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Matthew Esquivel

*Southern Methodist University*, mesquivel@smu.edu

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PARTICIPATION IN THE MARTYRED CHRIST:  
AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO ON MARTYRDOM  
AND MARTYR VENERATION

Approved by:

---

James K. H. Lee, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of the  
History of Early Christianity

---

Bruce D. Marshall, Ph.D.  
Lehman Professor of Christian Doctrine

---

Duane Stephen Long, Ph.D.  
Cary M. Maguire University  
Professor of Ethics

---

Fr. Andrew Hofer, O.P., Ph.D.  
Ordinary Professor of Patristics  
and Ancient Languages

PARTICIPATION IN THE MARTYRED CHRIST:  
AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO ON MARTYRDOM  
AND MARTYR VENERATION

A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the

Dedman College

Southern Methodist University

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

with a

Major in Religious Studies

by

Matthew G.S. Esquivel

B.A., Music, Southern Methodist University  
M.T.S, Perkins School of Theology

May 11, 2024

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Esquivel, Matthew G.S.

B.A., Music, Southern Methodist University  
M.T.S, Perkins School of Theology

Participation in the Martyred Christ:  
Augustine of Hippo on Martyrdom  
and Martyr Veneration

Advisor: James K.H. Lee

Doctor of Philosophy conferred May 11, 2024

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In Augustine’s North Africa, when the likelihood of *being* a martyr virtually disappeared, various practices of martyr veneration were the means by which the church communed with the martyrs, obtained their intercessory aid, and experienced miracles associated with their relics. Augustine reflected upon the meaning of martyrdom in the midst of two unique contexts: 1) the socio-political context, in which the Roman empire had ceased persecuting the church and had adopted Nicene Christianity as the official religion of the empire, and 2) the ecclesial context, which included the martyr veneration practices inherited from preceding generations and the competing claims to the title “Church of the Martyrs” in the Donatist controversy. In light of these contexts, this dissertation explores: What is the significance of martyrdom and martyr veneration for Augustine? How did he understand what it means to be “the Church of the Martyrs?” And finally, how did he understand the relationship between the faithful on earth and the martyrs in heaven?

More specifically, this dissertation will focus on how other significant aspects of Augustine’s theology bear upon his understanding of martyrdom and martyr veneration. These

various loci include his theology of 1) Christ as the mediator between God and humanity; 2) salvation as a participation in the life of God; 3) Christ and his church as the *totus Christus* (“whole Christ”) united in the bond of charity; and 4) the afterlife, the second coming of Christ, and the final bodily resurrection of the saints. These deeply interrelated aspects of Augustine’s theology, I argue, are central to his understanding of martyrdom and martyr veneration. Also, they reveal that, for Augustine, the intercessory aid of the martyrs in heaven and the various practices of martyr veneration are efficacious for strengthening the pilgrim church’s participation in the life of God and in charity.

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## ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS

*ANF* – *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. 10 vols (Grand Rapids, repr. : Eerdmans, 1885– )

*AugLex* – *Augustinus-Lexikon*, ed. C. Mayer (Basel: Schwabe & Co. 1986– )

*BA* – *Bibliothèque Augustienne: Œuvres de Saint Augustin*, 9<sup>e</sup> Série (Paris: Institut d' Études Augustiennes, 2008)

*CCSL* – *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* (Turnhout-Paris: Brepols, 1953– )

*CSEL* – *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 91+ vols. (Vienna: Tempsky, 1865– )

*FC* – *Fathers of the Church*, ed. R. J. Deferrari (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1947– )

*MA* – *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, 2 vols. (Rome: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1930-31)

*NPNF* – *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Oxford; rep.: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994)

*PL* – *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64)

*PLS* – *Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum*, 3 vols., ed. A. Hamann (Paris, 1958–63)

*RB* – *Revue bénédictine* (Namur: Abbaye de Maredsous, 1884ff.)

*WSA* – *Works of Saint Augustine*, ed. J. E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, 1900– )

### Abbreviations of Augustine's Works

*adn. Iob* – *Adnotationes in Iob liber unus*

*bapt.* – *De baptismo libri septem*

*c. ep. Parm.* – *Contra epistulam Parmeniani libri tres*

*ciu.* – *De ciuitate Dei*

*conf.* – *Confessionum libri tredecim*

*Cresc.* – *Ad Cresconium grammaticum partis Donati libri quattuor*

*cura mort.* – *De cura pro mortuis gerenda ad Paulinus episcopum liber unus*

*doctr. chr.* – *De doctrina christiana libri quattuor*

*c. Don.* – *Contra Donatistas liber unus*

*Dulc. qu.* – *De octo Dulcitii quaestionibus liber unus*

*en. Ps.* – *Enarrationes in Psalmos*

*ench.* – *De fide spe et caritate liber unus*

*ep.* – *Epistula*

*ep. Io. tr.* – *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus decem*

*exp. Gal.* – *Expositio epistulae ad Galatas*

*c. Faust* – *Contra Faustum ad Manicheum libri triginta tres*

*c. Gaud.* – *Contra Gaudentium Donatistarum episcopum libri duo*

*Gn. Litt.* – *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*

*Io. eu. tr.* – *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus CXXIV*

*c. Iul.* – *Contra Iulianum libri sex*

*lib. arb.* – *De libero arbitrio libri tres*

*c. litt. Pet.* – *Contra litteras Petiliani libri tres*

*retr.* – *Retractationum libri duo*

*mor.* – *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manicheorum libri duo*

*s.* – *Sermones ad populum*

*trin.* – *De trinitate libri quindecim*

**Abbreviations of Primary Sources (Other than Augustine):**

*Bru. Hipp.* – *Breuiarium Hipponense*

*c.Th.* – *Codex Theodosianus*

*Con. Carth.* – *Concilium Carthaginense*

*Con. Hipp.* – *Concilium Hipponensis*

*Conl. Carth.* – *Gesta Conlotionis Carthaginiensis*

*Pas. Perp.* – *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*

Cyprian of Carthage

*Laps.* – *De lapsis*

*ep.* – *Epistulae*

*Unit. Eccl.* – *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate*

Tertullian of Carthage

*An.* – *De Anima*

*Apol.* – *Apologeticus*

*Car. Chr.* – *De carne Christi*

*Mart.* – *Ad martyras*

*Mon.* – *De monogomia*

*Paen.* – *De Paenitentia*

*Pud.* – *De pudicitia*

To the One who laid down

His life for me in Love

## CHAPTER 1

### AN OVERVIEW OF AUGUSTINE'S THEOLOGY OF MARTYRDOM

This dissertation will offer a theological account of martyrdom and martyr veneration in the thought of Augustine of Hippo. What is the significance of martyrdom for Augustine, living in a post-Constantinian world following the Great Persecution (303–11 CE), when the church enjoyed a time of peace? How does he understand the church to be “the church of the martyrs,” and how does he think Christians should imitate the martyrs who suffered for Christ and participate in the glory they presently enjoy? Moreover, how does Augustine understand the by-then traditional practices of martyr veneration? In Augustine’s North Africa, when the likelihood of *being* a martyr in the sense of the previous two-plus centuries virtually disappeared,<sup>1</sup> various practices of martyr veneration were the means by which the church communed with the martyrs, obtained their intercessory aid, and experienced miracles associated with their relics.

This dissertation will explore how Augustine answered the above questions in light of two specific contexts: 1) the socio-political context, in which the Roman empire had ceased persecuting the church and had adopted Nicene Christianity as the official religion of the empire, and 2) the ecclesial context, which included popular practices of martyr veneration, the Donatist

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<sup>1</sup> The Donatists, however, identified suppression by the Catholics and the empire with persecution, which they would use to justify their claim to being the present “church of the martyrs.” This issue will be taken up at various points in this dissertation.



controversy, and the North African church's inheritance of the preceding martyr tradition, evident in the traditional practices of North African martyr veneration and in the writings of Tertullian of Carthage, Cyprian of Carthage, and various North African martyr narratives. More specifically, this dissertation will focus on how Augustine's understanding of martyrdom and martyr veneration bears upon other significant aspects of his theology, particularly, his understanding of Christ as mediator (chapter 2); salvation as a participation in the life of God (chapter 3); what it means to be the church, especially in relation to his theology of the church as the body of Christ united in the Holy Spirit, who is the bond of charity (chapter 4); and the return of Christ, the immediate afterlife, and the final bodily resurrection of the saints at the judgment seat of Christ (chapter 5).

For Augustine, these are truths to which the martyrs are witnesses. These deeply interrelated aspects of Augustine's theology, I argue, are central to his understanding of martyrdom and martyr veneration. Moreover, they reveal that for Augustine, the intercessory aid of the martyrs in heaven and the various practices of martyr veneration are efficacious for strengthening the pilgrim church's participation in the life of God and in charity.

A number of studies have been published over the past few decades that focus on chronological development or on particular elements of Augustine's theology of martyrdom.<sup>2</sup> A

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<sup>2</sup> For helpful articles and book sections discussing key aspects of Augustine's martyrology, see Martin Klöckener, "Martyres, martyrium," in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, ed. Cornelius Petrus Mayer et al. (Basel: Schwabe AG, 1986), 3: 1185–96; Carol Straw, "Martyrdom," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald and John C. Cavadini (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 538–42; J. Patout Burns, Jr. and Robin M. Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of Its Practices and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 519–51; J. den Boeft, "'Martyres Sunt, Sed Homines Fuerunt': Augustine on Martyrdom," in *Fructus Centesimus: Mélanges Offerts à Gerard J M Bartelink à l'occasion de Son Soixante-Cinquième Anniversaire*, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink et al. (in abbatia S. Petri: Steenbrugis, 1989), 115–24; Tarsicius Jan van Bavel, O.S.A., "The Cult of the Martyrs in St. Augustine: Theology versus Popular Religion?," in *Martyrium in Multidisciplinary Perspective: Memorial Louis Reekmans*, ed. M. Lambergts and P. van Deun (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 351–61. See also Robert B. Eno, *Saint Augustine and the Saints* (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1989). Only the final third of this three-part monograph deals specifically with Augustine. The previous two parts discuss authors prior to Augustine. See more sources in the following sections.

substantial portion of secondary literature examines this topic—or more broadly the topic of martyrdom in Late Antiquity—primarily through a socio-cultural, archaeological, narrative, or rhetorical approach.<sup>3</sup>

This dissertation is unique in two primary ways: 1) its focus on the relationship between Augustine’s theology of martyrdom and his wider theological vision, and 2) its exposition of the participatory nature of martyrdom and martyr veneration in Augustine’s thought.<sup>4</sup> To my knowledge, no monograph on this subject has taken this approach.<sup>5</sup> Though I will cite and

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Brown remains a highly influential contributor to a socio-cultural approach. See Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). See also W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (New York: University Press, 1967); W.H.C. Frend, “From Donatist Opposition to Byzantine Loyalty: The Cult of Martyrs in North Africa 350-650,” in *Vandals, Romans and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique North Africa*, ed. A.H. Merrills (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 259–70. Though Frend’s approach is now dated, it was nonetheless influential. For significant works on this topic that incorporate socio-cultural approaches with archaeological discoveries, see Victor Saxer, *Morts, martyrs, reliques: en Afrique chrétienne aux premiers siècles: Les témoignages de Tertullien, Cyprien et Augustin à la lumière de l’archéologie africaine* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1980); Yvette Duval, *Loca sanctorum Africae: Le culte des martyrs en Afrique du I<sup>er</sup> au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: De Boccard, 1982); Guy Lapointe, *La célébration des martyrs en Afrique d’après les sermons de Saint Augustin* (Montreal: Communauté Chrétienne, 1972); Shira Landier, *Ritual Sites and Religious Rivalries in Late Roman North Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). For narrative and rhetorical approaches, see Candida R. Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom: Diverse Practices, Theologies, and Traditions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); Candida R. Moss, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013); Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making, Gender, Theory, and Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Collin Garbarino, “Augustine, Donatists, and Martyrdom,” in *An Age of Saints? Power, Conflict, and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity*, ed. Peter Sarris, Matthew Dal Santo, and Phil Booth (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 49–61; Annemaré Kotzé, “Augustine and the Remaking of Martyrdom,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christian Martyrdom* (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), 135–50; Adam Ployd, “Non Poena Sed Causa: Augustine’s Anti-Donatist Rhetoric of Martyrdom,” *Augustinian Studies* 49, no. 1 (2018): 25–44; Adam Ployd, “Augustine, Martyrdom, and the Exemplary Rhetoric of History,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 28, no. 3 (Fall 2020): 423–41; Adam Ployd, *Augustine, Martyrdom, and Classical Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023); Diane Shane Fruchtmann, *Living Martyrs in Late Antiquity and Beyond: Surviving Martyrdom* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> As I will show in chapter 3, Peter Brown has explicitly denied this core feature of Augustine’s understanding of martyr veneration.

<sup>5</sup> There are more recent articles (written within the past thirty years) that offer helpful, concise summaries or highlight a single point about Augustine’s theology of martyrdom and martyr veneration. I am aware of none that focus on relating Augustine’s understanding of martyrdom and martyr veneration to his wider theological vision. Other English articles and book sections in this vein that are helpful to this dissertation include Anthony Dupont, “Imitatio Christi, Imitatio Stephani: Augustine’s Thinking on Martyrdom Based on His Sermons on the Protomartyr Stephen,” *Augustiniana* 56, no. 1/2 (2006): 29–61; Anthony Dupont, “Augustine’s Homiletic Definition of Martyrdom: The Centrality of the Martyr’s Grace in His Anti-Donatist and Anti-Pelagian *Sermones ad populum*,” in *Christian Martyrdom in Late Antiquity (300-450 AD): History and Discourse, Tradition and Religious Identity*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt and Johan Leemans (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 155–78. Anthony Dupont, *Preacher of Grace: A*

dialogue with sources that take a socio-cultural, archaeological, or rhetorical approach, I will focus on Augustine's theological account of martyrdom and martyr veneration in relationship to the other important aspects of his theology mentioned above. Although Augustine receives primary attention in this dissertation, I will refer to his North African predecessors and contemporaries where relevant to Augustine's views on martyrdom, martyr veneration, and the aforementioned loci of theology.

Moreover, this dissertation contributes to current scholarship and my own future research in its focus on Latin patristic Christology; soteriology, especially salvation as a participation in the life of God; ecclesiology, including Augustine's *totus Christus* theology; pneumatology, especially in relation to Spirit as the bond of charity and the charisms of the Spirit in the life of the church; and eschatology.<sup>6</sup> Also, the Latin understandings of deification and salvation as a participation in the life of God, and how these relate to these other theological topics, have attracted a growing amount of interest in recent scholarship, and this dissertation contributes to this dialogue.<sup>7</sup>

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*Critical Reappraisal of Augustine's Doctrine of Grace in His Sermones ad populum on Liturgical Feasts and During the Donatist Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Neither Augustine nor the early Latin church writers used these later terms, of course. For brevity's sake throughout the dissertation, I will use these terms in reference to the language mentioned in the previous section.

<sup>7</sup> See sources like David Meconi, S.J. *The One Christ: St Augustine's Theology of Deification* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013); Jared Ortiz, ed., *Deification in the Latin Patristic Tradition* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019).

## Overview of the Current Chapter

This initial chapter will briefly describe martyr veneration practices during Augustine's time and the bishop's basic contributions to North African martyrology.<sup>8</sup> This will provide a basis for the more extended discussion in the following chapters. Also, this chapter will argue, in contrast to recent secondary literature, that martyrdom for Augustine is fundamentally a witness to Christ *unto shedding blood* (i.e., death). On the one hand, Augustine broadens the traditional understanding of martyrdom by conceiving ways in which persecution can take various forms, especially during a time of peace. On the other hand, Augustine sets boundaries around martyrdom and what it means to be a martyr by emphasizing the elements of witness, cause, virtues, and willingness to die, rather than merely the punishment of death.

These conceptions of martyrdom that emphasize alternate forms of suffering and persecution and prioritize interior dispositions and virtues over the physical event of death become particularly useful for Augustine on two accounts: 1) his effort to describe the martyrs of the past as imitable for all of the faithful, though they may never be in the same circumstances as the martyrs, and 2) his response to the Donatists' claim to be the true Church of the Martyrs on the basis of their suppression by the state, which they consider persecution and martyrdom.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, I argue, suffering, shedding blood, and *dying* for one's witness to Christ remain essential elements to Augustine's fundamental understanding of martyrdom and what it means to be a martyr.

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<sup>8</sup> Other scholars have covered these veneration practices in greater depth. See Saxer, *Morts, martyrs, reliques*; Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 519–51.

<sup>9</sup> To be sure, the Donatists gave other theological and circumstantial arguments to support their claim. Augustine challenged them on every one of these points. I will discuss this further in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

## *Overview of Veneration Practices*

As J. Patout Burns and Robin M. Jensen have noted, martyr veneration was deeply embedded into the practice of late antique North African Christianity.<sup>10</sup> One of these practices included the circulation of martyr *acta* and *passiones*. While the *acta* typically read more like courtroom minutes between the legislative official and the martyr, the *passiones* include many more narrative details that paint the martyrs as visionary, miracle-working champions who conquer earthly and demonic principalities by their deaths. Unlike other regions, the North African church officially approved the reading of these *acta* and *passiones* during the liturgy on the feast days of the martyrs.<sup>11</sup> Some commonly known *acta* and *passiones* include the *Acti Marcelli*, *Acta Maximiliani*, *Acta Scillitanorum*, *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitae*, *Passio sanctorum Mariani et Iacobi*, and the *Passio sanctorum Montani et Lucii*.<sup>12</sup> In the wake of the Donatist controversy, the Donatists produced their own *acta* and *passiones* that differ greatly in emphasis and tone from previous martyr accounts in order to justify the Donatist cause.<sup>13</sup>

The practice of *refrigerium* involved the sharing of a meal at the shrine of a martyr. Initially, regulations on such a practice were much looser in North Africa than in other regions, such as Italy. When Augustine's mother followed her son to Italy, for example, she was rebuked by bishop Ambrose for bringing a meal to a shrine of a martyr—a common practice in North

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<sup>10</sup> See Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 519.

<sup>11</sup> *Concilium Hipponensis* a. 393, 4 (CCSL 149: 20–21, 250–253), and *Breuiarium Hipponense* 36d (CCSL 149:30–53). See Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 535.

<sup>12</sup> See Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); Éric Rebillard, *Greek and Latin Narratives About the Ancient Martyrs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> See Maureen A. Tilley, *Donatist Martyr Stories: The Church in Conflict in Roman North Africa* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996).

Africa at the time.<sup>14</sup> In the early days of his priesthood, however, Augustine began combatting what he and other bishops perceived as excesses in the celebration of meals at the martyr shrines.<sup>15</sup> Most of these “excesses” included participation in wild parties involving singing, dancing, and inebriation.<sup>16</sup>

By Augustine’s time, a thoroughly organized liturgical calendar of feast days existed in the North African church and abroad. These feast days included scriptural readings, an account of a given martyr’s life, a sermon about the martyr, the Eucharistic celebration, and an invocation of the prayers of the martyrs.<sup>17</sup> Though banquets with drinking and dancing at martyr shrines and church basilicas were common in North Africa during the martyr festivals, Augustine openly rebuked Christians for what he considered pagan revelry that actually dishonored both God and the martyrs.<sup>18</sup> The Council of Carthage in 397 approved the changes proposed by Augustine, Aurelius, and Alypius, resulting in the banning of using church buildings for these banquets.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Augustine, *Confessiones* 6.2.2.

<sup>15</sup> Augustine expresses his concerns and proposed restraints on these “excesses” to Bishop Aurelius of Carthage in *Epistula* 22 and 29. See Saxer, *Morts, martyrs, reliques*, 133–49; T.J. van Bavel, “Cult of the Martyrs,” 352; Frederik van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: Religion and Society at the Dawn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Brian Battershaw and G.R. Lamb (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 515–26. I discuss these two letters of Augustine in chapter 3.

<sup>16</sup> As T.J. van Bavel notes, Augustine no doubt influenced the canons of the Council of Carthage in 401 that admonished bishops to destroy when possible memorial shrines where no martyr relics could be found (“Cult of the Martyrs,” 352).

<sup>17</sup> A number of basilicas were either built on top of the tombs of martyrs or dedicated to specific martyrs. For a list of examples, see Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 530–31. For more on common festivals on the Calendar of Carthage and martyr festivals in general, see *Ibid.*, 534–38.

<sup>18</sup> See *ep.* 22 and *ep.* 29. The nature of these “excessive” celebrations led Manicheans to accuse Christians of worshipping the martyrs at shrines and basilicas in the same way that pagans worship their own gods in pagan temples. Augustine responds to this accusation in *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* XX. I discuss this in chapter 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Bru. Hipp.* 29. See Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 537.

Another common practice included burial *ad sanctos*, i.e., near the tomb of a martyr. This practice was an act of commending the soul of the departed to the care of the martyr and a hopeful attempt to secure the martyr's intercessory aid for the departed soul in the next life. As I discuss in chapter 5, Augustine offers his understanding of the benefits of this practice in response to a request from Paulinus of Nola.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, North African Christians commonly venerated the relics of the martyrs. Subtle references to relics are made in third-century martyr passion narratives, especially the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitae* and *Passio Cypriani*. Prior to the Diocletian persecution, a conflict arose between Caecilian, then a deacon of Carthage, and a matron named Lucilla over her kissing a questionable relic prior to receiving the Eucharist.<sup>21</sup> By Augustine's ecclesial career, the practice of venerating relics was well entrenched in North African Christianity. As I discuss in chapter 5, Augustine reports that from the time he began documenting local miracles to the writing of Book XXII of *De ciuitate Dei*, some seventy miracles had occurred in Hippo in association with the relics of St. Stephen, which were imported into Africa in 416 by the Spanish presbyter Paul Orosius.<sup>22</sup> He also mentions that countless miracles had occurred through the relics of the same saints in the region of Uzalis and Calama.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*. For more on fourth and fifth century practices of and archaeological evidence pertaining to burial *ad sanctos*, Christian burial, and funerary banquets, see Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 118–27, 505–6, 543–45. See also Yvette Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme : L'inhumation "ad sanctos" dans la chrétienté d'Orient et d'Occident du IIIe au VIIe Siècle* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1988).

<sup>21</sup> Optatus of Milevis recounts this episode and its impact on the Donatist Controversy in Optatus, *Contra Parmenianum Donatistam* (CSEL 26: 3–182).

<sup>22</sup> For the role of Orosius, see Augustine, *ep.* 175. See also Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 545.

<sup>23</sup> *De ciuitate Dei* XXII.8.

## Key Features of Augustine's Martyrology

Anthony Dupont, one of the leading voices explicating Augustine's theology of martyrdom in the past two decades, has already given helpful summaries of the secondary scholarship on this subject to date. Therefore, I only highlight the most common emphases.<sup>24</sup> In Dupont's own words, the secondary literature can be summarized as stating that two primary concerns, one ecclesiological and another Christological, determined Augustine's theology of martyrdom: "Firstly, by stressing that the martyrs do not exist outside the church and that only the true *causa* (which is to die for Christ) constitutes genuine martyrship, he sought to respond to the Donatist appropriation of martyrdom. . . . Secondly, Augustine attempted to direct the enthusiasm of his flock for the veneration of martyrs to God and to Christ."<sup>25</sup> Dupont highlights other important Christological emphases common in secondary literature: the longing of the martyrs for eternal life with Christ, the assistance and presence of Christ in the martyrs, the unity of Christ and the martyrs such that Christ himself suffers and dies in the martyrs, the reciprocal sacrifice of the martyrs, and the grace of Christ that enables the martyrs to suffer.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See Anthony Dupont, *Preacher of Grace*, 137–59 (esp. 137–42). This chapter was previously published in Anthony Dupont, "Augustine's Homiletic Definition of Martyrdom," 155–61. See also Anthony Dupont, "Imitatio Christi, Imitatio Stephani."

<sup>25</sup> Dupont, *Preacher of Grace*, 138. See also Dupont, "Augustine's Homiletic Definition of Martyrdom," 156. For the *causa* emphasis, Dupont cites van Bavel, "The Cult of the Martyrs," 351–61; Michelle Pellegrino, "Chiesa e martirio in Sant'Agostino," in *Ricerche Patristiche* (Torino: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1982), 1:597–633; Michelle Pellegrino, "Cristo e il martire nel pensiero di Sant'Agostino," in *Ricerche Patristiche* (Torino: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1982), 1: 635–88; Saxer, *Morts, martyrs, reliques*, 124–49, 170–299; van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 471–97. For the Christological emphasis, Dupont cites Hans Freiherr von Campenhausen, *Die Idee Des Martyriums in Der Alten Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936), 101–6; Candida R. Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>26</sup> Dupont cites Carol Straw, "Martyrdom." For other studies on martyrology in Augustine's sermons, Dupont cites J. den Boeft, "'Martyres Sunt, Sed Homines Fuerunt,' Ann-Marie La Bonnardière, "Les 'Ennarationes in Psalmos' prêchées par saint Augustin à l'occasion de fêtes de martyrs," *Recherches augustiniennes* 7 (1972), 73–103; Cyrille Lambot, "Les sermons de saint Augustin pour les fêtes de martyrs," *An-Boll* 67 (1949): 249–66; Guy Lapointe, *La célébration des martyrs*; C. Mayer, "'Attende Stephanum conservum tuum,' (Serm. 317,2,3). Sinn und Wert der Märtyrerverehrung nach den Stephanuspredigten Augustins," in *Fructus centesimus: mélanges offerts à Gerard*



As Martin Klöckner and J. den Boeft have observed, Augustine rarely discusses the martyrs in his early years as a Christian.<sup>27</sup> Den Boeft points out that the brief references to the martyrs in *Confessiones* (Monica's acceptance of Ambrose's ban on *refrigerium* in VI.2.2 and Ambrose's discovery of the bodies of the martyrs Protasius and Gervasius in IX.7.16) could arguably seal the evidence of Augustine's indifference toward martyrdom and martyrs in the first decade of his conversion. His attention to the topic instead arises during his time as a priest and amplifies during his office as a bishop.

Victor Saxer outlines three periods of the development of Augustine's thought on martyr veneration.<sup>28</sup> The first period occurs from 380–401, during which Augustine critiques what he deems excesses in the cult of the martyrs, especially in regard to *refrigeria*. Another key element of this period includes Augustine's response to the accusations of Manicheans and pagans that Christians have simply replaced the worship of idols with the worship of the martyrs.<sup>29</sup> As other scholars have shown, Augustine's primary emphasis during this period in response to Christian excesses and non-Christian accusations is the Christo-centricity of martyr veneration, in which the martyrs direct the faithful to worship God the Father and Jesus Christ, the chief and prince of the martyrs.<sup>30</sup> The liturgical feast days of the martyrs are an occasion to celebrate and imitate the martyrs as the faithful join them in the sacramental worship of the one true God. As I will show

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*J.M Bartelink à l'occasion de son soixante-cinquième anniversaire*, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, et al. (Steenbrugis: in abbatia S. Petri, 1989), 217–37.

<sup>27</sup> Klöckener, "Martyres, martyium," 1186. J. den Boeft, "'Martyres Sunt, Sed Homines Fuerunt,'" 116–17.

<sup>28</sup> See Saxer, *Mors, Martyrs and Reliques*, 124. See also van Bavel, "The Cult of the Martyrs," 351.

<sup>29</sup> Saxer notes that key work of Augustine during this period is *c. Faustum*. Saxer upholds an earlier dating for this work (*Mors, Martyrs and Reliques*, 124 and 134).

<sup>30</sup> Den Boeft, "'Martyres Sunt, Sed Homines Fuerunt,'" 117–18.

in chapters 2 and 3, Augustine's theology of Christ as the one true mediator between God and humanity and his understanding of salvation as a participation in the life of God are central to the development of his theology of martyrdom during this period and the following.

The second period occurs from 401–15, during which Augustine demonstrates a more sympathetic view of martyr veneration in light of his reflections on the topic during the Donatist controversy. Because the Donatists claimed to be the true Church of the Martyrs that suffered persecution at the hands of the state and the Catholic Church, Augustine felt compelled to articulate an understanding of what it means to be a true martyr and of what was the true Church of the Martyrs. The Donatist martyrs, Augustine argues, attempt to imitate Christ's suffering without imitating his charity—therefore they are not true martyrs. Ecclesiology, as T.J. van Bavel has shown, is key for Augustine during this period.<sup>31</sup> True martyrs are those who remain in the one church, which is the body of Christ. The Donatists claim that they are the ones persecuted, but in fact they are persecuted for unrighteousness rather than righteousness.<sup>32</sup> It is the cause of suffering, not the punishment itself, that makes a true martyr.<sup>33</sup> As I will show in chapter 4, Augustine's notion of the *totus Christus* is central to Augustine's claim that the Catholic Church is the true Church of the Martyrs and his justification of the use of imperial coercion in the Donatist controversy.

The third period that Saxer outlines occurs from 415–30, when Augustine's mature theology of and fervent adherence to martyr veneration has developed, especially after he

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<sup>31</sup> Van Bavel, "The Cult of the Martyrs," 356. See also Pellegrino, "Chiesa e Martirio in Sant' Agostino," 1: 215–51.

<sup>32</sup> Collin Garbarino, "Augustine, Donatists, and Martyrdom," in *An Age of Saints? Power, Conflict, and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity*, ed. Peter Sarris, Matthew Dal Santo, and Phil Booth (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 57.

<sup>33</sup> Den Boeft, "Martyres Sunt, Sed Homines Fuerunt," 118–20. See also Adam Ployd, "*Non Poena Sed Causa*."

witnesses miracles associated with martyr shrines and relics.<sup>34</sup> An eschatological emphasis arises in Augustine's theology of martyrdom during this period. By their examples and postmortem miracles, the martyrs serve as witnesses to the resurrection and last judgment. My contribution in chapter 5 includes a discussion of the centrality of Augustine's eschatology in his articulation of the degree in which the intercession of the martyrs may impact one's eternal destiny.

### **Witness and Death in Augustine's Theology of Martyrdom**

Now I come to the primary argument in this chapter. As a number of scholars have acknowledged, one of Augustine's major contributions to the theology of martyrdom is his emphasis on martyrdom as a witness to Christ. As Jan den Boeft has shown, Augustine discusses the *martyr/martyres* alongside the word *teste/testum*.<sup>35</sup> At times, Augustine discusses them in terms of equalization and other times in terms of allusion.<sup>36</sup> His usual practice, however, is to describe the martyrs as witnesses to what they have seen,<sup>37</sup> to the truth of Jesus Christ, to faith, and to eternal life.

Some recent studies by Collin Garbarino, Annemaré Kotzé, and Diane Fruchtman exploit Augustine's emphasis on martyrs as *testes* to argue (respectively) that Augustine redefines

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<sup>34</sup> Van Bavel, "The Cult of the Martyrs in St. Augustine," 360–61.

<sup>35</sup> The citations den Boeft has noted include: *adn. Iob* I, 39; *ciu.* 22.9; *cura mort.* 8,10; *c. Don.* 1.1; *en Ps.* 89.14; 115. 2; 118.9.2; 118.14.3; 118.23.7; 140.20–21; 147.27; *ep. Io. tr.* 1.2; *c. Faust.* 22,76; *Io. eu tr.* 93.3; 94.2; *c. Iul. imp.* 2.3.6; *s.* 128.3; *s.* 168.4; 284.2; 286.1; 319.1 and 3; 328.2; 329.1; 333.1; *s. Denis* 16.1 and 5; *s. Frangip.* 6; *s. Guelf.* 19.1; *s. Lambot* 9.29.1. See "Martyres Sunt, Sed Homines Fuerunt," 122n15.

<sup>36</sup> *Io. eu. tr.* 93.3 and *s.* 284.2, respectively. See J. den Boeft, "Martyres Sunt, Sed Homines Fuerunt," 122.

<sup>37</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 1.2

martyrdom, remakes it, or removes from it the criterion of death.<sup>38</sup> Though each of these scholars uncovers important insights into Augustine's theology of martyrdom, especially as it developed in responses to various controversies in which he was engaged, I argue that Augustine nonetheless fundamentally understands martyrdom in its classic sense: as a witness for Christ unto shedding one's blood.<sup>39</sup> Though he develops an understanding of what it means to be a martyr that applies to many of the faithful, Augustine regards dying for one's witness as an essential element in his basic understanding of martyrdom and what it means to be a martyr.

Garbarino argues that Augustine redefines martyrdom as *witness* in his response to the Donatist emphasis on martyrdom as a *sacrifice*. In doing so, he continues, Augustine breaks with many previous North African martyr traditions that, like the Donatists, emphasize the sacrificial nature of martyrdom.<sup>40</sup> Augustine condemns voluntary martyrdom and emphasizes that it is not exactly martyrs who sacrifice themselves for Christ, but Christ who sacrifices the martyrs. Death, for Augustine, becomes less important than witness: "Augustine's emphasis on the martyrs' testimony makes their willingness to die less important. In spite of what many martyr texts claimed, Augustine taught that the martyrs did not long for death at all; rather, they longed for life."<sup>41</sup> Augustine favored his own reassessment, Garbarino concludes, because it was closer to

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<sup>38</sup> See Garbarino, "Augustine, Donatists, and Martyrdom," 49–61; Annemaré Kotzé, "Augustine and the Remaking of Martyrdom." Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*. Ployd uses the language of construction and reconstruction for rhetorical purposes. See Ployd, *Augustine, Martyrdom, and Classical Rhetoric*.

<sup>39</sup> Garbarino and Kotzé explicitly cast the Manichean, Donatist, and Pelagian controversies as the causes behind Augustine's redefining or remaking of martyrdom. Though Fruchtman acknowledges the effect that such polemical contexts had on Augustine's theology of martyrdom (and vice versa), she is careful to avoid attributing causality to these controversies. Fruchtman summarizes her position, which I find more convincing: "Rather, I argue, we should think of Augustine's underlying theology of martyrdom and the positions he came to argue in his role as controversialist as fueling one another, in a sort of feedback loop that defies any conclusive retrieval of initial or clear causation." See Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 193.

<sup>40</sup> Garbarino, "Augustine, Donatists, and Martyrdom," 53.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

the New Testament and because the bishop found it to be a strategic weapon against the Donatists' claim to be the true Church of the Martyrs.

Kotzé argues that Augustine not only developed the pre-existing North African notion of martyrdom; he effectively *remade* it in his response to his Manichean, Donatist, and Pelagian opponents. Following the approach of Candida Moss, Collin Garbarino, and Lucy Grig that explores martyrdom in Late Antiquity as a narrative construct rather than a historical event, Kotzé asserts that Christian martyrdom “is not simply a historical given. . . . [It] is a complex and elusive concept, a construct that was created through discourse . . . something that had to be *made*” and, therefore, “could be *remade*.”<sup>42</sup> Against the Manicheans, Augustine emphasized the Christological focus of martyr veneration and the humility of the martyrs versus the pride of the Manichees, the pagan gods, and the Donatists.

In the Donatist controversy, Kotzé asserts, Augustine *remade* the notion of martyrdom to win the Catholic-Donatist battle for status and influence. The four primary ways in which Augustine reconstructed the notion of martyrdom include: his emphasis on the cause over the punishment, his repudiation of the voluntary Donatist martyrdoms, his reclaiming of Cyprian for the Catholic cause, and his understanding of how Christians living in a time of peace could daily experience a metaphorical martyrdom.<sup>43</sup> Kotzé considers the latter Augustine's “most inventive transformation of martyrdom” that served to supplant the Donatist claim to martyrdom.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Kotzé, “Augustine and the Remaking of Martyrdom,” 135. See Lucy Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity* (London: Duckworth, 2004). Moss takes this line of approach to the furthest degree, even denying the historical reality of martyrdom. See Candida R. Moss, *The Myth of Persecution*. See also Moss, *The Other Christs*.

<sup>43</sup> Kotzé, “Augustine and the Remaking of Martyrdom,” 138.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 140. She also discusses the Pelagian controversy as the context that influenced Augustine's emphasis on martyrdom as a gift of grace and the local miracles associated with the newly imported relics of St. Stephen as the context in which he developed his understanding of the veneration of martyr relics and miracles. The main

Influence, power, and numbers for the Catholic church, on her account, were his motivation. Similar to Garbarino, then, Kotzé suggests that Augustine has significantly *changed* what martyrdom means by removing from it the element of death for one's witness to Christ.

Fruchtman makes a much more forceful claim that challenges the idea that the conception of martyrdom in Late Antiquity necessitates death. She examines the writings of Prudentius, Paulinus of Nola, and Augustine of Hippo to emphasize the role of the what she calls "the living martyr" in late antiquity. These three writers, she argues, sought to develop a range of conceptions of martyrdom that did not always require death.<sup>45</sup> For Fruchtman, the stakes are high. She argues for an historical corrective, stating that writers in late antiquity considered martyrdom as something that individuals could survive in order to help scholars "see more clearly the aspirations and agendas of those who promoted [these living martyrs] as martyrs and how their martyrological discourse illuminates the variety of ways that martyrdom is and can be mobilized to construct new, community-creating worldviews."<sup>46</sup> She posits an historiographical corrective that calls for a change in "how we define and locate martyrdom" so that we can understand the full gamut of Christian understandings of martyrdom and uses of martyrial discourse throughout history.<sup>47</sup> Finally, she proposes a political corrective that calls for a need "to recognize the full range of martyrdom discourse, which expands in scope and deepens in

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motivation for Augustine is still, on Kotzé's account, "to enhance the religious experience of his congregation and the growth of Catholic numbers" (145).

<sup>45</sup> Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 15.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

intensity when we recognize the possibility of living with a martyrial consciousness rather than dying to merit the title. Once death is removed as a criterion, martyrdom proliferates."<sup>48</sup>

In fourteen of Augustine's sermons, she notes, the bishop explicitly dissociates martyrdom from death.<sup>49</sup> Subtle dissociations of martyrdom and death occur in another forty-eight sermons.<sup>50</sup> She challenges scholars who fail to recognize or dismiss Augustine's notion of the living martyr and who attach adjectives, such as "literal," "spiritual," or "metaphorical," to martyrdom that Augustine himself did not use.<sup>51</sup> It is also not enough for scholars to acknowledge a notion of martyrdom without death in Augustine without recognizing the centrality of the bishop's "paradigm of living martyrdom."<sup>52</sup> For Augustine, martyrdom "is judged not by one's external fate but by one's internal orientation of obedience to God—that is to say, in Augustine's words, *non facit martyrem poena sed causa*."<sup>53</sup>

Rather than conceiving of martyrdom in a basic, singular sense that requires death and subsequently applying or stretching his discourse of martyrdom to exceptional instances that do not involve death, Augustine, she argues, proffers numerous notions and discourses of martyrdom: "Some of these emphasize blood, suffering, and death, while others emphasize the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 16. Her conclusion offers an example, as she argues that this approach allows scholars of religion to recognize and analyze the martyrial discourse in Donald Trump's inaugural address.

<sup>49</sup> Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 161. She cites s. 4.36-37; 96.9; 159.8; 159A.4; 260E.2; 274; 286.1; 296.5; 301A.5; 305A.2; 306E (esp. 6); 318.2-3; 328.8; 335J.4. She only cites s. 303 hesitantly because of scholarly doubt on whether Augustine truly authored this sermon.

<sup>50</sup> For her citations, see Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 198n8.

<sup>51</sup> Carole Straw uses the words "literal martyrdom" and "spiritual martyrdom," and Kotzé frequently refers to "metaphorical" martyrdom. See Straw, "Martyrdom," 538-42; Kotzé, "Augustine and the Remaking of Martyrdom."

<sup>52</sup> Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 164. Here she critiques Anthony Dupont and Nicholas DeMaeyer, "A Study of Augustine's Theology of Martyrdom."

<sup>53</sup> Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 164.

life of martyrdom."<sup>54</sup> Though Augustine sometimes emphasizes death martyrdom and other times living martyrdom, Fruchtman argues that his uses of each notion in context "effectively undermines the meaning of blood imagery and death."<sup>55</sup>

In one sermon, she notes,<sup>56</sup> Augustine's references to living martyrs included bishops caring diligently for their flocks, the three young men who survived the flames of the furnace, and laypeople who obey God.<sup>57</sup> In other sermons, living martyrs included any Christians who continually resist temptation,<sup>58</sup> refuse to give false testimony under pressure from the wealthy,<sup>59</sup> risk being ostracized for preaching at a dinner party,<sup>60</sup> turn their wills away from the love of money,<sup>61</sup> love their enemies,<sup>62</sup> or endure the length of Augustine's sermons.<sup>63</sup> Martyrdom without death includes sermons on the three young men who survived Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace and the mother of the Maccabees who witnessed the brutal martyrdom of her seven sons.<sup>64</sup> Other ways in which Augustine conceives of living martyrdom include being a witness to

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>56</sup> See *ibid.*, 168–80 for her discussion of each of these examples. All of the sermon citations are found in Fruchtman's notes to these pages.

<sup>57</sup> *s.* 296.4-5.

<sup>58</sup> *s.* 4.37.

<sup>59</sup> *s.* 32.15; 36.10; 62.14, 81.4-5, 94A.2; 107.8-10; 301A.5; 306E.10)

<sup>60</sup> *s.* 260E.

<sup>61</sup> *s.* 194A.4.

<sup>62</sup> *s.* 315.10.

<sup>63</sup> *s.* 274.

<sup>64</sup> She cites *s.* 296.5; 306E; 343.



Christ through hearing the gospel, proclaiming it, or enacting it<sup>65</sup> and choosing to suffer with a sickness rather than use pagan healing amulets.<sup>66</sup>

Fruchtman, to be sure, acknowledges the prevalence of Augustine's connection between martyrdom and blood, suffering, and death. She examines in depth some of the reasons why scholars tend to assume that death is a fundamental element of martyrdom in Augustine's thought: (1) Augustine's statements that the martyrs have achieved perfection through their suffering or shedding blood; 2) his description of the feast day as the martyr's "birthday"; 3) his reference to the blood of the martyrs as seed of the church; 4) his idea of martyrdom by death as a repayment to Christ for his death; 5) his explicit references to the ways in which the martyrs died; and 6) his contrast between martyrdom and alternate demonstrations of faith.<sup>67</sup>

Even these six reasons, she argues, do not justify a "monolithic presentation of death as essential to martyrdom in Augustine's thinking."<sup>68</sup> She offers five critiques of any such "monolithic presentation" to show how Augustine destabilizes death as a criterion in martyrdom: 1) many of the same sermons that emphasize death martyrdom (including the shedding of blood and the blood of the martyrs as seed) also discuss living martyrdom or include statements "that undermine the centrality of death";<sup>69</sup> 2) Augustine re-evaluates and relativizes death in his discussions of diverse types of death (including martyrdom and natural death) in his sermons

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<sup>65</sup> s. 286.1; 260E.1-2.

<sup>66</sup> s. 335D.3; 4.36; 335D.3; 318.3; 328.8; 286.7; 306E.7. As Fruchtman notes, these "sickbed martyrs" appear seven times in extant sermons of Augustine and span the entirety of his preaching career (176).

<sup>67</sup> Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 184.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

on the feast days of the martyrs;<sup>70</sup> 3) Augustine discusses his prevailing understanding of martyrial death "as a signifier of the primary achievement of scorning the world";<sup>71</sup> 4) Augustine often characterizes death as the *moment*, not the *cause*, of the martyr's reception of a crown;<sup>72</sup> 5) his use of scripture undercuts the importance of death in martyrdom.<sup>73</sup>

Augustine's concept of *non poena sed causa*, Fruchtman argues, further demonstrates his emphasis on inward dispositions such as cause, intention, willingness, and charity over the outward act of death. He exhorts the faithful to imitate these inward dispositions of the martyrs over against their deaths. Though Augustine frequently discusses martyrdom in terms of death, he just as frequently discusses martyrdom in terms that exclude death. Therefore, Fruchtman concludes: "For Augustine, there is martyrdom without death, and there is martyrdom with death; *there is no such thing, for Augustine, as a death-centered martyrdom....* Augustine poses both *causa* and death as criteria for martyrdom, but while he often walks back or undermines the criterion of death, he never once does so for cause. The martyr's cause is always central; their death is not."<sup>74</sup> Recognizing the presence of "deathless martyrdom" in Augustine's sermons enables scholars to see much more easily "that Augustine's calls to imitate the martyrs are

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 185–186. For example, though Augustine acknowledges the death of the martyrs, he emphasizes their love of eternal life over physical death.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 188–190. For example, he repeatedly quotes Psalm 116:15 in situations either where he describes martyrdom by "witness, willingness, and via the sickbed" and Hebrews 12:4 in instances where he emphasizes readiness or willingness to die over death itself.

<sup>74</sup> Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 192.

intention-centered and that the *imitatio martyris* is, in Augustine's view, actually a fully-fledged martyrdom."<sup>75</sup>

For Garbarino, Kotzé, and Fruchtman, then, witness and cause supersede suffering and death in Augustine's theology of martyrdom, such that death at best diminishes as a crucial element in what it means to be a martyr. The conclusions of these scholars are understandable, especially given Augustine's repeated emphasis on the elements of witness, cause, virtues, and willingness that can apply to any of the faithful. Fruchtman has convincingly identified living martyrdom as a central feature of Augustine's conception of martyrdom, which has been underacknowledged by many scholars. Also, it is true that the presence of living martyrdom arises even in sermons when Augustine explicitly discusses death as a criterion for martyrdom. There are a few significant instances, however, that seem to tip the scales in favor of a death-centered martyrdom as foundational to Augustine's martyrology.

### ***The Martyrs as Witnesses Who Shed their Blood***

First of all, Augustine explicitly connects witness and the shedding of blood (i.e., death) in discussing why certain individuals are considered martyrs and why those martyrs are celebrated on the liturgical calendar. In a sermon preached on an unknown date on the feast day of Cyprian of Carthage, Augustine says that Cyprian "attained the triumphant name of a martyr, because he endured the struggle for truth unto shedding blood."<sup>76</sup> Cyprian is not considered a

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>76</sup> s. 310.3 (PL 38: 1413): "...atque adeptus est triumphale martyris nomen, quia perduxit usque ad sanguinem pro ueritate certamen." Translations are mine unless otherwise noted. For my translations, I have frequently consulted the Works of Saint of Augustine and/or the Fathers of the Church series. Some translations are a modification of the

martyr because he *fled* for the truth at the onset of the Decian persecution in 250. He is considered a martyr because he *died* for the truth (by beheading) during the Valerian persecution in 258.

Augustine also pairs the act of witnessing to the truth with the shedding of blood in a sermon preached on the feast day of the martyrs Primus, Victoria, and Perpetua. Though Augustine seems to equate the Greek word *martyr* with the Latin word *testis* in this sermon, he clarifies that the martyrs are called witnesses precisely because “they patiently suffered so many things for the truth of their testimony.”<sup>77</sup> Their identification as witnesses, then, is directly tied to their suffering unto death for that witness.

In a sermon preached in 428 on the feast day of the martyrs Protase and Gervase, Augustine equates the Latin word *martyres* (transliterated from the Greek μάρτυρες) with the Latin word *testes*. Augustine distinguishes true witnesses from false witnesses. The implication is that there are false martyrs who die giving a *false* witness and will surely be punished, and true martyrs who die giving a *faithful* witness and will surely be crowned.<sup>78</sup> Thus, death alone is not enough for one to be considered a true martyr. However, Augustine does not divorce true witness from shedding blood. In fact, he distinguishes them: “And it was certainly easy to bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the truth because he is God; but to do so unto death, that was a great

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WSA series. For notes on possible dates ranging from 407–421, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 69n1 (Hill also directs the reader to 66n1).

<sup>77</sup> S. 335A (*Miscellanea Agostiniana*, Rome, 1930, 1: 219): “Martyrum nomen graecum est, latine testes dicuntur: si ergo testes sunt, pro testimonii sui ueritate tanta perpassi sunt.” See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 211. As Hill notes, Fischer and Kunzelmann date this sermon to 401, but Hill finds 412 or 413 more convincing. The dating depends upon whether or not this sermon was preached in Carthage, which Augustine rarely visited. *Ibid.*, 213n1.

<sup>78</sup> s. 286.1 (PL 38: 1297): “Si testis falsus non erit sine poena, nec testis verus sine corona.” For dating notes, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 105n1. Though he does not specifically name the Donatists here, he likely has them in mind.

work.”<sup>79</sup> Though the living may surely witness to Christ, Augustine ascribes a particular greatness to witnessing *unto death*.

In the same sermon, Augustine describes three different types of believers. One type believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, but “would be ashamed to confess Christ in the presence of human beings.”<sup>80</sup> Another type believes and even witnesses to Christ publicly; he upholds a strong front, but not yet to the point of shedding blood.”<sup>81</sup> The third type, however, “is prepared to die for Christ in his confession.”<sup>82</sup> Fruchtman acknowledges this point, but she argues that Augustine destabilizes death as an essential aspect of their witness by saying that the third is great not because he dies but because “he is prepared to die for his witness to Christ.”<sup>83</sup> It is the *preparation* to die that is essential for Augustine, she says, but not necessarily the *act* of dying. Augustine is clear that death alone is not enough; however, in the same sermon, Augustine again emphasizes the act of death as significant in naming someone a martyr.

Because of his fear to confess Jesus Christ publicly on the night of the Lord’s betrayal, Peter “was still not the same” (*non erat similis*) as martyrs like the men Protase, Gervase, Stephen, or the youth Nemesianus, or the women Agnes and Crispina.<sup>84</sup> Even though he had already been sent prior to Christ’s passion to preach and overcome opposition from the Jews, even though he was already the primary apostle who “clung closely to the Lord” (*domino*

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<sup>79</sup> s. 286.1 (PL 38: 1297): “Et facile quidem fuit, Domino Jesu Christo et veritati, quia deus est, testimonium perhibere; sed usque ad mortem, magnum opus fuit.” See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 101.

<sup>80</sup> s. 286.1 (PL 38: 1297): “Fuerunt ergo qui erubescerent coram hominibus confiteri Christum....”

<sup>81</sup> s. 286.1 (PL 38: 1297): “...secundus iam habet firmam frontem, sed nondum usque ad sanguinem....”

<sup>82</sup> s. 286.1 (PL 38: 1297): “...tertium qui credit in Christum, et paratus est in sua confessione mori pro Christo.”

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. See Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 175.

<sup>84</sup> s. 286.2 (PL 38: 1298): “Sed tamen adhuc non erat similis Protasio et Gervasio.” Hill translates this as “wasn’t yet the equal” (Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 102).

*cohaerebat*), he was not yet “in the place” (*nondum hoc erat*) of these martyrs until he confessed Christ unto death.<sup>85</sup>

Prior to Christ’s Passion, then, among which of the three types of believers does Augustine place Peter? Given that Augustine praises Peter for confessing Christ publicly numerous times prior to the Passion, and given that Augustine clearly considers the above-mentioned martyred as what I’ll call a “Type 3” believer—i.e., one prepared (*paratus*) to confess Christ unto shedding blood—it seems that Augustine would consider Peter to be a “Type 2” Christian—one that publicly confesses Christ, but not unto death. Augustine praises Peter for having a “ready spirit” (*prompta anima*) to die for Christ just prior to his triple denial. Interestingly, Augustine does not question whether Peter was *actually* ready: “For if he had not been ready, he would not have said to the Savior: ‘I will die for you.’”<sup>86</sup> However, he was “not knowing how to measure out” (*sed nesciens se metiri*) that readiness in such a way that he would actually die for Christ. It was not until his third denial that he recognized that he was “sick with false presumption.”<sup>87</sup> So Augustine affirms a certain level of inner readiness in Peter that proved to be incomplete when faced with the possibility of death. The quality of one’s willingness and readiness to die, it seems, can only be proved when one is faced with death itself.

On the other hand, Augustine says, Christ did not allow Peter to die because the divine plan ordered that Christ must die first: “And the Lord died first for him, as was proper: and

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<sup>85</sup> s. 286.2 (PL 38: 1298): Jam apostolus erat, primus erat, Domino cohaerebat. Dictum illi erat, *Tu es Petrus*: sed nondum erat Protasius aut Gervasius, nondum erat Stephanus, nondum erat Nemesianus puer; nondum hoc erat Petrus; nondum erat quod mulieres quaedam, quod puellae, quod Crispina, quod Agnes; nondum erat Petrus, quod istarum muliebris infirmitas.”

<sup>86</sup> s. 286.2 (PL 38: 1298): “Quam prompta anima. Sed nesciens se metiri. Nam utique si prompta non esset, non diceret Saluatori, Moriar pro te.”

<sup>87</sup> s. 286.2 (PL 38: 1298): “Invenit se ergo aegrotus falsum praesumpsisse....”

afterward, Peter died for the Lord, as proper order demanded: and afterward the martyrs followed.”<sup>88</sup> Peter’s death, not his initial, incomplete readiness to die, was necessary for his witness to Christ to be considered a *magnum opus*.<sup>89</sup> Augustine does not suggest that Peter arrived at the same level as the martyrs when the apostle became *more* ready or *fully* ready to die, but only when he *actually* died. Moreover, the difficult, thorny path to death was “paved” (*strata*), “worn smooth” (*contrita*), and “made easier” (*facta lenior*) for the martyrs to follow by feet of Peter and the apostles who followed Christ in his witness unto death. Dying for Peter, Christ strengthened Peter and the apostles to die for Christ, which in turn strengthened would-be later martyrs to endure death for their own confession.<sup>90</sup>

Though most martyrs on the liturgical calendar suffered for Christ after Christ’s own death and resurrection, the church celebrates a few individuals who died prior to Christ. Their *death* for their witness is what qualifies them as martyrs *avant la lettre*. In a sermon preached on an unknown date on the feast day of the seven Maccabee brothers, Augustine affirms with the universal church that these brothers are rightly celebrated as martyrs. Though they lived and died before Christ’s birth, they can still be considered Christians because Christ has possessed a people since the time of Abraham.<sup>91</sup> They suffered not for their confession of Christ but for the

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<sup>88</sup> s. 286.2 (PL 38: 1298): “Et mortuus est prior pro illo Dominus, sicut oportebat: et mortuus est postea pro Domino Petrus, sicut ordo ipse postulabat: et secuti sunt martyres.” Another influence in Peter’s denial, Augustine would likely say, was Satan’s request to sift Peter like wheat. See Luke 22:31.

<sup>89</sup> s. 286.1. See quotation and citation in note 79 above.

<sup>90</sup> s. 286.2 (PL 38: 1298): “Strata est via prius spinosa, et pedibus Apostolorum contrita, facta lenior secuturis.” Augustine seems to attribute “paved” to Christ and “worn smooth” to the apostles, indicating a progressive ease of the difficult path to death for one’s witness. Augustine speaks of the martyrs’ deaths as paving a way for the faithful to imitate Christ in s. 325.1. I discuss this more in chapter 3.

<sup>91</sup> s. 300.1.

law of Moses, but they still share a glory similar to the martyrs who died after Christ.<sup>92</sup> The church can say that the Maccabees suffered for Christ because Christ is veiled in the law of Moses and throughout the Old Testament:

The martyrs confessed [Christ] openly, while the Maccabees at that time confessed the same one in a hidden manner: the former died for Christ *revealed* in the Good News: the latter died for the name of Christ *concealed* in the law. Christ possesses both, Christ helped both as they were struggling, Christ crowned both.<sup>93</sup>

Important to note is that Augustine is working here from a traditional understanding of what it means to be a martyr: one who *dies* for his or her *witness to Christ*. From this basic understanding, Augustine explains how the Maccabee brothers are rightly called martyrs even though they do not seem to fit the definition of a martyr in the strictest sense since they died before Christ's first advent.<sup>94</sup>

Similarly, in a sermon possibly preached in 405 on the feast day of John the Baptist, Augustine discusses why the church considers John, another person who suffered before Christ's passion, to be a martyr. The term, he says, usually applies to those who confessed Christ and suffered *after* Christ's death and resurrection.<sup>95</sup> Thus, Augustine assumes that dying for one's witness to Christ is the basic, universal understanding of martyrdom. Yet he also assumes the

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<sup>92</sup> s. 300.2.

<sup>93</sup> s. 300.5 (PL 38: 1379): "Ipsum martyres in manifesto confessi sunt, quem tunc Machabaei in occulto confessi sunt: mortui sunt isti pro Christo in euangelio revelato; mortui sunt illi pro Christi nomine in lege velato. Christus habet utrosque, Christus pugnantes adiuuit utrosque, Christus coronavit utrosque." Emphasis mine. See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 279.

<sup>94</sup> Augustine is responding here to the Jewish objection to the Christian veneration of the seven Maccabee brothers as *Christian* martyrs. His argument, then, is that Christians rightly venerate the Maccabees as Christian martyrs because these Jewish brothers confessed the Christ who was concealed in the law of Moses. See s. 305.3, 5. Another similar example includes the Holy Innocents who were killed by Herod just after Christ's birth. See *lib. arb.* 3.68; *ep.* 166.18; s. 373.3. See Klöckener, "Martyres, martyrium," 3:1188n14.

<sup>95</sup> s. 94A.1 (MA 1: 252): "Unde dicimus martyrem esse Iohannem? Numquid a persecutoribus Christianorum comprehensus, adductus, interrogatus, Christum confessus, et passus est? Hoc enim ceteri martyres post Christi passionem possunt dici." For notes on the dating, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/4, 22n1.



church rightly calls and venerates John the Baptist as a martyr. Thus, Augustine seeks to resolve the apparent tension. John, he says, was not being compelled by Herod to deny Christ like most martyrs; however, he is rightly called a martyr because he suffered for the truth. Because Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, the church can properly say that John suffered for Christ.<sup>96</sup> To be sure, suffering alone is not enough for one to be called a martyr, since people can suffer for worldly reasons.<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless, John's suffering for his witness, which ended in death, is still a crucial element for Augustine in the church's recognition of John as a martyr.

To Garbarino, Kotzé, and Fruchtman's points, Augustine thinks that all of the faithful may suffer persecution for truth in a different form than John the Baptist or the martyrs after Christ. In the same sermon, Augustine says that devil continues to persecute Christians in a time of peace. The devil entices the faithful to deny the truth by pressuring them through the wealthy and powerful to give false testimony in court at the threat of death. This false testimony may not pertain directly to denying Christ as Lord and God, but if Christians must choose to lie or suffer for speaking the truth, then they are suffering for Christ: "If Christ is the truth, whoever is condemned for truth suffers for Christ and legitimately is crowned."<sup>98</sup> Persecution, then, continues even during a time of peace since scripture states that *all* who wish to live godly lives will suffer persecution, even if that persecution takes on a different form.<sup>99</sup> Augustine exhorts his

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<sup>96</sup> *s.* 94A.1 (MA 1: 252): "Iste ergo unde martyr? Quia decollatus est? Non enim facit martyrem poena, sed causa. Quia offendit potentem mulierem? Unde offendit? qua de re offendit? Dicendo uerum regi, marito eius facto, quia non liceret ei habere uxorem fratris sui." Augustine says the same about the prophets in *Ennarationes in Psalmos* 149.26. Though they did not suffer for a witness to Christ, they suffered for truth by rebuking sinners and refusing moral compromise and idolatry.

<sup>97</sup> *s.* 94A.4. This would apply to the Donatists, who suffer out of pride for Donatus, not out of love for Christ. See chapter 4.

<sup>98</sup> *s.* 94A.2 (MA 1: 252): "Si christus est ueritas, pro christo patitur, quisquis pro ueritate damnatur, et legitime coronatur."

<sup>99</sup> *s.* 94A.2. Augustine cites 2 Timothy 3:12. See also *s.* 4.27.

listeners to refuse to give false testimony *to the point of death*, just as the martyrs did. This seems to blur the distinction between the martyrs of the past who suffered persecution in one form and the faithful in the present who suffer persecution in another form, but both forms of persecution result in death.

Also to Garbarino, Kotzé, and Fruchtman's points, Augustine explicitly applies martyrdom to those on a sickbed. In the same sermon mentioned above preached on the feast day of the martyrs Protase and Gervase, Augustine says that many of the faithful suffer martyrdom because they choose suffering over using a pagan healing charm. By refusing such treatment, despite the repeated appeals of family or friends, one overcomes the devil: "He becomes a martyr on the sickbed, crowned by the one who hung on the wood [of the cross] for him."<sup>100</sup> The implication here is that the sickbed martyr refuses pagan healing amulets *unto death* and then receives the crown of immortality. Therefore, though the sickly Christian is enduring martyrdom while still alive, that martyrdom is complete at death and rewarded in the next life. On the contrary, Fruchtman notes that Augustine "never specifies whether his sickbed martyrs die or not and is, by contrast, quite pointed in saying that they may live."<sup>101</sup> I grant her argument that Augustine focuses less on the illness's result than on the sickbed martyr's willingness to endure whatever God wills. However, his common emphasis on death in contexts mentioned below suggests a metaphorical application of martyrdom to those on their sickbed.

Even when Augustine emphasizes *causa* over *poena*, witnessing unto death remains essential. In a number of letters, expositions of the Psalms, and sermons preached on the feast

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<sup>100</sup> *s.* 286.7 (PL 38: 1301): "Fit martyr in lecto, coronante illo qui pro illo pependit in ligno." See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 105.

<sup>101</sup> Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 177. She cites instances from *s.* 4, *s.* 335D, and *s.* 306E. In the latter two, she notes Augustine's allusion to the three young men who were not sure whether they would die or be delivered from the furnace.

days of the martyrs, Augustine argues that it is the *cause* of death that makes a martyr, not the suffering of the death itself.<sup>102</sup> Augustine, however, is not redefining or remaking the meaning of martyrdom by diminishing or eliminating death. He is simply arguing that death *itself* does not qualify as martyrdom. One's death must be paired with a righteous cause in order to be considered martyrdom. Therefore, death remains a critical element even of this expanded understanding and application of martyrdom.

A case that seems to support Fruchtman's thesis that death is not a criterion of martyrdom for Augustine is the fact that he explicitly calls the three young friends of the prophet Daniel who survived the fiery furnace "martyrs." In *Sermo* 296 preached in 411 on the feast day of Peter and Paul, Augustine says that even though the three young men did not suffer martyrdom as the seven Maccabee brothers did, they were willing and ready to do so. Augustine asserts that the three young men should not be denied as martyrs and that they were crowned for their willingness to suffer.<sup>103</sup>

In the sermon mentioned above on the feast day of Protase and Gervase, however, Augustine distinguishes the glory of the three young men from that of the Maccabee brothers. The former "would have been crowned secretly if had they died in fire," but God chose to deliver them to drive idolatry from King Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>104</sup> Augustine is not saying that the three

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<sup>102</sup>*ep.* 89.2, 108.5, 185.2, 204.4; *en.* Ps. 34.2.1, 34.2.13, 68.1.9; *s.* 53A.13, 94A.1, 277A, 285.6–7, 306A, 327, 328.4, 331.2, 335C.5, 335G.2; *Cresc.* 3.47.51. See Ployd, "Non poena, sed causa," 26. For a thorough treatment of this phrase and its theological implications, see Wojciech Lazewski, "La Sentenza Agostiniana martyrem Facit No Poena Sed Causa" (PhD diss., Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis, 1987).

<sup>103</sup> *s.* 296.5 (PL 38: 1355): "Interroga ignes, passi non sunt; interroga voluntatem, coronati sunt." The same goes for the Apostle John. As Fruchtman notes, Augustine identifies martyr traits in the three young men: "In *Sermo* 306E, he uses the boys as an example of saints who have 'the mind of a martyr;' in *Sermo* 343, they are crowned; and in one sermon on the Gospel of John, he contrasts the three young boys with the false martyrs of the Donatists" (*Living Martyrs*, 171).

<sup>104</sup> *s.* 286.6 (PL 38: 1300): "Si illi in igne morerentur, occulte coronarentur, huic non prodesset."

young men were deprived of a crown because God delivered them from death. However, the Maccabees who did die received “a greater crown” (*maior corona*) than the three young men.<sup>105</sup> Though the three young men lived on to face the perils and temptations of this life, the Maccabees in their time of torture and death received a lifetime of trial and temptation. “Therefore,” Augustine says, “the Maccabees received more.”<sup>106</sup> He even rebukes the Christians who desire a deliverance from death like the three young men over the tortuous death of the Maccabee brothers. Such people have a “weak soul” (*anima infirma*) and are “lovers of this world.”<sup>107</sup>

Fruchtman comments on these quotes, but she attributes the “greater crown” and the “more” to timing, not degree. “To be clear,” she says, “Augustine is not arguing that the Maccabees deserved a greater reward because they had suffered and died. Rather, he argues that their death made their reward come more quickly, which in itself was a blessing.”<sup>108</sup> In other words, on her reading, the Maccabee brothers received a better deal because they escaped the perils of this life. She goes on to suggest that Augustine calls the person who desires the fate of the three young men a “weak soul” because such a person has a human view of this life; i.e., he or she fails to consider the reality of troubles that he or she is destined to face in this life. However, Augustine says that such persons should be ashamed before the mother of the

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<sup>105</sup> s. 286.6 (PL 38: 1300): “Mutatus est? Plus illos quam illos diligebat? Major corona data est Machabaeis.”

<sup>106</sup> s. 286.6; (PL 38: 1300): “Certe illi evaserunt ignes, sed ad pericula istius saeculi servati sunt: illi in ignibus omnia pericula finierunt. Non ulterius restabat ulla tentatio, sed sola coronatio. Ergo plus acceperunt Machabaei.”

<sup>107</sup> s. 286.6 (PL 38: 1300): “Homines saeculi hujus amatores si interrogem: ego inter tres pueros volebam esse, dicit mihi anima infirma.”

<sup>108</sup> Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 172.

Maccabee brothers, who wanted her sons to die “because she knew they weren’t dying,”<sup>109</sup> clearly indicating that he is rebuking them for their human view of a martyr’s *death*, not for this temporal life.

Is Augustine being inconsistent by explicitly identifying the three young men as martyrs in one breath and then contrasting them with martyrs in the next? Though there is tension in Augustine’s statements that does not seem to be fully resolved, a statement in *Sermo* 296 on the feast day of the Apostles Peter and Paul helps resolve at least some of the issue. Though the Apostle John did not suffer martyrdom like Peter and Paul, he says, that does not mean that he lacked “a soul prepared for suffering.”<sup>110</sup> Augustine compares John to the prophet Daniel’s three companions who, though delivered from death, were willing to die rather than bow to Nebuchadnezzar’s statue. Even though John and the three young men were not technically martyred, they had a willingness to suffer. Fruchtman interprets Augustine’s emphasis on willingness or preparedness to suffer in sermons like these as the basis for his understanding of martyrdom. However, the fact that Augustine distinguishes between martyrdom and “a soul prepared for suffering” suggests that he is working from a basic definition of martyrdom in which death is an essential element.

Also to Fruchtman’s point, Augustine does name the mother of the Maccabees a martyr while she is still alive: “Seven times the mother of seven martyrs was made a martyr: she was not separated from her sons by watching, and to her sons’ dying she was joined. She saw all of them, she loved all of them. What all of them bore in the flesh, she bore in her eyes; neither alone nor

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<sup>109</sup> *s.* 286.6 (PL 38: 1300, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 104): “Erubescere matri machabaeorum, quae uoluit filios suos ante se mori, quia sciebat non mori.”

<sup>110</sup> *s.* 296.5 (PL 38: 1354): “Non enim quia Joanni apostolo passio defuit, ideo passioni animus praeparatus deesse potuit.”

frightened, but even encouraged.”<sup>111</sup> The notion of what Fruchtman calls “living martyrdom” here is surely present. However, one must remember that the mother’s death follows her sons, which Augustine acknowledges.<sup>112</sup> Also, Augustine’s repeated use of death clearly demonstrates a metaphorical or spiritual understanding of death. The mother died without dying physically. If we take this passage to say that martyrdom for Augustine does not necessitate death, we might as well say that even *death* for Augustine does not necessitate death. It makes more sense to say that Augustine discusses both death and martyrdom metaphorically in this passage.<sup>113</sup> In both cases (death and martyrdom), he assumes a basic understanding that involves physical death, but he applies it in a different manner.

### ***The Unique Power of the Martyrs’ Deaths***

The second reason we ought to think that death is essential in Augustine’s basic understanding of martyrdom is that he considers the blood and death of the martyrs who are celebrated on the liturgical calendar as uniquely powerful for the martyrs themselves and for the church universal. Tertullian and Cyprian considered martyrdom as a baptism of blood that may

- 1) supply the saving effects of a baptism of water for those who have not yet received such and
- 2) restore water baptism for those who lose its effects through sin.<sup>114</sup> In Augustine’s anti-

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<sup>111</sup> s. 300.6 (PL 38: 1379–80): “Facta mater septem Martyrum, septies martyr: a filiis non separata spectando, et filiis addita moriendo. Videbat omnes, amabat omnes. Ferebat in oculis, quod in carne omnes; nec solum non terrebat, sed etiam exhortabatur.” See Fruchtman’s discussion of this quote on Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 185.

<sup>112</sup> See 2 Macc 7:41; s. 300.7. Strangely, as Fruchtman points out, Augustine only mentions the mother’s physical death in the last five words of the sermon, and he does not call her own physical death an eighth martyrdom. Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 185.

<sup>113</sup> Perhaps a distinction between spiritual death, which the mother endures seven times, and physical death, which she endures once, is a more appropriate term. Thus, even in Augustine’s conception of living martyrdom, a certain type of suffering and death takes place.

<sup>114</sup> See Tertullian, *De baptismo* XVI. See Cyprian, *ep.* 73.22.1–2; *ep.* 19.2.3; *De lapsis* 12.36. Cyprian argues, however, that martyrdom does nothing for schismatics who die outside of the church. See Cyprian, *ep.* 55.29.3.

Donatist work *De baptismo*, Augustine assumes this understanding of martyrdom as a baptism of blood for those martyred in the unity and charity of the Catholic church. If one is martyred outside of the one church, like the Donatist martyrs, then that martyr lacks charity. “If this charity is lacking, then, martyrdom is of no benefit.”<sup>115</sup> Following Paul and Cyprian, Augustine asserts that martyrdom profits nothing even for those *in* the church who are consumed with envy and wickedness, but lack charity.<sup>116</sup> Suffering unto death for the name of Christ, then, is not sufficient on its own to communicate the effects of water baptism. Nonetheless, martyrdom is a baptism of blood that takes effect when it involves unity and charity in the church *and* dying for one’s witness to Christ.<sup>117</sup>

Following Tertullian, Augustine referred to the blood of the martyrs as seed.<sup>118</sup> The entire world, Augustine says in the same sermon mentioned above preached on the feast day of Protase and Gervase, “has been filled with the blood of the martyrs as with seed, and from that seed the

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<sup>115</sup> Augustine, *bapt.* IV.17.24 (CSEL 51: 250, trans. Tilley, WSA, *The Donatist Controversy I*, I/21, 488): “quodsi propter hoc quia caritas deest passio nihil prodest, nec illis prodest...” Augustine is commenting here on Cyprian, *ep.* 73.21.1. To justify the baptism of Catholics who join the Donatists, the Donatists cite Cyprian’s statements that heretics and schismatics have no baptism. Those that are baptized by them, therefore, receive an illegitimate baptism, and such persons must be legitimately baptized once received into the one church. Augustine’s aim, then, is to refute the Donatist appeal to Cyprian and claim the former bishop of Carthage for the Catholic cause. See *bapt.* II.1.2. See Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 282. I revisit Augustine’s appropriation of Cyprian and the ecclesiology behind his theology of martyrdom in chapter 4.

<sup>116</sup> Augustine, *bapt.* IV.17.24 (CSEL 51: 250): “...quos intus in invidia et maliuolentia sine caritate uiuere Paulus dicit, Cyprianus exponit, et tamen uerum baptisma possunt et accipere et tradere.” To be sure, such individuals can both receive and administer true baptism. Augustine grounds this point on his wider argument that the validity of the sacraments derive not from the minister and the minister’s purity, but from Christ and Christ’s purity. See c. litt. Pet. 1.5.6–1.7.8; 3.49.59; 3.52.64. See James K. Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers: Unity in Charity* (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020), 71 and corresponding footnotes.

<sup>117</sup> Augustine also emphasizes faith and heart conversion: “It’s not so much that suffering for the name of Christ [on its own] can supply what was lacking from baptism; rather, faith and a conversion of the heart also [are necessary].” Augustine, *bapt.* IV.22.29 (CSEL 51: 257): “...non tantum passionem pro nomine christi id quod ex baptismo deerat posse supplere, sed etiam fidem conuersionem que cordis...”

<sup>118</sup> See Tertullian, *Apologeticus* 50.13.

crops of the church have sprung forth.”<sup>119</sup> The martyrs’ deaths, then, uniquely contribute to the growth of the church. Fruchtman acknowledges this, but she counters by saying that Augustine also describes in this sermon various forms of living martyrdom, thus destabilizing death as a criterion.<sup>120</sup> However, in the next sentence, Augustine says that the martyrs “have declared Christ more while dead than while alive. Today they declare, today they preach: their tongue is silent, but their actions resound.”<sup>121</sup> Their death, therefore, enhances their witness. God continues to bear witness through the martyrs in the church’s celebration of their deeds on liturgical feast days, the church remembering them and beseeching their prayers at memorial shrines, and the church experiencing postmortem miracles from the martyrs after praying to them or coming into contact with their relics.<sup>122</sup> The world considered the death of the martyrs “worthless,” but the Scriptures tell us, “*precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.*”<sup>123</sup> Noteworthy is Augustine’s emphasis that the *death* of the saints is what God considers precious.<sup>124</sup>

Moreover, in a sermon preached in 417 on the feast day of Cyprian, Augustine says that by shedding blood and dying the martyrs have overthrown demonic idols and their temples. The

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<sup>119</sup> s. 286.3 (PL 38: 1298): “Quasi semine sanguinis impleta est martyribus terra, et de illo semine seges surrexit Ecclesiae.” See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 102.

<sup>120</sup> See Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 285.

<sup>121</sup> s. 286.3 (PL 38: 1298): “Plus asseruerunt christum mortui, quam vivi. Hodie asserunt, hodie praedicant: tacet lingua, sonant facta.”

<sup>122</sup> s. 286.4. Augustine himself witnessed a number of miracles associated with the relics of Protase and Gervase, including the healing of a blind man who was likely still alive at the time this sermon was preached.

<sup>123</sup> s. 286.3 (PL 38: 1298, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 102): “In omnibus suis mortibus quasi viles irridebantur: sed pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus.”

<sup>124</sup> As Fruchtman notes, Augustine repeatedly quotes this passage from Psalm 116:15 throughout his sermons on the feast days of the martyrs (often multiple times in the same sermon). She does point out times where Augustine quotes this scripture and Hebrews 12:4 to emphasize various forms of living martyrdom (*Living Martyrs*, 188–90). I concede this point, but in light of the reasons I outline in this section, Augustine still seems to favor a basic definition of martyrdom that involves death.



fuming altars of the pagan gods, which are demons, “were extinguished with the blood of the dying [martyrs],” and the martyrs will “condemn [the gods’] proud deceits” when they rise again.<sup>125</sup> Not only do the martyrs’ deaths win a cosmic victory against demonic principalities in the present, the deaths of the martyrs win them the right to participate with Christ the judge in executing everlasting judgment on the demons at the future resurrection. To Fruchtman’s point, the three young men by their deliverance from the fire “put out the fire of idolatry in the soul of the king.”<sup>126</sup> However, Augustine never mentions the same degree of cosmic impact and involvement in eschatological judgment when referring to the three young men.

Furthermore, the martyr festivals, Augustine says in a sermon preached in 410 on the feast day of Peter and Paul, have been “consecrated for [the church] by the blood of the apostles.”<sup>127</sup> These apostles, of course, were martyred, and Augustine made this statement on the feast day of these martyr-apostles. Though the church recognizes and observes these feast days, the martyrs’ own blood is what sets these days apart for holy convocation and celebration. Augustine never attributes such consecrating power to the blood of any ‘living martyr.’

### ***The Martyrs as Exemplars for the Faithful to Imitate***

The third reason to believe that death remained a fundamental element in Augustine’s understanding of martyrdom is that Augustine regards the martyrs as special exemplars for the

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<sup>125</sup> s. 312.5 (PL 38: 1422, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 83): Quomodo eorum superbas fallacias resurgentium militum suorum splendore damnabit, qui eorum fumantes aras morientium sanguine exstinxit?” For notes on dating, see *Sermons*, III/9, 84n1. C.f. *ciu.* X.22 I revisit this notion of the martyrs defeating the false gods, who are false mediators, in the next chapter.

<sup>126</sup> s. 296.5 (PL 38: 1355): “...sed ignem idololatriae in animo regis extinxerunt.”

<sup>127</sup> s. 295.8 (PL 38: 1352, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 201): “Celebremus diem festum, Apostolorum nobis sanguine consecratum.” For dating notes, see *Sermons*, III/8, 202n1. Augustine reiterates this in s. 297.5.

church to celebrate and imitate. Fruchtman acknowledges the apparent centrality of death in Augustine's conception of martyrdom by his references to the day of a martyr's death and its celebration on the liturgical calendar as his/her "birthday" (*natale*). However, she suspects that Augustine considered the martyr's feast day "an arbitrarily designated time to honor and learn from the martyr, rather than an event marked by a heavenly birthday."<sup>128</sup> Nonetheless, Augustine recognizes that the death of the martyrs is precisely what affords the church such occasions to honor and imitate the martyrs. Though other departed Christians may have lived lives worthy of imitation, the church regards the martyrs as particularly worthy of celebration and imitation precisely because they shed their blood for their witness to Christ.

In a sermon preached in 408 on the feast day of twenty unnamed martyrs, Augustine says that the church has instituted martyr feast days so that the faithful "may be advised to imitate the martyrs of Christ."<sup>129</sup> The martyrs have paved the way for the faithful to imitate Christ "with their blood, with their confession."<sup>130</sup> Though Augustine rebukes Christians for improperly venerating the martyrs with drunken celebrations, he encourages the practice of visiting the shrines, celebrating feast days, and venerating the relics of the those who shed their blood for their witness. He does not indicate that the faithful dead, even those who died on their sickbed refusing pagan treatments or at the hands of the powerful for refusing to lie in court, should be venerated in such a manner. The specific type of persecution and death that the martyrs experienced makes them worthy of such honor in the church.

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<sup>128</sup> Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 180–181.

<sup>129</sup> *s.* 325.1 (PL 38: 1447): "Ad hoc ergo istae festivitates in Ecclesia constitutae sunt Christi, ut per eas congregatio membrorum Christi admoneatur imitari martyres Christi." As Hill notes, most date this sermon to anywhere between 405–11. Zwinggi specifically dates it to 408. See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 169n1.

<sup>130</sup> *s.* 325.1 (PL 38: 1448): "Ipsi fecerunt sanguine suo, confessionibus suis." I will revisit this sermon and Augustine's emphasis on imitation in chapter 3.

In a sermon preached on the feast day of the White Mass martyrs in an unknown year, Augustine discusses how the martyrs by their passion provide the faithful with an example of how to bravely endure what is unjustly suffered.<sup>131</sup> In the same sermon, Augustine admonishes the faithful to imitate the martyrs' scorn of this present life.<sup>132</sup> The faithful may not have the opportunity to imitate the martyrs' physical death, but they may still imitate the martyrs' attitudes and actions and receive heavenly rewards. However, these martyrs demonstrated by both their lives *and* deaths that they loved the next life more than this life, and for this reason they are to be celebrated and imitated by the faithful.

In a sermon preached between 425 and 430 on the feast day of the martyr Lawrence, who was martyred during the Valerian persecution, Augustine admonishes the faithful to follow in the footsteps of this martyr who demonstrated his disdain for temporal life by confessing Christ even when roasted to death by the flames of a gridiron. Augustine reiterates the graphic end of the martyr's life, which just had been recounted during the liturgical reading of Lawrence's passion prior to the sermon, to emphasize that the martyr saved his life by both his virtues *and* losing his life for Christ's sake in martyrdom: "He saved [his life] through faith, he saved it through contempt for the world, he saved it through martyrdom."<sup>133</sup>

To be sure, Augustine praises Lawrence's virtues and passion to assert that the martyr's virtues are in fact imitable to all of the faithful, whether or not they face the same manner of death. All are to follow in the footsteps of Lawrence because "[n]ot only are heavenly rewards promised to the martyrs, but also to those following Christ with untainted faith and perfect

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<sup>131</sup> s. 306.1.

<sup>132</sup> s. 306.10.

<sup>133</sup> s. 303.1 (PL 38: 1394, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 313–314): "Salvavit eam per fidem, salvavit per contemptum mundi, salvavit per martyrium."

charity.”<sup>134</sup> By imitating the martyrs who imitated Christ, the faithful may attain the glory of returning in white garments with Christ when he executes judgment on his enemies, sitting beside Christ at the judgment seat, and ruling with Christ forever; they may even “become equal with the angels, with the patriarchs, with the apostles, with the prophets, and enjoy possession of the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>135</sup> If the faithful can attain to the same glory of the martyrs, prophets, apostles, and patriarchs in reigning with Christ for eternity *without* dying a martyr’s death, what eternal significance does a martyr’s virtues and death have over those of the faithful? This brings us to our last point.

### ***The Surpassing Glory of the Martyrs***

Because they shed their blood for their witness, the martyrs were perfected such that 1) they have been forever elevated in the place of highest honor in the church, 2) they need no purification from sin in the next life, and 3) they need no prayers from the church on their behalf.<sup>136</sup> In a sermon preached in 399 on the feast day of Quadratus, Augustine describes the great glory of the martyrs as “first in the Church,” after which “any other [degrees of glory] follow.”<sup>137</sup> He goes on to say that martyrs are human examples that can be imitated, but following the writer of Hebrews, Augustine admonishes his readers to remain faithful in the

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<sup>134</sup> s. 303.2 (PL 38: 1394): “Non solum martyribus praemia promittuntur coelestia, sed etiam integra fide et perfecta charitate Christum sequentibus.” See Paul Schrodt, “Saints,” in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald and John C. Cavadini (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 746. For notes on dating, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 315n1.

<sup>135</sup> s. 303.2 (PL 38: 1394): “...Christum comitari, cum venire coeperit vindictam de inimicis recepturus; lateri eius assistere, cum sederit iudicaturus; cohaerem Christi fieri, Angelis adaequari, cum Patriarchis, cum Apostolis, cum Prophetis, coelestis regni possessione laetari?”

<sup>136</sup> I will revisit the topic in a discussion of the intersection of Augustine’s eschatology and martyrology in chapter 5.

<sup>137</sup> s. 306B.3 (MA 1: 93, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 30): “Magna est, fratres, martyrum gloria, prima in ecclesia: quaecumque sunt aliae, sequentes sunt.” For dating notes, see *Sermons*, 34n1.

midst of trials, especially since they had not been forced to resist sin to the point of shedding blood.<sup>138</sup> If one fails to despise the “flatteries of the world,” how will one endure the world’s “violent furies”?<sup>139</sup> In other words, how can one remain faithful to Christ in the face of death when one cannot remain faithful when *not* faced with death? The threat of death for one’s witness to Christ, for Augustine, is a uniquely difficult trial for which the faithful prepare themselves by despising the pleasures of the world in a time of peace.

In a sermon preached between 416 and 420 on the *natale* of Peter and Paul, Augustine says that the martyrs are great both because they “trampled upon the delights of this world” and because “they endured the harsh severity of a bitter death.”<sup>140</sup> Far from romanticizing death, Augustine goes on to discuss the bitterness and harshness of death that no one, including Peter as he was led to his martyrdom, desires. However, Peter and all of the martyrs chose to endure death “for confessing the Lord rather than deny Christ.”<sup>141</sup> For this reason, the martyrs are “greater” (*magni*), “more superior” (*excelsi*), and “crowned with a greater number of laurels than the rest of human beings.”<sup>142</sup> Moreover, because they endured the bitterness of death for their witness to Christ, their names are invoked in the liturgy and their prayers are sought by the

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<sup>138</sup> s. 306B.3. See Hebrews 12:4. As Fruchtman notes, Augustine frequently appeals to this Scripture in his sermons on the martyrs. See Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 190.

<sup>139</sup> s. 306B.3 (MA 1: 93): “Quando tolerat, quando sustinet mundum saeuientem, qui spernere non potest blandientem?”

<sup>140</sup>s. 297.3 (PL 38: 1360, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 217): Inde martyres magni, quia dulcedinem hujus mundi calcauerunt: inde martyres magni, quia amarae mortis asperitatem durissimam pertulerunt.” For notes on dating, see *Sermons*, 223n1.

<sup>141</sup> s. 297.3 (PL 38: 1360, trans., Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 217): “...pro Dominica confessione elegerunt suscipere, quam Christum negare....” For notes on dating, see *Sermons*, 223n1.

<sup>142</sup> s. 297.3 (PL 38: 1360): “Unde magni, unde excelsi, unde caeteris hominibus multo florentius coronati?” See Hill’s translation: “What makes them great, what raises them high above the rest of Christians, crowned with fresher laurels?” in Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 217.

faithful. For Augustine, the liturgical prayers prove that the martyrs maintain a superior status to rest of the faithful—both the living and dead—because they died for their witness to Christ. Augustine acknowledges this again in another sermon preached on the feast day of the martyrs Castus and Aemilius. The church prays for the faithful dead, but not the martyrs, because the latter “have been perfected by their sufferings,” and thus they serve as “advocates” (*aduocati*) for the faithful, not “dependents” (*suscepti*) who need the prayers of the faithful.<sup>143</sup> Augustine attributes this perfection and glory to none of the faithful, even those who might be considered martyrs for their witness to Christ unto death in the face of heresy, schism, trial, temptation, or sickness. Thus Augustine makes a clear distinction between the faithful dead and the martyrs. The faithful departed still require some sort of postmortem purification that necessitates the prayers of the pilgrim church on their behalf.<sup>144</sup> The martyrs, however, need no such purification and thus no prayers; rather, they pray for the pilgrim church.

As mentioned above, Augustine does not cast the martyrs as inimitable heroes, and he assures the faithful that eternal reward is available to all Christians who imitate Christ. In a sermon preached on an unknown date of the feast day of some unnamed martyrs, he says that the martyrs are human like the rest of the faithful, and the faithful may inherit eternal reward at the judgment seat of Christ by imitating the virtues of the martyrs.<sup>145</sup> However, Augustine seems hesitant to guarantee faithful imitators of the martyrs an immediate afterlife where purification

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<sup>143</sup> s. 285.5 (PL 38: 1295, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 98): “Martyrum perfecta iustitia est, quoniam in ipsa passione perfecti sunt. Ideo pro illis in Ecclesia non oratur. Pro aliis fidelibus defunctis oratur, pro martyribus non oratur. Tam enim perfecti exierunt, ut non sint suscepti nostri, sed advocati...”As Hill notes, the sermon is traditionally dated to 397. However, other scholars pose later dates (as late as 416). See Hill, 100n1.

<sup>144</sup> I discuss the nature of this purification in chapter 5.

<sup>145</sup> s. 335H.2. For Hill’s reasons for a possible dating of sometime between 416 and 420, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 248n6.

and prayers from the living faithful are not needed.<sup>146</sup> Fruchtman acknowledges that Augustine deems the martyrs as those whose righteousness has been perfected by their suffering and who thus need no prayers from the faithful.<sup>147</sup> Interestingly, though she cites a host of instances where, she argues, death is destabilized in Augustine's thinking, she does not offer any direct response to how this invocatory distinction—whereby the faithful commend themselves *to* the martyrs for prayer rather than offer prayers *for* the martyrs—might tip the scales in favor of a death-centered martyrdom. His understanding of the martyrs as perfected advocates and the faithful departed as dependents in need of the pilgrim church's prayers, along with the other reasons I have outlined, strongly suggests the centrality of death in Augustine's conception of martyrdom.

### **Consequences to Consider**

For Fruchtman, to reiterate, assuming that death was considered a criterion for martyrdom in writers of Late Antiquity (and beyond) is, first of all, erroneous historical scholarship that fails to recognize that for some ancient Christian writers, martyrs survive. Second, this assumption inhibits scholars from recognizing alternate Christian understandings of martyrdom throughout history. Third, it limits modern discourse about martyrdom and what it means to be a martyr.

By acknowledging that various understandings of martyrdom existed in Late Antiquity, scholars of religion have a corrected lens that enables them to identify varying notions of

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<sup>146</sup> As I will discuss in chapter 5 Augustine does suggest two possible situations in which a baptized person who was not martyred may avoid post-mortem purification. Nonetheless, Augustine speaks here of the martyrs, not the rest of the faithful, as those who have attained an elevated status of glory and honor in the church.

<sup>147</sup> See Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 180 and 184.

martyrdom, martyrial consciousness, and a realized eschatology in the past and the present, particularly when the language of martyrdom is not explicitly used.<sup>148</sup> Also, it negates the notion that martyrdom without death is “a lesser form of martyrdom” for historical Christian writers; rather, some writers portray living martyrdom as equal to or “more demanding” than death martyrdom.<sup>149</sup> Recognizing various notions of martyrdom in Christian history intensifies understandings of martyrdom by 1) making the term more applicable to those in “a wider set of historical circumstances”, 2) making martyrdom a lifetime of work and commitment rather than an instant; and 3) allowing scholars to recognize a spirituality in writers throughout history that considers martyrdom “the lens through which all other experience is filtered and the measure by which all experience is judged.”<sup>150</sup>

Finally, for Fruchtman, recognizing various notions of martyrdom in Christian history helps scholars to identify “the power and pervasiveness of martyrdom discourse” in the past and present.<sup>151</sup> For Prudentius, Paulinus, and Augustine, she says, martyrdom discourse was used to cultivate “martyrial worldviews in individuals” and was “potentially culturally determinative.”<sup>152</sup> This type of discourse has not ended, as she attempts to demonstrate in her conclusion with an analysis of the martyrdom language in Donald Trump’s inaugural address. This reformed understanding of martyrdom enables scholars to recognize how the language of willingness to sacrifice and suffer for a greater America casts Trump himself and his presumed listeners as

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<sup>148</sup> See Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 250–254.

<sup>149</sup> Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 252. She provides two examples of Christian writers who do this: the fourteenth-century English pilgrim Margery Kempe and the third-century Christian Latin poet Commodian.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*



martyrs. Scholars can also see how Trump sought to instill in his listeners a martyrial worldview in order to inspire and secure their “totalizing commitment” to his vision for a greater America, the reality he sought to establish, and “how ardently he strove to create it.”<sup>153</sup>

Because this dissertation focuses on *Augustine’s* theology of martyrdom, a fuller analysis of Fruchtman’s discussion of martyrdom in Prudentius and Paulinus of Nola goes beyond the scope of this chapter. She does, however, impressively lay out her argument for various ideologies of martyrdom in Late Antiquity, and the historical, historiographic, and political benefits of her conclusions sound promising. She has convincingly identified ways in which a broader understanding of martyrdom that does not necessitate death helps identify and analyze martyrdom discourse in the past and present. Regarding Augustine specifically, her contribution helps scholars understand his concerns to make the witness, virtues, and intent of the martyrs imitable for all of the faithful and to challenge Donatist conceptions of martyrdom.

However, rejecting death as a core criterion for martyrdom in Augustine—and notions of martyrdom in general—has its own consequences to consider. First of all, as I have shown, it potentially results in scholars missing significant distinctions that Augustine makes between martyrs who *die* for their witness from the rest of the faithful—even Augustine’s “living martyrs.”<sup>154</sup> Augustine certainly *expanded* the application of martyrdom in such a way that cast the martyrs as imitable for all of the faithful; yet he also *limited* his application of martyrdom. With these boundaries, Augustine not only excluded the false martyrdoms of the Donatists, which Fruchtman acknowledges,<sup>155</sup> he also attributed to the martyrs a distinct relationship to

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>154</sup> See Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 162.

<sup>155</sup> See Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 168–70.

Christ the head and an elevated status in the church. The martyrs, by dying for their witness to Christ, uniquely participated in the life and passion of Jesus Christ the *caput martyrum*<sup>156</sup> by imitating his virtues, his willingness to die for his witness, *and* his act of dying for that witness. For this reason, they are special exemplars for the faithful to imitate. Though Augustine calls the faithful primarily to imitate their virtues and interior dispositions rather than their deaths, as Fruchtmann rightly argues, he also appeals to the death of the martyrs in calling the faithful to imitate them and witness to the truth *unto death*, if God so ordains, in the face of trial, tribulation, or sickness.

To be sure, the martyrs, for Augustine, are neither gods to be worshipped nor inimitable heroes. Moreover, it is the grace of God that enables them to patiently endure suffering. However, their death for their witness and righteous cause contributes 1) to their own salvation (by communicating the effects of water baptism); 2) to the growth of the faithful in Christ's virtues (by being special exemplars for the faithful to imitate and praying for the pilgrim church); and 3) to the expansion of the church (by their defeat of earthly and demonic principalities and their postmortem witness to Christ and the world through their feast days, memorial shrines, and postmortem miracles). Finally, the martyrs' dying for their witness to Christ has caused them to be perfected such that they need no postmortem purification, they occupy an elevated place of glory and honor in the church both now and in eternity, and they pray particularly effective prayers on behalf of the pilgrim church.

Moreover, affirming that death is not necessary in Augustine's fundamental understanding of martyrdom could result in our misunderstanding of Augustine's conception of why the faithful venerate the martyrs. In other words, if the living faithful can be considered

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<sup>156</sup> *Io. eu. tr.* 43.12; *en. Ps.* 39.16; 63.3; 68.1.3; *s. Lambot* 15. See Klöckener, "Martyres, martyrium," 3: 1190n29.

martyrs in the same sense that the martyrs are considered martyrs, what is the point and the benefit, for Augustine—as well as for authors in Late Antiquity and beyond—of the faithful engaging in the various practices of martyr veneration? Why is it that Augustine prays *to* the martyrs who shed their blood for their witness while he prays *for* his departed mother who died of an illness?<sup>157</sup> Why is it that Christians in North Africa were eager to bury their departed loved ones near the tombs of the martyrs who shed their blood and not those of the so-called “sickbed martyrs”? Why did early Christians seek to touch the bones of St. Stephen and not uncle Julius who refused to bow to the wealthy man’s pressure to bear false witness in court? Missing this distinction between the faithful and the martyrs misses an important aspect of the spirituality of Augustine and early North African Christians.

Not recognizing this distinction between the living faithful and the martyrs who died for their witness also risks divorcing a theology of martyrdom from a theology of veneration practices and how the two relate to one another. This mistake could significantly narrow the “search terms” for the topic of martyrdom by limiting our search to either text or context without looking at both together.<sup>158</sup> Interesting to note, Fruchtman makes little comment on how these ancient authors understood the *practices* of martyr veneration that pervaded Christianity in Late Antiquity and how their understanding relates to their overall conception of martyrdom.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> See *conf.* IX.10.

<sup>158</sup> I.e., one may look for ancient sources in which ideas of martyrdom appear either directly or indirectly at the expense of considering the context of ancient veneration practices (and the development thereof), or vice versa.

<sup>159</sup> She makes a brief reference in Prudentius’s *Persistephanon* to the veneration of St. Vincent’s blood *prior to his death* to argue her point. She acknowledges that Christians dipping their garments in St. Vincent’s blood were perhaps anticipating his death “to activate his martyrial powers.” However, she argues, “the level of pre-mortem fervor is striking and strongly suggests that death was not the crucial event for Vincent’s martyrdom” (Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 37). Indeed, similar pre-mortem fervor can be found in North African martyr *passiones*. However, one must remember that such narratives were composed and circulated *after* the deaths of these martyrs. Thus the narratives themselves assume the death of the martyrs, even though the martyr had not died at a given point *in the narrative*. She also makes brief reference to the cult of Encratis the “living martyr” and Gaius and Crementius the “bloodless champions” in *Persistephanon* 4, who each suffered for their confession of Christ but were not put to

Perhaps she would consider such an analysis beyond the scope of her project. However, if scholars want to understand what ancient authors *thought* about a particular subject like martyrdom, it makes most sense to examine how they understood popular and liturgical *practices* associated with martyrdom. Searching for and analyzing ancient and modern understandings of *martyrdom* is incomplete without considering ancient and modern practices and conceptions of martyr *veneration*.

Fruchtman’s call for scholars “to acknowledge both the power and the pervasiveness of martyrdom discourse” in both the past and present is certainly warranted. On the one hand, her conclusions could prove helpful in identifying the presence and effects of martyrial language in historical and modern discourse, as she has shown.<sup>160</sup> This same type of analysis could be applied to the rhetoric and practice of other national and international conflicts, watching how groups promote varying political and social agendas.<sup>161</sup> On the other hand, Fruchtman’s argument for an expanded notion of martyrdom could, ironically, unnecessarily inhibit our ability to identify the presence and influence of martyrial discourse in Christian history.

When death for one’s witness to Christ is no longer upheld as central to martyrdom in general, it could easily direct our identification and analysis of “the power and pervasiveness of

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death. She could have noted that Prudentius also calls on his readers to pray at the tombs of these martyrs (38–42). She spends more time discussing Paulinus’s writings on the healings, exorcisms, and miracles that occurred at the shrine of Felix of Nola, who was also a confessor, yet received the same reward as a martyr (100–104). For Fruchtman’s brief discussion on the distinction or lack of distinctions made between martyrs and confessors in authors of Late Antiquity, see *Living Martyrs*, 12. The closest references she makes to martyr veneration in Augustine is the fact that the bishop preached on liturgical feast days.

<sup>160</sup> See Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*, 256–258. Fruchtman is hesitant, however, to evaluate whether Trump’s supporters—perhaps especially those present at the Capitol on January 6, 2021—ought to be considered true martyrs or false martyrs.

<sup>161</sup> Examples that immediately come to mind include the recent Russian-Ukrainian war, Arab-Israeli conflicts in the Middle East, pro-life/pro-choice initiatives, and LGBTQ+ issues. Arguably, “the power and pervasiveness of martyrial discourse” could easily be identified in both sides of each of these issues.

modern discourse” away from explicitly Christian, ecclesial settings. Oddly, Fruchtman’s conclusions about ancient *Christian* notions of martyrdom have resulted in directing her analysis to modern discourse and events that are not explicitly Christian in nature.<sup>162</sup> While it is understandable that she would apply martyrial discourse outside of the Christian tradition, I find it strange that in the same monograph, she focuses so heavily on *Christian* martyrial discourse in history and *non-Christian* martyrial discourse in the present. The leap from Christian martyrdom to the American political right is jarring, and Fruchtman provides no clear reasoning for such a leap.<sup>163</sup>

In doing so, Fruchtman has not only removed the element of *death* from Christian martyrial discourse; she has removed the element of *witness to Christ*.<sup>164</sup> Neither Prudentius, Paulinus, Augustine, nor the later Christian thinkers whom Fruchtman analyzes sought to apply martyrial discourse in this manner. Could Fruchtman’s removal of death and *witness to Christ* from Christian notions of martyrdom cause scholars to miss the power and pervasiveness of modern martyrial discourse in current *Christian* communities? Might this cause scholars to overlook subjects more directly relevant to ancient ideologies of martyrdom, such as: Who qualifies as a Christian martyr? How are martyrs-to-be rightly venerated and imitated by the

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<sup>162</sup> She could have appealed to the large amount of support of Donald Trump from conservative evangelical Christians or appeals Trump has at times made to his Christian faith. Strangely, references to these are absent from her analysis.

<sup>163</sup> Candida Moss similarly implements her expanded notion of ancient *Christian* ideologies of martyrdom as a political ax to grind against conservative Christians and their opposition to abortion and homosexuality. Moss, however, is more explicit in applying her approach to criticize—and even dismiss—historical and modern *Christian* notions of martyrdom and persecution. See Moss, *The Myth of Persecution*. For a sharp critique of Moss see Ephraim Radner, “Unmythical Martyrs,” *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, no. 233 (May 1, 2013): 53–56.

<sup>164</sup> Fruchtman rightly points out in her introduction that some but not *all* Christian writers in Late Antiquity made a clear distinction between confessors and martyrs. However, she passes over the fact that all early Christian writers commended both confessors and martyrs for their suffering for their *witness to Christ*. See *Living Martyrs*, 12.

faithful in modern Christian communities? How is veneration of the martyrs (and, more generally, the saints or exemplars) distinct from the worship of God? How accessible and imitable are modern-day Christian martyrs, saints, and exemplars?

Such questions are particularly relevant in light of the extant divisions between and the ecumenical conversations among various Christian communions, all of whom claim to have their own martyrs. How might these modern Christian communities determine what it means to be a martyr within their own communion? How does each communion understand and practice the veneration of their own martyrs, saints, or exemplars? What effects do martyrial discourse and veneration practices have—and what effect are they *intended* to have—on those inside and outside of each communion? Are members of one communion to consider the martyrs of other communions as true martyrs or false martyrs? On what grounds?<sup>165</sup> Maintaining death for one's witness to Christ as central for a fundamental understanding of martyrdom enables scholars to direct their analysis to a plethora of modern martyrial discourse that is ripe for discussion.

## Conclusion and Chapter Outline

Despite the development of his martyrology over time and in response to various controversies, Augustine fundamentally understands martyrdom as a witness to Christ to the

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<sup>165</sup> Take for the example, the Protestant affirmation that the 21 Coptic Christians massacred by ISIS in Libya in 2015 are rightly called martyrs. See Morgan Lee, "Five Years Ago, ISIS Executed 21 Christians on a Beach in Libya," *Christianity Today*, February 10, 2020, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/podcasts/quick-to-listen/isis-martyrs-coptic-christians-five-year-anniversary.html>. Also, Augustine's understanding of martyrdom and what it means to be a martyr could also be useful in analyzing the recently expanded qualifications for who classifies as a martyr in the Roman Catholic Church. For example, the Church has named as martyrs individuals who died in an act of justice or charity, like Fr. Kolbe who died in a Nazi concentration camp after offering himself as a replacement for another man sentenced to the starvation chambers at Auschwitz, Don Pino Puglisi who was killed for speaking out against thuggery, and Oscar Romero who was assassinated for denouncing oppression of those in poverty. For a brief discussion of these martyrs and other modern Roman Catholic martyrs, see Daniel Philpott, "Modern Martyrs, Thousands Die for Their Faith Each Year. How Should the Church Respond?," *America: The Jesuit Review*, November 12, 2012, <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/modern-martyrs>. Such a discussion could be expanded to interreligious understandings of martyrdom.

point of shedding blood (i.e., death). On the one hand, he extends the application of martyrdom to the faithful who endure persecution in forms such as trial, tribulation, temptation, and sickness. Also, he insists that the faithful inherit a heavenly crown as they imitate the martyrs who imitate Christ. On the other hand, he tightens the boundaries of what it means to be a martyr by emphasizing cause over punishment and the necessity of being in communion with the Catholic church. However, in both these inclusive and exclusive aspects, dying for one's witness to Christ remains a critical element in his understanding of martyrdom and what it means to be a martyr. In the following chapters, I explore how Augustine's wider theological vision bears upon this understanding of martyrdom and the various veneration practices common during his time.

The second chapter will examine the development of Augustine's theology of Christ the mediator in relationship to his theology of martyrdom. Augustine's earliest detailed discussion of Christ the mediator occurs in *Sermo* 198, which includes numerous references to the martyrs and their relationship to Christ the mediator. I analyze how his discussion of Christ the mediator in Book IV of *De Trinitate* and Books VII, IX, and X of *De ciuitate Dei* to demonstrate further how this Christology consistently bears upon his understanding of the martyrs' relationship to Christ the mediator. I will also demonstrate how Augustine's understanding of the Christ as the one true mediator between God and humanity grounds his own responses to Manichean, Donatist, and Neoplatonic notions of mediation and the intercessory role of the martyrs.

Augustine contests the charge from Manicheans and pagans that martyr veneration is no different from the worship that pagans offer to their own gods by arguing that at memorial shrines, the martyrs are remembered and honored, but Christ alone, who is the sole mediator between the immortal God and mortal humanity, is worshipped with *latría*. The martyrs have no desire for the worship of humanity; rather, they direct people to the worship of the one true God.

Moreover, contrary to the claim of the Donatist bishop Parmenian that Donatist clergy serve as mediators, Augustine argues that neither clergy nor martyrs can be considered true mediators. Not even true martyrs are mediators, for Christ alone is the one mediator between God and humanity. The Donatist clergy and martyrs are false mediators, like the devil, who pridefully lead people to themselves and their leader Donatus rather than to Christ. Augustine develops his understanding of false mediators and the one true mediator in *De Trinitate* and *De ciuitate Dei* to argue that the Platonist gods and *eudaimones* are neither gods nor good, but false mediators and wicked demons who draw people away from Christ. The martyrs conquer these false mediators through the one true mediator and demonstrate that Jesus Christ alone provides purification for sins.

In the third chapter, I analyze how Augustine's theology of salvation as a participation in the life of God bears on his understanding of martyrdom and martyr veneration throughout the three major periods of the development of Augustine's martyrology. Against Peter Brown, I argue for Augustine's affirmation of the participatory nature of imitating and celebrating the martyrs. For the first period, I focus on the participatory elements of celebrating the martyrs in *Contra Faustum ad Manicheaum* and contemporaneous *Epistulae* in which Augustine addresses Christian excesses in martyr veneration. For Augustine, there is a distinction between the veneration of the martyrs, the worship (*latría*) of the one true God, and idolatry. When the faithful celebrate the martyrs, they worship God, not creatures. Because that which humanity worships becomes that in which humanity participates, the faithful participate in God as they venerate the martyrs.

For the second period I examine the participatory nature of imitating and celebrating the martyrs in his *Sermones ad populum*. These works demonstrate that for Augustine, imitating is a



means of participating. By imitating the virtues and death of Christ, the martyrs uniquely participate in the life of Jesus Christ. As the faithful imitate the martyrs who imitate Christ, they also participate in the life and virtues of Christ. Moreover, celebrating the liturgical feast days of the martyrs becomes an occasion not only to remember and imitate the martyrs, but to participate in the eternal bond and participatory exchange between Christ's members on earth (the faithful) and in heaven (the martyrs).

For the third period I analyze Augustine's discussion in Book X of *De ciuitate Dei* of the participatory nature of the Eucharistic worship of the one true God (*latrìa*). As the faithful venerate the martyrs, they join the martyrs as the one body and Bride of Christ in worshipping God through self-sacrifice on the Eucharistic altar. Augustine's notion of *latrìa*, I argue, is key to understanding the inseparable link between participation in Christ, imitating the martyrs, and venerating the martyrs.

The fourth chapter will argue that Augustine's theology of the *totus Christus* (whole Christ) and the Holy Spirit as the bond of charity is central to his theology of martyrdom and martyr veneration. This ecclesiology, which emerges most explicitly in his *Ennarationes en Psalmos*, demonstrates the unique participation of the martyrs in Christ the head. By his assumption of humanity, Christ the "commander-in-chief of martyrs" and head of the church bears the suffering of the martyrs, prays in the martyrs, and even suffers his own persecution in the martyrs, who are members of the whole Christ, that he might transfigure them into the glory of his own body.

In works like *De baptismo*, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine's *totus Christus* theology intersects with his understanding of the Holy Spirit as the bond of charity that unites the members of Christ's body to one another

and to the head. From this ecclesiology and pneumatology, Augustine argues against the Donatist claim to be the Church of the Martyrs. Their schism means that all Donatists, including their so-called martyrs, inherently lack charity and have severed themselves from Christ's body. Thus they fail to participate in the life and Spirit of Christ communicated in the sacraments. Because the Donatists have cut themselves off from communion with the body of Christ and the bond of charity that unites Christ's members, their sacraments are not efficacious and their martyrs are not true martyrs. Far from being the persecuted, as they claim to be, the Donatists are actually the persecutors of Christ the head and his body the church.

In *Epistula* 185, Augustine also implements this ecclesiology to justify the use of imperial coercion in the Donatist controversy. The prideful schism and violent actions of the Donatists, Augustine holds, are rightly punished by the state, which serves as an instrument of divine discipline in the hands of Father God and Mother Church. With this ecclesiology and pneumatology at the forefront, Augustine asserts that the title Church of the Martyrs properly belongs to the one body of Christ, which is the Catholic mother and church of all nations united in the bond of charity.

The fifth chapter will focus on the intersection of Augustine's eschatology with his martyrology, especially as it relates to his understanding of the eternal impact of the intercession of the martyrs on the lives of the faithful. Unlike his predecessors Tertullian and Cyprian, Augustine approaches this question from a distinctly eschatological perspective. His *Sermones ad populum* cast the liturgical feast days of the martyrs as an occasion for the faithful to behold and imitate the martyrs' love of eternal life that they too may receive the crown of life at the resurrection. In *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, he describes the benefits and limitations of the practice of burial *ad sanctos* for the departed faithful in view of his theology of the immediate

afterlife and the judgment that all individuals will receive in accordance with the deeds they committed in their natural bodies. In the final books of *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine's theology of the return of Christ, the bodily resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, and the final judgment serve as the backdrop for his understanding of 1) the future reality of martyrdom before Christ's return, 2) the efficacy of the intercession of the martyrs on behalf of the departed faithful, and 3) the eternal significance of the veneration of martyr relics and the associated miracles that the relics frequently, but not always, effect. For Augustine, these eschatological realities not only help answer the question of the eternal impact of the martyrs' intercession on behalf of the faithful; they give meaning to martyrdom.

In light of the centrality of these essential aspects of Augustine's theology in his understanding of martyrdom and martyr veneration, this dissertation will conclude that for Augustine, martyr veneration and the intercession of the martyrs are efficacious in strengthening the pilgrim church on her journey toward union with God. Though Christians are to worship Christ, the sole mediator between God and humanity, martyr veneration offers the church access to the martyrs' example, intercession, and miracles, which aid her in her imitation of Christ's virtues. The martyrs strengthen the pilgrim church in faith, hope, and charity as she journeys toward her final end, in which both the martyrs and the faithful, who are all members of Christ's body joined in the bond of charity, will together enjoy God's life and immortality and complete transfiguration into the glory of Christ the head.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE MARTYRS AS WITNESSES TO CHRIST THE MEDIATOR

As noted in the previous chapter, the practice of celebrating the martyrs on feast days, and visiting their shrines with *refrigeria*, had become deeply ingrained into the life of the North African church by Augustine's time. Augustine and Bishop Aurelius of Carthage sought to regulate what they perceived as excesses in these celebrations, including feasting, dancing, and indulging in wine.<sup>166</sup> To pagan eyes, Augustine acknowledged, these practices looked strangely similar to the worship of pagan gods and the appeasement of pagan intermediaries. Christian martyrs, they argued, were no different from these pagan gods and intermediaries who needed to be appeased to provide purification of sins for their worshippers.

However, Augustine argued that the martyrs were not to be considered gods or intermediaries that required appeasement through sacrifices, offered purification from sins, or demanded worship. Instead, the martyrs are honorary exemplars to be venerated, not worshipped or appeased with sacrifices. Though Augustine's stance on this matter is widely acknowledged in scholarship, I demonstrate in this chapter that his position is deeply rooted in his understanding of Christ the one true mediator between God and humanity.

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<sup>166</sup> Augustine's correspondence with Aurelius will be discussed further in chapter 3.

Moreover, by analyzing Augustine's *Sermo* 198, *De trinitate*, and *De ciuitate Dei*, this chapter will demonstrate the coherent development of and the relationship between Augustine's Christology and martyrology in his polemics against the pagan, Donatist, and the Neoplatonist understandings of mediation. Each of the works examined in this chapter represents Augustine's mature thought; nonetheless, one can identify a thread of coherent development of the bishop's understanding of the relationship between the mediation of Christ, the true worship of God, and the exemplary role of the martyrs in the life of the church.

His early references to the mediation of Christ in works like *Expositio epistulae ad Galatas* and *Confessiones* appear apart from any mention of the martyrs.<sup>167</sup> However, a considerable development of his theology of Christ the mediator occurs in *s.* 198, where a discussion of the martyrs appears frequently.<sup>168</sup> Though a number of essays have been written on this sermon since its rediscovery, surprisingly few references to the martyrs arise in these essays.<sup>169</sup> In this lengthy discourse, Augustine refutes the pagans, who understood the martyrs to be no different than their own gods and mediators to whom they offered sacrifices and from whom they sought purification from sins. For Augustine, Jesus Christ alone is the one true

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<sup>167</sup> See *exp. Gal.* 24-28 and *conf.* VII.18.24. *Confessiones*, however, does include three references to the martyrs. See *conf.* I.14.23; VI.2.2; IX.7.16.

<sup>168</sup> For *s.* Dolbeau 26 (Mainz 62), see François Dolbeau, "Nouveaux sermons de saint Augustin pour la conversion des païens et des donatistes (IV)," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 26 (1992): 90-141. The sermon is titled *Tractatus Augustini episcopi contra paganos* in Mainz, Stadtbibliothek I 9, f.219-50v. Possidius knew of the sermon (*Indiculus* I.39). See Robert Dodaro, "Christus Sacerdos: Augustine's Preaching against Pagan Priests in the Light of S Dolbeau 26 and 23," in *Augustin Prédicateur (395-411): Actes Du Colloque International de Chantilly (5-7 Septembre 1996)* (Paris: Inst d'Études Augustiniennes, 1998), 377-93 (377n1). As Edmund Hill notes, following the argument of Dolbeau, *Sermo* 198 "includes the fragment already published as Sermon 198, together with 197 and 198A (III, 6)." See Dolbeau's introduction to the sermon in, "Nouveaux," 70. Hill follows Dolbeau's dating: a year prior to the Edict of Unity in 405. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 229n1.

<sup>169</sup> For example, Dodaro, "Christus Sacerdos," 377-93; Daniel J. Jones, "Relating Christus Sacerdos and Christus Mediator in St Augustine's S. Dobleau 26," *Studia Patristica* (2010): 197-202; and J. Pépin, "Falsi Mediatores Duo: Aspects de la médiation dans le sermon d'Augustin *Contra Paganos* (S. Dolbeau 26)," in *Augustin Prédicateur*, 395-417.

mediator between God and humanity who provides purification for sins. The martyrs are not mediators, *per se*, but as members of Christ's body, they participate in Christ's priestly mediation through their death, example, and intercession. They are not worshipped by the faithful; they too worship the one true God and direct the faithful to Christ and to the worship of God. This understanding, for Augustine, dramatically affects the way in which the martyrs are to be venerated. While the pagans receive the brunt of Augustine's arguments in this sermon, he also critiques the Donatist understanding of the Donatist clergy as mediators.<sup>170</sup> Like the devil, the gods and intermediaries of the pagans are fallen angels that serve as false mediators. Likewise, the Donatists and their martyrs are false mediators that block the way to God through Christ the one true mediator.

Augustine's understanding of the distinctions between the true mediator and false mediators culminates into his mature Christology in *De trinitate* and *De ciuitate Dei*.<sup>171</sup> Though *De trinitate* does not directly relate Augustine's Christology to his theology of martyrdom, it demonstrates an important development of his distinction between Christ the true mediator and the false mediators in which participation in God's blessedness and immortality is central. In *De ciuitate Dei*, this distinction appears again in Augustine's comprehensive intellectual assault on the Neoplatonic understanding of mediation, purification of sins, and participation in the eternal blessedness and life of God. The martyrs arise in this treatise as conquerors of the false mediators through the one true mediator Jesus Christ.

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<sup>170</sup> The sermon was preached during the rise of his anti-Donatist career, which falls in the second stage of Saxer's three-fold division of the chronological development of Augustine's martyrology. See chapter 1.

<sup>171</sup> While other treatises, such as his *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, are significant for a detailed discussion of Augustine's christology, his theology of mediation intersects most directly with his theology of martyrdom in the works I examine in this chapter.

Secondary studies on Augustine's martyrology frequently emphasize the Christocentricity of the bishop's discussions on the martyrs.<sup>172</sup> As Brian E. Daley notes, Augustine's thought on most major subjects of theology are "strikingly and explicitly centered on Christ."<sup>173</sup> His theology of martyrdom is no exception. To summarize scholars' conclusions: Christ is the chief and prince of the martyrs who bears the suffering of the martyrs and himself suffers in the martyrs. The martyrs, as members of the body of Christ, seek to direct the worship of the faithful to Christ, not themselves. Augustine's Christological focus, as these studies demonstrate, aims to direct the worship of the faithful to God and Christ in martyr veneration.<sup>174</sup>

Additionally, studies on Augustine's Christology from scholars like Tarsicius J. Van Bavel, Gérard Remy, William S. Babcock, and Brian E. Daley have discussed key features of Augustine's theology of Christ the mediator, including references to Christ as the *homo Deus* or the *Deus homo* in his early writings, the Word's assumption of a human body and rational soul, his language of two substances and one person that anticipated the Chalcedonian definition, Christ's role as the mediator, Christ's healing of human pride by the humility of his incarnation, Christ as the way in virtue of his humanity and as the goal in virtue of his divinity, and Christ's

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<sup>172</sup> See Anthony Dupont, "Augustine's Homiletic Definition of Martyrdom," 156. Dupont gives a helpful summary of the secondary literature on Augustine's martyrology to date.

<sup>173</sup> Brian E. Daley, *God Visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 151.

<sup>174</sup> Scholars such as Tarsicius Jan van Bavel, Jan Den Boeft, and Carol Straw note the chronological development of Augustine's martyrology with attention to his polemics against the Manicheans, the Donatists, and the pagans and his pastoral concern with supposed Christian excesses in martyr veneration. See van Bavel, "The Cult of the Martyrs in St. Augustine;" Straw, "Martyrdom."

participation in our mortality unto our participation in his immortality.<sup>175</sup> Moreover, Remy discusses the relationship between the titles *mediator* and *sacerdotes* in Augustine's works.<sup>176</sup>

However, these two literatures have not been adequately combined to date. In the works on Augustine's martyrology, Augustine's understanding of Christ the mediator receives mention, but they contain no detailed analysis of how this understanding bears upon his theology of martyrdom and martyr veneration. Likewise, studies on Augustine's Christology may include brief reference to the martyrs, but they contain no explicit analysis of the relationship between the two topics.<sup>177</sup>

The centrality of Christ's role as mediator in Augustine's Christology is evident by the frequency of references to *mediator* and *mediatio* throughout the Augustinian corpus. As Gérard Rémy notes, the use of the term *mediator/mediatio* in ancient Christian literature exploded with Augustine. The word appears not at all in the Old Testament and only four times in the New Testament (1 Tim 2:5; Heb. 8:6, 9:15; 12:24). Even in patristic authors prior to Augustine, the term has rare occurrences in Latin authors like Cyprian, Victorinus, and Ambrose, and in Greek authors like Irenaeus and Clement. In Augustine's works, the term appears more than 500

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<sup>175</sup> See Brian E. Daley, *God Visible*, 158–59. Daley cites *conf.* VII.18.24 as a summary of the central themes of Augustine's mature Christology. See also William S. Babcock, "The Christ of the Exchange: A Study in the Christology of Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos*" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1971); Tarsicius J. Van Bavel, *Recherches sur la christologie de saint Augustin; l'humain et le divin dans le Christ d'après saint Augustin* (Fribourg, Suisse, Éditions Universitaires, 1954). As Daley notes, van Bavel's work "remains the most ample, accurate, and thoroughly documented modern study of Augustine's Christology, and is still an invaluable guide to any study of the subject" (151n1).

<sup>176</sup> Gerard Remy, "Le Christ médiateur et tête de l'Église: selon le Sermon Dolbeau 26 d'Augustin," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 72, no. 1 (January 1998): 3–19. For a critique of Remy's hierarchical distinction between the title *mediator* (as a reference to Christ's being) and *sacerdotes* (as a reference to Christ's action), see Daniel J. Jones, "Relating Christus Sacerdos and Christus Mediator."

<sup>177</sup> See Meconi, *The One Christ*, 121. Daley makes no mention of the martyrs. T.J. van Bavel has written separate studies on Augustine's Christology and martyrology (see above footnote). In the latter, he frequently references the Christological and ecclesiological emphases in Augustine's martyrology, but he does not discuss how Augustine's theology of martyrdom develops specifically in relation to his theology of Christ the mediator.



times.<sup>178</sup> Given the amount of scholarly recognition of the centrality of Christ as mediator in Augustine’s Christology and the of the Christo-centricity of his martyrology, it is striking to see such a scarcity of scholarship analyzing more explicitly the relationship between Augustine’s theology of Christ the mediator and his martyrology. No study, to my knowledge, specifically outlines the development of Augustine’s theology of martyrdom and martyr veneration in relation to his theology of Christ the mediator.

### **True and False Mediators in *Sermo 198 (Dolbeau 26)***

As Gérard Remy notes, the Latin term *mediator* occurs approximately 550 times in Augustine’s works, and about 50 of these occurrences are borrowed from 1 Timothy 2:5.<sup>179</sup> In most of Augustine’s early references to the martyrs, he addresses the difference between idolatry, the veneration of the martyrs, the worship of the one true God, and the excesses occurring in the celebration of the martyrs.<sup>180</sup> Discussions of Christ as the mediator and the martyrs arise separately in his anti-Donatist works *Contra epistulam Parmeniani* (II.8.16),

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<sup>178</sup> Gérard Rémy, “Mediator (Mediatio),” in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, ed. Cornelius Petrus Mayer, et al. (Basel: Schwabe AG, 1986), 3:1223–30.

<sup>179</sup> Remy, “Mediator (Mediatio),” 3: 1224. Early references to Christ the mediator occur in *Expositio epistulae ad Galatas* (24-28,63), written in Hippo 394/395 after the First Council of Carthage, and in *Confessiones* (VII.24), written some time between 397 and 401. For dating, see Allan D. Fitzgerald, ed. *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), xliii and xlv.

<sup>180</sup> His earliest references to the martyrs and martyr veneration occur in the anti-Manichean writings of *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum* I.7.12; I.9.15; I.23.43, written in 387/388, and *Contra Faustum Manicheum* XX, written in 397/399 (for dating, see *Augustine through the Ages*, xlv-xlvi); *Epistula 23*, written between 391 and 393 to Aurelius the bishop of Carthage concerning excesses in martyr veneration (for dating, see Teske, WSA, *Letters 1-99*, II/1, 58); and *Confessiones* I.14.23; VI.2.2; IX.7.6, written in 397/401 (for dating, see *Augustine through the Ages*, xliii). For a helpful summary of other early references to and main theological points of martyrdom in Augustine’s works, see van Bavel, “The Cult of the Martyrs,” 351–55.

written in 400, and *Contra littera Petilianii* (II.20.44), written in 400/403.<sup>181</sup> However, the two topics intersect most directly for the first time in *Sermo* 198 (Dolbeau 26).

Augustine's *Sermo* 198, also entitled *Contra Paganos*, was delivered on January 1, 404, on the same day as a popular pagan New Year's festival, which Augustine regards as a counterfeit feast day entrenched in fleshly desires and shameful songs.<sup>182</sup> The attempt to preoccupy his flock during the pagan festival likely accounts for the length of his longest surviving sermon.<sup>183</sup> He refutes the assumption of the pagans that martyrs are venerated as mediators in the same manner that the pagans worship their own gods and intermediaries. Moreover, he counters the Donatist arguments that Donatist bishops serve as mediators to Christ's flock and that the Donatists alone possess true sacraments and true martyrs.

Though the term "mediator" is not mentioned until later in the sermon,<sup>184</sup> the basis of Augustine's appeal to Christians and his arguments against the pagans on the mediation of Christ becomes evident from the beginning of the sermon, where he appeals to his listeners to avoid participation in the pagan New Year's festival. Because the Lord Jesus Christ, "the Son of God, who for us became human," redeemed the faithful from among the nations with his own blood, Christians are not to participate in the pagan celebrations of the nations.<sup>185</sup> How could Christians

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<sup>181</sup> The former references Christ the mediator and the latter references the martyrs. For dating, see *Augustine through the Ages*, xlv and xlvi.

<sup>182</sup> s. 198.1. For an informative essay on the nature of this pagan festival to which Augustine was so vehemently opposed, see John Scheid, "Les réjouissances des calendes de Janvier d'après le sermon Dolbeau 26. Nouvelles lumières sur une fête mal connue," in *Augustine Prédicateur (395-411): Actes du Colloque International de Chantilly (5-7 septembre 1996)*, ed. Goulven Madec (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1998), 353–65.

<sup>183</sup> See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 229n1. Hill agrees with the January 1, 404 dating that Dolbeau offers. For Hill, this must be correct because of 1) an apparent reference to the imperial outlawing of pagan worship in 303, 2) the lack of reference to the Edict of Unity imposed on the Donatists in 405, and 3) the almost verbatim quotation of the Letter to Parmenian.

<sup>184</sup> s. 198.28.

<sup>185</sup> s. 198.2 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 91): "Iam enim dominus deus noster Iesus Christus dei filius, qui propter nos homo factus est, dedit pro nobis pretium. Itaque si iam ille dedit pretium, ad hoc dedit ut redimat, ut congreget de

in one moment sing appeals to the one true God to deliver them and gather them from among the nations, and then immediately after join in pagan gambling, drunkenness, and gift exchanges?<sup>186</sup> By engaging in such mixture with the nations, Christians are demonstrating ungratefulness to Christ the Redeemer and failing to acknowledge their blood-bought redemption.

Moreover, Christian participation in pagan New Year's festivities are not merely cultural celebrations or pastimes with no spiritual consequences; rather, such engagement involves the worship of demons and participation in the demonic realm. Following (and quoting) Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 10:20, Augustine explains that to participate in these celebrations, or in other pagan activities such as the theaters, chariot races, and coliseum events, is "to become the sharers of demons."<sup>187</sup> Christians may not be offering blood sacrifices and incense at this festivity; however, by the moral debauchery and foolish songs in which they engage, "it's just as if they were rendering incense to the demons from their hearts."<sup>188</sup> The demons who have "seduced" Christians into engaging in these "evil ways and this foul, irreputable lifestyle" both rejoice and feed on these sinful actions.<sup>189</sup> In other words, these pagan festivities serve as a type of appeasement and gratification to demons. This point will be crucial in distinguishing false mediators, the one true mediator, and the martyrs later in the sermon.

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gentibus. Vt ergo sequaris redemptorem tuum, qui te redemit sanguine suo, noli misceri gentibus similitudine morum atque factorum."

<sup>186</sup> As Hill notes, such gift exchanges (*strenae*) were done in order to receive a good omen from the gods. The goddess Strena presided over this event. See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 229n4.

<sup>187</sup> s. 198.3 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 92): "*Nolo uos fieri socios daemoniorum.*" Hill uses the term "associates." See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 182. I prefer "sharers" or "partakers" to highlight Augustine's understanding of the participatory nature of involvement in these pagan activities.

<sup>188</sup> s. 198.3 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 92): "*Ista facientes quasi tura ponunt daemonibus de cordibus suis.*"

<sup>189</sup> s. 198.3 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 92): "*Spiritus enim seductores gaudent seductis, et eorum quos seduxerint atque deceperint malis moribus et uita turpi infamique pascuntur.*"

The mediation of Christ continues to frame his appeal throughout the sermon with a call to imitate the suffering and patience of Christ and the martyrs. Rather than being seduced and deceived into disgraceful actions like gambling and pagan competitions, Christians ought to rejoice in and imitate martyrs like Cyprian, who by their passion have attained the crown of victory. Christ, who also overcame through his own passion and resurrection, supplies patience and endurance to Christians who wrestle against the seductions of demons.<sup>190</sup> Rather than feasting with the pagans at their morally debased New Year's celebration, Christians ought to imitate Christ by humbling themselves and fasting for the conversion of the pagans. The Lord Jesus Christ, Augustine says, took on the form of a slave, clothing himself with the sackcloth of "our aged mortality without any sin of his own" to bear the sins of humanity.<sup>191</sup> As Christ suffered by his passion for the redeemed, so Christians ought to suffer and lay down their lives on behalf of these godless pagans by fasting on this New Year's festival.<sup>192</sup>

Early on in the sermon Augustine introduces the relationship between mediation, worship and martyr veneration by contrasting the pagan worship of their gods in temples and the Christian worship of the one true God at the martyr shrines. When the pagans visit their own temples, they worship and offer sacrifices to created things like images of Neptune, Tellus, Juno,

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<sup>190</sup> s. 198.3 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 93): "tamquam illius agonis quem commemorate Paulus agonotheta, non solum spectat lunctantes, sed et adiuuat perdurantes." See also s. 198.12, where Augustine contrasts the martyrs, whom the faithful ought to imitate, with lovers of the world. The faithful ought to visit martyr shrines to remember, honor, and imitate the martyrs who did not consume the world's pleasures, but held such pleasures in contempt. The significance of Augustine's admonishment to Christians to imitate the martyrs who imitated Christ will be further discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>191</sup> s. 198.5 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 94): "In illa enim carne, quam ex nostrae mortalitatis uetustate suscepit sine ullo suo peccato, peccata nostra portabat." See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 184.

<sup>192</sup> s. 198.6 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 95): "Si nondum possumus pati pro gentius, possumus saltem ieiunare pro gentibus." Fasting should also be done, Augustine says, for the repentance of Christians who participate in the pagan activities he has just denounced. Fasting for the pagans and compromised Christians, then, is an imitation of the sacrificial love of Christ. See s. 198.9.

and Vulcan.<sup>193</sup> The pagans defend their worship of statues that neither see, nor, hear, nor speak by arguing that they worship not the visible image, but what the images signify, such as the sea (Neptune), the earth (Tellus), the air (Juno), and fire (Mercury). Moreover, in worshipping the visible image of Mercury, they claim, they are actually worshipping the invisible reality of intelligence (*ingenium*) that the image signifies.<sup>194</sup> Such intelligence, the pagans say, is rightly worshipped because it is a superior “middle reality” (*media res*). Augustine concedes that intelligence “is something invisible” (*inuisibile aliquid est*) and can be conceived as “a middle reality” because it “either turns away from the creator and so is darkened and becomes foolish, or turns toward the creator and so is enlightened and becomes wise.”<sup>195</sup> However, Augustine cuts to the heart of the reality of pagan worship. Regardless of how the pagans understand the relationship between the images and the things signified by the images, whether those things be visible or invisible, their worship amounts to the worship of things *created*, not to the Creator of such things. Such is the primary distinction between pagan worship and Christian worship, even at the martyr shrines.

At churches and martyr shrines, Christians direct their worship to the Creator, not to created things like columns, stones, statues, pictures, angels, or saints.<sup>196</sup> The intelligence of the

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<sup>193</sup> s. 198.16-23.

<sup>194</sup> s. 198.24 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 107): “Mercurium, inquit, cum colo, ingenium colo; ingenium non uidetur, inuisibile aliquid est.” Edmund Hill translates *ingenium* as “wit.” He considered “genius” or “ingenuity,” as well. Hill notes that Augustine “for the most part equates it with intelligence,” and for this reason I have chosen to translate the word simply as “intelligence.” See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 231n53.

<sup>195</sup> s. 198.24 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 108, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 198): “Ingenium media quaedam res est, quia ingenium aut auersum a creatore tenebratur et fit stultum, aut conuersum ad creatorem illuminatur et fit sapiens.”

<sup>196</sup> s. 198.16. Augustine acknowledges and bemoans the pagan critique that some Christians wrongfully adore columns and pictures. However, he says, the church teaches Christians to do otherwise. Unlike pagan priests who would gladly worship and sacrifice to idols, Christian leaders publicly instruct their flocks not to adore columns, images, and holy buildings.

saints, martyrs, and angels admonishes people to worship the one true God, not intelligence itself.<sup>197</sup> Unlike the pagans who visit temples to worship and offer sacrifices to their gods, Christians are to visit the shrines of the martyrs “to make a pious commemoration in their hearts, and out of honor (*honore*) for the martyrs, stir up affection (*adfectus*) for God....”<sup>198</sup> In addition, the faithful know that martyrs “are remembered in the celebration of the sacraments, but vows and prayers are directed to God.”<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, a martyr “desires that his Lord, not himself be adored (*se adorari*).”<sup>200</sup> Unlike Simon the Sorcerer from Acts 8, Peter, Paul, good angels, and martyrs chose the humility of seeing Christ honored over the pride of receiving honor (*honorem*) for themselves. In fact, after performing miracles, Paul and Barnabas were horrified when a group of Gentiles started giving them honor (*honorem*) with sacrifices as if they were Jupiter and Mercury; God, after all, who “alone was to be worshipped” (*esset adorandus*), granted them the ability to work miracles.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> s. 198.24.

<sup>198</sup> s. 198.12 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 99): “Ad loca martyrum sic venite, ut ex locis fiat pia commemoration in cordibus uestris, et ex honore martyrum exurgat adfectus in deum....”

<sup>199</sup> s. 198.12 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 100): “Norunt fideles in quo ordine commemorentur martyres in sacramentis, cum uota nostra precesque dirguntur ad deum....” By *fideles*, Augustine seems to mean the mature faithful or those who agree with Augustine. His appeals to the faithful in this sermon and in other places, as well as his response to the Manicheans (all discussed in the next chapter) reveal that not all of the faithful held to Augustine’s view.

<sup>200</sup> s. 198.12 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 100): “...non uult se adorari, sed dominum suum.”

<sup>201</sup> s. 198.13. (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 100): “...pagani secundum consuetudinem suam appellauerunt Barnabm Iouem, Paululm Mercurium...et coeperant eis uictimas immolare; que milli honorem sic exhorruerunt ut sua uestimenta conscinderent docerentque illos, quantum possent, quis unus esset adorandus, in cuius uirtute haec faciebant.” In these passages and throughout s. 198.12–16, Augustine utilizes various forms of the Latin nouns *honor* and *gloria* and the verbs *honoro*, *adoro*, and *laudo*. Augustine’s contrast of the martyrs with the pagan gods and his common association of these words with sacrifice demonstrates that he conveys these terms here as honor, glory, adoration, or praise due to God alone. He does not use *laudo* here in conjunction with sacrifice, but he denounces Simon the sorcerer’s desire to be “praised for performing miracles” and “exalted in pride.” s. 198.15 (“Nouveaux,” 102): “Quid uolebat Simon, nisi laudari in miraculis, extolli in superbia?”

While the martyrs are worthy of being honored, then, they are not worthy of the type of honor due to God alone. Augustine is not precise here in his use of Latin words to distinguish the two.<sup>202</sup> However, he is clear on two points: first, any type of honor or veneration involving sacrifice belongs to the Creator, not to creatures; second, neither angels, saints, nor martyrs desire such honor or veneration. As he continues to preach this sermon, Augustine further argues that in worshipping created things, whether visible or invisible, the pagans engage in the worship of Satan and his demons, who are false mediators.

### *The Devil as the Proud Mediator and Christ as the Humble Mediator*

The relationship between worship, mediation, and martyr veneration arises explicitly in s.198.25–40. Here Augustine’s counter-solution to the pagans’ attempt to satisfy their perceived need for the purgation of the human soul by offering sacrifices and rituals to their own mediators grounds his explanation of what is and is not happening in martyr veneration. All created things, he says, are either bodies or spirits. Spirits are always superior to bodies, but inferior and superior categories lie in both. Beasts, for example, are inferior bodies, while the sun, moon, and stars are the highest bodies. Irrational souls are inferior spirits, while rational souls of humans are superior. The intellect of the angels is still higher, but God, the uncreated, unchangeable Spirit, is supreme over all created bodies and spirits. He is the one who forms and enlightens all creatures.<sup>203</sup> Created things receive enlightenment when they turn to God and cling to him in love. However, they are darkened in pride when they turn away from God, who creates and

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<sup>202</sup> As I will show later, Augustine eventually becomes more precise with his Latin terms to distinguish veneration due to creatures and veneration due to the Creator.

<sup>203</sup> s. 198.25.

enlightens and who alone is deserving of worship.<sup>204</sup> The devil and his demons, who were originally created as good angels, took this prideful turn and became rulers of a lower celestial realm of darkness.<sup>205</sup>

Satan presented himself as a mediator between humanity and the Creator in order to deceive humanity into worshipping him. Though pagan philosophers have rightly recognized an uncreated Creator and their need for purification from the lusts of the flesh in order to attain to this uncreated Creator, the devil has deceived them with promises of purification and seduced them to offer sacred rites in temples to himself, to demons, and to created things. The philosophers were susceptible to this deception because of their pride in thinking that they could find a means to attain to the Creator within their own philosophical teaching.<sup>206</sup> Though God has revealed himself in creation, the pagans in their pride were deceived into worshipping and offering sacred rites to these demons for the purification of their souls.<sup>207</sup> In doing so, their minds were darkened and became foolish “through the false mediator, who delights in idolatrous images.”<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> s. 198.26.

<sup>205</sup> s. 198.26 Augustine cites Ephesians 2:2 and 6:12, where Satan is referred to as “*principem potestatis aeris hius*” and demons are referred to as “*principes et potestates et recotres mundi tenebrarum, et...spiritalia nequitiae in caelestibus*.” This “air” and these “heavens” are invisible and distinct from the visible heavens in which the stars dwell. (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 109–10).

<sup>206</sup> s. 198.28. Even though the state has now removed pagan temples and outlawed pagan sacred rites during official imperial events, he warns Christians that such practices continue to be performed secretly.

<sup>207</sup> s. 198.32.

<sup>208</sup> s. 198.33 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 109–10): “...per illum falsum mediatorem, qui gaudet simulacris...” Augustine briefly denounces another sort of philosophers who rely on philosophy alone for purification with no sacred rites. These, he says, have pridefully trusted in themselves for purification of the soul and have set themselves as the mediators between themselves and God. See s.198.36. Later in the sermon, as I will discuss, Augustine charges the Donatists with this same pride.



Pride, which is the origin of all sins, causes men and women to commit adultery against God and to fornicate with false gods, who are in fact demons, by worshipping them. Such harlotry leaves people utterly dissatisfied, for God is the only one who “satisfies the soul.”<sup>209</sup> Worshipping false gods, therefore, is a sort of demonic participation in which the worshippers defile their souls with the darkness of the false gods whom they worship. Though the pagans are correct in believing that they need a mediator in order to reconcile themselves to the supreme God, they are wrong to think of their demonic powers of the air as mediators who can offer purification for sins by being worshipped with sacrifices.

While the devil and his demons, Augustine argues, are false mediators, Christ alone is the only true mediator who can purify sins and reconcile worshippers to God. A mediator, Augustine says, must share the qualities of the two parties who need reconciliation.<sup>210</sup> The proud devil, the false mediator, shares in God’s immortality and humanity’s sin. The devil’s mediation offers no reconciliation because he is plagued with the very thing separating humanity from God: sin. The devil has no means, therefore, of purifying human beings from sin or leading them back to God. On the other hand, when the Word became flesh, he shared God’s righteousness and humanity’s mortality, but not humanity’s sin. He remained immortal in respect to his divinity, but he became temporarily mortal in respect to his humanity. Christ, therefore, qualifies as the only true mediator who purifies souls from sin and reconciles them to God, and apart from him “no one is purified.”<sup>211</sup> Christ is the humble mediator who meets the humble to lead them “to the heights of

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<sup>209</sup> s. 198.33 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 116): “Solus enim deus sufficit animae.”

<sup>210</sup> s. 198.39.

<sup>211</sup> s. 198.39 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 119): “Sicut autem mediator quosdam commemorare...qui mediatorem purgantem, sine quo nemo purgatur....”

God;” the devil is the proud mediator who meets the proud to block them from God.<sup>212</sup> The proud are seduced by the proud mediator’s deception because, in their pride, they take more offense at Christ’s humanity than in the devil’s sin. The proud reject the weakness and humility of Christ’s passion and death and accept as strength the proud devil’s immortality and inability to suffer and die in a physical body, despite his iniquity.<sup>213</sup>

Augustine’s understanding of Christ as the one true mediator, the devil as the false mediator, and the worship of the one true God grounds his explanation of how Christians are to understand and practice martyr veneration. The martyrs in heaven are among those “humble, saintly human beings” (*humiles homines sancti*) whom some Christians mistakenly venerate as those who provide purification for sins.<sup>214</sup> Neither martyrs, angels, nor any “saintly human beings” wish to be honored in this way; rather, they grieve and admonish the faithful to place their hope in God, not in people.<sup>215</sup>

The pagans were accusing Christians of sacrificing to the martyrs just as the pagans sacrifice to gods and powers of the air when they invoke the saints, bring offerings, and celebrate the Eucharist at martyr shrines. In response, Augustine argues that sacrifices are offered to God, not to the martyrs, in the church’s sacraments performed at the memorial shrines. Aid does not come to the faithful through sacrifice to the martyrs, but rather arrives when Christians invoke the help of the martyrs as they sacrifice to God:

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<sup>212</sup> s. 198.38 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 120, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 209–210): “Superbus ergo mediator superbis, humilibus humilis occurrit, sed ideo humilibus humilis, ut perducat ad altitudinem dei; ideo superbus superbis, ut altis in se interludat altitudinem dei.”

<sup>213</sup> s. 198.41.

<sup>214</sup> s. 198.44 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 124, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 214).

<sup>215</sup> s. 198.44, 46.

Do not let them [the pagans] lead you astray when they say to you: ‘If you worship the martyrs and consider that through them you are being aided in the presence of God, how much more should we then worship the powers of God, to be aided through them in the presence of God?’ Direct your attention to the sacraments of the church and see whether any sacrifice is offered to the martyrs, whether we present one sacrifice to these martyrs, another to those martyrs. Instead, in all of the memorial shrines we offer the one sacrifice; not to any of them, but to the Lord of us all; and in this sacrifice we also honor the martyrs in respect to their status, not in themselves, but in the One through whom they conquered the devil. And they keep us in mind all the more dearly the less we confer to them private sacred rites, because they have their joy in only One, and they have their honor only in that One.<sup>216</sup>

The martyr shrines, then, are places of worship directed at the one true God of both the faithful and of the martyrs. Unlike the pagan gods and their false mediators, who are appeased if sacrifices are offered to them, the martyrs desire no worship or sacrifices for themselves. Instead, they want the One who empowered them to overcome the devil to receive the sacrifices and the worship of the faithful. The martyrs are in some way mindful of the faithful, but the nature of their disposition toward the faithful depends upon how the faithful understand and celebrate martyr veneration. If the faithful offer their sacrifices to God, the martyrs are pleased; if the martyrs themselves are offered sacrifices, the martyrs are displeased. Those who offer sacrifices or sacred rites to the martyrs, on Augustine’s account, are venerating the martyrs incorrectly. This improper form of martyr veneration not only displeases one’s bishop, but the martyrs whom the faithful are supposedly venerating.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> s. 198.47 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 126–27): “Non uos itaque seducant, cum uobis dicunt: ‘Si uos martyres colitis et per illos putatis adiuuari apud deum, quanto magis nos uirtutes dei colere debemus, per quas nos apud deum adiuuari\*’. Adtendite enim ecclesiae sacramenta et uidete utrum alicui martyris sacrificium offeratur, ut aliud illi martyri, aliud illi exhibeamus; sed apud omnes memorias unum offerimus, nec alicui eorum, sed domino omnium nostrum, in quo sacrificio pro suo gradu etiam martyres honoramus, non in seipsis, sed in illo per quem diabolus uicerunt. Et tanto carius memores sunt nostri, quanto minus eis priuata sacra deferimus, quia, in quo uno solo habent gaudium suum, in illo uno solo habent honorem suum.”

<sup>217</sup> s. 198.47.

On a related note, this criterion of directing the worship of the faithful to the one true God also determines whether a visitation from a spirit in a vision or dream is truly from an angel, martyr, or demon.<sup>218</sup> Any ‘angels’ or ‘martyrs’ who appeared to someone and demanded celebration of a particular rite for themselves were demons in disguise. That kind of visitor, “even it claims to be the angel Gabriel,” Augustine warned, “is not a mediator reconciling you *to* God, but an impostor separating you *from* God.”<sup>219</sup> The only secure way to honor the angels and the martyrs, for Augustine, is to worship God alone: “Do you desire to safely honor the holy angels and the holy martyrs? Worship him, the one in whom they wish to be honored.”<sup>220</sup>

### ***The Donatist Bishops as False Mediators***

While the pagan, the devil, and demons are the primary antagonists of *s.* 198, Augustine warns his listeners against another group of false mediators that block Christians from Christ: the Donatists and their “martyrs.” This discussion of Christ the true mediator, the demons as false mediators, and the worship of God is central in this sermon to Augustine’s denunciation of the Donatist claims about their bishops, their sacraments, and their martyrs.

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<sup>218</sup> The church in North Africa was accustomed to testimonies of apparitions and dreams of angels and martyrs. Augustine’s understanding of various claims to visions and dreams of the martyrs will be further discussed in chapter 5.

<sup>219</sup> *s.* 198.48 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 127): “Non solum autem si homo, sed si quisquam quasi angelus siue aliqua uisitatione siue per somnium temptare uoluerit et dixerit: ‘Hoc mihi fac, hoc mihi celebra, quia ego sum angelus’, uerbi gratia Gabriel, noli credere. Vnum deum tu securus cole, qui est pater et filius et spiritus sanctus. Tali tuo cultu gaudet, si est angelus; si autem irascitur, quia extra aliquid non dedisti, ille iam intellegendus est de quo dicit apostolus quod [243v] transfigurat se in angelum lucis: intercludere uult uiam, male se interponit; non est mediator reconcilians, sed magis separans.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>220</sup> *s.* 198.46 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 126): “Vultis securi honorare angelos sanctos et martyres sanctos? Illum colite, in quo uno se honorari uolunt.”

Augustine implements his theology of Christ the one true mediator to challenge the Donatist notion of who can be considered mediators. The Donatist bishop Parmenian, who had immediately succeeded Donatus as the Donatist bishop of Carthage, claimed that Donatist bishops acted as mediators between God and humanity.<sup>221</sup> If the Donatist clergy can in fact be considered mediators, Augustine argues, Christ's unique role as the one mediator between God and humanity has been replaced by mere human beings. This, for Augustine, is "sacrilegious adultery" in which the Donatists "set themselves in the place of the bridegroom."<sup>222</sup> To assert that the bishops are also mediators is to agree with the pagans that there are many mediators between God and humanity.<sup>223</sup> None of the apostles referred to themselves as mediators, and neither should bishops. Parmenian's position, he says, pridefully contradicts Paul's assertion that Jesus Christ is the single mediator between God and humanity. Bishops are to be friends of the bridegroom who foster among the faithful loyalty to Christ, not to themselves. Christ, who alone is true God and true man, is the bridegroom and the only mediator between God and humanity.<sup>224</sup>

Though Augustine never applies the term "mediator" in any positive sense to any human being besides the man Jesus Christ, this is not to say that (Catholic) bishops do not share in the royal priesthood of Christ. In fact, he calls the entire church a royal priesthood in virtue of her

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<sup>221</sup> s. 198.52. Augustine briefly responds to Parmenian's notion that bishops and priests can be considered mediators in *Contra epistulam Parmeniani* II.8.16. Prior to s. 198, Augustine wrote three books against the theological positions, most of which dealt with what is the true church, put forth in a now lost letter of Parmenian. Allan Fitzgerald dates Augustine's three books against Parmenian's letter to 400 (*Augustine through the Ages*, xlv). Tilley follows this dating. See Maureen A. Tilley, "General Introduction: The Anti-Donatist Works of Saint Augustine," in *The Donatist Controversy I*, ed. Boniface Ramsey and David G. Hunter, trans. Maureen A. Tilley and Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2019), 26.

<sup>222</sup> s. 198.52 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 131): "Videtur quia pro sponso se opponunt: cum sacrilego adulterio corrumpunt animas alienas." Slight modification of Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 220.

<sup>223</sup> s. 198.52 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 131): "Si enim episcopus mediator est inter populum et deum, quoniam multi sunt episcopi, sequitur ut multi mediatores intellegantur.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

union with Christ the mediator.<sup>225</sup> When the Word became flesh, he took on humanity's substance in order to make purification for humanity's sin and to enable the faithful to attain to God and share in the substance of God:

On account of purification, which was made through the mediator, the one who is equal to the Father, willed to be the mediator and to become a human being himself, in order that we, through a blood-related substance, since he is a human, might attain to the highest substance, since he is God. He descended because we were in the lower realm. He ascended that we might not remain in the lower realm. He is the one true mediator, who deceives no one. Even though he was equal to the Father, he was willing to become less for our sakes, not setting aside that to which he is equal, but by assuming that which makes him less.<sup>226</sup>

The Word's assumption of humanity did not make him less in respect to the divine nature, of course; the Word "was willing to become less" in respect to the humanity he assumed. The purification that Christ the mediator accomplishes joins the faithful to Christ and to his royal priesthood. Though bishops lead the church, because Christians are joined to Christ who is the head of his body the church, "the whole universal church" is truly "the body of that one priest" and thus a holy, royal priesthood.<sup>227</sup> Therefore, all Christians share in the anointing of Christ the anointed high priest and king.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> s. 198.49.

<sup>226</sup> s. 198.49 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 128): "Et ideo propter purgationem, quae fit per mediatorem, unus uoluit esse mediator et ipse homo fieri, qui aequalis est patri, ut per cognatam substantiam – quod est homo – ad summam substantiam – quod est deus – perueniremus. Ideo que descendit, quia in inferioribus eramus, et ascendit, ne in inferioribus remaneremus. Ille unus mediator uerus est, qui neminem fallit, qui etiam cum sit patri aequalis, etiam minor illo propter nos esse uoluit, non amittendo quod aequale est, sed suscipiendo quod minus est." Augustine's understanding of the church's participation in the divine life, the wonderful exchange, and the Word's descent for the church's ascent will be discussed further in the next chapter. For a discussion of these themes in Augustine's *Enarrationes en Psalmos*, see Babcock, "The Christ of the Exchange."

<sup>227</sup> s. 198.49 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 128–29, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 218): "Nos autem omnes episcopi sacerdotes ideo dicimur, quia praepositi sumus. Vniuersa tamen ecclesia corpus est illius sacerdotis."

<sup>228</sup> s. 198.50. Augustine compares the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ with that of ancient Israel. Though ancient Israel had a high priest and a king, Jesus Christ assumed the roles of both priest and king. As king, he leads the church to share in the spiritual warfare by which he subjects all of his enemies. As the great high priest, he is mediator and victim of the sacrifice that would be offered for the sins of humanity.

However, the faithful and bishops are not to be considered mediators between God and humanity. All members of the body of royal priests, including bishops, are subordinate to the head royal priest, Jesus Christ, “the mediator himself, the sinless head of the Church, through whom is effected the purging away of our sins.”<sup>229</sup> All are members of the one body of Christ that has one head and high priest, so to call bishops (or any of the faithful) mediators, as the Donatist bishop Parmenian does, is to turn the church into a many-headed monster.<sup>230</sup> Clergy are priests in subjection to Christ the high priest. Christ is the “one and only pontiff, the one and only priest”<sup>231</sup> who intercedes in the heavenly holy of holies at the Father’s right hand on behalf of the members of his body.<sup>232</sup> Bishops and all of the faithful need prayers, but Christ the sinless mediator needs no prayers. Just as the high priest in the Old Testament never commended himself to receive prayers from the people, so Christ the head, mediator, and supreme royal priest who intercedes for his body needs no one to pray for him.<sup>233</sup> Instead, Christ the mediator

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<sup>229</sup> s. 198.51 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 131, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 220): “Solus autem Sacerdos ipse mediator, caput ecclesiae sine peccato, per quem fit nostrorum purgatio peccatorum.

<sup>230</sup> s. 198.53 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 132): “...unum caput habemus, non multa; nam corpus quod multa capita uult haere iam monstrum est.”

<sup>231</sup> s. 198.49. (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 128, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 218). “Ipse est pontifex unus et Sacerdos unus...” See also s. 198.53. For a discussion of Augustine’s use of *pontifex*, see Jane Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). Merdinger suggests that Augustine’s refusal to allow that any bishop might be considered a head of the church may have some implications for how he might have responded to the Western Church’s understanding of papal primacy in late antiquity and the medieval period.

<sup>232</sup> s. 198.53. As discussed above, clergy and laity are all a royal priesthood in the body of Christ the priest. Augustine’s point is the Christ alone is the high priest and head, and the church shares in his royal priesthood in virtue of her union with him.

<sup>233</sup> s. 198.54.

and head of the church “intercedes for all of his members, and the members should pray for one another in subjection to the head.”<sup>234</sup>

While the Donatist bishops do not explicitly demand worship from anyone, they pridefully exalt themselves as mediators between God and humanity. In this pride, the Donatist bishops, rather than joining people *to* God, barricade people *from* God. They lead Christians away from Christ by convincing them not to come into the unity of the Catholic church. This, for Augustine, is an imitation of the devil’s pride and borderlines idolatry:

And this here is what they neither fear nor blush with shame to say, that the bishop is a mediator between God and human beings. That bishop is a mediator, alright, but in the sect of Donatus, not as one who leads people [to Christ], but as one who shuts them off, just as Donatus did. He put forth his own name, that the way to Christ might be shut off. This is why they do not wish to come to the church, because Donatus hindered them....<sup>235</sup>

To call a bishop a mediator, then, is 1) to suggest that the bishop needs no prayer for himself, since Christ as mediator needs no prayer for himself, and 2) to place a human being as an obstacle between God and sinners, since these Donatist “mediators” hinder Christians from unity with Christ’s body and therefore from unity with Christ the head. To separate Christians from the unity of the church is to separate Christians from Christ himself, for he is the head of one body the church.<sup>236</sup> Neither Paul, nor John, nor any of the apostles considered themselves mediators, and all commended themselves to the prayers of the church; therefore, no bishop ought to exalt

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<sup>234</sup> s. 198.57 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 136): “{Interpellat caput pro omnibus} membris, interpellent pro inuicem membra sub capite.”

<sup>235</sup> s. 198.55 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 134): “Et hoc isti dicere nec timent nec erubescunt, quod mediator sit episcopus inter deum et homines. Plane ille mediator, sed in parte Donati, ut intercludat, non ut perducatur, sicut fecit Donatus: interposuit enim nomen suum, ut iter excluderet ad Christum. Inde enim nolunt uenire ad ecclesiam, quia interclusit Donatus....”

<sup>236</sup> s. 198.55. This will be further discussed in chapter 4 on Augustine’s ecclesiology, especially in regard to his *totus Christus* theology.



himself as a mediator.<sup>237</sup> All Christians, rather, should acknowledge Jesus Christ as the one mediator on behalf of humanity and remain in the unity of the church.

### ***Donatist Sacraments Fail to Provide Purification for Sins***

Augustine's understanding of Christ the mediator is also central to his claim in *s.* 198 that Donatist sacraments provide no purification of sins. In taking on human nature, Christ and his church became one as bridegroom and bride.

Your Savior took flesh to himself, your mediator took flesh to himself, and by taking flesh he took the Church to himself. He was the first to make a libation, as coming from the head, of what he would offer to God, *a high priest for ever* (Heb 5:6), and the *propitiation for our sins* (1 Jn 2:2). The Word took human nature to himself, and the two became one, as it is written, *They shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament*, he says, *but I mean in Christ and in the Church* (Eph 5:31-32).<sup>238</sup>

Christ the mediator is the head and the church is his body, which he mystically grafted into himself when he assumed human flesh. This union with Christ has made the church the mother of all Christians.<sup>239</sup>

Because Christ alone purifies souls from sin, and because Christ has taken the church into himself through the Incarnation, purification for sins can only be found within the unity of the church. The Donatists, like the false mediators of the pagans, promise to offer purification through their own sacraments, which they claim are the only valid sacraments. However,

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<sup>237</sup> *s.* 198.52, 55, and 57.

<sup>238</sup> *s.* 198.43 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 122–23, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 212): "Adsumpsit carnem saluator tuus, adsumpsit carnem mediator tuus, et carne adsumendo adsumpsit ecclesiam. Praelibavit tamquam de capite quod offerret deo, sacerdos in aeternum et propitiatio pro peccatis nostris. Verbum adsumpsit naturam humanam, et facta sunt duo unus, sicut scriptum est: Erunt duo in carne una. Sacramentum hoc magnum est, inquit, ego autem dico in Christo et in ecclesia."

<sup>239</sup> *s.* 198.42.

Augustine argues, only sacraments performed in the unity of the church, which is the body of Christ the one true mediator, are efficacious for salvation:

Allow no one to promise you purification outside of the church, whether in temples or by any other sacrilegious rites; yes, even by Christian sacraments outside this unity. Even though it is outside the unity, it is a sacrament, which we can neither deny nor do we venture to violate. Nonetheless, the strength and efficacy of the sacraments, which make one a coheir with Christ, is not present unless performed in the unity and in the bond peace of the church. Let no one lead you astray from God, nor the Church; from Father God, nor mother church.<sup>240</sup>

By her sacraments, therefore, the church directly participates in God's saving act toward humankind in which God purifies the faithful and causes them to share in his immortality through Christ the mediator. The church, in this qualified sense, shares in the mediation of Christ. The church is not a mediator in addition to or in place of Christ; the church, as the body of Christ the mediator, is a participant in Christ's mediation. The sacraments only provide purification, however, when performed in the unity of the Catholic church. Christians who seek purification through pagan sacraments seek purification outside of Christ, and they have severed themselves from God the Father; those who seek purification through Christian sacraments outside of the unity of the church, i.e., in the Donatist Church, have abandoned and severed themselves from mother church.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> s. 198.42. (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 122): "Nemo uois aliquam purgationem extra ecclesiam promittat, uel in templis uel ubi per sacra sacrilege; nemo extra unitatem etiam per sacramenta christiana, quia, etsi est sacramentum extra unitatem – quod negare non possumus nec audemus uiolare –, uirtus tamen e salus sacramenti, Christo faciens coheredem, no est nisi in unitate et in uinculo pacis ecclesiae. Nemo uos seducat a deo, nemo a ecclesia, nemo a deo patre, nemo ab ecclesia matre." Augustine distinguishes between sacramental validity and sacramental efficacy. He argues in his anti-Donatist works that Donatist sacraments are valid, but not efficacious for salvation. Only sacraments performed in the unity of the church are both valid and efficacious. This distinction and its significance will be addressed further in chapter 4.

<sup>241</sup> s. 198.42. Augustine anticipates here the basis of his upcoming christological and ecclesiological argument against the Donatists.

Just as God is the Father of all, Augustine says, the church is the mother of all. Just as an earthly father and an earthly mother grant us our mortality, so God the Father and mother church “give birth to us for immortality.”<sup>242</sup> The Donatists in their schism may seem to hold on to their Father, but they have abandoned their mother.<sup>243</sup> Augustine acknowledges that the Donatist sacraments are in fact *Christian* sacraments (and not pagan ones), but the Donatist refusal to be in communion with the (true) church renders their sacraments void of life and of the power of purification. Only sacraments performed in the unity of the body of Christ possess the saving power to purify sins and to impart immortal life, which comes from Christ the head.<sup>244</sup>

For Augustine, the Donatists’ commitment to communion with Donatus instead of the global body of bishops amounts to a hatred of Christian peace and unity and a replacement of the pure love of Christ with the perverse love of Donatus. They have been seduced into loyalty to the name of Donatus instead of the name of Christ, and “they have placed [Donatus] in front of Christ.”<sup>245</sup> The Donatists’ separation from the unity of the church not only nullifies the efficacy of their sacraments; it also nullifies the efficacy of their martyrdoms.

### ***The Donatist Martyrs as False Martyrs***

Just as the Donatist bishops in their pride have become false mediators, so the Donatist martyrs have become false martyrs. Though some Donatists suffered under the suppressive

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<sup>242</sup> s. 198.42 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 122, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 212): *Duos parentes habuimus qui nos mortaliter genuerunt, duos habemus qui nos immortaliter generant: deum et ecclesiam.*

<sup>243</sup> s. 198.42.

<sup>244</sup> In more explicit anti-Donatist writings like *De baptismo*, Augustine explains more in depth why the Donatist sacraments are valid, but not efficacious. This will be discussed further in chapter 4.

<sup>245</sup> s. 198.45 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 125): “Donatum donatistae pro Christo habent...Tam peruerse amant Donatum, ut eum Christo praeponant.”

measures of the Roman government, Augustine denounces their status as martyrs. The Donatists suffer for Donatus, whom they have put in place of Christ as a false mediator, and they loathe the unity of the church:

Nothing holds them under the name of Christ except the name of Donatus; they have seduced people to the name of a man contrary to Christ...They hate the preaching of peace, and if any of them suffer for this extreme wickedness of theirs—and this suffering, by the way, is not for Christ, but for Donatus—they consider themselves martyrs.<sup>246</sup>

The Donatists are wrong, then, to consider themselves martyrs because they have severed themselves for Christ and his church and joined themselves to a prideful man.

Augustine casts the Catholic bishops in the same light as true martyrs because they have suffered at the hands of the Circumcellions for preaching peace in the church. He admonishes his listeners to pray for the Catholic bishops, that they may continue to preach peace courageously, to love the Donatists despite their hatred for Catholics, and to endure suffering at Donatist hands in hopes to turn the Donatists back to the unity of the church:

Therefore we admonish you and beg you that you pray for us, that the Lord may inspire us always to continue preaching his peace faithfully, that we would not be afraid of them, but that we would be able to love them and to rejoice that the scripture is fulfilled in us, *With those who hate peace I was peaceful; when I spoke to them, it pleased them to fight against me.*<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> s. 198.45 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 125): “Nihil enim eos tenet, nisi nomen Donati sub nomine Christi; ad nomen hominis contra Christum seducti sunt...Oderunt praedicantes pacem et, si aliquid patiantur pro tanto scelere suo - et non pro Christo, sed pro Donato -, martyres se putant....”

<sup>247</sup> s. 198.45 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 125): “Vnde admonemus et petimus pro nobis oretis, ut inspiret nobis dominus semper fiduciam praedicandae pacis suae, nec timeamus eos, sed potius diligamus et compleri gaudeamus in nobis quod scriptum est: Cum his qui oderunt pacem eram pacificus; cum loquebar illis, debellabant me gratis.” See Psalm 120:7.

On Augustine's account, the Donatists *cause* much more suffering than they endure. They harm the church through their schism, and they harm individual Catholics through Circumcellion mob violence.<sup>248</sup>

While he does not equate Catholic bishops with martyrs, in the passage of above he paints the bishops as those who possess the essential qualities of a true martyr suffering at the hands of the Donatists. True martyrs suffer for the one true mediator between God and humanity; the Catholic bishops endure the scorn and violence of the Donatists for preaching unity with Christ the head and his body the church. True martyrs love their persecutors and pray for them; Augustine pleads for his listeners to pray that the Catholic bishops remain steadfast in fearlessly preaching the peace of the church and showing love to the Donatists, despite the Donatist hatred of Catholics. In their humility, true martyrs want Christ to be honored, not themselves; the Catholic bishops preach peace and unity with Christ the head and his church, which is made up of bishops and laity from all across the nations, not peace and unity with one particular bishop (like Donatus) in one geographic region.<sup>249</sup> Like a martyr praying for his persecutors as he is suffering, Augustine prays for the healing of the Donatists: "And if they are not able to be healed in another manner, let them wage war against us, let them smite us, let them strike us down, and even still, let them be healed."<sup>250</sup>

In his concluding comments in *s.* 198, Augustine re-emphasizes the humility that Christ the true mediator demonstrated in the Incarnation in order to exhort his listeners to follow in the

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<sup>248</sup> Augustine alludes to an incident in which by God's mercy he escaped an attempted attack from the Circumcellions.

<sup>249</sup> *s.* 198.45 As we will see in chapter 4, Augustine further implements this ecclesiological argument against the Donatists in his anti-Donatist writings.

<sup>250</sup> *s.* 198.45 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 125): "Et si aliter sanari non possunt, debellent nos, feriant, occident, et tamen sanentur."

way of Christ's humility and reject the pride of the false mediators of the pagans.<sup>251</sup> The pagans have despised the way of humility and have chosen the pride of the devil and demons, who deceptively present themselves as mediators and ensnare humanity with "the sacraments of demons and magical arts."<sup>252</sup> Christians, however, are to hold on to the way of humility demonstrated by Christ, the only mediator, the only one who purges sin through his mediation, and the only one who unites humanity to God.<sup>253</sup> Augustine develops each of these ideas in his major treatises *De trinitate* and *De ciuitate Dei*.

### **False Mediators and Christ the True Mediator in *De trinitate* and *De ciuitate Dei***

The relationship between Augustine's theology of Christ the mediator and his understanding of martyrdom culminates in his mature theology expressed in his major treatises *De trinitate* and *De ciuitate Dei*.<sup>254</sup> In these works, Augustine coherently develops his earlier discussion from s. 198 on humanity's need for a mediator to attain to God and the difference between the false mediators and Jesus Christ the true mediator. I pause in this section from a discussion of martyrdom in order to delve into these important developments of Augustine's Christology, which shapes how he understands the martyrs as witnesses to Christ the mediator and as conquerors of the false mediators.

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<sup>251</sup> s. 198.58–63.

<sup>252</sup> s. 198.63 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 140, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 228): "Adtendite etiam eos qui de talibus rebus praesumunt et sacrilegis daemnoirum sacramentis atque artibus magicis obligan animas lucis...."

<sup>253</sup> s. 198.62.

<sup>254</sup> Following Fitzgerald's *Augustine through the Ages*, the dates of *trin.* range from 399–422/426 (il) and *ciu.* dates range from 413–427 (xlili).

The meat of Augustine’s discussion on mediation on these works occurs in Book IV of *De trinitate* and then proceeds to Books VIII, IX, and X of *De ciuitate Dei*.<sup>255</sup> While *De trinitate* Book IV makes no mention of the martyrs, here Augustine develops important points related to Christ’s mediation, Christ’s participation in humanity unto humanity’s participation in divinity, and the purification of sins. *De ciuitate Dei* further develops these ideas and then makes an explicit connection between these themes, the worship of the one true God, and the martyrs.

In *De trinitate* and *De ciuitate Dei*, the term *mediator* is most often used to describe Jesus Christ as the mediator between God and humanity with frequent references to 1 Timothy 2:5, *There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus*.<sup>256</sup> However, he also uses the term numerous times to refer to false mediators—the devil and his demons, including the pagan gods and *eudaimones*—that hinder the faithful from clinging to God in charity.<sup>257</sup> At other times, he uses the word to describe the requirements of a good mediator without a specific reference to Jesus Christ.<sup>258</sup> Augustine employs variants of *medium* in *De ciuitate Dei* primarily in his references to pagan gods and refutation of the Platonic concept of *eudaimones* or “good demons”

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<sup>255</sup> Because of the similarity of the material, Edmund Hill posits that these portions of these treatises were likely written around the same time. See Edmund Hill, “Introductory Essay on Book IV,” WSA, *On the Trinity*, I/5, 150.

<sup>256</sup> For the use of *mediator* for Christ, see *trin.* I.7.14, 16, 17; I.10.20, 21; III.9.26; IV.7.11; IV.8.12; IV.10.13; IV.12.15; IV.13.16, 17, 18, 19; IV.15.20; IV.16.22, 23; VI.9.10; XII.12.18; XIII.10.13; XIII.17.22; XIII.18.23; XIII.19.24; XIV.17.23; XIV.19.26; XIV.23.44. See also *ciu.* IX.9, 15, 17; X.6, 20, 22, 24, 32; XI.2; XVII.5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 18, 20; XVIII.18, 33, 47, 51; XX.26; XXI.26. In some of these chapters, the word appears multiple times. Despite the frequency of occurrences of the word *mediator* in Book XVII, all are simply quick references to prefigurations of Christ the mediator in the Old Testament and lack any detailed discussion of the nature of Christ’s mediation. However, a closer look at the ways in which Augustine interprets various Old Testament figures and events as foreshadowings of Christ’s mediation seems like a potentially fruitful contribution to his understanding of Christ the mediator.

<sup>257</sup> For the use of *mediator/es* for the devil, his demons, pagan gods and/or *eudaimones*, see *trin.* IV.10.13; IV.12.15; IV.13.17, 18. See also *ciu.* IX.9, 15, 18.

<sup>258</sup> For the use of *mediator* that makes no direct reference to Christ or demons, see *ciu.* IX.15, 17. His purpose in doing this is to build his argument that Jesus is the only one qualified to be the mediator that humanity needs.

acting as intermediaries between humanity and the gods.<sup>259</sup> He uses this term *medium* once in *De ciuitate Dei* in reference to Jesus Christ in order to assert that Christ is the only true *medium* but then he quickly shifts to the Scriptural term *mediator* to continue describing Christ as the only true mediator.<sup>260</sup>

### ***The Mediation of Christ in De trinitate***

In Books II and III of *De trinitate*, Augustine has introduced the reader to the topic of divine mission in his discussion of the Old Testament theophanies.<sup>261</sup> In Book IV, he speaks of the divine mission of the Son in terms of mediation, which involved his being Incarnate and becoming a sacrifice for sin.<sup>262</sup> Moreover, he speaks of the mediation of Christ in terms of participation. Implementing his famous Christological rule from Philippians 2.6-7,<sup>263</sup> Augustine notes the Jesus Christ is mediator in respect to his humanity, not his divinity. In the form of God—i.e., as true God—he is equal to the Father. In the form of a servant—i.e., assuming humanity—he became a partaker (*particeps*) in humanity and thus became the one true mediator who intercedes for humanity in order to reconcile and unite them to God.

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<sup>259</sup> For the use of *medium/medii* for pagan gods and *eudaimones*, see *ciu.* II.21; III.20; VIII.14, 24; IX.7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 23; X.1. Augustine uses the term in X.23 and X.29 to describe Porphyry's understanding of the Holy Spirit as a sort of intermediary principle between the Father and the Son. It is used in various other places simply to refer to "middle," such as Noah's middle son (XVI.3) or the two middle/intermediary elements of air and water (XXII.11).

<sup>260</sup> *ciu.* IX.15.

<sup>261</sup> In Book III he makes a noteworthy reference to angels and mediation. He concludes that angels were in fact involved in the Old Testament theophanies. Their involvement, however, does not make them mediators. Christ alone is the one true mediator between God and humanity. See *trin.* III.9.26.

<sup>262</sup> For a helpful overview of how Augustine prepares the reader for his discussion of Christ's mediation and what key themes of mediation that Augustine highlights in Book IV, see Hill, "Introductory Essay on Book IV," 147–51. See also Matthew Levering, *The Theology of Augustine: An Introductory Guide to His Most Important Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 153–61.

<sup>263</sup> Augustine applies this interpretive rule to state that Scriptures that denote Christ's equality with the Father (such as John 1:1) are spoken of in respect to Christ in the form of God and Scriptures that speak of the Son as less than the Father (such as John 14:8) are spoken in respect to Christ in the form of a servant. See *trin.* I.7.14.



Thus the Son of God and Word of God, who is at the same time the mediator (*mediator*) between God and humanity and the Son of Man, equal to the Father by the oneness of divinity and our partaker by the assumption of humanity, interceding with the Father on our behalf insofar as he was human, yet not being silent that he was one with the Father as God; and among other things saying: “Yet I do not pray on behalf of these,” he says, “but for all who are going to believe in me through their word, that they all may be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, and they themselves may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory which you have given me, that they may be one even as we are one.”<sup>264</sup>

This oneness for which Christ prays, Augustine says, is a oneness of charity. The work of Christ the mediator cleanses the faithful, who are his body, that they may be one in charity with Christ, the head of the church. By virtue of the incarnation, Christ the mediator shares the same humanity as the faithful.<sup>265</sup> While the Incarnation united Christ the head and the members of his body in virtue of their shared humanity, Christ by his mediation intended to accomplish a oneness of wills, such that Christ and the faithful are “fused in a certain manner by the fire of charity into one spirit.”<sup>266</sup> This fusion of wills by the fire of love unites individual members of Christ’s body to the head and the members to one another. Christ prays that just as he, the Word made flesh, is one with the Father in substance (in respect to his divinity) and in will (in respect to his humanity), his members would be one with him not only in sharing the same human nature, “but also one in the same fellowship of love.”<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> *trin.* IV.8.12 (CCSL 50: 176–77): “Sic ipse *filius dei, uerbum dei* et idem ipse *mediator dei et hominum filius hominis, aequalis patri* per diuinitatis unitatem et particeps noster per humanitatis susceptionem, patrem interpellans pro nobis per id quod *homo* erat nec tamen tacens quod *deus* cum patre unum erat et inter cetera ita loquitur: *Non pro his autem rogo*, inquit, *tantum sed et pro eis qui credituri sunt per uerbum eorum in me ut omnes unum sint sicut tu pater in me et ego in te, ut et ipsi in nobis unum sint, ut mundus credat quia tu me misisti. et ego claritatem quam dedisti mihi dedi illis ut sint unum sicut et nos unum sumus.*” This echoes a well-known Christological passage in *en. Ps.* 56.5 (CCSL 39: 698). See Daley, *God Visible*, 152.

<sup>265</sup> This includes a human body, soul, and mind. From the earliest days of his conversion, as Augustine records in *conf.* VII, Augustine assumed that the Incarnation entailed the Word’s assumption of a human mind, since the Scriptures mention emotional changes occurring in Jesus Christ. See Daley, *God Visible*, 152.

<sup>266</sup> *trin.* IV.9.12 (CCSL 50: 177): “...in unum spiritum quodam modo caritatis igne conflatam.”

<sup>267</sup> *trin.* IV.9.12 (CCSL 50: 178), trans. Hill, WSA, *The Trinity*, I/5, 166): “sed etiam per eandem dilectionis societatem *unum sint.*” As I will discuss in chapter 4, true martyrs possess this bond of charity with Christ and his

For Augustine, the primary act of the intercession of Christ is his work as the one true mediator. His mediation cleanses the faithful and enables them to participate in divinity. Since the fall, the rational minds of humanity have been darkened by evil passions and unbelief; human beings were thus severed from God and dead in their sins.<sup>268</sup> To heal humanity of their darkness and unbelief, the Word of God became flesh.<sup>269</sup> The enlightenment of humanity is “participation in the Word” who is the “life which is the light of humanity.”<sup>270</sup> Because of sin, humanity was both unable and unworthy to participate in such light and to contemplate God without the cleansing of the righteous man, the Word made flesh, whose partaking in our mortality would make us partakers of his divinity.<sup>271</sup>

In *s.* 198, we saw how Augustine discusses human beings’ need for a mediator that would purify their souls of sin and enable them to attain to God. This mediator needed a share in the superior qualities of God and in the inferior qualities of human beings. The devil and his demons share in God’s immortality and in humanity’s sin; therefore, they are in fact mediators, but bad ones that block the way to God instead of help people attain to God. Christ the Incarnate Word is

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members; the Donatists have severed themselves from the Christ’s body through schism, and their martyrs are not true martyrs because they lack this bond of charity.

<sup>268</sup> *trin.* IV.1.3 (CCSL 50: 163): “Tenebrae autem caecatae sunt mentes hominum prava cupiditate atque infidelitate caecatae.”

<sup>269</sup> *trin.* IV.2.4 (CCSL 50: 163): “Has ut curaret atque sanaret uerbum, per quod facta sunt omnia, caro factum est et habitauit in nobis.” See Hill, WSA, *The Trinity*, I/5, 155.

<sup>270</sup> *trin.* IV.2.4 (CCSL 50: 163): “Inluminatio quippe nostra participatio uerbi est, illius scilicet uitae quae lux est hominum.” See Hill, WSA, *The Trinity*, I/5, 155.

<sup>271</sup> *trin.* IV.2.4 (CCSL 50: 164): “Adiungens ergo nobis similitudinem humanitatis suae abstulit dissimilitudinem iniquitatis nostrae, et factus particeps mortalitatis nostrae fecit participes diuinitatis suae.”

the true mediator that shares in the Father's immortality and righteousness and in our human nature, but not in our sin.<sup>272</sup>

In *trin.*, Augustine frames this same topic regarding a worthy mediator between God and humanity in terms of likeness/unlikeness and participation in humanity/participation in divinity. A worthy mediator between God and humanity needed a certain *likeness* with humanity and God and a certain *unlikeness* with humanity and God. Because we are human, we needed a human mediator. Because we needed reconciliation with God, we needed a mediator who was also God to cleanse us of sin and unite to God. Therefore, a proper cleansing that would make human beings righteous and allow them to contemplate God required that the object of our contemplation (God) become a righteous human being who participated in our humanity, but not in our sin. Only the blood of one who is at once God and human and had no sin could cleanse the sin of the unrighteous:

Furthermore, the cleansing of the unrighteous and the proud is the blood of the righteous one and the humility of God; in order for us to contemplate God, which by nature we are not, we must be cleansed by him who was made what by nature we are and what by sin we are not. For by nature we are not God; by nature we are human beings; by sin we are not righteous. Accordingly, God, having become a righteous human, interceded with God on behalf of sinful humanity. For the righteous one did not coincide with the sinner, but the human coincided with human beings. Therefore by joining with us in the likeness of his humanity, he takes away the unlikeness of our iniquity; and becoming a partaker of our mortality, he has made us partakers in his divinity.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> To be sure, the devil and his demons receive their immortality not from themselves, but from God. The immortality of Jesus Christ, who is true God, however, possesses immortality as God.

<sup>273</sup> *trin.* IV.2.4 (CCSL 50: 163–64): “porro iniquorum et superborum una mundatio est sanguis iusti et humilitas dei, ut ad contemplandum deum quod natura non sumus per eum mundaremur factum quod natura sumus et quod peccato non sumus. deus enim natura non sumus; homines natura sumus; iusti peccato non sumus. deus itaque factus homo iustus intercessit deo pro homine peccatore. non enim congruit peccator iusto, sed congruit homini homo. adiungens ergo nobis similitudinem humanitatis suae abstulit dissimilitudinem iniquitatis nostrae, et factus particeps mortalitatis nostrae fecit participes diuinitatis suae.” C.f. s. 47.12.21. Daley, *God Visible*, 168.

The work of a worthy mediator, then, requires both a likeness and an unlikeness with both of the parties for whom he intercedes. The Word made flesh remained *like* the Father in his divinity while becoming *unlike* the Father in his assumption of mortality. He took on the *likeness* of humanity with sinful human beings while remaining *unlike* us by being righteous.<sup>274</sup> Partaking in our humanity without partaking in our unrighteousness qualifies him as a worthy mediator to cleanse humanity of unrighteousness and cause them to partake in his own divinity and righteousness.<sup>275</sup> As Brian Daley notes, this exchange that occurs in Christ's assumption of our likeness to remove our iniquity and cause human beings to participate in divinity forms the foundation for Augustine's theology of divinization.<sup>276</sup>

For Augustine, unrighteousness is proper to humanity's fallen *condition*, not to human *nature*; therefore, our unrighteousness is a result of sin, not a result of human nature. Thus, Christ's sinlessness makes him no less a human being.<sup>277</sup> The participation of the righteous one in humanity makes sinful human beings participate in his divinity. This is not to say that all humans throughout all time have now become partakers in divinity because of the Incarnation. The Incarnation, rather, is the source of humanity's participation in divinity. Only the faithful,

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<sup>274</sup> C.f. *s.* 240.5

<sup>275</sup> Augustine's theology of participation as it relates to worship and imitation of Christ will be discussed further in the next chapter. As we will see below, Augustine's argument for the necessity of a true mediator possessing likeness and unlikeness with each party is the precise reason that Augustine in *De ciuitate Dei* rejects the assertion of certain Platonist philosophers that "good demons" (*eudaimones*) can serve as adequate intermediaries between God and humanity.

<sup>276</sup> Daley, *God Visible*, 168.

<sup>277</sup> Augustine makes this same point in *s.* 198.5. Christ took on our humanity without committing sin, even though he bore the sins of his people. Moreover, Augustine states in this passage, the fact that Christ committed no sin means he is not indebted to death. His death was for the redemption of the faithful from their own debt to death. See also *s.* 198.39. Christ shares in our mortality, but not in our sins. Had he sinned, he would not be capable of being our mediator. Satan the false mediator, on the other hand, shares in humanity's sin, but not in humanity's mortality.

who cling to God in faith, hope, and charity, become participants in Christ the mediator's divinity.

### ***The Devil and Demons as False Mediators in De trinitate***

Augustine continues his discourse on Christ the mediator in *De trinitate* by comparing him with the false mediator, the devil. Satan is the prideful mediator and Christ is the humble mediator. The basic arguments he made on these topics are, again, found in s. 198. However, in *De trinitate*, Augustine places greater emphasis on exactly *what* each mediator is mediating. The devil and the false mediators are mediating *death* and Jesus Christ the true mediator is mediating *life*. Humanity, he says, is “defiled and estranged by the mediator of death” but “cleansed and reconciled by the mediator of life.”<sup>278</sup> The “haughty devil” who *fell* “led haughty human beings down with him to death,” but “in humility, Christ” who *arose from the dead* “brought obedient human beings back to life” and “raised up the ones who in humility believed in him.”<sup>279</sup> The devil's *ascent* to pride resulted in his dreadful *fall*, and those who obey him share in his demise. Christ's *descent* in humility by his Incarnation resulted in his glorious *rising*, and those who believe in him will share in his resurrection life.

Similar to his discussion in s. 198, Augustine describes in *De trinitate* how the devil and the pagan powers, which are demons, deceived human beings into offering sacred rites with promises of purification. Instead of raising people to God as a true mediator, the false mediator

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<sup>278</sup> *trin.* IV.10.13 (CCSL 50: 178, trans. Hill, WSA, *The Trinity*, I/5, 166): “Haec est uera pax et cum creatore nostro nobis firma conexio purgatis et reconciliatis per mediatorem uitae sicut maculati et alienati ab eo recesseramus per mediatorem mortis.”

<sup>279</sup> *trin.* IV.10.13 (CCSL 50: 178): “Sicut enim diabolus superbus hominem superbientem perduxit ad mortem, ita christus humilis hominem obedientem reduxit ad uitam; quia sicut ille elatus cecidit et deiecit consentientem, sic iste humiliatus surrexit et erexit credentem.”

inhibits human beings from the way to God by “inspiring [in them] the exceedingly haughty and wicked passion to be his fellow partners.”<sup>280</sup> What develops in *De trinitate*, however, is Augustine’s more pointed critiques of the Neoplatonic philosophers regarding their understanding of how to purge sins. Their attempt “to purge themselves for the contemplation of God and clinging to God according to their own virtue and power” reveals that they have “altogether defiled themselves with pride.”<sup>281</sup>

Moreover, in *De trinitate*, Augustine takes the discussion of mediation *backward* to the devil’s initial act of mediating death to humanity in the Garden of Eden and *forward* to the culmination of Christ mediating life to the faithful at the eschaton. Adam’s sin, he explains, served as “the way to death” for humanity, and Satan “was the mediator of this way, a convincer of this sin, and a precipitator of this death.”<sup>282</sup> This death was “our double death:” an immediate death in the soul and an eventual death in the body.<sup>283</sup> God was not the cause of this death, yet he justly appointed humans beings to it as punishment. Though human beings deserved this punishment of death for sin, God provided a means of healing humanity and restoring them to life: Christ righteously chose to die as a sacrifice for sin.<sup>284</sup>

To be sure, though the prideful devil and the mediator of death deceived humanity into sinning, humanity is guilty of consenting to his evil will. Christ the humble mediator of life

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<sup>280</sup> *trin.* IV.12.15. (CCSL50: 180): “...quia falsus mediator non traicit ad superiora, sed potius obsidens intercludit uiam per affectus quos tanto maligniores quanto superbiores suae societatis inspirat...”

<sup>281</sup> *trin.* IV.15.20 (CCSL 50: 187): “Sunt autem quidam qui se putant ad contemlandum deum et inhaerendum deo uirtute propria posse purgari, quos ipsa superbia maxime maculat.”

<sup>282</sup> *trin.* IV.12.15. (CCSL50: 180): “Via nobis fuit ad mortem *per peccatum in Adam*... Huius uiae mediator diabolus fuit, persuasor peccati et praecipitator in mortem...”

<sup>283</sup> *trin.* IV.12.15. (CCSL50: 180): “...nam et ipse ad operandam duplam mortem nostram simplam attulit suam.”

<sup>284</sup> *trin.* IV.12.15. In this passage, Augustine emphasizes both the legal and medicinal nature of salvation. For more on the medicinal nature of salvation in Augustine, see Isabelle Bochet, “Medicinam, medicus,” in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, eds. Cornelius Petrus Mayer et al. (Basel: Schwabe AG, 1986), 3: 1230–34.

chose death, not as a punishment for his own sin, but to save humanity from the punishment of death that it deserves. By his sacrificial death and resurrection, Christ has released the faithful from the devil's dominion and the guilt that held them in debt to the penalty of death.

[T]he true mediator of life...[who] revived his own dead flesh, has cast that dead spirit and mediator of death out of the spirits of those who believe in him, so now that one no longer reigns inside them, but only attacks them from the outside without being able to overthrow them.... The chains of many sins in many deaths were broken by the one death of one man which no sin had preceded.... By his death he offered for us the one truest possible sacrifice, and thereby purged, abolished, and destroyed whatever there was of guilt, for which the principalities and powers had a right to hold us bound to payment of the penalty; and by his resurrection he called to new life us who were predestined, justified us who were called, glorified us who were justified."<sup>285</sup>

In *s.* 198, Augustine emphasized the purifying power of the Catholic Church's sacraments, which derive their efficacy from the mediation of Christ the true mediator and head of the church. In *De trinitate*, Augustine emphasizes the purifying power of faith.<sup>286</sup> The faithful, Augustine says, are continually purified by faith until that faith becomes sight at the eschaton. When this occurs, then "our mortality will completely attain immortality."<sup>287</sup> In *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine expands this comparison between bad mediators and the one true mediator and discusses mediation in relationship to the exemplary role of the martyrs.

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<sup>285</sup> *trin.* IV.13.17 (CCSL 50: 182–183, trans. Hill, WSA, *The Trinity*, I/5, 169): "Ille proinde qui spiritu uiuus carnem suam mortuam resuscitauit, uerus uitae mediator illum spiritum mortuum et mortis mediatorem ab spiritibus in se credentium foras misit ut non regnaret intrinsecus sed forinsecus oppugnaret nec tamen expugnaret... factum est enim ut uincula peccatorum multorum in multis mortibus per unius unam mortem quam peccatum nullum praecesserat soluerentur... Morte sua quippe uno uerissimo sacrificio pro nobis oblato quidquid culparum erat unde nos principatus et potestates ad luenda supplicia iure detinebant purgauit, aboleuit, exstinxit, et sua resurrectione in nouam uitam nos *praedestinos uocauit, uocatos iustificauit, iustificatos glorificauit.*" This passage recalls *s.* 198.40, where he emphasizes that Christ was made subject to death without becoming a debtor to death through sin. His subjection to death without deserving death was what freed the faithful from their own death and mortality to which they were indebted through sin.

<sup>286</sup> This is not to say that Augustine prioritizes one's inner disposition of faith over external participation in the sacraments.

<sup>287</sup> *trin.* IV.18.24 (CCSL 50: 192): "cum fides nostra uidendo fiet ueritas, tunc mortalitatem nostram commutatam tenebit aeternitas."

### *False Mediators in De ciuitate Dei*

In *De ciuitate Dei*, the discussion of false mediators and Christ the true mediator falls within the context of a polemic against pagan philosophers, especially the Platonists. As Matthew Levering notes, Augustine aims with this treatise “to defend the City of God and its founder—the Church and Christ Jesus—against those who trust in pagan gods.”<sup>288</sup> After his initial counterarguments in Books I-V to the pagan claims that Rome has fallen because it has abandoned its ancient gods, Augustine focuses his discussion on a refutation of pagan philosophers in Books VI-X. Mediation receives the greatest attention in Books VIII, IX, and X. In the latter two books, the martyrs appear as witnesses to Christ’s mediation and conquerors of the false mediators through the one true mediator.

As he does in *De trinitate*, Augustine emphasizes the participatory and purgatorial nature of Christ’s mediation; i.e., Christ participates in our humanity to purge us of sin unto our participation in his divinity. Two other topics, however, are deeply integrated into Augustine’s discussion of mediation in *De ciuitate Dei*: 1) the delineation between the true worship of God and the false worship of demons and 2) the eternal misery of the false mediators and the eternal blessedness of the one true mediator.<sup>289</sup> Against the Platonist philosophers, Augustine argues that only the worship of the one true God can lead to everlasting blessedness. Moreover, only Jesus Christ serves as the true mediator for humanity to attain immortality and blessedness.

Like Christians, the Platonists rightly believe in the love and worship of the supreme God, and they believe this God to be immaterial, immutable, simple, uncreated, creator of all

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<sup>288</sup> Matthew Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, 114.

<sup>289</sup> Whereas both of these theological emphases will be discussed, the subject of the true worship of God will be taken up further in the next chapter.



things, and the source of all being, goodness, truth, and beatitude.<sup>290</sup> The Platonists are superior to other philosophers and most like Christians because “they have discerned with their understanding of God where is the cause of the established universe, where to perceive the light of truth, and where to drink from the font of blessedness.”<sup>291</sup> However, they seriously err in holding that the gods are to be worshipped.<sup>292</sup>

Certain philosophers like the African Platonist Apuleius of Madaura (c. 125–c. 180) even believe that human beings must worship not only gods, but demons. Human beings, these Platonists say, need the demons as intermediaries to participate in the eternal blessedness of the gods.<sup>293</sup> However, Augustine follows the logical conclusion of Apuleius’s discussion of the demons as intermediaries to turn this argument of the Platonists on its head. By emphasizing the need for intermediaries to share the qualities of both parties which they represent, Augustine demonstrates that the demons are not good mediators to be honored and appeased with sacrifices. Instead, the demons are bad mediators that mediate death and eternal misery.

According to Platonists like Apuleius, all rational beings are categorized into three groups: gods, demons, and human beings. The demons are lower than the gods but higher than human beings. Like the gods, they possess immortality; like human beings, they are subject to

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<sup>290</sup> *ciu.* VIII.6.

<sup>291</sup> *ciu.* VIII.10 (CCSL 47: 227): “...isti Deo cognito reppererunt ubi esset et causa constitutae uniuersitatis et lux percipiendae ueritatis et fons bibendae felicitates.” For Augustine’s longer explanation of why he ranks the Platonists higher than all of the philosophers, see *ciu.* VIII.5–12.

<sup>292</sup> *ciu.* VIII.13. Augustine here discusses the contradictory opinions of Platonists like Labeo, who thinks that there exist both evil and good divinities, with Plato himself, who held that only good gods existed. Since all gods are good, Plato reasoned, all are worthy of honor. The wicked so-called gods that required debaucherous plays to be performed in their honor were not gods, but demons. For Labeo, evil gods required appeasement with blood sacrifices and good gods required appeasement with joyful, entertaining plays and activities.

<sup>293</sup> *ciu.* VIII.14. Apuleius, Augustine says, admits in his book *On the God of Socrates* (but not in the book title) that the God of Socrates is in fact *not* a god, but a demon. Augustine takes plenty of opportunities to point out how Apuleius’s arguments are inconsistent with Plato, Apuleius himself, and the sound reason of any devout person.

the passions.<sup>294</sup> Even though Apuleius admits the debase morals of the demons, he regards them as higher than human beings in virtue of their aerial location above human beings and their immortality.<sup>295</sup> The gods are so superior to humanity that human beings need the demons to serve as intermediaries between them and the gods to attain to the eternal blessedness of the gods. If the demons are properly honored and appeased with sacrifices, the demons report the desires of human beings to the gods and return to human beings with the responses of the gods.<sup>296</sup>

In order for the demons to be intermediaries between the gods and human beings, they must share qualities of both. The superior qualities of the gods include “lofty location, eternity, and blessedness,” and the inferior qualities of humanity include “lowly location, mortality, and misery.”<sup>297</sup> Since the gods are in the highest place and human beings in the lowest (in terms of rational beings), and since there is a vast separation between the two, then demons, Augustine agrees, must possess their own unique quality of “intermediate location.”<sup>298</sup> Thus, the demons share one superior characteristic with the gods (eternity/immortality) and one quality proper to themselves (intermediate location). What remains in order for the demons to qualify as intermediaries, Augustine points out, is one shared quality with humanity.

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<sup>294</sup> *ciu.* VIII.14.

<sup>295</sup> In fact, Augustine notes, Apuleius is clear that demons never progress in wisdom and virtue such that they become gods; they remain demons that are subject to the passions forever. See *ciu.* IX.10.

<sup>296</sup> *ciu.* VIII.18. As discussed above, Augustine uses the word *medium* more often than *mediator* in references to the *eudaimones*, but the function of the words is essentially the same. Christ, on the other hand, is most often referred to as *mediator*, not *medium*. Perhaps these preferred uses are to emphasize further that Christ is the one true mediator.

<sup>297</sup> *ciu.* IX.12 (CCSL 47: 260, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 291): *tria igitur ab eo posita sunt deorum, id est locus sublimis, aeternitas, beatitudo; et his contraria tria hominum, id est locus infimus, mortalitas, miseria.*”

<sup>298</sup> *ciu.* IX.13 (CCSL 47: 260, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 291): “*Inter haec terna deorum et hominum quoniam daemones medios posuit, de loco nulla est controuersia; inter sublimem quippe et infimum medius locus aptissime habetur et dicitur.*”

Here Augustine argues for the foolishness of Apuleius and the Platonists in thinking that the demons can serve as reliable mediators of the eternal blessedness of the gods. Again, demons must possess one of the inferior qualities of lowly location, mortality, or misery in order to be intermediaries.<sup>299</sup> Since demons reside in an intermediate location, the human quality of lowly location is off the table. Since the demons are eternal, the human quality of mortality is also not an option. Therefore, the only remaining inferior quality they could possess to qualify as intermediaries between the gods and human beings must be *misery*.<sup>300</sup> Since Apuleius has defined them as subject to the passions who do not progress in wisdom or virtue, these demons are certainly not blessed but miserable. Because of their eternity and their immense wickedness, they are *eternally* miserable.<sup>301</sup>

For Augustine, this logical end of the Platonists' argument eliminates the possibility of their notion of "good demons" (*eudaimones*) as intermediaries. In order to be a true intermediary between "blessed immortals" (the gods) and "miserable mortals" (human beings), then even so-called "good demons" must either possess mortality and blessedness or immortality and

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<sup>299</sup> *ciu.* IX.12.

<sup>300</sup> *ciu.* IX.13 (CCSL 47: 260): "Porro quia prouidentia summi dei, sicut etiam ipsi fatentur, non fortuita temeritate regitur mundus, numquam esset istorum aeterna miseria, nisi esset magna malitia." See Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1-10)*, I/6, 292.

<sup>301</sup> *ciu.* IX.13. Augustine makes a couple of important clarifications to argue for the necessarily miserable condition of the demons. One might ask: Since the Platonists rightly attribute an intermediate status to the demons' quality of location, such that demons are neither in the lofty location of the gods nor in the lowly location of human beings, why could one not also attribute a sort of intermediate status to the other qualities? In other words, why could the other two qualities of demons not also possess an intermediate status between immortality/mortality and blessedness/misery, such that the demons are semi-immortal/semi-mortal and semi-blessed/semi-miserable? To do so, Augustine argues, would be a logical fallacy. All beings either live forever or at some point die; there is no middle ground for this quality. Also, the demons are rational beings, not inanimate objects like plants nor irrational beings like animals that lack reason. Thus, they are necessarily either blessed or miserable. While Apuleius says that the demons are subject to the passions, he fails to admit that this liability to the passions necessarily makes them miserable.

misery.<sup>302</sup> They certainly do not possess mortality, as the Platonists admit. Even good demons are forever subject to the passions, so how could they possess blessedness? Besides, if “good demons” were to possess immortality and blessedness, they would lack an inferior quality with humanity and thus disqualify as mediators between humanity and the gods.<sup>303</sup>

Demons, including those falsely called “good demons” can and do in fact serve as mediators, but only as *bad* mediators.<sup>304</sup> They qualify as mediators because they possess the superior quality of immortality and the inferior quality of misery.<sup>305</sup> But they serve as unworthy mediators because they do not possess goodness or blessedness. Because they lack these qualities, they cannot aid humanity in attaining them. The demons wickedly lure men into sin with their immortality and deceive humanity into offering them worship that they know God alone deserves.<sup>306</sup> Because humanity seeks immortality, which is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for true blessedness, they easily succumb to this seduction and become enslaved to demons.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> *ciu.* IX.13 (CCSL 47: 261): “ita ergo cum quaerimus medium inter beatos inmortales miseros que mortales, hoc inuenire debemus, quod aut mortale sit beatum, aut inmortale sit miserum.” See Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1-10)*, I/6, 292.

<sup>303</sup> *ciu.* IX.13. This, for Augustine, is precisely the reason that angels, who are immortal and blessed, cannot be mediators between God and human beings. See *ciu.* IX.15.

<sup>304</sup> Augustine seems open to grant that what the Platonists call “good demons” or even “good gods” may equate what Christians understand to be good angels. Both groups, after all, affirm the existence of blessed, immortal beings created by the uncreated Creator. However, he clarifies two important points. First, Scripture speaks of good and evil angels, but never of good demons. To call a good angel a good demon is to cause unnecessary confusion and to undermine the use of the word “demon” in Scripture, which always equates demons with evil spirits. Second, truly blessed, immortal beings that are created, whether one calls them angels or lesser “gods,” neither deserve nor desire to be worshipped. They desire to worship God alone and want humanity to worship God alone. Any created, immortal being desiring worship is neither good nor blessed, but evil and miserable. See *ciu.* IX.19.22.23.

<sup>305</sup> *ciu.* IX.13.

<sup>306</sup> *ciu.* IX.13, 20.

<sup>307</sup> *ciu.* IX.15.

Since the demons are unreliable mediators who inhibit the way to God and his blessed immortality, human beings needed a true mediator to mediate blessedness and eternal life. A reliable mediator for human beings must share one of their lowly qualities yet also possesses the higher qualities to which they aspire. Thus, they needed a mediator, “who is not only man but is also God, so that the blessed mortality of this intermediary may, by his intervention, lead men from their mortal misery to blessed immortality.”<sup>308</sup> Moreover, they needed a mediator who shares in mortality, but who “[does] not remain mortal.”<sup>309</sup> Jesus Christ fulfilled these needs.<sup>310</sup> He is the eternal and immortal Word of God who became mortal yet did not remain so. In his divinity, Christ possesses the “permanent blessedness” (*beatitudinem permanentem*) to which humanity longs to attain.<sup>311</sup> In his humanity, Christ took on mortality and suffered death. But because he rose from the dead into immortal flesh, he is the only worthy mediator who can raise humanity into an immortal state.<sup>312</sup> Through the Incarnation, then, the eternal Son of God

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<sup>308</sup> *ciu.* IX.15 (CCSL 47: 262, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1-10)*, I/6, 296): “Si autem, quod multo credibilis et probabilis disputatur, omnes homines, quamdiu mortales sunt, etiam miseri sint necesse est, quaerendus est medius, qui non solum homo, uerum etiam deus sit, ut homines ex mortali miseria ad beatam immortalitatem huius medii beata mortalitas interueniendo perducat. . . .”

<sup>309</sup> *ciu.* IX.15 (CCSL 47: 262, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1-10)*, I/6, 296): “...quem neque non fieri mortalem oportebat, neque permanere mortalem.”

<sup>310</sup> C.f., *conf.* X.42.67. Augustine reflects on the deceitful tactics of the devil. Though the devil lacks human flesh, he lures humanity with his immortality into offering sacred rites to the spiritual powers in order to offer purification. Humanity, however, needed a mediator who shared mortality with humans and immortality and blessedness with God.

<sup>311</sup> *ciu.* IX.15 (CCSL 47: 262, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1-10)*, I/6, 293): “Proinde mediatorem inter nos et Deum et mortalitatem habere oportuit transeuntem et beatitudinem permanentem. . . .”

<sup>312</sup> None of Christ’s divinity, to be clear, was lost during the Incarnation. He maintains the fullness of his divinity while taking on the fullness of humanity. The Word did not discard the immortality proper to the divine nature; yet he assumed flesh that was temporary mortal until he raised it from the dead. See *ciu.* IX.15 (CCSL 47: 262): “mortalis quippe factus est non infirmata uerbi diuinitate, sed carnis infirmitate suscepta; non autem permansit in ipsa carne mortalis, quam resuscitauit a mortuis; quoniam ipse est fructus mediationis eius, ut nec ipsi, propter quos liberandos mediator effectus est, in perpetua uel carnis morte remanerent.” C.f. *Enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide, spe et caritate* 10.35 [421-422]; *Io. eu. tr.* 19.15 [413]; *ep.* 137.8. As Daley notes, the language in these latter passages of the assertion of a single Son who is a single person anticipates Leo’s *Tome* and the Chalcedonian Definition. Daley, *God Visible*, 152 and 154.

became one with mortal humans so that, by his death and resurrection, mortal humans might become one with him in perpetual blessedness and immortality.<sup>313</sup>

As he does in *De trinitate*, Augustine emphasizes this theme of participation in God's blessedness and immortality in his discussion of Christ's mediation. "The blessed God," Augustine says, "is the one who makes us blessed; by participating in our humanity he has offered to us the benefit of participation in his divinity."<sup>314</sup> Because Christ the mediator as God possesses eternal blessedness, it is only by participation in the one true mediator that human beings can participate in eternal beatitude. Christ alone, not the multitude of bad mediators, leads human beings to blessedness:

Therefore there are many bad mediators that cause separation. The many who are blessed become blessed by participation in the one God. For this reason, these numerous evil angels, which are miserable because of a lack of this participation, place themselves as a hindrance. They set themselves as a deterrent to blessedness, not a help. By their multitude they roar against us, in a certain way, not so we can arrive at the one who is blessed and good, but we might be led away from him. It was the work not of *many* mediators, but of *one* mediator, and *only* this one, by participation in whom we might become blessed. This one mediator is the Word of God, who is not made, but by him all things are made.<sup>315</sup>

Human beings, as creatures, remain distinct from the divinity in which they participate. And to be sure, Jesus Christ is a mediator in respect to his humanity, not his divinity. As God He is "immortal and blessed in the highest degree, and so He is at a far distance from miserable

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<sup>313</sup> *ciu.* IX.15

<sup>314</sup> *ciu.* IX.15 (CCSL 47: 263): "...quia beatus et beatificus deus factus particeps humanitatis nostrae compendium praebuit participandae diuinitatis suae."

<sup>315</sup> *ciu.* IX.15 (CCSL 47: 263): "Et ideo multi sunt medii separatores, quia multitudo, quae beata est, unius dei participatione fit beata; cuius participationis priuatione misera multitudo malorum angelorum, quae se opponit potius ad impedimentum, quam interponit ad beatitudinis adiutorium, etiam ipsa multitudine obstrepat quodam modo, ne possit ad illud unum beatificum <bonum> perueniri, ad quod ut perduceremur, non multis sed uno mediatore opus erat, et hoc eo ipso, cuius participatione simus beati, hoc est uerbo dei non facto, per quod facta sunt omnia." Emphasis mine.

mortals.”<sup>316</sup> However, by the Word’s participation in humanity, including a temporary participation in mortality, the faithful may participate in the blessedness and immortality of the uncreated Word of God.

Also, Jesus Christ is a better mediator than the Platonist mediators because he leads human beings *directly*, not indirectly, to God and God’s own blessedness and immortality. The Platonists believe that as intermediaries, the demons *indirectly* lead human beings into participation in the blessed immortality of God. Because the uncreated God is supremely higher than miserable mortals, the Platonists say, human beings may not come into direct contact with God and his own blessed immortality. Through the intermediaries, they continue, human beings may participate in the blessed immortality that the uncreated God has granted to the lesser gods, who are lower than God but higher than the demons. Therefore, none of the Platonist mediators lead humanity directly to God and his blessed immortality. Jesus Christ, however, does not lead human beings to participate in the blessed immortality of created beings, such as angels.<sup>317</sup> By the Incarnation of the Word who is both life and the way of life, humanity receives *direct contact* with the Trinity, with God’s own blessedness, and God’s own immortality.<sup>318</sup>

Jesus Christ, then, is the only true and worthy mediator between God and humanity who mediates eternal life and blessedness. The devil and his demons are bad mediators who mediate

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<sup>316</sup> *ciu.* IX.15 (CCSL 47: 263): “Nec tamen ob hoc mediator est, quia uerbum; maxime quippe inmortale et maxime beatum uerbum longe est a mortalibus miseris; sed mediator, per quod homo....” See Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1-10)*, I/6, 294.

<sup>317</sup> *ciu.* IX.15. Augustine concedes that the Platonist notion of the good gods as blessed, immortal beings created by the supreme God could equate the Christian understanding of angels (see note 304 above). Though the demons qualify as mediators (bad ones, to be sure), even the Christian conception of angels does not qualify these angels mediators between God and humanity at all. The angels possess blessedness and immortality, which they receive from God, but they lack all of the inferior qualities of fallen human beings. (See note 303 above).

<sup>318</sup> *ciu.* IX.15 (CCSL 47: 263): “neque enim nos a mortalitate et miseria liberans ad angelos inmortales beatos que ita perducit, ut eorum participatione etiam nos inmortales et beati simus; sed ad illam Trinitatem, cuius et angeli participatione beati sunt.”

eternal death and misery. Contrary to the argument of Apuleius and the Platonist philosophers, humanity is not to appease the demons, but to resist and overcome them through the one true mediator. Christ the true mediator, who “by the humility of his death and the kindness of his blessedness,” dismantled the demons’ grip over those “whose hearts he purifies by faith” and rescued them from the demons’ “foul dominion.”<sup>319</sup> Whereas all of the faithful overcome the false mediators through the one true mediator Jesus Christ, Augustine highlights a select portion of the faithful who have triumphed over the devil and his demons: the martyrs.

### **The Martyrs as Witnesses to Christ’s Mediation and His Triumph Over False Mediators**

#### *The Martyr Shrines as Witnesses of Christ’s Triumph over False Mediators*

The martyrs, for Augustine, are witnesses to Christ’s mediation and exemplars of Christians who have overcome the false mediators through the one mediator Jesus Christ. Before his sustained treatment of the martyrs in Book X of *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine makes two brief references to the victory of the martyrs in the first chapter of Book I and the end of Book VIII. In response to those who blamed the sack of Rome on the state’s adoption of Christianity, Augustine points out that many lives were spared by the armies of Alaric because they took refuge in martyr memorials and in basilicas.<sup>320</sup> The Romans are ungrateful, Augustine says, for the benefits they have received from the name of Christ and the refuge they found in martyr shrines and basilicas. However, Augustine also seems to be making a subtle point that will arise explicitly in Book X: Christ and his martyrs, in whose memorials both pagans and Christians alike sought refuge

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<sup>319</sup> *ciu.* IX.15 (CCSL 47, 262, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1-10)*, I/6, 293): “...et suae mortis humilitate et suae beatitudinis benignitate destruxit in eis, quorum corda per suam fidem mundans ab illorum inmundissima dominatione liberauit.”

<sup>320</sup> *ciu.* I.1.



during the sack of Rome, are more powerful and more reliable than the pagan gods to which many Romans of Augustine's time were wishing to return.

This point arises more directly in Book VIII when Augustine evaluates the lament of Hermes the Egyptian, who rued the replacement of the worship of gods in Egypt by the memorial tombs of the martyrs.<sup>321</sup> Augustine first clarifies that the martyrs are not worshipped as the pagan gods are worshipped. Rather, the sacrifices at the martyrs shrines are offered to God as the martyrs are remembered. God, the creator of the martyrs and all humankind, has caused the martyrs to join in "heavenly honor" with the holy angels; contrary to the propitiatory nature of pagan veneration of the gods, martyr veneration involves praying to the God of the martyrs, "offering thanks to the true God for their victories," remembering the deeds of the martyrs, and urging one another to imitate them.<sup>322</sup>

The words of the priest at the martyrs shrines, for Augustine, reveal the intentions of the priest and take priority over the possible intentions of misguided Christians. After all, no Christian priests ever explicitly say in their prayers that an offering is given to a martyr, unlike the pagan priests whose words and rites denote a clear intention to propitiate the gods.<sup>323</sup>

Augustine acknowledges that some Christians bring meals to the shrines, but he argues that these are "ornaments of their memorials" and not propitiatory offerings to the dead as if the dead were

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<sup>321</sup> *ciu.* VIII.26.

<sup>322</sup> *ciu.* VIII.27 (CCSL 47: 248): "Cum apud eorum memorias offeratur Deo, qui eos et homines et martyres fecit et sanctis suis angelis caelesti honore sociauit, ut ea celebritate et deo uero de illorum uictoriis gratias agamus et nos ad imitationem talium coronarum atque palmarum eodem inuocato in auxilium ex illorum memoriae renouatione adhortemur?" These subjects will be the focus of chapter 3.

<sup>323</sup> *ciu.* VIII.27. Augustine makes this same argument against the Manicheans in *Contra Faustum ad Manicheum* XX.21, and he reiterates this argument in *De ciuitate Dei* Book X in his discussion of the worship of God and the true sacrifice of Christians. His letters, however, reveal the struggle for bishops in various towns in North Africa and in other parts of the world, especially Rome, to regulate what he sees as excesses of the understanding and practice of martyr veneration. This topic will be further discussed in the next chapter.

gods.<sup>324</sup> Besides, he says, “better Christians” and most churches around the world do not participate in such a custom.<sup>325</sup>

The replacement of pagan temples with martyr memorials, for Augustine, proves the triumph of the martyrs over the pagan gods who are demons. Hermes’s lament was in fact a sign of the demons painfully “mourning the impending threat of their own future recompenses in the memorials of the holy martyrs.”<sup>326</sup> Their prophetic lament was fulfilled at many martyr shrines where they are “tormented, made known, and driven out of the bodies of those whom they possessed.”<sup>327</sup> Those who worship God and honor the martyrs at the shrines, therefore, proclaim and participate in the martyrs’ own victory over the demons.

### ***The Martyrs as Witnesses to Christ the Mediator***

In Book X of *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine describes the martyrs as witnesses to Christ the true mediator and to the superiority of Christianity over pagan religion and philosophy.

Porphyry, a Platonist of the third century, receives Augustine’s primary criticism in Book X. On

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<sup>324</sup> *ciu.* VIII.27 (CCSL 47: 248): “Quaecumque igitur adhibentur religiosorum obsequia in martyrum locis, ornamenta sunt memoriarum, non sacra uel sacrificia mortuorum tamquam deorum.”

<sup>325</sup> *ciu.* VIII.27 (CCSL 47: 248): “...(quod quidem a christianis melioribus non fit, et in plerisque terrarum nulla talis est consuetudo)...” His letters, however, reveal the struggle for bishops in various towns in North Africa and in other parts of the world, especially Rome, to regulate widespread participation in lavish banquets at martyr shrines and basilicas. That topic will be further discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>326</sup> *ciu.* VIII.26 (CCSL 47: 248): “Sed dolor daemonum per eum loquebatur, qui suas futuras poenas apud sanctorum martyrum memorias imminere maerebant.”

<sup>327</sup> *ciu.* VIII.26. (CCSL 47: 248): “In multis enim talibus locis torquentur et confitentur et de possessis hominum corporibus eiciuntur.” He does not specify whether these exorcisms refer to the exsufflation given at the rite of baptism (see *s.* 398.2) or to more demonstrative manifestations of demons being driven out of people. The former seems unlikely, as there seem to be no references to baptisms occurring at martyr shrines. The latter also seems more likely in light of his report in Book XXII of the healing at the shrine of Saint Stephen in Hippo of a brother and sister from Caesarea in Cappadocia. They suffered from violent trembling of their limbs after their mother had cursed them. Both collapsed into a sleep after touching the railings in the shrine and awoke completely healed, Augustine reports. See *ciu.* XXII.8. I discuss this reported miracle and others in chapter 5.

the one hand, Porphyry argues that the soul can be purified in some measure through theurgy, which consists of sacred rites to the demons and gods. On the other hand, Porphyry denies that such sacred rites are sufficient for a soul to return to God. The ritual practice of theurgy, he says, purifies part of the soul, but not the intellect, by which human beings contemplate divinity. Thus, he at once approves of theurgy yet denies its ability to grant blessed immortality.<sup>328</sup>

In the midst of pointing out what he sees as numerous inconsistencies in Porphyry's arguments, Augustine continues his assertion that the gods and demons to which the Platonists offer sacred rites and sacrifices are false mediators. Porphyry claimed that sacrifices and sacred rites offered to the demons and the gods could provide a partial, but not a complete, purification for souls. In essence, Augustine points out, Porphyry posits that evil divinities can injure humanity whenever they please; good divinities, however, can only aid human beings if the evil divinities are appeased. For Augustine, such a view subjects good divinities to evil ones. The gods, on Porphyry's account, are also in some sense limited by evil human beings. The theurgic arts of a priest attempting to achieve purification of someone's soul can be thwarted by another priest who doesn't want that soul to be purified.<sup>329</sup>

A major cause of Porphyry's rejection of the Incarnation and Christ's role as the only true mediator, Augustine argues, is the Platonist's prideful assumption that the flesh of Christ—precisely because it is flesh—could not possibly provide purification of sins.<sup>330</sup> According to Porphyry, only the principles (*principia*)—that is, the Father, the mind or intellect of the Father,

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<sup>328</sup> *ciu.* X.9.

<sup>329</sup> *ciu.* X.9–10. Augustine also points out this such a view subjects even the gods to the passions. The gods, according to Porphyry, feared the theurgic arts of a priest demanding evil such that they would not grant the appeal for good by a priest implementing the same theurgic rituals.

<sup>330</sup> *ciu.* X.24.

and an intermediate being between the two—can cleanse the intellect of the soul.<sup>331</sup> For Porphyry, flesh could not possibly purify one’s soul because the substance of flesh is defiled.<sup>332</sup> However, Augustine replies, Christ the Incarnate Word demonstrates that 1) sin, not the substance of flesh, is evil, 2) the Word could thus assume and abide in a human body and soul without becoming tainted by sin, 3) the Word could discard its flesh by death, and 4) the Word could transform and exalt that flesh by resurrection.<sup>333</sup> The flesh that the Word assumed, moreover, became the means by which human beings are purified. Augustine, on this point, drastically departs from the Platonist notions that flesh is at worst evil and at best an accommodation.

However, Augustine emphasizes that Christ’s flesh purifies humanity not in virtue of being flesh, but in virtue of being flesh assumed by the uncreated Logos. He reiterates the important clarification that Christ is the mediator, priest, and sacrifice in respect to his *humanity*, not in respect to his divinity: “Indeed, he offered this form; in this form he was offered, because according to this form he is the mediator, in this form his the priest, in this form he was sacrificed.”<sup>334</sup> The Word in humility assumed humanity without sin and thus became the

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<sup>331</sup> *ciu.* X.23 (CCSL 47: 296). Augustine takes this to be a misconstrued understanding of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For Augustine, Porphyry’s understanding of the *principia* is a careless description that aligns with neither the Plotinian understanding of three *principia* nor the Christian understanding of the Trinity.

<sup>332</sup> *ciu.* X.23.

<sup>333</sup> *ciu.* X.24. Augustine’s discussion of the Word setting aside human flesh at the Incarnation raises questions regarding the nature of the union of humanity and divinity in Christ. Is Augustine suggesting that death dissolved the union and that the union was restored at Christ’s resurrection? As Daley notes, elsewhere Augustine clarifies that death resulted in a separation of the mortal body and the human soul of Christ, which is inseparably united to the Word. The union of divinity and humanity, then, was not dissolved at Christ’s death for Augustine. See Daley, *God Visible*, 153. See *Ioannis Evangelium Tractatus* 47.10 [413]. C.f. *Sermo* Denis 5.1 (*Miscellanea Augustiniana* 1.26); *c. Faustum* 12.35 [397-398]; *ep.* 164.5.14 [c. 414].

<sup>334</sup> *ciu.* X.6 (CCSL 47: 279): “Hanc enim obtulit, in hac oblatus est, quia secundum hanc [formam serui] mediator est, in hac sacerdos, in hac sacrificium est.”

mediator, priest, and sacrifice who accomplishes the remission of sins, purification, and reconciliation to God.<sup>335</sup> However, the Word, not the human body and soul that he assumed, is the primary purifying principle for humanity. The flesh of Christ, which offended Porphyry's pride, purifies humanity in respect to its assumption by the Word:

Therefore through itself the flesh does not cleanse, but through the Word by which that flesh was assumed, when the Word was made and dwelt among us.... The principle, therefore, having assumed soul and flesh, cleanses the soul and flesh of the faithful.<sup>336</sup>

This clarification maintains, along with Porphyry, that God is the principle that purifies humanity.<sup>337</sup> However, Porphyry is wrong, on Augustine's account, to deny that a principle substance (i.e., God) would purify humanity through the assumption of human flesh and a human soul.

The martyrs, for Augustine, witness to the truth that Christianity offers the only means of purification for humanity. Porphyry lived in the third century when widespread persecution of Christians at the hands of "demon worshippers, idolaters, and rulers of the earth" abounded, yet he pridefully rejected Christ as the mediator and the only means of purification of sins.<sup>338</sup> The martyrs, however, are "witnesses to the truth" that Christianity is the only "universal way of the soul's liberation;" by their lives and deaths, the martyrs admonish the faithful to resist "all bodily

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<sup>335</sup> *ciu.* X.22. (CCSL 47: 296): "In eius ergo nomine uincitur, qui hominem adsumpsit egit que sine peccato, ut in ipso sacerdote ac sacrificio fieret remissio peccatorum, id est per mediatorem dei et hominum, hominem christum iesum, per quem facta peccatorum purgatione reconciliamur deo."

<sup>336</sup> *ciu.* X.24 (CCSL 47: 297–298): "Hunc ille Platonius non cognouit esse principium; nam cognosceret purgatorium. neque enim caro principium est aut anima humana, sed uerbum per quod facta sunt omnia. non ergo caro per se ipsa mundat, sed per Verbum a quo suscepta est, cum *Verbum caro factum est et habitauit in nobis...* Principium ergo suscepta anima et carne et animam credentium mundat et carnem."

<sup>337</sup> As noted above, however, Porphyry affirms a plurality of principles. Christianity, Augustine notes, affirms one principle: the Trinity.

<sup>338</sup> *ciu.* X.32. (CCSL 47: 310, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 345): "Tunc enim Porphyrius erat in rebus humanis, quando ista liberandae animae uniuersalis uia, quae non est alia quam religio christiana, oppugnari permittebatur ab idolorum daemonum que cultoribus regibus que terrenis...."

evils for the sake of loyalty to the faith and commending of the truth.”<sup>339</sup> Porphyry must have suspected, Augustine reasons, that persecution against Christians would put an end to Christianity and prove that it is not the “universal way.” However, Christianity remained long after Porphyry’s death. The suffering of the martyrs, then, was not a sign of defeat, but a sign of victory for Christianity and a testimony to Christ as the mediator, “in whom would be the universal way of the soul’s liberation, that is, the way given to all peoples.”<sup>340</sup>

Moreover, for Augustine, the martyrs’ sacrificial offering of themselves to God in martyrdom serves as a sort of extension of Christ’s offering. Whereas the demons seek to obtain offerings and sacred rites from human beings through deceit, the martyrs sacrifice themselves to God as “bleeding victims” who have contended for truth to the point of shedding blood.<sup>341</sup> Though the martyrs’ blood does not appease God on behalf of humanity, as did the blood of Christ the mediator, their death for loyalty to the truth nonetheless acts as a pleasing sacrifice to God.<sup>342</sup> Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son, is the priest by whom the faithful appease God. The martyrs offer themselves as victims in a similar way that all of the faithful offer to God humility,

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<sup>339</sup> *ciu.* X.32 (CCSL 47: 310, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 345): “...propter asserendum et consecrandum martyrum numerum, hoc est testium ueritatis, per quos ostenderetur omnia corporalia mala pro fide pietatis et commendatione ueritatis esse toleranda.”

<sup>340</sup> *ciu.* X.32 (CCSL 47: 311, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 345): “...in quo esset ista liberandae animae uniuersalis uia, hoc est omnibus gentibus data....”

<sup>341</sup> *ciu.* X.3 (CCSL 47: 275): “huius enim templum simul omnes et singuli templa sumus, quia et omnium concordiam et singulos inhabitare dignatur...cum ad illum sursum est, eius est altare cor nostrum; eius unigenito eum sacerdote placamus; ei cruentas uictimias caedimus, quando usque ad sanguinem pro eius ueritate certamus.”

<sup>342</sup> Augustine uses *placare* to describe appeasing or pleasing God. See quote in note 341.

praise, and charity on the altar of their hearts: “To him we sacrifice a victim of humility and praise on the altar of hearts enkindled by the burning flame of charity.”<sup>343</sup>

The martyrs’ victory over the false mediators through their faithfulness unto death attained for them the status of highest honor in the church. The false mediators were behind the persecutions of the church prior to Augustine’s time, the bishop says. In order to vent their hatred toward the church, which is the city of God, the demons provoked tyrannical leaders of the Roman empire to persecute the faithful that refused to offer the sacrifices that they demanded.<sup>344</sup> Such violent persecution, however, proved to exalt the martyrs rather than destroy them:

Far from being destructive, however, this power actually turned out to be useful to the Church in filling up the number of the martyrs, whom the city of God counts as the more glorious and more honored among its citizens precisely because they battle so strongly against the sin of impiety, even to the point of shedding their blood.<sup>345</sup>

Through Christ the mediator, the martyrs triumph over the false mediators. According to the ancient Greeks, impious gods like Hera and Heros possess power over the air, and these gods can be overcome only by appeasement with sacrifices. The martyrs, however, overcome these evil gods not by sacrificing to them, but through the sacrifice of Christ the mediator and by their own sacrifices of godly virtues, prayers to God, and witnessing to Christ the mediator to the point of shedding blood.

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<sup>343</sup> *ciu.* X.3 (CCSL 47: 275): “...ei sacrificamus hostiam humilitatis et laudis in ara cordis igne feruidam caritatis.” As Augustine notes in *ciu.* X.5, though God desires these sacrifices, God is not the one who benefits from them; the faithful benefit from these sacrifices as one who drinks from a fountain or who uses a light to see.

<sup>344</sup> For Augustine, God is the one who in his providence granted such power to the demons for a pre-determined, limited time. The demons passively received this short-lived power. See *ciu.* X.21 (CCSL 47: 294): “Moderatis autem praefinitisque temporibus etiam potestas permissa daemonibus...” Augustine’s aim here is not to blame God for the persecution of the church; rather, he is underscoring the sovereignty of God. Without divine permission, the demons would have no power to persecute the church.

<sup>345</sup> *ciu.* X.21 (CCSL 47: 295 trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God*, I/6, 328): “...non solum pernicioso non est, sed etiam utilis inuenitur ecclesiae, ut martyrum numerus impleatur; quos ciuitas dei tanto clariores et honoratiores ciues habet, quanto fortius aduersus impietatis peccatum et usque ad sanguinem certant.”

It is by true piety that [men and women] of God drive out the power of the air, which are hostile and contrary to piety. They are exorcising, not appeasing it. They overcome all of the temptations of the adversary not by praying to him, but by praying to their God against him. For [the adversary] does not overcome anyone or subjugate anyone except by an association with him in sin. Therefore [the adversary] is overcome in [Christ's] name, the one who assumed humanity yet did not sin, so that in him, both priest and sacrifice, remission of sins would be made, that is, through the mediator between God and humanity, the man Jesus Christ, through whom we have been purged of sins and reconciled to God.<sup>346</sup>

Augustine generally refers here to “men and women of God” (*homines dei*), but this sentence immediately follows a discussion on the martyrs’ defeat of evil gods. Therefore, this passage seems to serve a dual purpose: on the one hand, this is how the martyrs defeated demons in the past; on the other hand, the faithful can presently overcome demons through Christ the mediator, prayers to God, and godly virtues.

Though the martyrs and faithful cooperate with Christ the mediator in overcoming the false mediators, their godly virtues are nonetheless a result of divine grace. Just as the purging of sins occurs not by our own merits or power but “by divine mercy...[and]...kindness,” any virtues that Christians possess have likewise “been granted to us by [God’s] goodness.”<sup>347</sup> The grace of God, which God gives to humanity through Christ the mediator, directs both the faithful

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<sup>346</sup> *ciu.* X.22 (CCSL 47: 296): “Vera pietate homines dei aeriam potestatem inimicam contrariam que pietati exorcizando eiciunt, non placando, omnes que temptationes aduersitatis eius uincunt orando non ipsam, sed deum suum aduersus ipsam. Non enim aliquem uincit aut subiugat nisi societate peccati. In eius ergo nomine uincitur, qui hominem adsumpsit egit que sine peccato, ut in ipso sacerdote ac sacrificio fieret remissio peccatorum, id est per mediatorem dei et hominum, hominem Christum Iesum, per quem facta peccatorum purgatione reconciliamur Deo.” Though the church avoids attributing the term “hero” to the martyrs because of the word’s derivation from the Greek god Heros son of Hera, Augustine asserts that martyrs could still be understood as heroes because of their triumph over the demons.

<sup>347</sup> *ciu.* X.22 (CCSL 47: 296, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books I–10)*, I/6, 329): “Non enim nisi peccatis homines separantur a deo, quorum in hac uita non fit nostra uirtute, sed diuina miseratione purgatio, per indulgentiam illius, non per nostram potentiam; quia et ipsa quantulacumque uirtus, quae dicitur nostra, illius est nobis bonitate concessa.”



and the martyrs in this life “by faith” and leads them “to fullest perfection by the actual sight of immutable truth.”<sup>348</sup>

### Conclusion

As I have shown in this chapter, Augustine’s theology of Christ the mediator is central to his theology of martyrdom and martyr veneration. The themes of the false mediation of the devil and his demons, Jesus Christ the mediator, and the purification of sins through Christ the priest, victim, and head of the church, coherently develops in Augustine’s theology. In *Sermo* 198, Augustine develops these themes in response to pagan understandings of mediation and martyr veneration and the Donatist Bishop Parmenian’s understanding of the Donatist bishops as mediators. Neither good angels, the apostles, the gods of the pagans, the bishops and martyrs of the Donatists, the demons of Apuleius and Porphyry, nor even the bishops and martyrs of the Catholic church are true mediators. The pagan gods, demons, and Donatist bishops and martyrs are false mediators who pridefully block the way to Christ and lead human beings to themselves. Christ alone is the true mediator between God and humanity who alone offers purification of sins. The church, who is Christ’s body, shares in the royal priesthood of Christ in virtue of her union with Christ her head. The purification of sins that Christ’s mediation accomplishes is communicated to the faithful through the sacraments performed in the unity of the Catholic Church. In this sense, the church participates in the mediation of Christ.

In *De trinitate* and *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine develops these same theological themes with an emphasis on participation in the eternal life and blessedness of God. Christ is true God and true man who mediates the eternal life and blessedness that humanity seeks through his

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<sup>348</sup> *ciu.* X.22; (CCSL 47: 296, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 330): “Hac Dei gratia, qua in nos ostendit magnam misericordiam suam, et in hac uita per fidem regimur, et post hanc uitam per ipsam speciem incommutabilis ueritatis ad perfectionem plenissimam perducemur.”

Incarnation, death and resurrection. The demons possess immortality, but they only mediate death and eternal misery. Christ became temporarily mortal and suffered death to release the faithful from death and the grip of the prideful mediator, the devil. Christ is also far superior to the Platonist mediators because as true God he leads human beings into direct communion with God. Furthermore, the martyrs testify to the claim that Christ alone is the mediator, not the false mediators of the Platonists. Christ alone, not the theurgic rites offered to demons, provides purification for sins. The martyrs conquer the false mediators through the one mediator Jesus Christ, and their death for their faithful witness to Christ grants them a place of highest honor in the church.

In *Sermo 198* and *De ciuitate*, the relationship between Christ's mediation, the worship of God, and the martyr veneration arises most explicitly. While all the faithful share the same mediator who grants the same grace that cleanses them of sin, directs them by faith, and brings them to complete perfection, the martyrs' resistance to the devil to the point of shedding blood grants them a place of highest honor in the church and sets them apart as exemplars of faithfulness and loyalty to the truth for all of the faithful. For this reason, the church honors the martyrs and asks for their prayers at memorial shrines and in the liturgy of church. They are not worshipped, but they direct the worship of the faithful to the one true God as their witness is commemorated and their prayers are sought in martyr veneration. They are not mediators in the strict sense, but they participate in the mediation and intercession of Christ the one true mediator. Their godly virtues and deaths disarm demonic principalities. Their example and intercession strengthen the church and direct the faithful to the worship of Christ. As Christ sacrificed himself, the martyrs sacrifice themselves and offer themselves to God as bleeding victims who like Christ patiently endured suffering.

A theology of participation permeates Augustine's understanding of the mediation of Christ. The Word of God participates in our humanity in order that we might participate in his divinity. By his participation in humanity, Christ becomes the one true mediator between God and humanity. While all of the faithful participate in Christ in virtue of the Incarnation, the martyrs possess a unique participation in Christ in virtue of their imitation of his virtues and their death for their witness to Christ. The faithful, however, join in the martyrs' participation in Christ by celebrating and imitating the martyrs as they worship the one true God. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

### CHAPTER 3

#### MARTYR VENERATION AS PARTICIPATION

The liturgical calendar in North Africa included a number of official martyrial feast days.<sup>349</sup> Despite the ecclesiastical approval of—and even enthusiasm for—liturgical celebrations of the martyrs, Augustine sought to curb what he perceived as excesses in the practice of martyr veneration. These “excesses” abounded in two forms, which usually coincided: on the one hand, some Christians understood the meals they brought to the martyr memorials as offerings to the martyrs themselves. On the other hand, some Christians—often the very Christians who fell into the first error—celebrated the martyrs with excess drinking and revelry. As Peter Brown notes, Augustine himself confesses that as a young student, he and other young men frequented liturgical feast days hoping to find a new partner to fulfill their sexual lusts.<sup>350</sup> After his conversion, however, Augustine found a new meaning in the celebration of these festivals.

Martyr veneration for Augustine, this chapter argues, provides an occasion for the faithful to participate in the life and virtues of Christ. Here, I respond to an assertion historian Peter

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<sup>349</sup> For more on the feast days on the North African and Roman liturgical calendars, see Martin Klöckener, “Festa sanctorum et martyrum,” in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, ed. Cornelius Petrus Mayer et al. (Basel: Schwabe AG, 1996-2002), 2: 1281–1305; Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 533–538. Each names the martyrs celebrated as recorded in the liturgical calendar of Carthage and in the sermons of Augustine.

<sup>350</sup> See Peter Brown, “Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity,” *Early Medieval Europe* 9, no. 1 (2000): 6. Brown cites s. 359B.5 (*Mayence 5/Dolbeau 2*). See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 333.

Brown makes in the preface to the 2014 edition of his important work *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (1981). According to Brown, Augustine and the North African laity are in conflict regarding the purpose of martyr veneration.

Augustine insisted that the congregation had gathered so as to learn how to imitate the martyrs. But the congregation had often come for a very different, less easily verbalized but more potent reason. They had not come to imitate. They had come to participate. They wished to be touched, if only for a blessed moment, by the burst of glory associated with heroes and heroines, whose victory over unspeakable suffering and instant entry into heaven sent a shock wave of numinous energy through the gathering.... They did not only come to bow, to pray, and to be prayed for. They came to touch—to rub themselves against the tombs, to take away their dust and their candle wax, and to drink the oil of their lamps. What they wanted was a participatory, one might almost say ‘symbiotic,’ relationship with the other world.<sup>351</sup>

Acknowledging the participatory nature of martyr veneration in the understanding of the North African laity in Late Antiquity (and also in the Medieval period), Brown argues here that Augustine rejects this notion. He sets Augustine’s emphasis on *imitating* in opposition to the laity’s expectation of *participating*.<sup>352</sup> In a previously written article “Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity” (2000), Brown differentiates Augustine’s “insistence on the need to imitate the martyrs” and the view of others who “regarded the triumph of the martyrs over pain and death as a unique manifestation of the power of God, in which believers participated, not through imitation but through celebrations reminiscent of the joy of pagan festivals.”<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Peter Brown, “Preface to the 2014 Edition,” in *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), xxvii.

<sup>352</sup> See Brown, “Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity,” 1–24. In this article, Brown writes, “...others regarded the triumph of the martyrs over pain and death as a unique manifestation of the power of God, in which believers participated, not through imitation but through celebrations reminiscent of the joy of pagan festivals” (1). Thus, Brown also sets a dichotomy between Augustine’s insistence on *imitation* and the laity’s expectation to participate in the power of God via *celebration* of the martyrs.

<sup>353</sup> See Peter Brown, “Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity,” 1.

Given the presentation in these publications of two seemingly different dichotomies, Brown is somewhat unclear as to what exactly is the difference between Augustine's view and the laity's view of participation. Brown is either claiming 1) that Augustine altogether denies a participatory nature and purpose of martyr veneration or 2) that Augustine acknowledges participation in martyr veneration via *imitation* of the martyrs while the laity believes that participation occurs via *celebration* of the martyrs. Either way, Brown's claim evokes the questions: In what sense (if any), for Augustine, does martyr veneration entail a participation in the life of God and a communion with the martyrs? Why is imitating the martyrs so central and necessary for Augustine? What is the relationship between participation, imitation, and celebration of the martyrs for Augustine? This chapter seeks to answer these questions.

I argue that Brown's view (whichever of the two above views he holds) fails to recognize the inseparable connection in Augustine's thought between celebrating the martyrs, imitating the martyrs, and participating in the life of God in martyr veneration. Brown is correct to break down the common "two-tier model" that once prevailed in scholarship in regard to martyr veneration, to refute the argument that martyr veneration in Late Antiquity ought to be viewed as evidence of survivals of pagan religion, and to highlight Augustine's concern to distinguish martyr veneration from pagan festivals. However, he establishes a false dichotomy either between *imitation and participation* or between *imitation and celebration* in Augustine's thought.

For Augustine, I argue, participation in God and the "symbiotic relationship with the other world" occurs precisely through the imitation *and* celebration of the martyrs. By gathering to celebrate and imitate the martyrs as they worship God, the faithful commune with the martyrs, benefit from their intercession, and participate in the life and virtues of Christ. Moreover, Augustine's understanding of *latrìa* and its place in martyr veneration is essential for his

understanding of martyr veneration as a participation in Christ. *Latria* is what ultimately links participation, celebration, and imitation in Augustine's understanding of martyr veneration.

In his early polemics against the Manicheans, particularly *Contra Faustum*, and his responses to Christian "excesses" in celebrating the martyrs, particularly *Epistulae* 22 and 29, Augustine establishes the foundation for the purpose of martyr veneration. It serves as an act of worship of the one true God, centered on the celebration of the Eucharist, as the faithful honor the martyrs, imitate them, and invoke their intercession. To celebrate the martyrs in drunkenness and revelry as the pagans celebrate their gods is to scorn the martyrs and to participate in the pagan gods, who are demons. The celebration of the martyrs, for Augustine, calls the faithful to imitate the virtues of the martyrs who imitated Christ the chief and head of the martyrs.<sup>354</sup>

In his *Sermones ad populum*, Augustine further emphasizes the importance of imitating the martyrs who imitated Christ. However, as I will demonstrate, this imitation is a participation because Christ works in and through the martyrs and the faithful in this imitation. Celebration and imitation, Augustine's sermons reveal, are deeply connected and constitute a communion between the martyrs and the faithful.

In *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine develops the connection between the worship of Christ, the imitation of Christ, and participation in the divine life of Christ in relation to martyrdom and martyr veneration. To imitate Christ, he says, is to worship Christ. Moreover, the worship of Christ is a participation in the life of Christ. Since the martyrs are members of Christ's body who imitate Christ their head, to imitate the martyrs is to imitate Christ and to participate in Christ.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> See *s.* 316.2 and *s.* 306.10 for Augustine's use of these titles of Christ.

<sup>355</sup> Though this chapter will make references to Augustine's theology of the *totus Christus* (whole Christ), this topic in Augustine's thought will be further discussed in the next chapter.

In heaven, the martyrs participate in the true worship of Christ and in his heavenly intercession for the faithful on their earthly pilgrimage to the heavenly city. As the faithful imitate this true worship of the martyrs in heaven and participate in the life of Christ through that worship, they are transformed into the image of Christ.

Many scholars who discuss Augustine's theology of martyr veneration unequivocally acknowledge the North African bishop's emphasis upon directing the faithful to the worship of Christ and the imitation of the martyrs who imitate Christ.<sup>356</sup> Some have explicitly named the martyrs as special participants in the sufferings of Christ.<sup>357</sup> None of which I am aware, however, analyze how Augustine understands veneration and the imitation of the martyrs as a participation in Christ.

### **Augustine's Theology of Participation**

Augustine's theology of participation is essential to understanding his view of martyr veneration as a participation in the life and virtues of Christ. For this discussion, I turn to the work of David Vincent Meconi.<sup>358</sup> Secondary literature, as David Meconi notes, emphasizes that three main areas of Augustine's theology depend upon his theory of participation: 1) his

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<sup>356</sup> See Hans Freiherr von Campenhausen, *Die Idee Des Martyriums in Der Alten Kirche*; Pellegrino, *Chiesa e martirio in Sant' Agostino*; Pellegrino, *Cristo e il martire nel pensiero di Sant' Agostino*; Carol Straw, "Martyrdom;" Moss, *The Other Christs*; Guy Lapointe, *La célébration des martyrs*; Klöckener, "Martyres, martyrium;" J. den Boeft, "Martyres Sunt, Sed Homines Fuerunt." van Bavel, "The Cult of the Martyrs in St. Augustine: Theology versus Popular Religion?;" Dupont, "Imitatio Christi, Imitatio Stephani."

<sup>357</sup> See Klöckener, "Martyres, martyrium," 1188; Straw, "Martyrdom," 538; Pellegrino, *Cristo e il martire*, 600 and 665.

<sup>358</sup> David Vincent Meconi, "St. Augustine's Early Theory of Participation:," *Augustinian Studies* 27, no. 2 (1996): 79–96; "The Incarnation and the Role of Participation in St. Augustine's Confessions," *Augustinian Studies* 29, no. 2 (1998): 61–75; Meconi, *The One Christ*.



ontology,<sup>359</sup> 2) his epistemology,<sup>360</sup> and 3) his understanding of Christian deification.<sup>361</sup> Meconi summarizes seven contributions of secondary work to date:<sup>362</sup> 1) All creatures are illuminated by a participation in eternal truth;<sup>363</sup> 2) Augustine uses participation to relate creatures to the Creator;<sup>364</sup> 3) God has chosen freely to participate in what he created, and he restores the divine image in sinful humanity by the Incarnation;<sup>365</sup> 4) participation allows human beings to know something (yet not everything) about God and enables mutable creatures to be united to the immutable God;<sup>366</sup> 5) God elevates our nature to his by becoming a sharer in our human nature;<sup>367</sup> 6) participation is influenced by Plato's argument in *Phaedo* that "if something varies in its essential elements, then it does not have them from itself;"<sup>368</sup> 7) participation is closely

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<sup>359</sup> Namely, creation's participation in the existence of God, who is Being itself.

<sup>360</sup> Namely, the human knower's illumination by participation in the wisdom of God, who is Wisdom itself.

<sup>361</sup> Namely, humanity's participation in the very life of God. Meconi, "St. Augustine's Early Theory of Participation," 87.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 81–87.

<sup>363</sup> Ianuarius Di Somma, "De Naturali Participazione Divini Luminis in Mente Humana Secundum S. Augustum et S. Thomam," *Gregorianum* 7 (1926): 321–38;

<sup>364</sup> M. Annice, "Historical Sketch of the Theory of Participation," *The New Scholasticism* 26 (1952): 49–79.

<sup>365</sup> Patricia Wilson-Kastner, "Grace as Participation in the Divine Life in the Theology of Augustine of Hippo," *Augustinian Studies* 7 (1976): 135–52.

<sup>366</sup> Juan Pegueroles, "Participación y Conocimiento de Dios En La Predicación de San Agustín," *Espíritu* 27 (1979): 5–26.

<sup>367</sup> Gerald Bonner, "Augustine's Conception of Deification," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37, no. 2 (1986): 369–86.

<sup>368</sup> Roland Teske, "The Image and Likeness of God in St. Augustine's *De Genesi Ad Litteram Liber Imperfectus*," *Augustinianum* 30 (1990): 441–51. Quoted from Meconi, "Augustine's Early Theory of Participation," 86.

related to deification and is used to demonstrate the dependence of the creature upon the Creator in whom all things participate.<sup>369</sup>

Meconi himself contributes an analysis of how Augustine understands and uses the term participation. Augustine's first significant use of participation in his early anti-Manichean polemic *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manicheorum* (388 CE) reveals the following insights:

First, participation helps Augustine explain that the essence of things is goodness.... God, the absolutely good and omnipotent Creator, is the one to whom we attribute all the participated good we find in created things. Secondly, participation allows Augustine to understand evil as a privation. Evil is not an independent nature but, rather, is the poverty of goodness.... For Augustine, there are no evil things, only the evil use of things.... Thirdly...participation allows Augustine to be more precise in predicating qualities. Participation shows how goodness is proportionate to a thing's being; God is goodness while all else participates in, and thus, has goodness.<sup>370</sup>

Meconi expands on how Augustine's understanding of participation affected the bishop's own conversion and his Christology.<sup>371</sup> Conversion required Augustine to modify his Platonic "upward theory" of participation to a Christian "downward theory" of participation.<sup>372</sup> The Platonic theory of participation, in other words, always assumed that creatures participated in the Creator, not the other way around. The uniquely Christian "downward theory" of participation, Augustine discovers, grounds the ability of creatures' participation in the Creator in a striking reversal, namely the Creator's participation in creation. The "underived and

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<sup>369</sup> Claudio Moreschini, "Neoplatonismo e Cristianesimo: 'Partecipare a Dio' Secondo Boezio e Agostino," in *Sicilia e Italia Suburbicaria Tra IV e VIII Secolo*, ed. Salvatore Pricoco et al. (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino Editore, 1991), 283–95.

<sup>370</sup> Meconi, "Augustine's Early Theory of Participation," 95–96. For the dating of *De Moribus Manicheorum*, see footnote 23 on *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>371</sup> See Meconi, "The Incarnation and the Role of Participation in St. Augustine's Confessions," 61–75.

<sup>372</sup> For more on this topic, see James J. O'Donnell, *Confessions: Commentary on Book 1-7*, II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 463; Meconi, "Incarnation and the Role of Participation in St. Augustine's Confessions," 61–62.

immutable,” in order to save and redeem creation, “actually takes part in the created and imperfect” while both Creator and creation remain distinct.<sup>373</sup> This notion of God’s condescension, whereby he participates in his creation, prepares Augustine to accept Christ’s humility in the Incarnation.<sup>374</sup> Moreover, in his discussion of the moral dimension of deification in Augustine, Meconi emphasizes how the faithful become like God, even deified, by imitating Christ’s patience and charity.<sup>375</sup> Interestingly, Meconi briefly mentions the martyrs as “the best examples of patience,” but he does not discuss the faithful’s imitation of the martyrs as a means of participation or deification.<sup>376</sup>

Whereas participation typically involves a “taking part” in rather than a full share in another being’s self or specific attributes, Meconi continues, for Augustine the Incarnation is somewhat of an exception.<sup>377</sup> In becoming human, God has fully, perfectly, and forever shared in humanity without in any way replacing or diminishing anything proper to his divine nature.<sup>378</sup> The human nature God assumed was temporarily mutable, corruptible, and mortal (though not sinful), but this in no way diminished his divinity nor did it make his divinity in any way dependent upon humanity. Rather, his humanity, after the resurrection, would receive a full share in the life, incorruptibility, and immortality of his divinity. Moreover, God’s descent to and

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<sup>373</sup> Meconi, “Incarnation and the Role of Participation,” 75.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>375</sup> Meconi, *The One Christ*, 120–26.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>377</sup> Meconi, “Incarnation and the Role of Participation,” 67.

<sup>378</sup> See Bonner, “Augustine’s Conception of Deification,” 380. As Gerald Bonner notes, God’s participation in humanity, for Augustine, is the source and cause of humanity’s participation in God. God loses nothing of himself and remains fully and only himself. Human beings gain much—God’s life, immortality, and blessedness, and even God’s own self—yet remain distinct from and dependent upon the Creator.

participation in humanity in the Incarnation paves the way for humanity to ascend to and participate in God.<sup>379</sup> This final point is key in the relationship between Augustine's theology of participation and his theology of martyrdom.

### **Early Distinctions Between the Worship of God, Martyr Veneration, and Idolatry**

As other scholars have noted, Augustine's earliest references to martyr veneration (390–401 CE) focus on combating the pagan and Manichean understandings of martyr veneration and what Augustine perceived as abuses in the cult of the martyrs, especially the practice of honorific meals for the martyrs and the dead.<sup>380</sup> In the years of his priesthood, he already understands the martyrs as aiding the faithful on their journey to union with God. Only one year following his baptism, Augustine refers to the martyrs four times in *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum* (ca. 387/388), where he defends the continuity between the Old and New Testaments. As T.J. van Bavel summarizes, for Augustine “God has prepared a path for us by the patriarchs, the prophets, his incarnate Word, the apostles, and the blood of the martyrs.”<sup>381</sup>

As soon as his early priesthood in the early-to-mid 390s, Augustine distinguishes between the worship of God and the celebration of the martyrs in martyr veneration. In *ep.* 17, most likely written in 390 prior to the institution of a Roman law prohibiting the worship of

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<sup>379</sup> Meconi, “St. Augustine’s Early Theory of Participation,” 85. See Bonner, “Augustine’s Conception of Deification,” 373.

<sup>380</sup> See van Bavel, “The Cult of the Martyrs,” 351; Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques*, 124. Both authors focus on Augustine’s attempts to reform martyr veneration, but they also discuss Augustine’s response to the Manicheans.

<sup>381</sup> Van Bavel, “Cult of the Martyrs,” 353. See *mor.* I.7.12; 9.15; 23.43. Cf. 35.77 (CSEL 90: 14-15; 17-18; 48-49; 82-83).

pagan idols,<sup>382</sup> Augustine responds to the pagan grammarian Maximus of Madaura in Numidia. Maximus considered martyr veneration as the worship of parts or members of the one God. Augustine counters with the assertion that God is worshipped as one, not as many parts. Moreover, he says, a Catholic Christian does not “worship the dead and adores nothing as divinity which is made and established by the one God himself, who made and established all things.”<sup>383</sup>

For Augustine, the practice of drunkenness, gluttony, and fornication in sacred spaces is not associated with the worship of God, but with idolatry.<sup>384</sup> In *ep.* 22, written in 391–93, Augustine the priest writes to Aurelius, the bishop of Carthage and primate of Africa, reproving North African clergy for tolerating excessive eating, drinking, and fornication at the tombs of the martyrs. Augustine pointedly notes that Paul condemns these practices as sins and forbids Christians from eating with other Christians who engage in any of these vices.<sup>385</sup> Though Augustine also condemns the private practice of uninhibited gorging and imbibing, he finds the public celebrations of such immoderate festivities at the tombs of the martyrs as particularly deplorable. These memorials are sacred places are “houses of prayer” meant for the celebration

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<sup>382</sup> See Teske, WSA, *Letters 1-99*, II/1, 48. The letter, Teske says, was likely written prior to a law prohibiting the worship of idols instituted on February 28, 391.

<sup>383</sup> *ep.* 17.5 (CCSL 31: 43): “... nullum coli mortuorum, nihil denique ut numen adorari, quod sit factum et conditum a deo, sed unum ipsum deum, qui fecit et condidit omnia.” See Teske, WSA, *Letters 1-99*, II/1, 50. See van Bavel, “Cult of the Martyrs,” 53.

<sup>384</sup> Augustine worked alongside other bishops and clergy toward this end. As van Bavel notes, Augustine’s outspoken denunciation of such practices throughout his early pastoral ministry likely directly influenced future conciliar decrees on the matter. The Council of Carthage in 401, for example, forbade North African bishops from approving of martyr memorials that contained no evidence of the martyr’s relics or property and commanded the bishops to destroy such altars and shrines when possible. See “83. De falsis memoriis martyrum,” in *Concilia Africae* A. 345 – A. 525, ed. Cornelius Munier (CCSL 149: 204–205). See van Bavel, “The Cult of the Martyrs,” 352.

<sup>385</sup> *ep.* 22.2–3. Augustine references Romans 13:3-4.

of the sacraments and prayers to God.<sup>386</sup> Therefore, they ought not be defiled by gluttonous and drunken Christians. Other churches in Italy and across the Mediterranean, he attests, either never held such banquets or quickly put a stop to them. Why should the North African church not follow?<sup>387</sup> Though Augustine's proposed tactic in dealing with such abuses involved gentle rebuke and correction over harsh language and coercion, he was convinced that the authority of a council would be the only lasting remedy for such ills.<sup>388</sup>

In *ep.* 29, written in 395, he writes to Alypius, bishop of Thagaste, recounting a lively, tear-jerking reprimand (first for his hearers, then for Augustine himself) that Augustine gave during a sermon. In said sermon, Augustine preached against the drunken feasts held in the basilicas on the martyr feast day of Leontius, who served as bishop at Hippo Regius during the persecution under Diocletian. Most egregious was that Christians were so recklessly consuming alcohol inside of the basilicas in the name of Christianity. By doing so, they defiled sacred spaces meant for prayer and celebration of the sacraments and prevent people from inheriting the kingdom of God.<sup>389</sup> Such drunkenness, he continues, has never in the Scriptures been linked with religion except when the Israelites had fashioned the golden calf in the wilderness. Therefore, participation in these banquets resembled not a traditional expression of Christian worship, but a form of idolatry that God condemned.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> *ep.* 22.3. (CCSL 31: 54, trans. Teske, WSA, *Letters 1–99*, II/1, 59). “Saltem de sanctorum corporum sepulcris, saltem de locis sacramentorum, de domibus orationum tantum dedecus arceatur!”

<sup>387</sup> In *ep.* 29.10. However, he recounts his congregation reminding him of the daily occurrence of such banquets at the basilica of Peter in Rome. Augustine argues that the busyness of the city, the distance between the city and the seat of the bishop, the pervading carnal appetites of his flock, and Christian travelers made it difficult for the bishop to restrain such excesses.

<sup>388</sup> *ep.* 22.4-5.

<sup>389</sup> *ep.* 29.5.

<sup>390</sup> *ep.* 29.4. The reforms proposed by Augustine and bishops Aurelius and Alypius were codified in the Council of Carthage in 397. This ruling prohibited as much as possible the use of churches for such banquets. The churches

The day after delivering his sermon, many listeners and others from the town publicly challenged Augustine's repudiation of the banquets during the martyr feast days. Since these banquets were a long-held tradition in North Africa and in Rome, they asked, why were they just now being banned? Augustine explains that after persecutions had ceased and the church entered into a time of peace, many pagans hesitated from joining the church because they were accustomed to celebrating banquets with excessive eating and drinking in honor of their idols. The clergy, therefore, tolerated these banquets as long as they were celebrated on martyr festivals. The clergy hoped that after gathering these former pagans into the bosom of the church and under the yoke of her authority, they might turn these new converts away from such practices with teaching and exhortation. The church in Augustine's day, however, had already settled into this reign of peace. The time of toleration had ended, and the time had come for those who call themselves Christians to conform their will to the will of Christ by rejecting such practices.<sup>391</sup> The question, in Augustine's eyes, should not be "Why openly condemn these banquets now?" Rather it was "Why *not* condemn these banquets now?," especially when the Scriptures so clearly denounce them already.<sup>392</sup>

While Augustine admits a certain influence of paganism on North African martyr veneration, he does not attribute the entire practice to such influence. In other words, the very *existence* of martyr veneration itself is not evidence of pagan survivals in Christianity.<sup>393</sup> The

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were to be used only to feed itinerant clerics. See *Breviarium Hipponense* 29 (CCSL 149:30-53). See also Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 537.

<sup>391</sup> *ep.* 29.9.

<sup>392</sup> *ep.* 29.8. C.f. *conf.* 8.12.28. See Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 537.

<sup>393</sup> Peter Brown argued against this modern interpretation of early Christian martyr veneration. See Brown, "Preface," xvii.

*manner* in which many Christians venerate the martyrs—namely, with lavish banquets and immoderate alcohol consumption—is where the pagan influence lies.<sup>394</sup> Christians who participate in these banquets, he argues, defile themselves, the basilicas, and the martyr shrines. Moreover, they dishonor the apostles, the martyrs, and Christ, who all rejected and forbade such a practice.<sup>395</sup> While these early works reveal certain aspects of Augustine’s understanding of the distinctions between the worship of God, martyr veneration, and idolatry, he discusses these distinctions in terms of participation and imitation in his later Manichean polemics following his ordination as bishop of Hippo.

### **The Worship of God and Celebration of the Martyrs as a Participation in *Contra Faustum***

Augustine’s challenge to the Manichean understanding of martyr veneration in *Contra Faustum* demonstrates the earliest evidence of the bishop’s understanding of the relationship between the worship of God and participation in God.<sup>396</sup> Interestingly, Augustine’s articulation of this relationship occurs alongside his distinction between the worship of God and the veneration of the martyrs. Augustine’s defense of Christianity and the Christian practice of

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<sup>394</sup> *ep.* 22.4. Augustine admits that the North African church of his day is sick with a sort of pagan hangover that needs sound teaching and conciliar authority to sober it up and remedy its ills. See Brown, “Preface,” xvii.

<sup>395</sup> *ep.* 22.3.

<sup>396</sup> As Meconi notes, besides a passing reference to participation in *Contra Academicos* (386 A.D.), in which Augustine thanks Romanianus for permitting Augustine “to partake” of his patrimony, Augustine’s first significant use of “participation” appears in chapter four of *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manicheorum*. Meconi, “Augustine’s Early Theory of Participation,” 88. See the above section of this chapter on Augustine’s Theology of Participation for a summary of Meconi’s conclusions regarding Augustine’s theory of participation as outlined in *mor.* While Augustine speaks of creatures’ participation in the Creator in this work, he does not discuss this participation in relation to worship.



martyr veneration, which he outlines in Book XX, centers on his understanding of the false worship of the pagans and the Manicheans in contrast to the true worship of God.<sup>397</sup>

On the account of Faustus represented in the opening sections of Book XX of *c. Faustum*, Judaism and Christianity are contorted offspring and schisms of ancient pagan religion while Manicheanism is a sect that springs from a pure, unique fountain of true religion.<sup>398</sup> For Faustus, a “schism” comprises a collective of individuals who share the same beliefs and worship rituals as the collective from which it separated. A “sect,” however, holds its own unique set of beliefs and worship practices. Christians and Jews, he argues, are schisms of pagan gentiles because they hold both to a similar belief—one principle for both spiritual and material realities—and to similar rituals, such as shrines, altars, and incense. The Jews, like the pagans, worshipped this single principle through sacrifices in temples with altars and incense.<sup>399</sup>

The Christians, on Faustus’s account, maintained more pagan practices than the Jews by turning pagan idol worship into martyr veneration. Christian veneration of the martyrs, he says, involved prayers and rituals akin to the pagan idol worship, and it substituted pagan sacrificial feasts with Christian agape feasts and meals at the martyr shrines.<sup>400</sup> Manicheans, however, form their own unique sect because they acknowledge two principles: 1) God, the principle of all

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<sup>397</sup> For a brief overview of Augustine’s answer to the Manichean accusations, especially in *c. Faustum*, see van Bavel, “The Cult of the Martyrs,” 351–55.

<sup>398</sup> Augustine was responding to a work of Faustus entitled *Capitula*, which is now lost save what we have in Augustine’s *c. Faust*. At times, for sake of brevity, I make statements like “on Faustus’s account” or “Faustus says.” In reality, what we have is Augustine’s representation of Faustus. Perhaps a more technically accurate way to put it would be something like “on Augustine’s account of Faustus’s account” or “Augustine’s Faustus says.”

<sup>399</sup> *c. Faust*. XX.3.

<sup>400</sup> *c. Faust*. XX.3-4.

good, and 2) Hyle, the principle of all evil. Moreover, they worship God not in temples or shrines with altars and incense, but with prayers on the altar on their minds.<sup>401</sup>

Augustine's defense of Christianity and the Christian practice of martyr veneration reveals two important ideas in Augustine's understanding of worship. First of all, worship results in the worshippers' participation in that which is worshiped; second, worship, whatever the object of worship may be, involves sacrifice. Christians, Augustine says, are not like pagans because Christians worship the one true God. Pagans wrongfully worship things in creation that exist, such as the sun, the moon, the stars, the elements, idols etc., as gods. Following Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 10:20, Augustine says that the gods to which the pagans sacrifice are actually demons. This sacrifice to demons results in becoming "associates" (*socios*) with those very demons. This is why Paul warns Christians not to participate in eating food sacrificed to idols.<sup>402</sup>

While Augustine uses the term *socios* here to describe the relationship that occurs when people offer sacrifices to demons, he employs the term *participatione* to describe the deficiency of participating in creatures and the sufficiency of participation in God.<sup>403</sup> The terms seem to be interchangeable for Augustine and seem to carry the same connotation of sharing, communion, and partaking. Therefore, in the same way that worshipping God causes a participation in the

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<sup>401</sup> *c. Faust.* XX.3. (CSEL 25.1: 537): "ego ab his in hoc quoque multum diuersus incedo, qui ipsum me, si modo sim dignus, rationabile dei templum puto, uiuum uiuae maiestatis simulacrum Christum filium eius accipio, aram mentem bonis artibus et disciplinis inbutam. honores quoque diuinos ac sacrificia in solis orationibus et ipsis puris ac simplicibus pono."

<sup>402</sup> *c. Faust.* XX.5. (CSEL 25.1: 539): "ipsa etiam daemonia, unde dicit apostolus: quae inmolant gentes, daemoniis inmolant et non deo, utique sunt, quibus illos inmolare dicit et quorum nos socios esse non uult."

<sup>403</sup> See quote below and translation (footnote 405).

blessedness and life of God, worshipping demons results in a participation in the misery and death of demons.<sup>404</sup>

The pagans seek to attain happiness or blessedness by worshipping and thus participating in creatures, whether the sun, moon, stars, idols, or demons. However, only the invisible God who created all things is to be worshipped, because only by participation in God can one attain blessedness:

And we admonish [the pagans] to worship the invisible God who made all of these things. By participation in him alone can humanity become blessed, and no one denies that everyone desires to be blessed. Yet several of [the pagans] worship an invisible and incorporeal creature, such as the human soul and mind. Nevertheless, because a human being becomes blessed not by participation in such a creature, but only by participation in the true God who is not only invisible but immutable, it is this true God who is to be worshipped. He is the only one who is to be worshipped, the one who alone makes blessed his worshiper, and the one who alone makes miserable the mind of everyone else, whatever else it might enjoy.<sup>405</sup>

This passage reveals an inseparable connection between the worship of God and participation in God. Worshipers participate in the properties of the object of their worship such that those properties are communicated to the worshippers. Thus, a distinct sort of exchange occurs in worship. The worship of miserable creatures, such as the false gods and demons of the pagans,

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<sup>404</sup> Most likely his reasoning for using each of these terms is due to the Latin translation of 1 Corinthians 10:20–21. Nonetheless, he still seems to treat them as essentially the same in meaning. Though Augustine likely compared multiple Latin versions, the Latin Vulgate implements the same seemingly interchangeable words *socios* (from the Greek κοινωνός) and *particeps* (from the Greek μετέχειν): “sed quae immolant gentes daemoniis immolant et non Deo nolo autem vos *socios* fieri daemoniorum non potestis calicem Domini bibere et calicem daemoniorum. non potestis mensae Domini *participes* esse et mensae daemoniorum” (“Epistula Ad Corinthios I - Chapter 10: The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians,” Vulgate.Org: The Latin Vulgate New Testament Bible, accessed March 21, 2024, [https://vulgate.org/nt/epistle/1corinthians\\_10.htm](https://vulgate.org/nt/epistle/1corinthians_10.htm)). For Greek, see Michael W. Holmes, ed., “ΠΡΟΣ ΚΟΡΙΝΘΙΟΥΣ Α 10:20-21,” in *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 351.

<sup>405</sup> *c. Faust.* XX.5 (CSEL 25.1: 539): “eisque colendum horum omnium conditorem deum inuisibilem suademus, cuius solius participatione beatus homo fieri potest: quod omnes uelle nemo ambigit. sed quia nonnulli eorum inuisibilem et incorpoream creaturam colunt - quod est et anima mens que humana - tamen, quia nec eiusmodi creaturae participatione fit homo beatus, ille non solum inuisibilis uerum etiam incommutabilis deus, id est deus uerus colendus est, quia solus ille colendus est, quo solo fruens beatus fit cultor eius, et quo solo non fruens omnis mens misera est, qualibet re alia perfruatur.”

renders their worshippers miserable; the worship of the one true God, who is blessed and the source of all blessedness, “makes his worshipper[s] blessed” (*beatus fit cultor eius*).<sup>406</sup> To be clear, participation in the properties of the being that is worshipped in no way blurs the distinction between that being and its worshippers. However, the worshippers take part in or receive a share of the properties of that which they worship.<sup>407</sup>

This worship, which causes worshippers to participate in their object of worship and its properties, necessarily involves sacrifice. Augustine contrasts the condemned *sacrificiis gentiu*, the foreshadowing *sacrificiis hebraeorum*, the memorial *sacrificio christianorum*, and the vain Manichean *sacrum*.<sup>408</sup> Unlike the idolatrous pagan sacrifices (*sacrificiis gentiu*) which are offered to demons and condemned by God, the animal sacrifices of the ancient Israelites (*sacrificiis hebraeorum*) were offered to the one true God. Moreover, they were prophetic signs: “in those sacrifices there was found that mystical anointing that prefigured Christ.”<sup>409</sup> The sacrifice of Christ’s body and blood on the cross is the fulfillment of the sacrifices of ancient Israel; it is the true sacrifice that reconciles the faithful to God by the remission of sins.<sup>410</sup> The

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<sup>406</sup> Ibid. Augustine uses kind of exchange, as I discussed in the last chapter, in his christology. See Babcock, “The Christ of the Exchange.”

<sup>407</sup> Also, the worshiper’s partaking in the properties of God involves no diminution in God. See *mor.* 4.6 and Meconi, “Augustine’s Early Theory of Participation,” 93. How this applies to demons is not exactly clear, but I find nothing in Augustine that suggests that one’s participation in the misery of a demon would in any way diminish the demon’s misery.

<sup>408</sup> *c. Faust.* XX.18 (CSEL 25.1:559): “Manichaei uero nescientes, quid damnandum sit in sacrificiis gentium et quid intellegendum in sacrificiis Hebraeorum et quid tenendum uel obseruandum in sacrificio christianorum, uanitatem suam sacrum offerunt diabolo, qui eos decepit recedentes a fide, intendentes spiritibus seductoribus et doctrinis daemoniorum in hypocrisi mendaciloquorum.”

<sup>409</sup> *c. Faust.* XX.18 (CSEL 25.1:559, trans. Teske, WSA, *Against Faustus the Manichean*, I/20, 277): “...ubi erat et illa mystica unctio, qua christus praefigurabatur, unde et ipsum nomen a chrismate ducitur.”

<sup>410</sup> *c. Faust.* XX.21-22.

Eucharist, which Augustine here calls “the sacrifice of Christians” (*sacrificio christianorum*), remembers that same sacrifice of Christ on the cross.<sup>411</sup>

Moreover, Christians, who have become members of the body of Christ their head, offer themselves as living sacrifices to God.<sup>412</sup> For Augustine, the worship of the one true God before, during, and after Christ’s passion, has always centered around the one sacrifice of Christ:

Before the coming of Christ the flesh and blood of this sacrifice was promised by the likenesses of victims; in the Passion of Christ the promise was fulfilled in its reality; after the ascension of Christ, it is celebrated through the sacrament in its memory.<sup>413</sup>

Though the Scriptures refer to these three types of sacrifices offered at various times in history—1) the foreshadowing sacrifices of the ancient Israelites prior to Christ’s advent, 2) the fulfilling sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and 3) the memorial sacrifice of Christians at the Eucharistic table after Christ’s resurrection and ascension—all were commanded by and offered to the one true God. Therefore, unlike the pagan sacrifices, none of them were idolatrous. As this passage demonstrates, Augustine’s sacramental theology is operative in his discussion of sacrifice.<sup>414</sup>

Though the Manicheans do not offer animal sacrifices to created things like the pagans, their worship nonetheless constitutes a participation in demons. Manichean sacrifices are *unlike* the pagan sacrifices in that they are offered to non-existent things and consist not of animal

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<sup>411</sup> For more on the development of Augustine’s understanding of the church as sacrifice, see James K. Lee, *Augustine and the Mystery of the Church* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2017), 95–122. For an analysis of Augustine’s discussion of sacrifice in *c. Faust*, see 104–9. As Lee notes, Augustine says in *c. Faust* XX.21 that “the *res* of the eucharistic *sacramentum* is the true sacrifice of Christ’s body and blood.” (Lee, 107).

<sup>412</sup> *c. Faust*. XX.22. See Rom 12:1. As I will discuss below, Augustine revisits this subject in *ciu.* X.19.

<sup>413</sup> *c. Faust*. XX.21 (CSEL: 25.1: 564, trans. Teske, WSA, *Against Faustus the Manichean*, I/20, 280): “huius sacrificii caro et sanguis ante aduentum christi per uictimas similitudinum promittebatur, in passione christi per ipsam ueritatem reddebatur, post ascensum christi per sacramentum memoriae celebrator...”

<sup>414</sup> For more on the relationship between sacrament and sacrifice in Augustine, see Lee, *Mystery of the Church*, 95–122, esp. 105–6. This relationship will be further discussed below in the *ciu.* section of this chapter.

sacrifices but of prayer and ascetic discipline offered on the altar of their minds.<sup>415</sup> However, the Manicheans are worse than the pagans because they worship as gods things that do not exist, such as a triangular sun.<sup>416</sup> The pagans may worship many idols, but the Manicheans worship many “phantasms.”<sup>417</sup> Though their sacrifices are offered to falsehoods instead of created things, Manichean sacrifices are nonetheless offered to the devil and his demons because their teaching and rituals are inspired by the deceitful doctrines of demons.<sup>418</sup> Therefore, the false worship of the Manicheans, just like the false worship of the pagans, is a participation in the devil that will render them miserable, not blessed.

Augustine’s link between participation and worship is also central for his defense against the Manichean accusation that martyr veneration is a Christianized version of, though essentially the same as, pagan idol worship. Christians, Faustus says, have turned idols into martyrs, offering the martyrs worship, prayer, and appeasement through wine and meals.<sup>419</sup> Martyr veneration, Augustine counters, does not resemble pagan idolatry because sacrifices and worship are offered to God, not to the martyrs.<sup>420</sup> The church venerates the martyrs at memorial shrines for three main reasons: 1) to admonish the faithful to imitate the *virtues* of the martyrs, 2) to

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<sup>415</sup> *c. Faust.* XX.3.

<sup>416</sup> *c. Faust.* XX.6. *c.f. c. Faust.* XX.9. According to Manichean belief, in this triangular sun lies a ship full of princes and princesses of light after whom the princesses and princes of darkness lust in order to be released from the prison of their material bodies. Augustine also denounces the Manichean belief that the Father dwells in the sun, the Son in the moon, and the Spirit in the air.

<sup>417</sup> *c. Faust.*, XX.19. (CSEL 25.1: 560): “...in pluribus autem diis colendis doctrina daemoniorum mendaciloquorum illis persuasit multa idola, vobis multa phantasmata.” Though Augustine denounces various Manichean myths as “phantasms”, he regards the Manichean belief in two principles and in the corruptibility and mutability of God as particularly sacrilegious.

<sup>418</sup> *c. Faust.*, XX.19.

<sup>419</sup> *c. Faust.*, XX.21.

<sup>420</sup> Straw, “Martyrdom,” 539.

unite the faithful to the *merits* of the martyrs, and 3) to grant the faithful help from the *prayers* of martyrs.<sup>421</sup> For Augustine, then, martyr veneration strengthens the pilgrim church by bringing the faithful into contact with the virtues, merits, and prayers of the martyrs. At the memorials, the faithful are stirred with affection both for the martyrs who are worthy of imitation and for God who is worthy of worship.<sup>422</sup> The martyrs are honored with “cult of love and fellowship” (*cultu dilectionis et societatis*) because they have suffered for the gospel.<sup>423</sup> Martyr veneration then, is not only a participation in God; it is a communion with the martyrs in heaven that has real effects for the church on earth. The martyrs aid the church on earth with their prayers, and the faithful rely on the martyrs’ assistance as they make pilgrimage to their heavenly homeland.<sup>424</sup>

Augustine’s use of *colimus* (from *colere*) and *cultu* (from *cultus*) in this passage (and passages discussed above) is noteworthy. As he will do in *De ciuitate Dei*, he acknowledges here that such words are not exclusively used for the worship of God. Though *cultus* is a broad term that can apply to the veneration attributed to the martyrs, the worship due to God alone is the type of *cultus* more properly termed *latria* (from the Greek *λατρεία*). This worship involves sacrifice, and the church teaches that *latria* is to be offered only to God, not to any martyr, saint, or angel. As he states in *s.* 198, discussed in the previous chapter, neither saints nor angels desire that the faithful offer to them this kind of worship. Only the devil, his demons, and certain

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<sup>421</sup> *c. Faust.* XX.21 (CSEL 25.1: 562): “populus autem christianus memorias martyrum religiosa sollemnitate concelebrat et ad excitandam imitationem et ut meritis eorum consocietur atque orationibus adiuuetur...”

<sup>422</sup> *c. Faust.*, XX.21 (CSEL 25.1: 562): “...ut ex ipsorum locorum admonitione maior adfectus exurgat ad acuendam caritatem et in illos, quos imitari possumus, et in illum, quo adiuuante possimus.”

<sup>423</sup> *c. Faust.* XX.21 (CSEL 25.1: 562, trans. Teske, WSA, *Answer to Faustus a Manichean*, I/20, 278): “colimus ergo martyres eo cultu dilectionis et societatis, quo et in hac uita coluntur sancti homines dei, quorum cor ad talem pro euangelica ueritate passionem paratum esse sentimus...”

<sup>424</sup> Therefore, for Augustine, God uses the church to accomplish his will. For more on this subject, see Lee, *Mystery of the Church*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017).

wicked human kings, who are consumed with pride, demand this worship that involves sacrifices.<sup>425</sup>

Martyr veneration is not idolatry because the martyrs receive from the faithful *cultus*, but not *latria*. Only when *latria* is offered to a creature other than the one true God is such *cultus* considered idolatry. The pagan *cultus* of various gods is idolatry because they are offering sacrifices and therefore *latria* to created beings.<sup>426</sup> The altars at martyr memorials are erected not to martyrs but to “the God of the martyrs.”<sup>427</sup> This is evident, for Augustine, in the language of the liturgy at memorial shrines as the bishop makes the eucharistic offering to God, not to the martyrs:

After all, what bishop, while standing at the altar in the places where their holy bodies are buried, ever said, ‘We offer this to you, Peter or Paul or Cyprian’? Rather, what is offered is offered *to* God, who crowned the martyrs, but *at* the memorials of those martyrs he crowned....<sup>428</sup>

Augustine’s understanding of the Eucharist as the sacrifice offered to God could not be clearer.

Pagans and Jews offered animal sacrifices, but Christians offered the sacrifice of the

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<sup>425</sup> *c. Faust.*, XX.21 (CSEL 25.1: 563): “ista sibi plane superbi spiritus exigent, diabolus et angeli eius, sicut per omnia templa et sacra gentilium. quorum similitudo in quibusdam etiam superbist hominibus expressa est, sicut de Babyloniae quibusdam regibus memoreiae commendatum tenemus.”

<sup>426</sup> To be clear, Augustine is *not* saying that it is acceptable for pagans to offer *cultus* to demons as long as they do not offer *latria* to them. This point is more evident in *ciu.* VIII.17 in Augustine’s response to Apuleius’s view that the demons ought to be venerated. Why, Augustine asks, would Apuleius consider the demons, who are hopelessly subject to the passions and guilty of the most abominable vices, worthy of veneration? Therefore, what also makes pagan worship idolatry for Augustine is that the pagans honor and/or imitate the immorality of their gods. These gods are demons that imitate the vices of Satan, thus they should neither receive veneration (*cultus*), nor should they be imitated.

<sup>427</sup> *c. Faust* XX.21. (CSEL 25.1: 562): “...ita tamen, ut nulli martyrum, sed ipsi deo martyrum quamuis in memoriis martyrum constituamus altaria.”

<sup>428</sup> *c. Faust.*, XX.21 (CSEL 25.1: 562, trans. Teske, WSA, *Answer to Faustus*, I/20, 279): “quis enim antistitum in locis sanctorum corporum adstans altari aliquando dixit: offerimus tibi, Petre aut Paule aut Cypriane, sed quod offertur, offertur deo, qui martyres coronavit, apud memorias eorum quos coronavit....” Augustine makes a similar argument in an early sermon (dated to 396) on the *natale* of a bishop named Fructuosus and two deacons named Augurius and Eulogius. See *s.* 273.3–4, 7–9. As we will see later, Augustine makes this same argument in *ciu.* VIII.27.



Eucharist.<sup>429</sup> The location of the eucharistic offering at the altar in the memorial shrine does not change the fact that it is offered to God. The bishops were intentional about using language that clearly indicated that it is to God that the Eucharist is offered.<sup>430</sup> The martyrs, who are members of Christ's body in the heavenly city, do in fact aid the pilgrim church in the act of martyr veneration; however, the aid comes through the faithful invoking the memory and prayers of the martyrs as they offer the eucharistic sacrifice, not to the martyrs, but to God.

Augustine admits that some Christians wrongly participate in martyr veneration either through the intent of their worship—e.g., the idea that they are sacrificing to the martyrs—or through their actions performed—e.g., drunkenness and revelry at the martyr shrines. However, erroneous intents and indulging behavior are a misunderstanding on the part of the people that the clergy are to correct. The church does not *command* people to sacrifice to the martyrs and become drunk at the shrines, she *corrects* them with sound teaching. Anyone who erroneously thinks that the faithful are to sacrifice to the martyrs is “reproved by sound doctrine, so that he may be either set right or avoided.”<sup>431</sup> The same applies to those who become drunk at the martyr shrines, though Augustine finds drunkenness less appalling than sacrificing to the martyrs. The former is sin, but the latter is sacrilege.

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<sup>429</sup> This is not to say that Augustine's understanding of the Eucharist as a sacrifice was identical to Rome's articulation of the subject in the Council of Trent. However, his conception of the Eucharist as a sacrifice offered to God is undeniable. For more on Augustine and the Eucharist as a sacrifice, see Pamela Jackson, “Eucharist,” in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald and John C. Cavadini (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 331–34. See also Lee, *Mystery of the Church*, 95–122.

<sup>430</sup> For more on the efforts of Augustine and North African bishops to regulate martyr veneration, especially what they considered abuses of *refrigeria*, see van Bavel, “The Cult of Martyrs in St. Augustine,” 352. See also Victor Saxer, *Morts, martyrs, reliques*, 133-149.

<sup>431</sup> c. *Faust.*, XX.21 (CSEL 25.1: 563, modified trans. Teske, WSA, *Answer to Faustus the Manichean*, I/20, 279): “...et quisquis in hunc errorem delabitur, corripitur per sanam doctrinam, siue ut corrigatur, siue ut caueatur.”

Martyr veneration is rightly observed when God is worshipped and the martyrs are honored for their suffering and victory over death. If performed in this manner, martyr veneration becomes for the faithful an occasion for participation in the blessedness of the one true God. As the faithful venerate the martyrs, they fellowship with them and worship the one true God by offering the Eucharistic sacrifice to God. In this act of worship, God makes his worshippers blessed. As Augustine elucidates in many of his sermons, the best way to venerate the martyrs is to imitate them.

### **Imitating and Celebrating the Martyrs as Participation in the *Sermones ad populum***

Martyr veneration, for Augustine, not only directs the faithful to the worship of the one true God; it directs them to the imitation of the virtues of the martyrs.<sup>432</sup> In Augustine's earliest references to martyr veneration, we saw the relationship between the celebration of the martyrs, the worship of God, and *participation*. In the "middle period" (401–415) of the development of Augustine's thought on martyrdom and martyr veneration,<sup>433</sup> Augustine places greater emphasis on the relationship between the celebration of the martyrs, the worship of God, and *imitation*.<sup>434</sup> This relationship most clearly surfaces in his sermons on the feast days of the martyrs, where Augustine repeatedly exhorts the faithful to imitate the martyrs, who imitated Christ the chief

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<sup>432</sup> See Lapointe, *La celebration des martyrs*. Anthony Dupont summarizes Lapointe's conclusions regarding Augustine's martyr theology evidenced in his sermons: 1) The theocentric dimension, in which God alone is worshipped in martyr veneration, 2) the Christocentric dimension, in which Christ is "*the caput et princeps martyrum*" who aids the martyrs in their suffering, and 3) the ecclesiological dimension, in which the martyrs are "the building blocks of the church" and their blood is "the seed for the growth of the church." See Dupont, "Augustine's Homiletic Definition of Martyrdom," 158.

<sup>433</sup> See van Bavel, "The Cult of the Martyrs," 351; Saxer, *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques*, 124.

<sup>434</sup> T.J. van Bavel argues that the increase of Augustine's involvement in the Donatist controversy and his response to Donatist claims of being the true Church of the Martyrs that suffered persecution from the imperially supported Catholic church likely influenced this emphasis ("The Cult of Martyrs," 355–57).

martyr.<sup>435</sup> However, rather than setting imitation *against* participation or celebration, as Peter Brown claims that Augustine does, the bishop regards both imitation and celebration of the martyrs as participatory.

There are understandable reasons for Peter Brown's argument. Augustine, as Brown notes, explicitly states the mimetic purpose of the feast days in a sermon preached sometime between 405 and 411 on the feast day of the Twenty Martyrs:

Therefore for this reason these festivals have been established in the church of Christ: so that through them the assembly of Christ's members might be admonished to imitate the martyrs of Christ. This is entirely the benefit of this festival, there is not another.<sup>436</sup>

In this same sermon, Augustine says the martyrs rejoice not when they are venerated, but when they are imitated.<sup>437</sup> In addition, as Brown also mentions, Augustine devotes the majority of his one hundred-something sermons on the feast days of the martyrs to exhorting the faithful to imitate the virtues of Christ and the martyrs.<sup>438</sup>

Though Augustine calls all of the faithful to imitate Christ, martyrs uniquely imitate him by their participation in his physical sufferings. In a sermon preached on the feast day of Cyprian on an unknown date, Augustine speaks of Cyprian the Shepherd who, like Peter, imitated Christ the Chief Shepherd by the shedding of his blood for his confession of Christ.<sup>439</sup> In a sermon on

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<sup>435</sup> Though scholars date some of these sermons to the early and late periods of the evolution of his understanding of the cult of the martyrs, many references to this relationship are found in those dated to the middle period (401-15).

<sup>436</sup> s. 325.1 (PL 38: 1447): "Ad hoc ergo istae festiuitates in ecclesia constitutae sunt christi, ut per eas congregatio membrorum christi admoneatur imitari martyres christi. Haec est omnino huius festiuitatis utilitas, alia non est." See Brown, "Enjoying the Saints," 4.

<sup>437</sup> s. 325.1. See Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 539. They cite the following references in Augustine that further confirms this point: s. 273.9; 302.1; 311.1.1; 317.1.1; 325.1; s. *Dolbeau* 13 (159A).1; *en. Ps.* 69.4. Also, Augustine states that venerating the martyrs does not result in God conferring greater favor on the martyrs. After all, they are already abiding in eternal glory in heaven.

<sup>438</sup> See Brown, "Enjoying the Saints," 1.

<sup>439</sup> s. 309.4. For Hill's reasons for his proposal of the dates 394, 406, or 419, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 66n1.

the feast day of Stephen, Augustine extols Stephen for imitating Christ by forgiving his enemies and commending his spirit to Christ as he was being stoned to death.<sup>440</sup> Stephen imitated the mercy that Christ demonstrated while being crucified *and* the death that Christ suffered for his witness. Therefore, Stephen is a “true imitator of the Lord’s passion and a perfect disciple of Christ, completing in his own passion what he had heard from the master.”<sup>441</sup> Despite their exemplary imitation of Christ, the martyrs’ feats are not inaccessible to the faithful. They may be martyrs, but they are also human beings and examples whose virtues can be imitated by the faithful.<sup>442</sup>

In various sermons on the feast days of the martyrs, Augustine exhorts the faithful to imitate New Testament martyrs like John the Baptist,<sup>443</sup> Peter and Paul,<sup>444</sup> and Stephen.<sup>445</sup> Old Testament figures, like the prophets and the Maccabee brothers, have likewise received the crown and title of martyrdom because they died for their witness to the coming Christ; thus, they

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<sup>440</sup> s. 316.3.

<sup>441</sup> s. 317.6 (A. Wilmart, ed., “Le Morceau Final Du Sermon 317 de Saint Augustin Pour La Fête de S. Étienne,” *Revue Bénédictine* 44 (1932): 204–205; trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 145): “Uerus imitator dominicae passionis et perfectus est christi discipulus adprobatus, qui quod a magistro audierat in sua passione complebat.” As Hill notes, “The sermon ends with section 5 in the Maurist edition; section 6 comes from a text edited by Dom Wilmart in the *Revue Bénédictine* 44 (1932) 204–205. The thought, in fact, crosses my mind that we may have here fragments of more than one sermon, stitched together by some old florilegist or collector, given the apparent discrepancy between section 1 and section 6 over the day it was preached on. But of course, it could have been arranged that the relics would be received in Hippo Regius on the saint's feast day” (*Sermons*, 146n1).

<sup>442</sup> s. 306B.3. J. den Boeft opens his brief summary of Augustine’s martyrology with this quote. “The true martyrs,” den Boeft observes, “are neither to be compared to the pagan gods nor the schismatic heroes, they were human beings whose merits are due to God’s grace and who therefore can be imitated by us: *martyres sunt, sed homines fuerunt* (*serm. Lambot* 26, 2).” J. den Boeft, “‘Martyres Sunt, Sed Homines Fuerunt,’ 124.

<sup>443</sup> s. 94A; 287; 288; 289; 290; 291; 292; 293.

<sup>444</sup> s. 295; 296; 297; 298; 299; 299A; 299B; 299C. These sermons include both Peter and Paul because the two shared the same feast day.

<sup>445</sup> Though Stephen is referenced in approximately thirty sermons, thirteen pertain primarily to Stephen. See s. 314; 315; 316; 317; 318; 319; 319A; 320; 321; 322; 323; 324; 382. For a discussion of these thirteen sermons on Stephen, see Anthony Dupont, “Imitatio Christi, Imitatio Stephani: Augustine’s Thinking on Martyrdom Based on His Sermons on the Protomartyr Stephen,” *Augustiniana* 56, no. 1/2 (2006): 29–61.

too are worthy of imitation.<sup>446</sup> Augustine likewise exhorts the faithful to imitate martyrs known throughout North Africa, such as the Scillitan martyrs,<sup>447</sup> Perpetua and Felicitas,<sup>448</sup> Vincent,<sup>449</sup> Marianus and James,<sup>450</sup> Lawrence,<sup>451</sup> of Cyprian of Carthage,<sup>452</sup> and other unnamed martyrs.<sup>453</sup> The martyrs by their eternity-driven deeds have proven to be worthy of imitation.

In some sermons on unnamed martyrs preached sometime between 405 and 411, Augustine describes sundry ways in which the faithful are to imitate the martyrs: to deny this temporal life and its lusts for the sake of eternal life and reward;<sup>454</sup> to rely on the help of God to endure death and overcome temptation;<sup>455</sup> to fear not death, but sin and the second death;<sup>456</sup> to despise greed, avarice, and the love of money, to seek charity, and to love what is good;<sup>457</sup> and to

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<sup>446</sup> For Augustine's sermons on the Maccabee martyrs, see *s.* 300; 301; 301A. See also *s.* 296.5; 306E; 343. See also *en. Ps.* 33.2.22. Cf. J. den Boeft, "'Martyres Sunt, Sed Homines Fuerunt,' 115–24.

<sup>447</sup> See *s.* 299D; 299E; 299F.

<sup>448</sup> See *s.* 280; 281; 282.

<sup>449</sup> See *s.* 274–277; 277A.

<sup>450</sup> See *s.* 284.

<sup>451</sup> See *s.* 302–305; 305A. Though Lawrence was a Roman deacon who died in the persecution of Valerian, Augustine's reports of miracles in *s.* 302 suggests that Hippo Regius housed a shrine to St. Lawrence. See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 311n2.

<sup>452</sup> Twelve sermons are devoted to Cyprian. See *s.* 308A; 309; 310; 311; 312; 313; 313A; 313B; 313C; 313D; 313E; and 313F.

<sup>453</sup> *s.* 325–335; 335A–L. He also preached on White Mass (or Massa Candida) martyrs of Utica, who were killed under Emperor Valerian in 258. The number of them is not known but it seems that it was considerable. See *s.* 306; 306A; 306B. Their bishop was Quadratus. See *s.* 306C; 306D. For more information on the White Mass martyrs, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 25n1.

<sup>454</sup> *s.* 335B.3. This sermon is dated to 410–412. See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 220n1.

<sup>455</sup> *s.* 335B.4–5.

<sup>456</sup> *s.* 335B.5

<sup>457</sup> *s.* 335C. Lambot dates this sermon to 405–411. See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 227n1.

confess Christ in the presence of human beings in order that Christ may confess them before God the Father on judgment day.<sup>458</sup> The martyrs, aided by Christ, practiced these virtues because their minds were fixed on Christ, on the reality of standing before the judgment seat of Christ, on the hope of eternal reward, and on the terror of eternal punishment. The martyrs, therefore, admonish the faithful to imitate not only their virtuous deeds, but their life-governing vision that centers on Christ, judgment, and eternity.<sup>459</sup>

Despite Augustine's seemingly obvious emphasis on imitation over participation or celebration of the martyrs, Brown's view misses important aspects of Augustine's martyrology. The bishop's emphases on Christ working in and through the martyrs and the exchange that occurs between the martyrs and the faithful in martyr veneration reveal the bishop's participatory understanding of both imitation and celebration of the martyrs.

### ***Christ the Chief Martyr Strengthens the Martyrs***

The martyrs' imitation of Christ, for Augustine, is a participation in Christ because Christ works in the martyrs and enables them to endure suffering. In a sermon preached in 397 on the feast day of Scillitan martyrs, Augustine states that female martyrs are clear evidence that the strength of all martyrs (both male and female) comes from Christ and not from themselves:

Christ is the strength of both male and female martyrs. If men alone exhibited strength in their passion, their virtue would be attributed to their sex. The reason, then, the weaker sex is able to suffer vigorously is because God empowered all of them. Accordingly, whether one be man, whether one be a woman, in his or her tribulation, one should say: *The Lord is my strength, and I will love you, Lord, my strength.*<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> s. 335F.1. The date of this sermon is uncertain. See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 242n1.

<sup>459</sup> In chapter 1, I discussed in greater detail some ways in which Augustine says the faithful may imitate the martyrs. Other scholars have done the same. See Straw, "Martyrdom;" Dupont, "Imitatio Christi, Imitatio Stephani;" den Boeft, "Martyres Sunt, Sed Homines Fuerunt;" Fruchtman, *Living Martyrs*.

<sup>460</sup> s. 299E.1 (MA 1: 550): "Martyrum christi uirorum et feminarum fortitudo christus. Si enim uiri soli in passione fortes exsisterent, sexui fortiori uirtus tribueretur. Ideo fortiter pati et infirmior sexus potuit, quia deus in omnibus

In another sermon preached on an uncertain date, Augustine reminds his listeners that Christ is the source of strength by which Perpetua and Felicity overcame the devil:

The one who had made himself weak for them was shown to be undefeated in them. The one who had *emptied himself* (Phil 2:7) in order to sow them, filled them with courage in order to reap them. The one who for their sake had heard abusive accusations, made them worthy to receive these honorable citations. The one who for their sake was willing mercifully to be born of a woman, enabled these women to die faithfully like men.<sup>461</sup>

Without the strength of Christ, none of the martyrs would have been able to endure persecution. The implication is that martyrdom is a gift granted to some, but not to all.<sup>462</sup> In a fragment of a sermon, Augustine says that true martyrs have their eyes fixed not on their own strength, but on “the martyr of martyrs, the head of martyrs, the lord of martyrs, the example of martyrs, the one who watches martyrs, helps martyrs, crowns martyrs.”<sup>463</sup>

In a sermon preached in 418 on the *natale* of the Apostles Peter and Paul, Augustine describes the divine and human action involved in martyrdom to draw further attention to Christ working in and through the martyrs. The martyrs fulfill the call of Christ’s passion to sacrifice

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potuit. Proinde licet sit uir, licet sit femina, in tribulatione sua debet dicere: DOMINUS FORTITUDO MEA, et DILIGAM TE, DOMINE, UIRTUS MEA.” While this passage could understandably be viewed by modern eyes as denigrating towards women, it is important to note that Augustine here is attributing a unique equality to male and female martyrs. Women, like men, are granted bravery and strength in suffering by Christ. Neither men nor women suffer martyrdom in their own natural strength.

<sup>461</sup> s. 281.1 (PL 38: 1284, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 78): “Ille in eis apparuit inuictus, qui pro eis factus est infirmus. Ille eas ut meteret, fortitudine impleuit; qui eas seminaret, semetipsum exinaniuit. Ille eas ad hos honores laudes que perduxit, qui pro eis opprobria et crimina audiuit. Ille fecit feminas uiriliter et fideliter mori, qui pro eis dignatus est de femina misericorditer nasci.”

<sup>462</sup> For more on martyrdom as a gift, see s. 326.1; s. 330.1; *en. Ps.* 102.3. See also Straw, “Martyrdom, “ 538; Anthony Dupont, “Imitatio Christi, Imitatio Stephani, 29–61; For a study of Augustine’s doctrine of grace as it relates to his theology of martyrdom, see Dupont, *Preacher of Grace*.

<sup>463</sup> s. 335G.2 (PLS 2: 804, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 244): “Adtendit enim ad martyrem martyrum, caput martyrum, dominum martyrum, exemplum martyrum, spectatorem martyrum, adiutorem martyrum, coronatorem martyrum.” The Latin text can also be found in *RB* 51: 24. As Hill notes, the dating of this sermon is uncertain. This sermon includes the common anti-Donatist theme of *non poena sed causa*. This will be further discussed in the next chapter. See Adam Ployd, “*Non poena sed causa*, 25–44.

themselves for God as Christ did for them; Christ fills the martyrs with the Holy Spirit and strengthens them to overcome. Christ himself even dedicates the martyrs and offers them as sacrifices to himself.<sup>464</sup> The martyrs are not merely passive offertory victims whose human will and action are absent in their martyrdom, but Christ the high priest initiates, carries through, and completes their martyrdom. Though the martyrs cooperate with Christ in their martyrdom, it is Christ who empowers, dedicates, offers, and crowns the martyrs.

Christ serves not only as an *outward example*, but also an *inward aid* to the martyrs and the faithful in their imitation of his suffering. In a sermon preached in Carthage in 418 on the feast day of the martyrs Marianus and James, Augustine calls Christ the “Prince of the martyrs” (*martyrum principem*) who by resisting temptation from the devil in the wilderness taught the martyrs to resist temptation: “Pay attention to the leader of the martyrs providing examples of battles, and mercifully helping the contenders.”<sup>465</sup> Because their aid came from Christ, the martyrs are to “attribute their very suffering to God, not as if they had offered it to God from themselves.”<sup>466</sup> Christ suffered for all of the faithful in order to serve as an “example”

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<sup>464</sup> s. 299.3. As I will discuss in the next chapter, Augustine takes the depth of Christ’s involvement even further by describing Christ as sacrificing *himself* in the martyrs.

<sup>465</sup> s. 284.5. (PL 38: 1291): “Attendite martyrum Ducem exemplorum certamina proponentem, et certantes misericorditer adiuuantem.” For notes on dating, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 93note 1. In s. 284.2 (PL 38: 1289), he says that Mary gives birth to the “prince of the martyrs” (*martyrum Principem*). In s. 316.2 (PL 38: 1432), he says that Stephen, while being martyred, imitates looks to heaven to see Jesus the “chief of the martyrs” (*martyrum caput*).

<sup>466</sup> s. 284.3 (PL 38: 1280): “...et ipsam passionem suam imputet deo, non tanquam de suo hoc obtulerit deo....” Cf. *en. Ps.* 115.5. Though this sermon is not preached on a martyr feast day, he reminds his congregation that the ability of the martyrs and the faithful to endure suffering comes from Christ who first suffered for them. For more on Christ’s *exemplum* as a demonstration of virtue, an admonition for the faithful to imitate Christ, and a guarantee of the faithful’s ability to imitate Christ, see Basil Studer, “<<Sacramentum et exemplum>> chez saint Augustin,” in *Dominus Salvator: Studien zur Christologie und Exegese der Kirchenväter* (Roma: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1992), 141–212. Studer comments on Augustine’s statements in *en. Ps.* 115 regarding Christ’s *exemplum* conferring on the faithful the ability to suffer. Studer also makes a brief mention of Prosper of Aquitaine’s discussion of the martyrs as demonstrating the *virtus capitis et sacramento eminent et exemplo* (Studer, 208). See also Andreas Kessler, “Exemplum,” in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, eds. Cornelius Petrus Mayer et al. (Basel: Schwabe AG, 1986), 2: 1174–81. Kessler briefly references the martyrs serving as an *exemplum* that is closest to the *exemplum* of Christ in Augustine’s anti-Pelagian works (“Exemplum,” 3: 1178).



(*exemplum*) of how to suffer, even if such suffering does not result in death.<sup>467</sup> In praising the patience of the martyrs, the faithful are not to forget that such patience has been granted to them by God. The faithful may likewise receive divine assistance to imitate Christ in his passion and endure suffering of various kinds by asking for such aid in prayer.<sup>468</sup> If one finds it too difficult to imitate Christ, one may by the grace of God imitate martyrs like Stephen, Marianus, and James, who are “fellow bondservants” of the faithful.<sup>469</sup>

In his sermons on the feast day of the martyr Vincent, Augustine upholds Vincent not only as an example of patience, but one who has received his patience from Christ’s example and inward aid. By his patience which enabled him to overcome the devil, Vincent calls the faithful to overcome the devil’s fiery darts of seductions with self-control, his errors with wisdom, and the temptation to boast in one’s own strength with humility. Just as Vincent did not exhibit patience through his own powers but through the one who granted him patience, so the faithful who exhibit patience receive that patience from Christ. It is Christ’s example working in the faithful that enables them to endure: “[I]n them dwells the Word, and in them dwells his example (*exemplum*).”<sup>470</sup> Vincent’s victory, moreover, calls the faithful to remember that it is Christ who conquers in and through the faithful. Though Christ defeated the devil through his passion, the devil still prowls like a lion, seeking to devour the faithful. They can combat the devil victoriously because of the conquering Christ who reigns in the faithful.<sup>471</sup> Vincent’s life is not

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<sup>467</sup> s. 284.6

<sup>468</sup> s. 284.6.

<sup>469</sup> s. 284.6 (PL 38: 1293): “Ex gratia domini imitare conseruum, imitare stephanum, imitare marianum et iacobum.”

<sup>470</sup> s. 274 (PL 38: 1253): “Mites enim sciunt quod dico; quia in illis habitat uerbum, in illis habitat exemplum.”

<sup>471</sup> s. 275.1

ultimately to remind the church of Vincent, but of Christ, the “king of martyrs equipping his troops with spiritual weapons,”<sup>472</sup> who works in both the martyrs and the faithful to overcome the devil. Imitating the martyrs, then, means allowing Christ to be victorious in the faithful.

In a sermon preached on the feast day of Perpetua and Felicity on an uncertain date, Augustine states that both martyrs and the faithful draw their strength from the outward example and inward aid of Christ the head. Though the martyrs’ accomplishments are great and the faithful may never measure up to their merits, the martyrs and the faithful “are member’s of the same person’s body.”<sup>473</sup> The faithful look to the martyrs in virtue of their connection to Christ the head and their imitation of his passion.<sup>474</sup> Therefore, as the faithful, who are members of Christ’s body, imitate the martyrs, the faithful participate in the agency of Christ the head.<sup>475</sup>

### ***The Martyrs as Exempla of the Christ the Exemplum***

The martyrs serve as *exempla* of Christ the ultimate *exemplum* to strengthen the faithful in their imitation of Christ. In imitating the martyrs, the faithful imitate Christ the chief martyr. As Anthony Dupont observes, “[t]he martyrs are *exempla* because they followed the supreme

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<sup>472</sup> s. 276.1 (RB 17: 45, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 29): “...recolite martyrum regem cohortes suas armis spiritalibus instruentem...”

<sup>473</sup> s. 280.6 (PL 38:1283, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 75): “Non nobis parum uideatur quod eius corporis membra sumus, cuius et illi, quibus aequiparari non possumus.”

<sup>474</sup> s. 280.6.

<sup>475</sup> Augustine clarifies, however, that imitating only the physical suffering of Christ and the martyrs, as the Donatist martyrs did, does not make one a true martyr or a true imitator of Christ. See s. 275.1; s. 283.7; s. 285.2; s. 285.7; s. 313E.2; s. 335.2; s. 327.1; s. 382.4; *ep.* 89.2; *ep.* 202.4; *Cresc.* 3.47.51; *en. Ps.* 34.2.1; *en. Ps.* 68.1.9. For a more extensive list of primary references discussing this theme, see Dupont, “Imitatio Christi, Imitatio Stephani,” 159n11. This anti-Donatist rhetoric has been well-examined by secondary scholars. For a detailed study of this theme, see W. Lazewski, “La Sentenza Agostiniana martyrem Facit No Poena Sed Causa.” See also Collin Garbarino, “Augustine, Donatists, and Martyrdom,” 49–61; Straw, “Martyrdom,” 539; Ployd, “*Non Poena Sed Causa*.” I will give more attention to Augustine’s response to the Donatist claim to be the true “Church of the Martyrs” in the following chapter.

*exemplum*, the passion of Christ. Christ is thus imitated by imitating the martyrs.”<sup>476</sup> In a sermon preached on the feast day of the Twenty Martyrs sometime between 405 and 411, Augustine discusses how Christ, in taking on human flesh, provides a human *exemplum* for the faithful to imitate.<sup>477</sup> Though Christ by his suffering taught the faithful to endure suffering, God knew that humanity would excuse themselves of the command to follow in the footsteps of Christ with an appeal to Christ’s divinity and their own human frailty. Sure, Christ is human, but he is also divine. How can weak human beings be expected to imitate one who is true God? Anticipating our excuses, Augustine says, God provided other human *exempla*—the apostles, prophets, and martyrs—to show the faithful that imitation of Christ, despite our human frailty, is possible.

So therefore, it was to deny our weakness and our lack of faith all such excuses that the martyrs built for us a paved road. It was to be built of paving stones, on which we could walk without a qualm. They made it with their blood, with their confession of faith. Or you could say, that despising their bodies, as Christ came to win the nations, seated as it were on that donkey, they strewed their bodies like clothes before him...If you're reluctant to imitate the Lord, imitate your fellow servant. The column of servants has gone before you in advance, depriving your reluctance of all excuse.<sup>478</sup>

Noteworthy about this passage is Augustine’s language about the way in which the martyrs aid the faithful. Their blood, their confession, and their dead bodies pave the way for the faithful to imitate the Lord. Augustine is not suggesting that the blood of the martyrs redeems the faithful, brings them into covenant with God, or grants to them the forgiveness of sins. But he does

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<sup>476</sup> Dupont, “Augustine’s Homiletic Definition of Martyrdom,” 158.

<sup>477</sup> s. 325.1. Hill notes that one scholar, Zwingii, gives a specific dating of Sunday, 15 November 408. See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 169n1.

<sup>478</sup> s. 325.1. (PL 38: 1448): “...ad tollendas igitur omnes excusationes infidelis infirmitatis, martyres nobis stratam construxerunt. Lapideis enim tabulis construenda erat, qua securi ambularemus. Ipsi fecerunt sanguine suo, confessionibus suis. Denique contemptis corporibus suis, uenienti ad gentes lucrandas christo, tanquam in iumento illo sedenti, corpora sua sicut uestimenta strauerunt...Si piget imitari dominum, imitare conseruum. Praecessit agmen seruorum, sublata est excusatio pigrorum.”

describe the martyrs' blood as in some way efficacious for leading the faithful into the imitation of Christ.<sup>479</sup> As those who faithfully imitated Christ by shedding their blood for him as he shed his blood for humanity, the martyrs are God's gift to the faithful as a special *exempla* for the faithful to imitate.<sup>480</sup>

As the faithful gather to venerate the martyrs, these special *exempla* are placed before them to aid them in imitating Christ, the ultimate *exemplum*. Therefore, all reluctance or neglect to follow in the footsteps of Christ is inexcusable. This imitation is participation because Christ works in and through the martyrs. The martyrs share in the passion of Christ the head; Christ suffers in and with the martyrs, who are members of his body; Christ works through the martyrs to accomplish his saving work in the lives of the faithful by setting them as examples for the faithful to imitate; the faithful, by imitating the martyrs, cooperate with Christ who works in them and in the martyrs. Therefore, to imitate Christ and to imitate the martyrs who imitated Christ is for the faithful a participation in Christ's life and virtues.<sup>481</sup>

While Peter Brown either sets imitation against participation or participation via imitation against participation via celebration, I have sought to demonstrate that for Augustine *imitating* the martyrs is a participation. What remains then is clarification on whether or not Augustine

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<sup>479</sup> For more on the unique efficacy of the martyrs' blood, see *s.* 280.6 (their blood waters the earth for a harvest of new converts); *s.* 286.3 (their blood is seed in the earth that produces a harvest of new converts); *s.* 295.8 (their blood consecrates the martyr feast days); *s.* 312.5 (their blood overthrows false gods, idols, and temples). I discussed the uniqueness of the martyr's blood in chapter 1.

<sup>480</sup> As Guy Lapointe notes, the martyrs for Augustine serve as examples of lives aimed at eternal beatitude. Augustine exalts their example over the example of other departed faithful because they imitated Christ's humility and passion. To imitate the martyrs, then, is to imitate Christ. See Guy Lapointe, *La célébration des martyrs*.

<sup>481</sup> For a brief discussion of the martyrs as examples of "deified" patience in *De patientia* 14, see Meconi, *The One Christ*, 120–22. Christ's model of patience both calls and enables the martyrs and the faithful to imitate Christ's very patience. The imitation of this "deified" patience that Christ modeled in his own passion is a participation in the deified life of Christ. As Meconi notes, "Here we receive the first instance of the practical implications of a deified life. The deified life is led by the Spirit, ordered toward God, cognizant that all is a gift from above" (*The One Christ*, 122).

sees *celebrating* the martyrs as a participation. Augustine's repeated appeal for the faithful to imitate the martyrs would suggest his seemingly obvious preference for imitating instead of celebrating and communing with the martyrs. However, his mimetic emphasis does not discount the importance and participatory nature of the liturgical celebration of the martyrs.

### ***Imitation and Celebration of the Martyrs as Participation***

Imitation, celebration, and participation are in fact deeply connected for Augustine. It is by both imitation and celebration of the martyrs that the faithful participate in what Brown calls a "participatory... 'symbiotic,' relationship with the other world."<sup>482</sup> In a sermon preached on the feast day of Perpetua and Felicitas, he calls the faithful to rejoice in these two triumphant martyrs by celebrating *and* imitating them:

Whenever these solemn festivals occur, let us celebrate them with intense devotion in joyful sobriety, pure assembly, faithful reflection, and confident proclamation, just as we are doing now. It is not an insignificant part of imitation to rejoice together in virtues of those who are greater than we are.<sup>483</sup>

On the one hand, then, a true celebration of the martyrs involves *imitating* their virtues. On the other hand, a true imitation of the martyrs involves *celebrating* their virtues. While he upholds the martyrs as great heroes of the faith that tower over the faithful like giants, their virtues can be imitated. Though not all may be able to imitate their suffering and torments of martyrdom, all can follow their affection, joy, gladness, desire for God, and compassion.<sup>484</sup> As they celebrate,

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<sup>482</sup> Brown, "Preface to the 2014 Edition," xxvii.

<sup>483</sup> s. 280.6 (PL 38: 1283): "Unde solemnitates eorum, sicut facimus, deuotissime celebremus, sobria hilaritate, casta congregatione, fideli cogitatione, fidenti praedicatione. Non parua pars imitationis est, meliorum congaudere uirtutibus." The date of this sermon is uncertain. Hill hypothesizes that it was written about 400. See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 76n1.

<sup>484</sup> s. 280.6.

the faithful join the martyrs “in a common, joyful expression” (*in commune gaudium*) and benefit from the intercession of the martyrs.<sup>485</sup> In a sermon preached on the feast day of Cyprian of Carthage in 405, Augustine on the one hand *distinguishes* celebrating the martyrs and imitating the martyrs. On the other hand, the two are not to be done apart from one another:

Thus, in the celebration of the solemn festivals of the martyrs, their virtues should be imitated. It is easy to celebrate the glory of the martyrs; it is greater to imitate the faith and patience of the martyrs. Let us do the former in such a way that we desire the latter.<sup>486</sup>

Celebration alone, however, does not grant a participatory communion with the martyrs, especially when those celebrations are accompanied by drunkenness and revelry. A proper celebration of the martyrs and a participatory communion with them necessitates an imitation of their virtues. But why, for Augustine, is imitation essential? One answer he gives is fairly practical. Why would communion occur when those who gather to celebrate the martyrs engage in activities that the martyrs despise?

As discussed above, during his priesthood, Augustine had already denounced drunkenness at the martyr festivals as a violation of sacred space and a form of idolatry that God condemns.<sup>487</sup> He continued his preaching against such excesses throughout his career. In a sermon possibly preached around 401 on the feast day of Primus, Victoria, Perpetua, and other unnamed martyrs, Augustine exhorts his audience to celebrate not with drunkenness, but by

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<sup>485</sup> s. 280.6 (PL 38: 1283).

<sup>486</sup> s. 311.1 (PL 38: 1414): “Sed celebratio solemnitatis martyrum, imitatio debet esse uirtutum. Facile est honorem martyris celebrari: magnum est fidem atque patientiam martyris imitari. Hoc sic agamus, ut illud optemus....” For a discussion on the dating, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 79n1.

<sup>487</sup> See above discussion of *ep.* 29.4. The reforms proposed by Augustine and bishops Aurelius and Alypius were codified in the Council of Carthage in 397. This ruling prohibited as much as possible the use of churches for such banquets. The churches were to be used only to feed itinerant clerics. See *Breuiarium Hipponense* 29 (CCSL 149:30-53). See also Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 537.

honoring the sufferings of the martyrs.<sup>488</sup> "If [the martyrs] had esteemed [drunkenness]," Augustine says in another sermon on some unnamed martyrs, "they would not have been martyrs."<sup>489</sup> Drunkenness during the feast days brings dishonor, not honor, to the martyrs. The martyrs have no desire to have communion with those who dishonor them and the God for whom they died. The martyrs were not inebriated with wine but with the Spirit of God, which empowered them to resist the devil. If the faithful want to commune with and participate in the glory of the martyrs, they ought to discard their earthly beverages and imbibe from the same heavenly draughts as the martyrs did.

Moreover, those who engage in such drunkenness persecute the martyrs and associate with demons: "[They] persecute with their cups [of strong drink] the ones those people persecuted with stones; [they] go on even to dance and give the members of Christ over to the demons for play; and they think they are pleasing the martyrs, when in fact they are pleasing unclean spirits."<sup>490</sup> Such drunken celebrations, then, constitute an other-worldly participation not with the martyrs, but with demons. The object of imitation, then, determines the object of participation.

Another explanation Augustine provides as to why imitation is necessary to properly celebrate and enjoy communion with the martyrs involves a deeper, mystical reality of Christ's union with and operation in his church. As Augustine states in a sermon preached on the feast day of Perpetua and Felicitas, Christians on earth and the martyrs in heaven are in a "close

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<sup>488</sup> s. 335A.3. For the debates around the dating of this sermon, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 213n1.

<sup>489</sup> s. 335D.1 (PLS 2: 777): "...si ista dilexissent, martyres non essent." This is *Sermon Lambot* 6. The Latin text may also be found in *RB* 50: 4.

<sup>490</sup> s. 335D.2 (PLS 2: 777, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 229): "...et quos illi persecuti sunt lapidibus, persequuntur calicibus; insuper etiam saltant et membra christi ad ludendum daemonibus donant, et putant se placere martyribus dum placent inmundis spiritibus." The Latin text may also be found in *RB* 50: 4.

union” or “binding relationship” (*connexione*) with each other that death cannot sever.<sup>491</sup> Even though the martyrs die, they remain with the faithful in the unity and charity of Christ the head. The celebration of the martyrs makes present this eternal bond between Christ’s heavenly and earthly members.

We admire them, they are sorry for us. We congratulate them, they pray for us. They strewed their bodies like garments on the road, when the colt carrying the Lord was led into Jerusalem; let us at least cut branches from the trees, pluck hymns and praises from the holy Scriptures, and offer them in a joint expression of rejoicing. At least we are all in one attendance upon the same Lord, all following the same teacher, accompanying the same leader, joined to the same head, wending our way to the same Jerusalem, pursuing the same charity, and embracing the same unity.<sup>492</sup>

In martyr veneration, then, an exchange, or a “participatory, ‘symbiotic’ relationship” one might say,<sup>493</sup> occurs between the earthly and heavenly citizens of the New Jerusalem. The faithful on earth offer their admiration of the martyrs in heaven in exchange for the intercession of the martyrs and the display of the martyrs’ virtues. By receiving the intercession of the martyrs and beholding the virtues of the martyrs, the pilgrim church is strengthened to imitate the virtues of Christ.<sup>494</sup> To imitate and celebrate the martyrs, then, is to participate in the exchange with Christ the head in order to be conformed to this unity-in-charity.<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> s. 280.6. “Si eos sequi non ualemus actu, sequamur affectu: si non gloria, certe laetitia: si non meritis, uotis: si non passione, compassione: si non excellentia, connexione.”

<sup>492</sup> s. 280.6 (PL 38: 1283–84, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 75–6. “Miramur eos, miserantur nos. Gratulamur eis, precantur pro nobis. Illi corpora sua tanquam uestimenta strauerunt, cum pullus dominum portans in ierusalem duceretur: nos saltem uelut ramos de arboribus caedentes, de scripturis sanctis hymnos laudes que decerpimus, quas in commune gaudium proferamus. Omnes tamen eidem domino paremus, eundem magistrum sequimur, eundem principem comitamur, eidem capiti subiungimur, ad eandem ierusalem tendimus, eandem sectamur charitatem, eandem que amplectimur unitatem.”

<sup>493</sup> See Brown, “Preface to the 2014 Edition,” xxvii.

<sup>494</sup> See s. 282.1. This exchange is reminiscent of Augustine’s idea of the “wonderful exchange” between Christ the head and the members of his body, in which Christ in his humility assumed our frail humanity in order to transfigure the faithful into the glory of his own body. See *en. 2 Ps.* 30.5. See Babcock, “The Christ of the Exchange.”

<sup>495</sup> This topic will be further discussed in the next chapter.



The relationship between the martyrs and the faithful, however, is not exactly mutual in the sense that there is an equal exchange between them. As Augustine says in a sermon preached on the feast day of the martyrs Castus and Aemilius, the faithful invoke the intercession of the martyrs, but the faithful do not make intercession to God *for* the martyrs since the martyrs have already been made perfect in righteousness by their sufferings.<sup>496</sup> The church prays for other faithful departed, but the martyrs act as advocates that pray for the church on earth.<sup>497</sup> Moreover, Augustine not only affirms that these prayers of the martyrs in heaven are efficacious; he says that the martyrs' prayers *for* the faithful even cause the prayers *of* the faithful to become effectual. In a sermon possibly preached in 410 on the feast day of Cyprian, he says, "But don't imagine either that the prayers of the saints for all of us can be without effect with God; it is by their prayers that your prayers, too, and mine, will not be wasted with God."<sup>498</sup> Celebrating the martyrs, then, is a participatory communion of Christ's members in heaven and on earth that grants the faithful access to the powerful and effective prayers of the martyrs.

This intercession of the martyrs, as Augustine clarifies in the above sermon preached on the feast day of the martyrs Castus and Aemilius, is based upon and an extension of the intercession of Christ the head. The martyrs serve as advocates who pray for the faithful, but

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<sup>496</sup> s. 285.5. The proposed dates for this sermon include 397, sometime between 405 and 411, and 416. See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 100n1.

<sup>497</sup> s. 285.5. Cf. s. 284.5. The martyrs' prayers are beseeched because they battled against sin to the point of shedding blood.

<sup>498</sup> s. 313E.8. (MA 1: 543, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 115): "Ne autem putetis uacare posse orationibus sanctorum pro omnibus nobis apud deum; quorum orationibus etiam orationes nostrae et uestrae non erunt inanes apud deum." Hill argues for a much earlier date of 395 or 396 (Hill, 116n1). Augustine aligns with the North African martyr tradition that held that the prayers of martyrs on behalf of the faithful held a unique authority. The extent of the unique position and authority of confessors and martyrs was debated, especially in regard to confessors who had not yet been killed. Tertullian and Cyprian resisted the view that martyrs and confessors could attain forgiveness for those who had denied Christ in persecution. See Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 519–551. I will discuss this topic further in chapter 5.

only because they are joined as members to Christ the head who is the one Advocate.<sup>499</sup> Christ the head, who is seated at the right hand of the Father, continually makes intercession for all of the members of his body. The head invites his heavenly members (the martyrs) to share in this intercession for his members on earth. Just like Peter, who as a member of the body of Christ is a shepherd "in the body of the shepherd," so are martyrs advocates and intercessors in the one Advocate Christ Jesus.<sup>500</sup> The celebration of martyr festivals, therefore, is a visible expression of and a real communion between the martyrs in heaven and the faithful on earth. The faithful share in the benefits of this intercession as they venerate the martyrs, invoke their prayers, and rejoice with the martyrs in Christ.<sup>501</sup>

As Peter Brown rightly notes, a longing for a communion and a "participatory... 'symbiotic' relationship" with the martyrs abiding in the heavenly realm moves the faithful to honor the martyrs on feast days and draw near to their sacred bodily remains.<sup>502</sup> Contrary to Brown's suggestion, however, Augustine in fact shares with the laity this longing for and understanding of such a communion with the martyrs in martyr veneration. To celebrate and imitate the martyrs, for Augustine, is to participate with them in a single charity, unity, and worship of Christ, who is head of the martyrs and head of the church. Augustine further develops

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<sup>499</sup> s. 285.5 (PL 38: 1295): "tam enim perfecti exierunt, ut non sint suscepti nostri, sed aduocati, neque hoc in se, sed in illo cui capiti perfecta membra cohaeserunt. Ille est enim uere aduocatus unus, qui interpellat pro nobis, sedens ad dexteram Patris; sed aduocatus unus, sicut et pastor unus."

<sup>500</sup> s. 285.5 (PL 38:1296): "Petrus ergo non in se, sed in corpore pastoris, est pastor." In *en. Ps.* 85.24, Augustine says that the martyrs, with Christ, continually make intercession for the faithful until the eschaton. See Eno, *Saint Augustine and the Saints*, 70–74.

<sup>501</sup> s. 285.5.

<sup>502</sup> See Brown, "Preface to the 2014 Edition," xxvii.

the connection between worship, participation, and martyr veneration in his developed understanding of true worship and sacrifice in *De ciuitate Dei*.

### **True Worship, Sacrifice, and Martyr Veneration as Participation in *De ciuitate Dei***

During the “late” period of the evolution of Augustine’s theology of martyrdom and martyr veneration (415–30), Augustine develops the connection between the ideas emphasized during the early period (participation and *worship*) and the middle period (participation and *imitation*). The representative work for this period that I examine is *De ciuitate Dei*. In this work, Augustine synthesizes ideas previously developed in the context of his polemics against the Manicheans and his pastoral concerns regarding the North African laity’s understanding and practice of martyr veneration. This time, however, the pagans, especially the Platonist philosophers, receive the brunt of his carefully articulated critique. In this work, the participatory, deifying elements of worship become more pronounced with an emphasis on true religion and true sacrifice. The relationship between the martyrs, sacrifice, and the worship of God become an important focal point for Augustine in Book XXII.

### ***True Religion, Imitation, and Worship***

As discussed in the previous chapter, Augustine relates worship to participation. True worship involves sacrifices and is due to “the true God that makes his worshippers gods.”<sup>503</sup> Neither the gods of the Platonists, nor the demons can make worshippers into gods. The Platonists rightly believe that human beings have an ultimate end of beatitude. They even rightly

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<sup>503</sup> *ciu.* X.1 (CCSL 47: 273, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 306): “...qui uerus est Deus facit que suos cultores deos.”

recognize that it can only come through sharing in the immortality and blessedness of the Creator. They fall into serious error, however, in their advocacy of worshipping, i.e., offering sacrifices and sacred rites, to many gods and demons in addition to the supreme God.<sup>504</sup> On the contrary, Augustine argues, God alone is to be worshipped by both the blessed immortals (angels) and the miserable mortals (humanity). Truly blessed immortals derive their blessed immortality from God, and they desire that God alone is worshipped, not themselves. Only by worshipping God and clinging to him in love can the faithful attain happiness and immortality.<sup>505</sup>

In Book VIII, Augustine links worship and true religion to imitation. He critiques the African Platonist Apuleius who claims that demons ought to be worshipped but not imitated. On the one hand, Apuleius describes the demons as “worthy of divine honors” (*diuinis honoribus dignos*) on account of their eternity, their superior location in the intermediate realm, and their intermediary role between the gods and human beings.<sup>506</sup> On the other hand, he regards the demons’ immoral actions, which are rampant, as unworthy of imitation. Augustine finds this argument absurd:

What reason is there, then, other than sheer folly and wretched error, for you to humble yourself to venerate a being that you have no desire to resemble in your way of life? Why should you worship in religion one whom you have no desire to imitate, when the supreme height of religion is to imitate the one whom you worship?<sup>507</sup>

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<sup>504</sup> Cf. *doctr. chr.* 2.40.60; *ep.* 233. See Pier Franco Beatrice, “Christian Worship,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald and John C. Cavadini, trans. Matthew O’Connell (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 158.

<sup>505</sup> *ciu.* X.1; X.3.

<sup>506</sup> *ciu.* VIII.17 (CCSL 47: 234, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 262).

<sup>507</sup> *ciu.* VIII.17 (CCSL 47: 235, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 263): “Quae igitur causa est nisi stultitia error que miserabilis, ut ei te facias uenerando humilem, cui te cupias uiuendo dissimilem; et religione colas, quem imitari nolis, cum religionis summa sit imitari quem colis?”

Imitation, then, is integral to true religion and worship for Augustine. Only those worthy of imitation are to be venerated or worshipped.<sup>508</sup> This recalls Augustine's emphasis on the close relationship between celebrating the martyrs and imitating the martyrs in the *Sermones ad populum*. To properly celebrate and honor the martyrs, one must imitate their virtues. Likewise, imitation involves celebrating and honoring the virtues of the martyrs. To enjoy communion with the martyrs, one must celebrate and imitate them. In the same way, true religion involves imitating the one true God who is worshipped. Because God makes into gods those who worship God, and because imitation of God is integral to the true worship of God, imitation of God is a participation in the life of God.<sup>509</sup>

In Book X of *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine expands upon his discussion of worship and sacrifice to God initially developed in his anti-Manichean polemics in contrast to the false worship and sacrifice to the gods and demons of the Platonists. As he did in *Contra Faustum*, Augustine describes the worship owed to Deity as a worship that involves sacrifice:

Now it is to be discerned and examined, as much as God grants, concerning the immortal and blessed ones, seated in the heavenly thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, those which [the Platonists] name "gods" or some of which they name "good demons," which we would call "angels": In what manner do they believe that we are to observe religion and piety? That is, to speak candidly, whether it pleases them for us to perform sacred actions and offer sacrifices, or to consecrate ourselves or something that belongs to us in religious rites, to themselves also or exclusively to their God, who is also our God. For this is the worship (*cultus*) owed to Divinity, or more directly speaking, to Deity....<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> Augustine uses the verbs *uenerare* and *colere* here to describe the veneration and worship that the Platonists offer to the demons. However, his mention of the offerings and divine honors that Apuleius believes ought to be attributed to the demons suggests that Augustine has in mind *latria*, the worship that involves sacrifice. To be sure, he would denounce offering both *latria* and the more general forms of *veneratio* and *cultus* to the demons on account of the demons' immorality and eternal misery.

<sup>509</sup> Cf. *ciu.* IX.23. Augustine agrees with Porphyry that imitation of God deifies us. This point is also significant in underscoring the moral element of deification in Augustine's thought. As Meconi notes, the moral element of deification arises in the last of Augustine's eighteen references to *deificare* in *ciu.* IX.23. See Meconi, *The One Christ*, 124–26.

<sup>510</sup> *ciu.* X.1 (CCSL 47: 272): "nunc uidendum ac disserendum est, quantum Deus donat, immortales ac beati in caelestibus sedibus dominationibus, principatibus potestatibus constituti, quos isti deos et ex quibus quosdam uel

Worship proper to God, therefore, involves sacrifices and a consecration of one's possessions or oneself in religious rites. Any created being that worships God desires no worship for itself; rather, it directs others "with all the force of its love" to the worship of the one true God.<sup>511</sup> If the immortal gods and the *eudaimones* of the Platonists truly loved human beings, Augustine argues, they would lead people to this final end of blessedness and immortality which can only be found in the worship of God alone.<sup>512</sup>

Though Augustine uses the Latin word *cultus* for "worship" in the above passage, he admits that such a word does not properly encapsulate the worship due to God alone, since various word forms of *cultus* can refer to other things such as cultivating or colonizing land. Even the Latin terms *religio* and *pietas* can refer to other things besides God, such as human relationships. He prefers the Greek word λατρεία, which he argues, is always, or almost always, used in the Scriptures to describe worship offered to God. The Latin translations of the Scriptures available during his time, he notes, translate the Greek term λατρεία as *servitus*.<sup>513</sup>

True religion and sacrifice, for Augustine, takes a variety of forms that each constitute a participation in the life of God. First of all, the faithful offer and consecrate themselves to God by offering sacrifices of humility and praise:

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bonos daemones uel nobis cum angelos nominant, quo modo credendi sint uelle a nobis religionem pietatem que seruari; hoc est, ut apertius dicam, utrum etiam sibi an tantum deo suo, qui etiam noster est, placeat eis ut sacra faciamus et sacrificemus, uel aliqua nostra seu nos ipsos religionis ritibus consecremus. hic est enim diuinitati uel, si expressius dicendum est, deitati debitus cultus...."

<sup>511</sup> *ciu.* X.3 (CCSL 47: 276, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, 308): "Illi enim potius diuinae sententiae suffragatur et dilectionis uiribus fauet...."

<sup>512</sup> *ciu.* X.1.

<sup>513</sup> *ciu.* X.1 (CCSL 47: 273). Though other Greek and Latin terms have their own nuance, in this passage he considers the Greek terms in Scripture λατρεία (*servitus* in Latin), θρησκεία (*religio* in Latin), and θεοσέβειαν (no single word equivalent in Latin) as referring to the worship of God (CCSL 47: 273).

We offer to him the sacrifice of humility and praise on the altar of the heart ignited by the burning flame of charity. In order that we may see him as he will be able to be seen, and by clinging closely to him, we are cleansed of all the stain of sins and evil desires, and we are consecrated in his name.<sup>514</sup>

Clinging to God in love is the ultimate offering of oneself as a sacrifice to God.<sup>515</sup> Both human beings and heavenly beings are not only to direct themselves to this end, they are to direct other creatures to this end.<sup>516</sup> Directing one's neighbor to cling to God in love is precisely what it means to love one's neighbor.

And this is the end: to cling to God. Therefore, when one who understands what it means to love oneself is being commanded to love one's neighbor as oneself, what else is being commanded, if not that one commend one's neighbor, as much as one is able, to love God? This is the worship of God, this is true religion, this is upright godliness, this is the service owed to God alone.<sup>517</sup>

True worship, true religion, and true piety for Augustine is the love of God and the love of neighbor. The ritual sacrifices of the Old Testament were visible signs that pointed to the invisible sacrifices of a repentant heart, mercy, and the love of God and of neighbor.<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>514</sup> *ciu.* X.3 (CCSL 47: 275): "...ei sacrificamus hostiam humilitatis et laudis in ara cordis igne feruidam caritatis. ad hanc uidentum, sicut uideri poterit, ei que cohaerendum ab omni peccatorum et cupiditatum malarum labe mundamur et eius nomine consecramur.

<sup>515</sup> Lee, *Mystery of the Church*, 113.

<sup>516</sup> *ciu.* X.3. Lee, *Mystery of the Church*, 112.

<sup>517</sup> *ciu.* X.3 (CCSL 47: 275–76): "Hic autem finis est adhaerere deo. Iam igitur scienti diligere se ipsum, cum mandatur de proximo diligendo sicut se ipsum, quid aliud mandatur, nisi ut ei, quantum potest, commendat diligendum deum? Hic est dei cultus, haec uera religio, haec recta pietas, haec tantum deo debita seruitus."

<sup>518</sup> *ciu.* X.19 (CCSL 47: 277): "Non uult ergo sacrificium trucidati pecoris, et uult sacrificum contriti cordis." See Beatrice, "Christian Worship," 158. According to Jesus's words in Matthew 22:40, Augustine notes in this same passage, the entirety of the law and the prophets are summarized in these two commandments. Though God temporarily commanded visible animal sacrifices as signs to these true, invisible sacrifices, he does not need them. Though he requires and delights in the true, invisible sacrifices, he does not need these either. Properly worshipping God benefits man, not God. Moreover, he says, some Platonists, erroneously sever the relationship between visible and invisible sacrifices. They argue that visible sacrifices, such as religious rites, consecrating one's possessions, etc., may be offered to the many gods; but invisible sacrifices, such as offering one's heart in love, adoration, devotion, etc., ought to be given to one creator God alone. This for Augustine, creates a false dichotomy between visible sacrifices and invisible sacrifices. For Augustine, every visible sacrifice signifies an invisible sacrifice. Just as words signify the things of which they speak, so do visible sacrifices signify invisible sacrifices: "Therefore, just as in the case of prayer and praise we direct to God words that signify and offer to him the things in our hearts that are signified by our words, so also, we should understand that, in the case of sacrifice, visible sacrifice is to be offered only to God and that, in our hearts, we should present our very selves as an invisible sacrifice to him." *ciu.* X.19 (CCSL 47: 293, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 327): "Quocirca sicut orantes atque

Moreover, Augustine argues, true sacrifice is any action performed toward the final end of “cling[ing] to God in holy fellowship.”<sup>519</sup> This includes works of mercy extended toward others when performed for God’s sake—i.e., so that others might also cling to God in holy fellowship. Contrary to the dualistic view of the body and soul among the Manicheans and the Platonists, Augustine argues that the body and soul are both involved in this true sacrifice.<sup>520</sup> One offers one’s entire self to God as a sacrifice by dying to the world and living to God: “Thus a human being is himself a sacrifice when consecrated to God and dedicated to God insofar as he becomes dead to the world that he might live to God.”<sup>521</sup> The body becomes a sacrifice when one resists sin and chooses righteousness, and the soul becomes a sacrifice when directed to God in love so that “enkindled with the fire of love, it lets go of its worldly lusts and, being subject to him, becomes reformed to God, as it were, to his unchangeable form, therefore pleasing God by receiving God’s own beauty.”<sup>522</sup> The body and soul, therefore, though created and mutable, share in God’s immutable nature and beauty when offered to God as a sacrifice. As the body and soul actively engage in true sacrifice, God causes them to share in God’s own being. Thus worship and true sacrifice cause the faithful to participate in the life of God.

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laudantes ad eum dirigimus significantes uoces, cui res ipsas in corde quas significamus offerimus: ita sacrificantes non alteri uisibile sacrificium offerendum esse nouerimus quam illi, cuius in cordibus nostris inuisibile sacrificium nos ipsi esse debemus.”

<sup>519</sup> *ciu.* X.6. (CCSL 47: 278): “Proinde uerum sacrificium est omne opus, quo agitur, ut sancta societate inhaereamus deo, relatum scilicet ad illum finem boni, quo ueraciter beati esse possimus.” Lee, *Mystery of the Church*, 116–17.

<sup>520</sup> Augustine discusses the important of mercy as a form of true worship in *c. Faustum* 20.16.

<sup>521</sup> *ciu.* X.6. (CCSL 47: 278): “Vnde ipse homo dei nomine consecratus et deo uotus, in quantum mundo moritur ut Deo uiuat, sacrificium est.”

<sup>522</sup> *ciu.* X.6. (CCSL 47: 278): “Si ergo corpus, quo inferiore tamquam famulo uel tamquam instrumento utitur anima, cum eius bonus et rectus usus ad Deum refertur, sacrificium est: quanto magis anima ipsa cum se refert ad Deum, ut igne amoris eius accensa formam concupiscentiae saecularis amittat ei que tamquam incommutabili formae subdita reformetur, hinc ei placens, quod ex eius pulchritudine acceperit, fit sacrificium!”



When the faithful perform these true sacrifices, they offer themselves to God through Christ the mediator, who sacrificed himself:

...the whole redeemed city, that is, the congregation and fellowship of the saints, is offered to God as a universal sacrifice through the great priest who, in his passion, offered himself for us in the form of a servant, to the end that we might be the body of such a great head. For it was this servant form that he offered, and it was in this form that he was offered, because it is according to this form that he is the mediator, in this form that he is the priest, and in this form that he is the sacrifice.<sup>523</sup>

Christ the head offered himself as a sacrifice in the form of a servant to possess a people—the members of his body—who would likewise offer themselves as a sacrifice in the form of servants. As the faithful serve one another, with God as the end, the body of Christ collectively becomes a sacrifice just like Jesus Christ the head.<sup>524</sup>

Though Augustine describes these various forms of offering true sacrifice of God, he gives special attention to the Eucharist. For Augustine, the true worship and sacrifice of Christians is deeply connected to the sacramental life of the church. In partaking of the Eucharist, the church celebrates the true sacrifice of Christians. Quoting Romans 12:3-6, Augustine summarizes the true sacrifice of Christians as “*although many, one body in Christ.*”<sup>525</sup> The faithful celebrate this true sacrifice at the sacrament of the altar, where “in the offering she

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<sup>523</sup> *ciu.* X.6 (CCSL 47: 279, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 311): “...ut tota ipsa redempta ciuitas, hoc est congregatio societas que sanctorum, uniuersale sacrificium offeratur Deo per sacerdotem magnum, qui etiam se ipsum obtulit in passione pro nobis, ut tanti capitis corpus essemus, secundum formam serui.”

<sup>524</sup> Even though he offered himself as a sacrifice to God the Father on behalf of humanity, the true mediator Jesus Christ is also worthy of this sacrificial worship due to God alone, because with the Father he is one God. See *ciu.* X.20 (CCSL 47: 294): “Vnde uerus ille mediator, in quantum formam serui accipiens mediator effectus est dei et hominum, homo christus iesus, cum in forma dei sacrificium cum patre sumat, cum quo et unus deus est, tamen in forma serui sacrificium maluit esse quam sumere, ne uel hac occasione quisquam existimaret cuilibet sacrificandum esse creaturae. per hoc et sacerdos est, ipse offerens, ipse et oblatio.”

<sup>525</sup> *ciu.* X.6 (CCSL 47: 279, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 312): “Hoc est sacrificium christianorum: *multi unum corpus in Christo.*”

makes, she herself is offered.”<sup>526</sup> The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ’s sacrifice by which the church daily offers herself to God.<sup>527</sup> Therefore, the *res* of the *sacramentum* of the Eucharist is twofold, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the entire church as Christ’s body.<sup>528</sup>

The sacrificial offering of Christ’s pure spirit and undefiled flesh provide the cleansing that humanity needs for immortality and blessedness. In this true sacrifice of Christians, which is celebrated in the Eucharist, the church shares with all its members in Christ’s sacrifice and offers her own body and soul to God in worship. Moreover, Augustine refers to this sacrifice of Christians as a “universal sacrifice” (*universale sacrificium*)<sup>529</sup> and a “total sacrifice” (*totum sacrificium*)<sup>530</sup> that includes Christ’s heavenly citizens—angels and saints— and his earthly citizens—the faithful on earth.<sup>531</sup> The martyrs participate in this true sacrifice of Christians as Christ’s heavenly members, and they direct the faithful to this kind of self-offering to God.

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<sup>526</sup> *ciu.* X.6. (CCSL 47: , trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 312): “...quam offert, ipsa offeratur.” This view of the Eucharist as the church’s self-offering to God further underscores the bodily dimension of sacrifice in Augustine’s theology. As Lee notes, “Worship [for Augustine] has bodily and ethical dimensions, and the worship of Christians is not merely a sacrifice of the mind, rather it is the offering of the whole church at the altar...” (Lee, *Mystery of the Church*, 109).

<sup>527</sup> *ciu.* X.20 (CCSL 47: 294): “Cuius rei sacramentum cotidianum esse uoluit ecclesiae sacrificium, quae cum ipsius capitis corpus sit, se ipsam per ipsum discit offerre.” For more the development of Augustine’s understanding of *sacramentum* and the church as sacrifice, including the visible and invisible elements of sacrifice, see Lee, *Mystery of the Church*, 95–122. He focuses on *ciu.* in 112–121.

<sup>528</sup> Lee, *Mystery of the Church*, 116. Augustine’s discussion of the Eucharist here might suggest that the visible *sacramentum*—the offering of the bread and cup at eucharistic altar—is secondary to the *res*—the self-offering of the church to God. However, given Augustine’s broader understanding of Augustine’s sacramental theology, especially regarding the Eucharist, one can conclude that this is not the case. See Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 1–10)*, I/6, 310n36. A sacrament, for Augustine, is not merely a memorial sign that directs the faithful to an invisible reality; the visible sacrament conveys to the faithful an invisible grace from God. *s.* 272 (PL 38: 1247): “...speciem habet corporalem, quod intelligetur, fructum habet spiritalem.” See Meconi, *The One Christ*, 216. For more sermons on Augustine’s explanation of the mystery of the Eucharist, see *s.* 227, 229, 229A, 229B. Beatrice, “Christian Worship,” 162.

<sup>529</sup> *ciu.* XIX.17.

<sup>530</sup> *ciu.* X.6.

<sup>531</sup> Lee, *Mystery of the Church*, 119.

### *The Martyrs as Participants in and Witnesses to the Worship of God*

For Augustine, the martyrs are participants in, rather than recipients of, the worship that involves sacrifice. In Book X, Augustine briefly speaks of the martyrs as those who offer themselves to God as bleeding sacrifices when they uphold their witness to the truth to the point of shedding blood.<sup>532</sup> The martyrs' self-offering to God in dying for their testimony to the truth, then, is an act of worship. This worship involves a simultaneous offering of their souls in their refusal to deny the truth and the offering of their bodies to submit to death for the sake of truth.

Moreover, their own sacrifice directs the faithful to offer to God, not to themselves, the true sacrifices mentioned above. In Book XXII of *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine discusses the witness of the martyrs to the resurrection of Christ in the flesh through their post-mortem miracles. After a refutation of the pagan objection to the resurrection of the body, Augustine lists copious miracles that occurred in his region as a result of visiting a martyr shrine and coming into contact with a martyr relic. These miracles continue to testify to the past resurrection of Christ in the flesh and the future resurrection of the faithful in the flesh. Therefore, the testimony for which the martyrs suffer continues even after their deaths, strengthening the faithful's belief in the resurrection and refuting pagan objections to the Christian faith.<sup>533</sup>

Though reports of miracles performed at pagan shrines had spread through the region, as well, Augustine argues that even if these reports are true, the pagan gods only perform miracles in order to receive worship for themselves. These pagan miracles, moreover, are performed by demons, who deceive and mediate death to humanity. The martyrs, however, perform

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<sup>532</sup> *ciu.* X.3 (CCSL 47: 275) "...ei cruentas uictimas caedimus, quando usque ad sanguinem pro eius ueritate certamus..." Augustine's use of *caedimus* and *certamus* underscores the solidarity between the faithful and the martyrs. He seems to say that the entire church makes this offering of the martyrs.

<sup>533</sup> *ciu.* XXII.10. These miracles as a testimony to the resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of the righteous and wicked will be further discussed in the final chapter of this dissertation.

postmortem miracles to encourage faith in and worship of the one true God.<sup>534</sup> The martyrs know that they are not gods but witnesses to and worshippers of the one true God. “But our martyrs are not gods, for we know one God, who is our God and the God of the martyrs.”<sup>535</sup>

The martyrs testified with their deaths and their postmortem miracles that Christ alone is the true God. The Roman belief in the divinity of Romulus and his supposed founding and ruling of Rome, has not been proved by any miracles, nor has anyone proved to be willing to die for the belief that Romulus, Hercules, or any other men were gods. The divinity of Christ, on the other hand, has been proved by both miracles and by the willingness of the martyrs to die rather than to deny that Christ is God.<sup>536</sup> Fear of torture and death did not prevent a great number of martyrs from all over the world from worshipping Christ and proclaiming Christ as God.<sup>537</sup> Even though the martyrs brutally suffered, they did not retaliate. As a result, the number of people in the city of Christ multiplied:

The city of Christ, however, which has been sojourning on the earth until now and has contained a great number of citizens, did not fight against its wicked persecutors in order to obtain temporal well-being. Instead, in order to obtain eternity, the citizens of the city of Christ did not retaliate. They were bound in chains, imprisoned, hewn into pieces, tortured on the racks, burned alive, mangled by beasts, brutally slaughtered. Yet they

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<sup>534</sup> *ciu.* XXII.10 (CCSL 48: 828): “Quibus igitur potius credendum est miracula facientibus? eis ne qui se ipsos uolunt haberi deos ab his quibus ea faciunt, an eis qui, ut in deum credatur, quod et christus est, faciunt quidquid mirabile faciunt?”

<sup>535</sup> *ciu.* XXII.10 (CCSL 48: 828): “Sed nobis martyres non sunt dii, quia unum eundem que Deum et nostrum scimus et martyrum.”

<sup>536</sup> *ciu.* XXII.6 (CCSL 48: 813): “Quis porro numeret, quam multi quantalibet saeuitia crudelitatis occidi quam christum Deum negare maluerunt?” As Babcock notes, martyrdom was regarded by earlier authors, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Athanasius as “proof of the truth of Christian religion.” (Babcock, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, 503n24).

<sup>537</sup> *ciu.* XXII.6 (CCSL 48: 813): “...a Christo autem deo non solum colendo, uerum etiam confitendo tantam per orbis terrae populos martyrum multitudinem metus reuocare non potuit non leuis offensionis animorum, sed immensarum uariarum que poenarum et ipsius mortis, quae plus ceteris formidatur.”

multiplied. They did not fight for their well-being; instead, they fought by disdaining their well-being for the sake of their savior.<sup>538</sup>

Furthermore, because the martyrs are *participants* in the worship of God and not *recipients* of this worship, the temples of the pagan gods are completely unlike the memorial shrines of the martyrs. Though martyr shrines consisted of an altar or *mensa* where the Eucharistic meal was shared, the altars are not set up to the martyrs.<sup>539</sup> Also, the martyrs do not receive sacrifices. The altars in the memorial shrines of the martyrs are for the offering of the one true sacrifice to God.

In short, [the pagans] built temples, set up altars, instituted priesthoods, and performed sacrifices for those gods of theirs. We, in contrast, do not construct temples for our martyrs but memorial shrines, as for dead persons whose spirits live with God. Nor do we erect altars there on which to offer sacrifices to the martyrs, but rather altars on which to offer sacrifices to the one God who is both the martyrs' God and ours.<sup>540</sup>

Because the martyrs are members of the body of Christ along with the faithful, and because the true sacrifice of the church is to offer herself as a sacrifice to God, the martyrs could not possibly be recipients of this true sacrifice. As Augustine discussed in *Contra Faustum*, he says again here that the words of prayer indicate that the priest in the shrine names the martyrs in *remembrance*, not in order to offer sacrifices to them.<sup>541</sup>

Obviously, then, it is to God, not [the martyrs], that [the priest] sacrifices, even though he sacrifices in their memorials; because he is God's priest, not theirs. This sacrifice is

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<sup>538</sup> *ciu.* XXII.6 (CCSL 48: 813): "Neque tunc ciuitas Christi, quamuis adhuc peregrinaretur in terris et haberet tamen magnorum agmina populorum, aduersus impios persecutores suos pro temporali salute pugnauit; sed potius, ut obtineret aeternam, non repugnauit. ligabantur includebantur, caedebantur torquebantur, urebantur laniabantur, trucidabantur - et multiplicabantur. non erat eis pro salute pugnare nisi salutem pro saluatore contemnere."

<sup>539</sup> The basilicas and churches where martyrs were buried contained an altar. The memorial shrines included a table (*mensa*) where a eucharistic meal was offered. Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 530.

<sup>540</sup> *ciu.* XXII.10 (CCSL 48: 828, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11-22)*, I/7, 519): "Denique illi talibus diis suis et templa aedificauerunt et statuerunt aras, et sacerdotes instituerunt et sacrificia fecerunt; nos autem martyribus nostris non templa sicut diis, sed memorias sicut hominibus mortuis, quorum apud Deum uiuunt spiritus, fabricamus; nec ibi erigimus altaria, in quibus sacrificemus martyribus, sed uni Deo et martyrum et nostro...."

<sup>541</sup> *ciu.* XXII.10 (CCSL 48: 828): "Ad quod sacrificium sicut homines dei, qui mundum in eius confessione uicerunt, suo loco et ordine nominantur, non tamen a sacerdote, qui sacrificat, inuocantur."

actually the body of Christ itself; it is not offered to [the martyrs] themselves, because they also are that body.<sup>542</sup>

For the martyrs, who are members of the church, to receive the true sacrifice of Christians would be to receive a sacrifice *of* themselves *to* themselves, which is absurd.

In martyr veneration, therefore, the faithful participate with the martyrs in the true sacrifice of Christians through their celebration of the Eucharist, in which the church, who is Christ's body, offers herself as a sacrifice to God. During their participation in this true, deifying worship of God, the faithful celebrate the martyrs who imitated Christ and seek to imitate the martyrs' virtues, that they might participate in God's life, charity, and blessedness.

### Conclusion

Augustine's understanding of salvation as a participation in the life of God is central to his theology of martyr veneration. The various emphases and development of Augustine's thought throughout the early, middle, and late periods of the evolution of his martyrology demonstrate Augustine's insistence on the inseparable relationship between martyr veneration, imitation, and participation. Peter Brown sets up a false dichotomy—either between imitation and participation or participation via imitation and participation via celebration—in Augustine's thought on martyr veneration. However, for Augustine, imitation and participation in the invisible realm always occur in the celebration of the martyrs. The object of *participation* during this celebration depends upon the object of *imitation* in martyr veneration. If Christians imitate pagans and their gods with drunkenness and revelry as they celebrate the martyrs, these Christians dishonor Christ and the martyrs and engage in fellowship with demons. If they imitate

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<sup>542</sup> *ciu.* XXII.10 (CCSL 48: 828): “Seo quippe, non ipsis sacrificat, quamuis in memoria sacrificet eorum, quia Dei sacerdos est, non illorum. ipsum uero sacrificium corpus est Christi, quod non offertur ipsis, quia hoc sunt et ipsi.”

the martyrs who imitated Christ the chief martyr, they participate in communion with Christ and the martyrs and benefit from the martyrs' intercession.

Augustine, like the laity of the North African churches, understood martyr veneration as an occasion to join the saints in heaven and experience a taste of the divine life that they enjoy as they abide in the presence of the risen Christ. This communion between the faithful and the martyrs is present because all, as members of Christ's body, are joined to one another and to Christ the head in unity and charity. As the ultimate *exemplum*, Christ models his own virtues of humility, patience, and charity in his passion, and he exhorts and enables the faithful and the martyrs to follow in those same virtues. The martyrs are God-given *exempla* to further model the virtues of Christ, to exhort the faithful to imitate those virtues, and to serve as a guarantee that the faithful by the grace of God are able to imitate. True celebration of the martyrs requires imitation of the martyrs, and a significant aspect of imitation involves celebration. Moreover, the virtues of Christ like humility, patience, and charity, which the martyrs faithfully imitated, are a gift of God granted to the martyrs and to the elect.

This imitation of the martyrs is a participation in Christ because Christ works in and through the martyrs and in the faithful in this imitation. The martyrs imitate and thus share in the passion of Christ the head, who strengthens them with the ability to patiently endure suffering. Christ offers the martyrs to himself and even suffers in and with the martyrs who are members of his body; Christ works through the martyrs to accomplish his saving work in the lives of the faithful by setting them as examples for the faithful to imitate; the faithful, by imitating the martyrs, cooperate with Christ who works in them and in the martyrs. As members of the same body, the faithful join the martyrs in their worship of Christ, who is the head of the martyrs and of the church.

Finally, as the faithful join the martyrs in offering *latria* to the one true God, the faithful participate in the life of the God who deifies his worshippers. The faithful offer *cultus* to the martyrs and *latria*, which involves sacrifice, to the one true God. Though Christians may sacrifice to God in various ways, including martyrdom, the ultimate sacrifice of Christians includes their self-sacrifice on the eucharistic altar, which is a memorial sacrifice of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The martyrs, as members with the faithful of the one body of Christ, are participants in this true sacrifice. Their own sacrifice in martyrdom, their postmortem miracles, and the church's remembrance of the martyrs at memorial shrines and during liturgical feast days testify to the death and resurrection of Christ and direct the faithful to the worship of the one true God. In many ways, then, martyr veneration becomes an occasion to commune with the martyrs and participate in the life of God. When the faithful worship God, remember the martyrs, and imitate the martyrs who imitate Christ, they participate in God's life, blessedness, and charity.

What this chapter has not discussed is Augustine's understanding of imitating the martyrs in light of the Donatist controversy. The Donatists claimed to be the true imitators of the martyrs and the true Church of the Martyrs. The Catholics, in their eyes, imitated not the martyrs but the *persecutors* of the martyrs by aligning with the state suppression of Donatism. How does Augustine understand martyrdom and what it means to be the Church of the Martyrs in light of these Donatist claims? Augustine's theology of the *totus Christus* and the Holy Spirit as the bond of charity are key to this discussion. It is to these subjects that we now turn.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE MARTYRS AS MEMBERS OF THE *TOTUS CHRISTUS*

This chapter will argue for the centrality of ecclesiology to Augustine's theology of martyrdom and martyr veneration. His understanding of the *totus Christus*—the “whole Christ,” head and members, united in the bond of charity—has profound implications for how the faithful, especially the martyrs, participate in the passion of Jesus Christ. Augustine's *totus Christus* idea arises most explicitly in his *Ennarationes en Psalmos*, in which Augustine exegetes the Psalms with the understanding that the *una vox* (“one voice”) of Jesus Christ speaks through every Psalm. Though important work has been done on these topics in Augustine, little attention is given in secondary scholarship to their relationship to the bishop's theology of martyrdom. The *totus Christus* ecclesiology further elucidates Augustine's understanding of the participation of the members of the body, particularly the martyrs, in the life and passion of Christ their head.

For Augustine, it is in his incarnation and passion that Christ the head assumes the cries and sufferings of his members. The head's own suffering, moreover, serves as a sacrament that signifies the suffering of the martyrs across all nations. In virtue of their incorporation into the *totus Christus*, the martyrs share in the passion of Christ. The whole Christ shares in the suffering of the martyrs in virtue of the union between Christ the head and all of the members of his body in the bond of charity. And such participation *only* occurs in this unity-in-charity with the whole Christ. Schism and heresy separate members not only from the rest of the body, but

from the head. Therefore, remaining in this unity-in-charity with the whole Christ is necessary for participation in the life and sufferings of Christ the head.

The chapter's second part discusses the relationship of these ideas with Augustine's response to the Donatist controversy, where he further develops the inextricable connection between (1) his understanding of the Christ and the church as the *totus Christus* united in the bond of charity and (2) the martyrs as participants in Christ's passion.<sup>543</sup> In their own eyes, the Donatists are the true Church of the Martyrs and spiritual descendants of the previous generations of the martyrs, including the martyr-bishop Cyprian of Carthage.<sup>544</sup> They alone possess the Holy Spirit, life-giving sacraments, and true martyrs. The Catholics, the Donatists claim, have severed themselves from Christ and his body through their communion with Caecilian of Carthage, who succeeded Mensurius in the office of bishop. The Donatists accused one of Caecilian's consecrators, Felix of Abthungi, of handing over Scriptures to the government during the Diocletian persecution.<sup>545</sup> Moreover, they claimed, Mensurius and Caecilian forbade people from bringing food to confessors in prison.<sup>546</sup> Aside from these charges and the

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<sup>543</sup> This time period would fall under the second phase of the evolution of Augustine's understanding of martyrdom. T.J. van Bavel and Carole Straw assert that the Donatist controversy is the context in which Augustine develops his martyrology during this period. See van Bavel, "The Cult of the Martyrs in St. Augustine," 355–59; Straw, "Martyrdom," 538–39.

<sup>544</sup> Though other scholars have noted the difficulty of finding terms untainted with bias in referring to the traditionally termed "Catholics" and "Donatists," I follow Augustine's preferred designations. See Maureen Tilley, "Redefining Donatism: Moving Forward," *Augustinian Studies* 42, no. 1 (2011): 21–32; Brent Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>545</sup> The absence of the primate of Numidia in Caecilian's ordination was no small factor in the controversy surrounding Caecilian's appointment as bishop of Carthage. Further controversy arose from an event primary to Caecilian's ordination as bishop. He supposedly rebuked a noble woman named Lucilla for her veneration of the relics of an unauthorized martyr before receiving the Eucharist. This would result, so the story goes, in Lucilla's organized opposition against Caecilian's appointment to the episcopal see of Carthage. See Optatus, *Contra Parmenianum* 1.16, 18–19. See also Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 34.

<sup>546</sup> The Donatists would later circulate a martyr account that demonized Caecilian and Mensurius. For an overview of history of the Donatist Controversy and Augustine's anti-Donatist works, see Maureen Tilley, "General Introduction: The Anti-Donatist Works of Saint Augustine," in *The Donatist Controversy I*, ed. Boniface Ramsey and David G. Hunter, trans. Maureen A. Tilley and Boniface Ramsey, Vol. 21. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A*

subsequent debates surrounding the legitimacy of Caecilian's ordination as bishop of Carthage, which were no small factors in the controversy, the Donatists supported their claim to be the true Church of the Martyrs on thoroughly theological grounds.

Though Augustine was concerned to counter the Donatist claims with historical arguments regarding the ordination and trials of Caecilian, the schisms within Donatism, and the controversial alignment of many Donatist bishops with the violent group known as the Circumcellions, the Catholic bishop's response to the Donatists was deeply ecclesiological.<sup>547</sup> Augustine's understanding of Christ and his church as the *totus Christus* united in the bond of charity lies at the heart of his response to the claims of the Donatists, a fact which emerges clearly in their conflict over the nature of martyrdom.

Scholarly literature discussing the Donatist controversy often highlights one or more of the following theological emphases in Augustine: Augustine's emphasis on the unity-in-charity over against the Donatist emphasis on the defilement of apostasy;<sup>548</sup> Augustine's emphasis on the purity of Christ over against the purity of the minister for sacramental efficacy;<sup>549</sup> Augustine's distinction between sacramental validity and sacramental efficacy over against the

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Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2019), 13–28. See also Serge Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, trans. Antonia Nevill (London: SCM Press, 2002), 275–305; Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 524–29; Alexander Evers, “A Fine Line? Catholics And Donatists In Roman North Africa,” in *Frontiers in the Roman World: Proceedings of the Ninth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Durham, 16-19 April 2009)*, ed. T. Kaizer and O. Hekster (Boston: Brill, 2011), 175–98; W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).

<sup>547</sup> Augustine was deeply concerned to set the history straight. His anti-Donatist works repeatedly appeal to records of Caecilian's trials, conciliar declarations, schisms within Donatism, Catholic-Donatist interactions, and Circumcellion violence to prove Catholic legitimacy and Donatist illegitimacy. However, Augustine embedded such arguments within the framework of his counter ecclesiology and pneumatology.

<sup>548</sup> See *Contra Litteram Petilianii*; James K. Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers: Unity in Charity* (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020), 71–76.

<sup>549</sup> Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 71–76.

Donatist conflation of the two;<sup>550</sup> and Augustine’s emphasis on the *cause* of suffering over against the Donatist emphasis on suffering itself as the evidence of true martyrdom.<sup>551</sup> Moreover, discussion of Augustine’s justification of imperial coercion centers primarily on his circumstantial reasons (e.g., Donatist resistance to persuasive and conciliatory measures and Circumcellion violence against Catholics) or his supposed political agenda (particularly, maintaining imperial support for the Catholics).<sup>552</sup>

Each of these themes also emerge in this chapter. But generally in this scholarship little attention is paid specifically to the impact of his *totus Christus* theology on his counterarguments to the Donatist claims to the title Church of the Martyrs. I aim to demonstrate here that Augustine’s understanding of the union between Christ the bridegroom and his bride the church is foundational to his refutation of the Donatists on this point. Augustine implements this ecclesiology to argue that 1) Donatist “martyrdom” is of no benefit because these people die in separation from the *totus Christus*; 2) the Donatists are not the persecuted church, but themselves the persecutors of the *totus Christus*; and 3) the one church—the Catholic Mother, great tree, and bride of Christ—rightly implements imperial coercion as a participation in Christ’s divine discipline against the Donatists.

The works of Augustine on these matters upon which I will focus include *De Baptismo libri septem*, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus CXXIV*, *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos*

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<sup>550</sup> Ibid.

<sup>551</sup> See Ployd, “*Non Poena Sed Causa*,” 25–44.

<sup>552</sup> See for example, Brent Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Noel Lenski, “Imperial Legislation and the Donatist Controversy: From Constantine to Honorius,” in *The Donatist Schism: Controversy and Contexts*, ed. Richard Miles (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018), 166–219; Maureen A. Tilley, “When Schism Becomes Heresy in Late Antiquity: Developing Doctrinal Deviance in the Wounded Body of Christ,” *JECS*, no. 15.1 (2007): 1–21.

*tractatus decem*, and *De correctione Donatistarum liber unus* (*Epistula* 185). In each of these works, Augustine explicitly addresses many core issues in the Donatist controversy from an ecclesiological perspective. Though the term *totus Christus* is seldom found in these works, I will demonstrate how this ecclesiological understanding lies behind Augustine's arguments against the Donatists in these works.<sup>553</sup>

This is not to say that Augustine does not approach the controversy from an ecclesiological perspective in other anti-Donatist works. I focus on these treatises in part because they are some of his more notorious anti-Donatist writings. Moreover, the implementation of his *totus Christus* theology against the Donatists seems to surface most clearly, at times explicitly and other times implicitly, in these particular anti-Donatist works. This is also not to say that other ecclesiological images are not present or significant for Augustine in his response to the Donatists in these three works (or in other anti-Donatist works). In fact, as I will demonstrate, other images of the church, such as the Great Tree, Sarah, the Catholic Mother, and the bride of Christ are crucial to Augustine's ecclesiological arguments against the Donatists.

For the purposes of this chapter, I will treat each of these works thematically rather than chronologically. Augustine develops his arguments in each of these works either against the backdrop of or in direct conversation with the Donatists. With the exception of the latter portion of *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus CXXIV*, each of the above works was written roughly during the first decade of the fifth century, which falls into Saxer's second stage of the development of

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<sup>553</sup> The only explicit references to the term *totus Christus* appear in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus decem*. See discussion below.

Augustine's martyrology.<sup>554</sup> Moreover, they reflect a consistent line of argument against the Donatists. Though Augustine refines his arguments over time, the only significant development occurs in his attitude toward the use of imperial coercion against the Donatists.<sup>555</sup>

### **Augustine's *Totus Christus* Idea and Martyrdom**

Augustine's *totus Christus* theology is well known among scholars, so I offer only a brief summary of its core elements.<sup>556</sup> These features are most pronounced in his *Ennarationes in Psalmos*. Developing the ecclesiology of Paul, Augustine exegetes the Psalms with the

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<sup>554</sup> Much ink has been spilled in attempts to date the first and second parts of this work precisely. Scholars date the first portion (1–54) as early as 406 and the second portion (55–124) as late as 421 or beyond. See Allan D. Fitzgerald, O.S.A., "Introduction," in trans. Edmund Hill, WSA, *Homilies on the Gospel of John 1-40*, I/12, 27–30.

<sup>555</sup> His circumstantial and theological justification for this change will be discussed in the last portion of this chapter.

<sup>556</sup> For studies on Augustine's theology of the *totus Christus*, see Tarsicius J. van Bavel, "The 'Chrisuts Totus' Idea: A Forgotten Aspect of Augustine's Spirituality," in *Studies in Patristic Christology: Proceedings of the Third Maynooth Patristic Conference*, ed. Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey (Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 1998), 84–94; Bernard Burning, "Die Einheit des *Totus Christus* bei Augustinus," in *Scientia Augustiniana: Studein über Augustinus, den Augustinismus und den Augustinorden*, ed. Cornelius Petrus Mayer, and Willigis Eckermann, (Wurzberg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1975), 43–75; Emile Mersch, S.J., *The Whole Christ: The Historical Development of the Doctrine of the Mystical Body in Scripture and Tradition*, trans. John R. Kelly, S.J. (London: Dennis Dobson LTD, 1938), 367–440; David Vincent Meconi, "Ecclesial Reception of the Divine Life," in *The One Christ: St. Augustine's Theology of Deification* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 175–233. See also Tarsicius J. van Bavel, *Christians in the World*, trans. Marcella van Bryn (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1980); Kimberly Baker, "Augustine's Doctrine of the Totus Christus: Reflecting on the Church as Sacrament of Unity," *Horizons* 37, no. 1 (2010): 7–24.

understanding that the whole Christ speaks as *una vox*.<sup>557</sup> The *totus Christus*, or whole Christ, consists of Jesus Christ the head and the church which is his body.<sup>558</sup>

Augustine explains in his exposition of Psalm 138 that in the Incarnation, Christ the bridegroom assumed humanity and became one flesh with his bride the church.<sup>559</sup> Together, the two make up “a complete man.”<sup>560</sup> The coming forth of Eve from the side of Adam during his sleep prefigures the church and her sacraments coming forth from the side of Christ at his death on the cross.<sup>561</sup> As Adam and Eve became one flesh, so Jesus and the Church have become “[o]ne flesh, because he assumed flesh with our mortality.”<sup>562</sup> To be sure, Christ and the church become “one flesh,” not “one divinity;” the distinctions between the Creator and the creature are not blurred or conflated in this union.<sup>563</sup> As Christ suffered on the cross and was pierced in his

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<sup>557</sup> For a detailed study of the writings of Augustine on the Psalms, see Michael Fiedrowicz, *Psalmus vox totius Christi: Studien zu Augustins Enarrationes in Psalmos* (Freiburg: Herder, 1997). For a condensed English translation of Fiedrowicz, see Michael Fiedrowicz, “General Introduction,” in *Expositions of the Psalms*, ed. John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B., *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, III/15 (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2000), 13–66. See also Jason Byasee, *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007). See also Marie-Josephe Rondeau, *Les commentaires patristiques du Psautier (IIIe-Ve siècle)*, vols. 1–2, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 219–20 (Rome: Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, 1982–1985); Hubertus Drobner, *Person-Exegese und Christologie bei Augustinus: zur Herkunft der Formel Una Persona* (Leiden: Brill, 1986); Michael Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 171–212; Lee, *Mystery of the Church*, 52–53; Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 76–79.

<sup>558</sup> Paul uses various images to illustrate the union of Christ and his church: head and body/limbs (See 1 Cor 12:12, 27; bridegroom and bride (Eph. 5:31-32 and Isaiah 61:10); vine and branches Jn 15:5). Augustine frequently appeals to one or more of these in his discussion of the *totus Christus*. See *en. 2 Ps.* 30.4; *en. 1 Ps.* 58.2; 138.2; 140.3. Kimberly Baker provides a helpful list of references to Augustine’s bridal imagery in his *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, see *en. Ps.* 18[2].2, 6, 10; 30[2].2.1; 34[2].1; 37.3; 40.1, 6, 10; 41.2; 44.1, 3, 12, 24; 47.1; 54.3; 56.11; 59.9; 61.4; 64.14; 68[2].1; 71.17; 74.4; 83.2; 88[2].2, 14; 90[2].5.5, 12; 101[1].2; 103[1].4–6; 103[4].6; 120.9; 122.5; 127..8, 11, 13; 131.14; 138.2; 142.2, 4; 143.18; 147.17. See Baker, “Augustine’s Doctrine of the *Totus Christus*,” 11n10.

<sup>559</sup> *en. Ps.* 138.2.

<sup>560</sup> *en. Ps.* 138.2 (CCSL 40: 1990): “Totus itaque Christus caput et corpus, tamquam integer uir....” Augustine clarifies that this *integer uir* includes both men and women.

<sup>561</sup> *en. Ps.* 138.2.

<sup>562</sup> *en. Ps.* 138.2 (CCSL 40: 1991): “Vna caro, quia de nostra mortalitate carnem suscepit....”

<sup>563</sup> *en. Ps.* 138.2 (CCSL 40: 1991): “Non autem una diuinitas, quia ille Creator, nos creatura.”

side, the sacraments, which communicate the life of Christ and thus form the church, “flowed forth from him.”<sup>564</sup> Christ’s own martyrdom, then, resulted in the formation of the church and her sacraments.

In his exposition of Psalm 87, Augustine explains that when Christ assumed human flesh, which was liable to death, he also assumed the “feelings of human infirmity.”<sup>565</sup> To be sure, Christ was not subject to death and the passions “from any necessary condition but from his merciful will.”<sup>566</sup> As a human, Christ truly experienced sorrow and suffering that he as the head “might transfigure his body the church into himself” and teach his members who endure trials and pain that the grace of God is near to them.<sup>567</sup> Christ’s own suffering of sorrow was not due to sinfulness, but to human infirmity. Likewise, the emotional pain that his members experience during trials is not sinful, “but only indications of human infirmity.” Like a choir following its song leader, the cries of the members follow “the voice of Christ going before them.”<sup>568</sup>

The Son of God also takes up the cries and suffering of the members of his body such that in the Psalms, some words are spoken in respect to Christ the head, and others are spoken in

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<sup>564</sup> *en. Ps.* 138.2 (CCSL 40: 1991): “Si ergo Adam forma future, quomodo de latere dormientis Eua facta est, sic ex latere Domini dormientis, id est, in passione morientes, et in cruce pecusso lancea, manauerunt sacramenta, quibus formaretur ecclesia... Ergo dormitio intellegitur passio. Eua de later dormientis, ecclesia de latere patientis.” T.J. van Bavel emphasizes the role of participation and the distinction between the head in members. “A human being cannot become another Christ by his own free will; only by participation can he be taken up into the life of Christ. The distinction... consists that Christ is the Savior and we are the saved ones” (“The ‘Christus Totus’ Idea,” 89). Cf. *en. Ps.* 56.11; 65.7; 126.7 and Maria Boulding’s notes to these passages in the WSA translation. Boulding, WSA, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/20, 257n8.

<sup>565</sup> *en. Ps.* 87.3 (CCSL 39: 1209): “Hos autem humanae infirmitatis affectus, sicut ipsam carnem infirmitatis humanae, ac mortem carnis humane Dominus Iesus....”

<sup>566</sup> *en. Ps.* 87.3 (CCSL 39: 1209): “...non conditionis necessitate, sed miserationis uoluntate suscepit....”

<sup>567</sup> *en. Ps.* 87.3 (CCSL 39: 1209–10): “ut transfiguraret in se corpus suum, quod est ecclesia, cui caput esse dignatus est... ut si cui eorum inter humanas tentationes contristari et dolere contingeret, non ideo se ab eius gratia putaret alienum....”

<sup>568</sup> *en. Ps.* 87.3 (CCSL 39: 1210): “...et non esse ista peccata, sed humanae infirmitatis indicia, tamquam uoci praemissae conciens chorus, ita corpus eius ex ipso suo capite addisceret.”



respect to the members of his body. However, because Christ is where his body is, all of the words of the Psalms are spoken by one Christ.<sup>569</sup> The head's speaking of the cries of his members is not substitutional in an exclusive sense, as if Christ the head only speaks *in place* of his members without in some way personalizing those sufferings. As Augustine explains in his second exposition of Psalm 30, Christ "transfigured the voice of his body into himself."<sup>570</sup> The head mystically assumes and thus participates in the suffering and cries of his members. Because there is one Christ, Augustine says in his exposition of Psalm 62, a solidarity exists between head and members. Though Christ in heaven sits at the right hand of the Father, "he still undergoes in the person of his Church whatever it may suffer amid the troubles of this world, whether temptations, or hardship, or oppression...."<sup>571</sup>

Charity plays a significant role in Augustine's *totus Christus* theology, as the bond that unites the head to the members.<sup>572</sup> In his commentary on the opening lines of *en. Ps.* 140, Augustine explains the marks of true charity and asserts that charity "cries out" in the words of the one Christ who speaks in the psalms in a way that flows mutually: "Do you not know that [charity] makes us one in Christ? Charity cries out *to* Christ *from* us; charity cries out *from* Christ

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<sup>569</sup> *en. Ps.* 138.2. As Baker notes, Augustine develops Tyconius's rules of interpretation. Whereas Tyconius attributes the voice in the psalms to the head, the body, or both together, Augustine asserts that there is always one Christ speaking. See Baker, "Augustine's Doctrine of the Totus Christus," 12.

<sup>570</sup> *en. Ps.* 30[2].11 (CCSL 38: 199): "Et tamen uocem corporis in se transfigurauit...." Augustine continues to say, "non enim Unicum suum Pater aliquando dereliquit." Christ on the cross cried out "*Deus, Dues meus, utquid me dereliquisti?*" in the voice of his members, not the head. The Father never forsook the Son; rather, the Son assumed the cry of humanity's abandonment. Nonetheless, in virtue of the union between the members and the head, the head takes humanity's cry into himself. See discussion below.

<sup>571</sup> *en. Ps.* 62.2 (CCSL 39: 794, trans. Boulding, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/17, 230): "quidquid patitur ecclesia ipsius in tribulationibus huius saeculi, in tentationibus, in necessitatibus, in angustiis...ipse patitur."

<sup>572</sup> This emphasis of unity in charity in his *totus Christus* theology will arise again in his polemics against the Donatists.

for us.”<sup>573</sup> Though the one Christ of the psalms at times speaks words that seem to attribute sin or infirmity to Christ, such words are properly attributed to the members, not the head. Christians should hear their own voice when they read these words of this psalm.<sup>574</sup> However, in virtue of his union with and love for the church, Christ the head still speaks words such as these on behalf of his members and makes the prayer his own.<sup>575</sup> Christ and his church are one flesh, and “representing us in the charity of his own body,” he speaks the words and prays the prayers of his body.<sup>576</sup>

Moreover, because Christ assumed the human form and cries of his members, the members can likewise speak the words of Christ their head.<sup>577</sup> Though the head and members are distinct, the two are one flesh. Christ is head of his body the church which spreads across all nations.<sup>578</sup> This mystical unity and reciprocal share in suffering between head and members even transcends time, embracing the faithful of the past, present, and future.<sup>579</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> *en. Ps.* 140.3 (CCSL 40: 2027): “Nescitis quia ipsa unum nos fecit in Christo? Caritas clamat ad Christum de nobis; caritas clamat de Christo pro nobis.”

<sup>574</sup> *en. Ps.* 140.3.

<sup>575</sup> *en. Ps.* 140.3.

<sup>576</sup> *en. Ps.* 140.6 (CCSL 40: 2029): “Ergo si Dominus noster Iesus Christus nos figurans in caritate corporis sui, quamvis esset ipse sine peccato...” He even takes up our confession of sin, even though he is without sin. This point is an important qualifier in Augustine’s *totus Christus* theology. In virtue of his union in charity with his members, he assumes their confession, yet without assuming their sin.

<sup>577</sup> *en. Ps.* 30[2].3.

<sup>578</sup> *en. Ps.* 62.2.

<sup>579</sup> *en. Ps.* 62.2. Augustine’s theology of the mutual sharing of suffering and resurrection of the head and members might seem to suggest that the resurrected, incorruptible, impassible flesh of Christ who is seated in heaven experiences passion. But this is not the case. Because the head and members are one, the suffering of the members is not entirely disconnected from the head, as if Christ the head has no participation in the suffering of his members. However, even though he emphasizes a mystical solidarity between the head and members, he carefully qualifies the way in which the head shares the suffering of the members. Exactly how the suffering of the members in some sense touches (my term, not Augustine’s) the human body or soul of the risen Christ is not entirely clear, but Augustine’s qualification that Christ suffers “in the person of his Church” (see quote in note 571). Augustine seems to mean that in his Incarnation and passion, Christ participated in the suffering of all members of the faithful for all time. At the resurrection, he transfigured the sufferings and cries of his members sacramentally. The faithful participate in the

An exchange and a transfiguration occur in the union between Christ the head and his body. The head assumes the cries of his members and transfigures them into his own so that Christ's suffering members might be transfigured into the glory of Christ's own body. In *en. Ps.* 142, Augustine explains that Jesus "took over into himself our lowly body and transformed it, configuring it to his own glorious body. Our old self was nailed to the cross with him."<sup>580</sup> As a result of the assumption, broken, sinful humanity is renewed and transformed into his glory.<sup>581</sup> In his second exposition of Psalm 30, Augustine describes the "wonderful exchange" that takes place in the Son's assumption of his members' humanity and cries. In this exchange, Christ the "heavenly dealer" would "receive insults and give honors...drain the cup of suffering and give salvation...undergo death and give life."<sup>582</sup>

Augustine further describes the benefits of this exchange and the solidarity between head and members in his exposition of Psalm 62. The head and members not only share in one another's suffering,<sup>583</sup> they share in one another's death and resurrection: "We died in him, then, and in him we have risen from the dead; but he also dies in us, and rises again in us, for he is

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effects of Christ's sacramental death and resurrection through the sacramental life of the church and continual growth in faith, hope, and love. All of this being said, Augustine does seem to push the theological boundaries described in this note, especially in his portrayal of the Donatists as those who kill Christ in the faithful. See discussion below.

<sup>580</sup> *en. Ps.* 142.9 (CCSL 40: 2066, trans. Boulding, WSA, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/20, 352.): "Tranfiguravit enim in se corpus humilitatis nostrae, conformans corpori gloriae suae; et uetus homo noster confixus est cruci cum illo."

<sup>581</sup> See Michael Cameron, "Transfiguration: Christology and the Roots of Figurative Exegesis in St. Augustine," in *Studia Patristica*, Vol. XXXIII, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 41. Cameron notes the use of transfiguration in reference to the Lord's Passion. "He 'transfigured us in himself'...or more pointedly he 'transfigured our weakness', or 'our voice', in such a way that representatively the head acted and spoke on behalf of the body, and formatively the body was suffused with the life of the head."

<sup>582</sup> *en. Ps.* 30[2].3 (CCSL 38:192, trans. Boulding, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/15, 323): "Haec enim mira commutation facta est, et diuina sunt peracta commercia, mutatio rerum celebrate in hoc mundo a negotiatore caelesti. Venit accipere contumelias, dare honores; uenit haurire dolorem, dare salute; uenit subre mortem, dare uitam." C.f. *en. Ps.* 26[2].22; *doctr. chr.* 2.6.7; *ench.* 13.42-43; 31.117-20. See Lee, *Mystery of the Church*, 53.

<sup>583</sup> *en. Ps.* 62.2 (CCSL 39: 794): "...quia quidquid passus est, in illo et nos passi sumus; quia et nos quod patimur, in nobis et ipse patitur."

himself the unity that binds head and body.”<sup>584</sup> In becoming human, Christ participated in his members’ humanity, suffering, and death, and he transfigures his members by his resurrection. Likewise the faithful participate in Christ’s death and his resurrection. The faithful not only die with Christ, they rise in Christ; likewise, Christ dies and rises in them in virtue of his union with his body.<sup>585</sup> This unity in charity, solidarity in suffering, exchange of death for life, and transfiguration into the glory of Christ’s body has unique implications for the martyrs.

### **The Martyrs as Members of the *Totus Christus***

Though Augustine’s *totus Christus* theology emphasizes a solidarity between Christ the head and all of his members, this ecclesiology entails a unique participation between Christ and the martyrs. The Scriptural passages to which Augustine frequently appeals in support of his *totus Christus* idea directly relate to the persecution and suffering of Christ and his members. Augustine’s frequent scriptural appeals for his *totus Christus* theology are Acts 9:4, where Christ asks Saul of Tarsus, “*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?*”<sup>586</sup> and Psalm 22:1, where Christ cries out on the cross in the person of his body, “*My God, my God, look upon me, why have you forsaken me?*”<sup>587</sup> The latter passage Augustine understood as being about the persecution and

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<sup>584</sup> *en. Ps.* 62.2 (CCSL 39: 795, trans. Boulding, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/17, 231): “Si ergo in illo mortui sumus, et in illo resurreximus, et ipse in nobis moritur, et in nobis resurgit (ipse est enim unitas capitis et corporis....”

<sup>585</sup> This is reminiscent of Augustine’s discussion in *trin.* IV of Christ’s death and resurrection as the *sacramentum et exemplum* of the double death and resurrection of the faithful. See Studer, “<<Sacramentum et exemplum>> chez saint Augustin.”

<sup>586</sup> *en. Ps.* 30[2].3 (CCSL 38: 192, trans. Boulding, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/15, 323): “*Saule, Saule, quid me persequeris?*” See also *en. Ps.* 39.5; 52.1; 140.3.

<sup>587</sup> See *en. Ps.* 58[1].2 (CCSL 39: 731, trans. Boulding, WSA, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/17, 149): “*Deus meus, Deus meus respice in me, quare me dereliquisti?*” Lee, *Mystery of the Church*, 54.

martyrdom of Christ the head; the former he understood as being about the persecution and martyrdom of Christ's members.<sup>588</sup>

Though Augustine invokes these passages to demonstrate the mystical unity between Christ and all of his members, at times he gives specific attention to Christ's martyred members. As we saw in the previous chapter, for Augustine Christ as the high priest *sacrifices* the martyrs *to himself*. The sacrifice of the martyrs, then, is a sort of reciprocal sacrifice: as Christ sacrificed himself for the martyrs (and all of humanity) out of love, so the martyrs sacrifice themselves to Christ out of love for Christ and fellow Christians.<sup>589</sup> His *totus Christus* theology, however, takes the relationship between the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the martyrs much deeper. As the head that is united to the members of his body in the Incarnation, Christ himself *is sacrificed* and suffers *in the martyrs*.<sup>590</sup> Christ did not ask, Augustine emphasizes, why Saul was persecuting his servants, saints, or limbs; he asked "*Why are you persecuting me?*" This for Augustine is equivalent to saying "Why do you persecute my members?" because "the Head was crying out on behalf of the members, and the head was transfiguring the members into

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<sup>588</sup> Scholarship scarcely notes this explicit connection between Augustine's *totus Christus* idea and martyrdom. Some scholars briefly discuss Augustine's ecclesiological emphasis on unity and/or charity in his understanding of what is a true martyr (i.e., a true martyr is one who dies in charity and unity with the Catholic Church). However, the *totus Christus* idea seldom enters the discussion. See Straw, "Martyrdom," 539; Anthony Dupont, "Augustine's Homiletic Definition of Martyrdom," 162; van Bavel, "The Cult of the Martyrs in St. Augustine," 356; Pellegrino, "Chiesa e Martirio in Sant' Agostino," 217–223. Pellegrino and Emile Mersch, S.J., most directly, yet also briefly, specifically discuss the relationship between Augustine's *totus Christus* idea and his theology of martyrdom. See Michele Pellegrino, "Cristo e Il Martire Nel Pensiero Di Sant' Agostino," 281; Mersch, *The Whole Christ*, 424–25.

<sup>589</sup> As Straw notes, the martyrs by their own sacrifice "replicate and return the sacrifice of Christ." They share in Christ's suffering and lay their lives down for their fellow Christians. Straw, "Martyrdom," 538. Straw cites a number of references for these points: *en. Ps.* 59.1; 115.5; 102.3; 141.11; *s.* 286.3; 299.3; 329.2; *ep. Io. tr.* 5.4; *Io. eu. tr.* 47.11; 123.5.

<sup>590</sup> See Klöckener, "Martyres, martyrium," 3: 1188.

himself.”<sup>591</sup> To persecute the martyrs, then, is to persecute not only a member of Christ’s body, but Christ himself.<sup>592</sup>

In his exposition of Psalm 58, Augustine explains that even after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, his body the church continues to suffer persecutions through the bloodshed of the martyrs. Both Christ and the martyrs speak in the psalmist’s cry for deliverance from men who shed blood, and both head and body are delivered:

From these men of blood Christ is rescued: not the head only, but the body too. Christ is delivered from men of blood, from those of former days, those of today, and those who will persecute in the future. The Christ who is rescued is the Christ of earlier days, and the Christ of today, and the Christ who will be, for Christ is the whole body of Christ.”<sup>593</sup>

Again, by virtue of his union with his body, when these martyrs were/are/will be delivered from the hands of their persecutors by their deaths, Christ himself is also delivered. To be sure, because the members are also joined to one another, all of the past, present, and future faithful may share in this cry for deliverance. However, Augustine makes specific reference to Christ’s martyred members: “The savage force of that kingdom was unleashed against the witnesses of Christ. A great and mighty flood of martyrs’ blood was poured out; but through its shedding the crop of the Church sprouted all the more vigorously, and filled the whole world, as we see it does

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<sup>591</sup> *en. Ps.* 30[2].3 (CCSL 38: 192, modified trans., Boulding, WSA, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/15, 323): “Non ait : Quid sanctos meos, quid seruos meos, sed “ quid me persequeris, hoc est, quid membra mea ? Caput pro membris clamabat, et membra in se caput transfigurabat.” See Baker, “Augustine’s Doctrine of the Totus Christus,” 14.

<sup>592</sup> This is precisely the logic behind Augustine naming the Donatists as persecutors and killers of Christ. See below.

<sup>593</sup> *en. Ps.* 58[1].5 (CCSL 39: 732, trans. Boulding, WSA, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/17, 151–52): “Ab his ergo uiris sanguinum eruitur Christus, et eis qui fuerunt, et eis qui sunt et eis qui future sunt, eruitur Christus, et qui processit, et qui est, et qui uenturus est.”

today.”<sup>594</sup> Thus, the martyrs and Christ have a unique share in one another’s sufferings that produces fruit for the entire church.

Moreover, the blood of the martyrs shares a unique ecclesiological efficacy, comparable to the blood of Christ. Both the blood of Christ and the blood of the martyrs birth new members of the church. Just as the church was born from the pierced side of Christ that poured out water and blood,<sup>595</sup> the blood of the martyrs produced a harvest of new converts to Christianity across the nations.<sup>596</sup> This unique share of the martyrs’ blood in the efficacy of the blood of Jesus appears again in *en. Ps.* 40. Augustine opens this exposition, which he preached on a martyr festival, describing Christ as “the commander-in-chief of martyrs” (*imperatoris martyrum*).<sup>597</sup> Before sending the martyrs like “troops into battle,” Christ the chief martyr “engaged in battle first” and “first won the victory” in order to “encourage [the martyrs] by his own example, and aid them with his majestic power, and crown them as he had promised.”<sup>598</sup>

Augustine immediately continues by reminding his listeners that Christ speaks in the psalms at times “in his own person” as head and other times “in the person of his body.” Because Christ the head and his body are one flesh and “form an indivisible unity,” one voice is to be

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<sup>594</sup> *en. Ps.* 58[1].5 (CCSL 39: 732, trans. Boulding, WSA, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/17, 151–52): “...et fremuit impetus regni illius aduersus testes Christi; effusus est magnus et multus martyrum sanguis : quo effuse, tamquam seminata seges ecclesiae fertilius pullulauit, et totum mundum, sicut nunc consipimus, occupauit.”

<sup>595</sup> See *en. Ps.* 138. C.f. *en. Ps.* 40.10.

<sup>596</sup> C.f. *en. Ps.* 39.1. Augustine follows Tertullian in *Apol.* 50.12: “semen est sanguis christianorum.” See Klöchner, “Matyres, Martyrium,” 1191.

<sup>597</sup> *en. Ps.* 40.1 (CCSL 38: 447, trans. Boulding, WSA, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/16, 224).

<sup>598</sup> *en. Ps.* 40.1 (CCSL 38: 447, trans. Boulding, WSA, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/16, 224): “...qui sibi non pepercit militibus imperans pugnam, sed prior pugnavit, prior uicit, et pugnantes exemplo suo hortaretur, et maiestate sua adiuuaret, et promissione coronaret, audiamus aliquid in isto psalmo, quod pertineat ad eius passionem.”

heard in the psalms.<sup>599</sup> Therefore, the words of the psalm are spoken both by Christ the head, whose name the devil tried to remove from the earth, and by the members of Christ's body. Though Christ the head sits on his throne in heaven, his members on earth continue to struggle against the devil who continues to persecute Christ by persecuting his members. However, the devil's attempts to remove Christ's name from the earth resulted in his own demise, the victory of the martyrs, and in the spreading of Christ's name throughout the earth. Notice the efficacy Augustine attributes to the martyrs' blood: "[t]he holy blood [of the martyrs] was shed because it was powerful for the multiplication of the Church, and the death of the martyrs was added to the sowing [of Christ's blood]."<sup>600</sup>

Two points are worth noting from this passage. First of all, Christ has an intimate share in the suffering of the martyrs, and the martyrs share in the persecution of Christ. To be sure, in the martyrs' deaths Christ is killed anew "not in the head, but in his body."<sup>601</sup> In other words, his resurrected, impassible flesh in heaven is not suffering; he suffers in the earthly members of his body, with whom he is one flesh.<sup>602</sup> Second, Augustine attributes to the blood of the martyrs an efficacy similar to that of Christ's blood that results in the multiplication of the church. To be sure, the blood of the martyrs does not effect the forgiveness of sins and inaugurate a covenant between God and his people. Only the blood of Christ the head offers such redemptive effects.

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<sup>599</sup> *en. Ps. 40.1* (CCSL 38: 447, trans. Boulding, WSA, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/16, 224): "...Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum plerumque loqui ex se, id est ex persona sua, quod est caput nostrum ; plerumque ex persona corporis sui, quod sumus nos et ecclesia eius ; sed ita quasi ex unius hominis ore sonare uerba, ut intellegamus caput et corpus in unitate integritatis consistere, nec separari ab inuicem...."

<sup>600</sup> *en. Ps. 40.1* (CCSL 38: 448, modified trans. Boulding, WSA, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/16, 225): "Ad multiplicandam ecclesiam ualuit sanctus sanguis effusus, seminationi accessit et mors martyrum."

<sup>601</sup> *en. Ps. 40.1* (CCSL 38: 448): "Vt moreretur iterum Christus non in capite, sed in corpore suo, occisi sunt et martyres."

<sup>602</sup> See Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 77.



However, the martyrs' blood uniquely participates in the redemptive nature of Christ's blood. When their blood is shed, the effects of Christ's shed blood that overpowered Satan and birthed new members of the church at Christ's own martyrdom become present again at the martyrdom of his members. Thus, as Christ suffers anew in his martyred members, Satan is conquered anew, and new members of the church are harvested anew.

Even more telling of the unity between Christ and his martyr-members is the way in which Augustine, following Paul, understands their suffering as a completion of what was lacking in Christ's own suffering as the head.<sup>603</sup> When Christ cries out "*Destroy me, all of you*" (*Interficate omnes*) in Psalm 61:4, he is speaking about being killed—i.e., martyred.<sup>604</sup> However, because Christ cries out here in his whole person, we find in this passage the suffering and martyrdom of both Christ the head *and* his members. In virtue of their union, the head and body are "two in one flesh, in one voice, in one passion..."<sup>605</sup> Head and members, therefore, share in one another's suffering. The suffering of the members even *fulfills* the suffering that God had appointed for Christ's *whole person* throughout all time. To be sure, some of this suffering was appointed to Christ in respect to the head, such as Christ's own insults, scourging, and crucifixion, and some was appointed to Christ in respect to his past, present, and future members, such as the trials, tribulations, and the persecution that his members endure. Again, Christ's body consists of those faithful to God before and after the Incarnation.<sup>606</sup> The suffering of each of

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<sup>603</sup> See Colossians 1:24.

<sup>604</sup> *en. Ps.* 61.4 (CCSL 39: 773).

<sup>605</sup> *en. Ps.* 61.4 (CCSL 39: 774): "duo in carne una, et in uoce una, et in passione una..."

<sup>606</sup> *en. Ps.* 61.4. Because Christ is the king and founder of the heavenly city, Augustine explains, he is joined to citizens of that city who came both before and after him.

these members throughout all time completes “the universal passion of Christ” (*uniuersae passioni Christi*), which will continue until the end of the age:

He suffered as our head, and he suffers in his members, which means in us. We each pay what we owe into this commonwealth of ours, according to our limited means; we contribute our quota of sufferings from the resources allotted to us. There will be no final balancing of accounts in the matter of suffering until this world ends.<sup>607</sup>

Though “*Destroy me, all of you,*” is spoken by all members of the heavenly city, Augustine highlights the voice of the martyrs:

The entire city is speaking, therefore: all of it from the murdered, righteous Abel to the slaughtered Zechariah, and then further still, from the blood of John, through the blood of the apostles, on through the blood of the martyrs, to the blood-shedding of all Christ’s faithful. One single city is speaking, one person is saying...*Kill me all of you.*<sup>608</sup>

The faithful, to be sure, also cry out as members of the persecuted Christ. After discussing in this same exposition how Saul’s persecution of David prefigures the persecution of Christ from Jews who had rejected him, he goes on to discuss how this also depicts the devil’s persecution of the faithful. In his first exposition of Psalm 58, Augustine says that all of the faithful, in virtue of the union between Christ and all of his members, cry out as one body and one voice for deliverance from their demonic enemies that assault them with deceptions,

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<sup>607</sup> *en. Ps.* 61.4 (CCSL 39: 774, trans. Boulding, WSA, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/17, 205): “...qui passus est in capite nostro, et patitur in membris suis, id est in nobis ipsis. Ad commune hanc quasi rempublicam nostrum quisque pro modulo nostro exoluimus quod debemus, et pro possessione uirium nostrarum quasi canonem passionum inferimus. Pariatoria plenaria passionum omnium non erit, nisi cum saeculum finitum fuerit.” See Mersch, *The Whole Christ*, 424–25. This aspect of his *totus Christus* theology has interesting implications for how Augustine might respond to the problem of evil, at least in terms of the suffering of Christians. Christian suffering in whatever form, he seems to say rather explicitly here, was appointed by God. More than that, Christian suffering is Christ’s own suffering that was appointed for him by God. Perhaps the comforting element of this assertion in Augustine’s eyes would be Christ’s identification with our own suffering (as well as our identification with his) and God’s redemptive ends for Christian suffering, which would be akin to the redemptive nature of Christ’s suffering. Currently, I am not aware of any study that has considered Augustine’s theodicy in relation to his *totus Christus* theology.

<sup>608</sup> *en. Ps.* 61.4 (CCSL 39: 74, trans. Boulding, WSA, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/17, 205): “Tota ergo illa ciuitas loquitur, a sanguine Abel iusti usque ad sanguinem Zachariae. Inde et deinceps a sanguine Iohannis, per sanguinem apostolorum, per sanguinem martyrum, per sanguinem fidelium Chrii, una ciuitas loquitur, unus homo dicit...*Interficate omnes.*” See Richard Foley, S.J., “The Communion of Saints: A Study in Saint Augustine,” *International Journal for Philosophy and Theology* 20, no. 3 (1959): 274.

temptations, and traps.<sup>609</sup> Even in the days of peace, Augustine explains in *en. Ps.* 39, persecutions do not cease. The devil and his methods of persecution take on different forms at different times. In times of imperial persecution, the devil is the roaring lion who forces Christians to deny Christ through open, vicious attacks on their bodies. In times of peace, the devil is the slithering snake who teaches Christians to deny Christ with deceptive doctrine.<sup>610</sup> In *en. Ps.* 40, Augustine calls the faithful to trample on both the lion and the snake in the name of Christ.<sup>611</sup>

Moreover, because Christ, the martyrs, and the faithful are members of the same body joined in charity, the faithful participate in the bleeding and suffering of Christ and the martyrs. After a discussion of the charity which unites Christ the head and his members as one flesh and one voice in *en. Ps.* 140.4, Augustine interprets the profuse bleeding of Christ's "whole body" during his fervent prayer in Gethsemane as a sign that "the whole Church would bleed in the suffering of the martyrs."<sup>612</sup> The event of Christ's bloodshed, then, was a sacrament that signified the bloodshed of the church in the martyrs. While Augustine acknowledges that some of the faithful are martyred and some are not, he also affirms a participation of the whole Christ in the sufferings of each member.

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<sup>609</sup> *en. Ps.* 58[1].4.

<sup>610</sup> *en. Ps.* 39.1. Augustine here seems to be making a subtle reference to the Donatists, who cause Catholic Christians to deny that they are in fact Christians by persuading them to submit to a Donatist rebaptism. Augustine explicitly references the Donatists using this same logic in *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus CXXIV* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus decem*. See below for a further discussion of this topic.

<sup>611</sup> *en. Ps.* 40.4.

<sup>612</sup> *en. Ps.* 140.4 (CCSL 40: 2028, trans. Boulding, WSA, *Expositions of the Psalms*, III/20, 304): "Quid est de toto corpore sanguinis effluxion nisi de tota ecclesia martyrum passio?"

As we will see in his anti-Donatist works, however, only those who remain in unity with the one church share in the sufferings of the one Christ, head and members. Once a member severs itself from the unity of the church, it severs itself from the *totus Christus*, both head and body. Therefore, any sufferings that these severed members experience can in no way be identified with the sufferings of Christ the head or his members. These points are central in Augustine's polemics against the Donatists, to which I now turn.

### ***Totus Christus* Theology Against the Donatists**

While the last section examined the *Ennarationes in Psalmos* to analyze Augustine's understanding of the *totus Christus* in relation to his theology of martyrdom, this section investigates works where he applies this ecclesiology, as well as related ecclesiological images, to confront the claims of the Donatists.

As James K. Lee has noted, prior to the height of his involvement against the Donatists, Augustine had already developed a rich understanding of the church as one body united in charity.<sup>613</sup> In *Contra Faustum*, Augustine had described the church as a mixed body containing righteous and sinners, wheat and chaff, that would only be separated on the day of judgment.<sup>614</sup> He described Noah's Ark as a type of the church. The timbers of the ark, glued together with pitch, typify the members of Christ's body, bound together by charity given by the Holy Spirit

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<sup>613</sup> For a discussion on the following images and their primary references, see Lee *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 68–70 and corresponding footnotes.

<sup>614</sup> See *c. Faust.* 12.15.

(Rom. 5:5).<sup>615</sup> He had described the church as the bride of Christ without blemish (Eph 5: 27),<sup>616</sup> the chaste spouse and virgin mother,<sup>617</sup> and the temple of God,<sup>618</sup> yet she is presently composed of wicked people and undergoes a continual process of purification until the eschaton.<sup>619</sup> The church is Christ's body on pilgrimage,<sup>620</sup> joined with him as one flesh and united with him in charity as the whole Christ (*totus Christus*);<sup>621</sup> yet that body is presently mixed with both the good and the wicked.<sup>622</sup>

Although Augustine had already articulated this understanding of the church in his polemics against the Manicheans, his growing dialogue with the Donatists played no small part in the development of this ecclesiology.<sup>623</sup> Augustine drew upon the theology of Tyconius, who was excommunicated from the Donatist communion for advocating for a temporal toleration of the presence of the wicked in the church until the eschaton. He later employed this understanding

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<sup>615</sup> *c. Faust.* 12.14. Romans 5:5, as Lee notes, was a favorite verse of Augustine. Lee further explains how Augustine used the image of Noah's ark to demonstrate that conditions in which the church on earth presently exists: "1) as the elect, chosen by God before the creation of the world; 2) on pilgrimage in history as a mixed body of good and wicked; and 3) in eschatological perfection." Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 68.

<sup>616</sup> *c. Faust.* 12.42.

<sup>617</sup> *c. Faust.* 15.3–11.

<sup>618</sup> *c. Faust.* 13.14.

<sup>619</sup> *c. Faust.* 13–14.

<sup>620</sup> *c. Faust.* 12.26–28.

<sup>621</sup> *c. Faust.* 12.8, 26.

<sup>622</sup> *c. Faust.* 13.16; 15.4.

<sup>623</sup> Even in works written during his priesthood, one finds Augustine's emphasis on unity, charity, and the mixture of the righteous and sinners in the Church. See his first anti-Donatist tract, *Psalmus contra partem Donati*, written in 393. Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 70–71.

of the church, including these biblical images, to refute the Donatist claim to be the only true church with true sacraments and true martyrs.<sup>624</sup>

The Donatist claim to be the Church of the Martyrs rests on a number of theological points that Augustine counters with his theology of the unity and charity of the church. Since other scholars have discussed these in depth, I briefly summarize three of the primary points and Augustine's responses. First of all, according to the Donatists, not only does apostasy defile the one who committed such a grave sin; it defiles those ordained by the apostate and those who remain in communion with him or his successor. Because the Catholics honored the ordination of Caecilian and remained in communion with his successors, the entire Catholic communion had become impure and polluted by the sin of apostasy.

Second, because the Holy Spirit departs from apostates, those ordained by apostates, and those in communion with apostates, the sacraments of such ministers lack the Holy Spirit and in no way benefit their recipients. For this reason, the Donatists did not recognize baptisms performed in the Catholic communion, and any Catholics who converted to Donatism had to be rebaptized. Finally, the Donatists justified their claim to be the true "Church of the Martyrs" over against the Catholics because of Catholic support of—and, to some extent, involvement in—state suppression of the Donatists. The true Church of the Martyrs, they say, suffers persecution rather than inflicts persecution.

Augustine, for his part, orchestrates a series of ecclesiological counterarguments: 1) The true test of one's place in the church is not whether one is in communion with an impure

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<sup>624</sup> Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 70. As Maureen Tilley also notes, Augustine by this point had devoted considerable effort to studying the anti-Donatist works of Optatus of Milevus, the ecclesiology and exegetical rules of Tyconius, and the works of Cyprian of Carthage. Each of these authors deeply influenced the development of his ecclesiological response to the Donatists. See Tilley, "General Introduction," 20–21.

minister, but whether one abides in the unity-in-charity of the one church.<sup>625</sup> Because the power of the sacraments is derived from the purity of Christ the head, the efficacy of the sacraments performed in the unity of Christ's body the church cannot be hindered by moral status of the minister.<sup>626</sup> 2) The Holy Spirit does not depart from individuals and ministers in communion with sinners, but from those who sever themselves from Christ's one body. Though the Donatist sacraments possess the proper form, they lack power because they have cut themselves off from the life of the Spirit.<sup>627</sup> 3) Because the Donatist "martyrs" die outside of the unity-in-charity of the one church, they are no such thing.<sup>628</sup> It is Augustine's third response that is of primary interest in this section. Having countered the Donatist claims with historical and conciliar appeals, an ecclesiology equating schism with heresy, a pneumatology preferring unity-in-charity over ministerial purity, and a sacramental theology distinguishing valid and efficacious sacraments, Augustine still had to confront an unavoidable reality that might seem to favor the Donatist cause: the imperial suppression that resulted in Donatist casualties and enforced unification with the Catholics.

Two Donatist bishops in Augustine's time, Primianus in 403 and Petilian in 411, declared that the true Catholic church is not the one that persecutes, but the one that suffers persecution.<sup>629</sup> Though this phrase was recorded much later in the controversy, the Donatists had

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<sup>625</sup> As Lee has already observed, Augustine argues that the uncleanness of some members in the body of Christ does not defile the other members. Just as the presence of chaff does not ruin the grain, the presence of bad Christians does not harm the holiness of good Christians (*c. litt. Petil. 2.22.50*). See Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 71.

<sup>626</sup> *c. litt. Pet. 1.5.6–7.8; 3.52.64*. See Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 71.

<sup>627</sup> *s. 267.4; 268.2*.

<sup>628</sup> *bapt. 3.18.23*. See Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 73.

<sup>629</sup> For Primianus's quote in 403, see *Breviculus Conlationis cum Donatistis* II.4.4 (CCSL 149A, 273); For Petilian's quote in 411 at the Council of Carthage, see *Gesta Conlationis Carthaginensis* 3.22 (CCSL 149A: 184): "apud nos est enim vera catholica, quae persecutionem patitur, no quae facit." See van Bavel, "The Cult of the Martyrs in St. Augustine," 356. As Adam Ployd notes, other Donatist representatives reiterated this phrase throughout the course

long held this position. In Donatist eyes, state suppression equaled persecution. Because the Catholics were supported by the government (and because they remained in communion with supposed apostates), the Donatists regarded the Catholics as culpable.

Augustine's theology of Christ and the church as the *totus Christus* united in the bond of charity is central to his response to this aspect of the Donatist claim to being the Church of the Martyrs. Augustine implements this ecclesiology to argue 1) Donatist martyrdoms, like their baptisms, are of no benefit because they die outside of the *totus Christus*; 2) the Donatists are the persecutors of the *totus Christus*, not the persecuted; 3) the *totus Christus*, which comprises Christ and his one church of all nations, rightly uses the state as an instrument of divine discipline against the rebellious Donatists.

### ***The Donatist Martyrs Die Outside of the Totus Christus***

First of all, Augustine argues, the Donatists have no claim to martyrdom because their so-called martyrs die outside of the unity and charity of the *totus Christus*. True martyrs, he says, die in charity and in unity with the one church across the nations. In *De Baptismo*, written in 400–401, Augustine has already laid the groundwork for this counter claim. Though Augustine's primary concern in *De Baptismo* is his ecclesologically-grounded defense of Catholic baptismal practices vis a vis the Donatists, this ecclesiology also has consequences for his theology of

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of the Council of Carthage in 411. See *Conl. Carth.* 3.251 and 3.258. See “*Non Poena Sed Causa*,” 26. For more on this conference, see Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 54–57; Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 287–305; Erika T. Hermanowicz, *Possidius of Calama: A Study in the North African Episcopate at the Time of Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 188–220; W.H.C. Frend, “The Eclipse of Donatism: A.D. 399–410,” in *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952).



martyrdom.<sup>630</sup> Also, though the phrase *totus Christus* does not appear explicitly in this work, his theology of the church as the one, universal church united in the bond of charity, in which Cyprian of Carthage lived and died, grounds his arguments in this work against the Donatist claim to martyrdom.

Citing Cyprian of Carthage and his famous line *salus extra ecclesiam non est*,<sup>631</sup> Augustine argues that not only is a baptism of water of no effect outside of the church; martyrdom, which is a baptism of blood, also brings no benefit to one who is killed outside of the church.<sup>632</sup> To be outside of the church, Augustine adds, is incontrovertible proof of a lack of charity—and “if charity is lacking then, martyrdom is of no benefit.”<sup>633</sup> To be sure, one may even be in the unity of the church, yet still render one’s martyrdom ineffective by living in wickedness and without charity.<sup>634</sup>

Cyprian’s martyrdom, Augustine argues, also demonstrates that true martyrdom only occurs in union with the universal church. Cyprian’s refusal to deny communion to bishops with differing opinions and the crown of his martyrdom bore witness to the assertion that he would

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<sup>630</sup> The essential points that Augustine argues in *De Baptismo* are: 1) baptism exists in the Catholic Church; 2) baptism is received rightly only in the Catholic Church; 3) the Donatists have baptism; 4) baptism is not rightly received among the Donatists. See *bapt.*, 1.3.4.

<sup>631</sup> Cyprian of Carthage, *ep.* 73.21.2.

<sup>632</sup> To justify the rebaptism of Catholics who join the Donatists, the Donatists cite Cyprian’s statements that heretics and schismatics have no baptism. Those that are baptized by them, therefore, receive an illegitimate baptism, and such persons must be legitimately baptized once received into the one church. Augustine’s aim, then, is to refute the Donatist appeal to Cyprian and claim the former bishop of Carthage for the Catholic cause. See *bapt.* 2.1.2. See Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 282.

<sup>633</sup> *bapt.* 4.17.24 (CSEL 51: 250, trans. Tilley, WSA, *The Donatist Controversy I*, I/21, 488): “quodsi propter hoc quia caritas deest passio nihil prodest, nec illis prodest....” Augustine also appeals to Paul in 1 Cor. 13:3. See Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 73.

<sup>634</sup> *bapt.* 4.17.24.

have accepted the judgment of a later, universal council.<sup>635</sup> Cyprian refused “sacrilegious separation” (*separatione sacrilega*)<sup>636</sup> and underwent martyrdom while in unity with the church:

Walking in [the bond of unity] with the most persevering tolerance, not by having shed his blood but by having shed it in unity (because if he had handed his body over to be burned and did not have charity, it would have profited him nothing), Cyprian arrived at angelic light by way of the confession of martyrdom.<sup>637</sup>

Cyprian demonstrated a love for unity that the Donatists ought to imitate. If he had been stained by remaining in communion with sees that did not baptize heretics and schismatics, then the church would have fallen in Cyprian's day. If Cyprian was not stained by his communion with those who differed in opinion, then the Donatists should imitate him.<sup>638</sup> Acknowledging the God-given autonomy of each episcopal see, he deprived no other see of communion due to a difference of opinion. Thus, even though the Donatists appeal to the authority of Cyprian to justify their claims of being the true church with true martyrs, they fail to follow the martyr-bishop's example of preserving unity.<sup>639</sup>

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<sup>635</sup> *bapt.* 2.5.6

<sup>636</sup> *bapt.* 2.6.7 (CSEL 51: 182, trans. Tilley, WSA, *The Donatist Controversy I*, I/21, 426):

<sup>637</sup> *bapt.* 2.5.6 (CSEL 51: 181, trans. Tilley, WSA, *The Donatist Controversy I*, I/21, 426): “in quo ambulans Cyprianus perseuerantissima tolerantia non fuso sanguine sed in unitate fuso, quia si traderet corpus suum ut arderet et non haberet caritatem nihil ei prodesset, per martyria confessionem peruenit ad angelicam lucem....”

<sup>638</sup> *bapt.* 2.9.14.

<sup>639</sup> *bapt.* 2.3.4. Augustine is citing Cyprian's words found in *Sententiae LXX episcoporum* (*The Opinions of the Seventy Bishops*), preface (CSEL 1/1, 435). See Tilley, WSA, *The Donatist Controversy I*, I/21, 387 and 425n21. The WSA gives the misleading subtitle “*Scripture is a greater authority than a council*” to this section. Augustine here relates humility, peace, and charity to the superiority not of the Scriptures, but of later, universal councils over earlier, regional councils. Cyprian and his episcopal colleagues agreed at the Council of Carthage in 256 that heretics and schismatics have no baptism and must receive it upon entry into church. The Donatists appealed to this to justify their practice of rebaptism. See *bapt.* 2.1.2. However, Augustine argues that the judgment of former bishops can be reformed on two accounts: 1) if the writings of earlier bishops are found to depart in any way from the truth of the Scriptures by later, wiser, and more numerous bishops *gathered together in a council*; or 2) if a larger, more global council corrects a previous regional council. The later universal Council of Arles in 314, Augustine argues, holds greater authority than the provincial council of Carthage on both of these accounts. Though the Council of Arles occurred after Cyprian's martyrdom, the martyr-bishop would have submitted to this later,

After the completion of his major anti-Donatist works,<sup>640</sup> Augustine more explicitly implements his theology of the unity and charity of the *totus Christus* to demonstrate why Donatist “martyrdoms” are of no benefit in his *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus decem* (407). Interestingly, in his opening homily, Augustine discusses the *totus Christus* immediately after a reference to the martyrs. He relates the apostles, who were witnesses to the Word of Life in his life, death, and resurrection, to the martyrs who died for their witness to the same Word of Life. Recalling a similar rebuke to Christians for getting drunk at martyr shrines in s. 335D, Augustine calls the martyrs “witnesses of God” whose sufferings the faithful ought to imitate rather than “persecute with cups of wine.”<sup>641</sup> In the next paragraph, he explains that the church of Christ becomes the bride and body of Christ as she is joined to the flesh that the Word of God assumed; The Word of God and his flesh, which includes the church “composes the whole Christ (*Christus totus*), head and body.”<sup>642</sup> Therefore, for Augustine, the same church who is the bride

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universal council because of his love for the peace of the Church and the example of Peter, who humbly submitted to correction of Paul. See *bapt.* 2.4.5.

<sup>640</sup> *Contra epistulam Parmeniani* (400), *Contra litteras Petilianii* (400/403), *De Baptismo* (400/401), *Ad catholicos fratres/De unitate ecclesiae* (402/405), and *Ad Cresconium grammaticum partis Donati* (405/406). The dating of these works follows *Augustine through the Ages*, xliii-il.

<sup>641</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 1.2 (*Bibliothèque Augustienne: Œuvres de Saint Augustin*, 9<sup>e</sup> Série, Paris: Institut d’Études Augustiennes, 2008, 76: 66, 68): “Atque utinam sic habitet et in corde ut passiones martyrum imitemur, non eos calicibus persequamur!...Testes Dei passi sunt.” The *Bibliothèque Augustienne* includes the Latin on even-numbered pages and a French translation of the odd-numbered pages, so Latin sentences or passages that carry over to the next page(s) continue on the next even-numbered page. Ramsey notes the difficulty translators have had with translating *non eos calicibus persequamur*. Ramsey translates the phrase as “not trample them underfoot.” See Ramsey, WSA, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, I/14, 21–22 and 22n3. However, this passage recalls an almost verbatim phrase in s. 335D.2 in which Augustine is clearly rebuking Christians who become drunk at martyr celebrations and thus “persecute [the martyrs] with cups of wine.” See s. 335D.2 (PLS 2: 777): “...et quos illi persecuti sunt lapidibus, persequuntur calicibus.” Just as he does in s. 335D.2, Augustine in *ep. Io. tr.* 1.2 rebukes Christians for participating in drunkenness at martyr celebrations, an action that the martyrs themselves would have condemned, rather than imitating the martyrs.

<sup>642</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 1.2 (BA 76: 68): “Illi carni adiungitur Ecclesia et fit Christus totus, caput et corpus.” In this passage, Augustine initially speaks of bridegroom and bride in terms of the Eternal Word and the flesh that the Word assumed. The Word and the flesh assumed, he says, became one as bridegroom and bride in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The church is joined to that flesh and thus becomes both the body and bride of Christ. C.f. *Io. eu. tr.* 28.1.

and body of Christ makes up, along with Christ the head, the *totus Christus*. Though Augustine makes no explicit reference to the Donatist ‘martyrs’ here, he does mention the schismatics towards the end of the sermon. After emphasizing the existence of the church in all nations and the call to brotherly love which is present “in the unity of charity,” he chides the Donatists for rejecting brotherly love and forsaking the entire world—i.e., the church in all the nations—by their schism.<sup>643</sup> The Donatists and their martyrs, then, have separated themselves from this *totus Christus*, which is found in all nations.

Emphasizing the universality of the *totus Christus*, Augustine in his second homily describes the church as a vine planted in the field of Jerusalem, which began with the first disciples and spread to all nations. Heresy and schism, however, causes some branches to become useless. Such branches must be cut off. Only by turning from their heresy or schism can these branches be re-grafted into the vine.<sup>644</sup> Augustine develops this point by alternating his use of “Jerusalem.” On the one hand, Jerusalem is a geographical location where Christ was killed. Nonetheless, he loved this city so much that he decided to begin his church here by pouring out the Holy Spirit upon the disciples on Pentecost.<sup>645</sup> On the other hand, Jerusalem represents the Catholic Church. Though the Catholics admonish the Donatists to remain in communion with “Jerusalem,” the Donatists refuse. Though the gift of the Spirit caused the newborn church to

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<sup>643</sup> *ep. Io. tr. 1.12* (BA 76: 98): “Quia qui diligit fratrem tolerat omnia propter unitatem, quia in unitate caritatis est fraternal dilectio...Cum accusant Afros, deseruerunt orbem terrarium.” Augustine specifically names the Donatists as these haters of unity and charity in the last sentence of the homily (1.13).

<sup>644</sup> *ep. Io. tr. 2.2*.

<sup>645</sup> *ep. Io. tr. 2.3*.

speak in the tongues of all the nations, the Donatists by their schism claim that Christ and his church speak only Latin and Punic.<sup>646</sup>

For Augustine, it is not communion with an impure minister that defiles and cuts one off from the church of Christ, as the Donatists hold, but a lack of maintaining the unity-in-charity of the universal church. This is not, for Augustine, to set purity against charity. The ultimate expression of purity is the twofold love of God and love of neighbor. The epitome of impurity is a love of the world, which the faithful must empty from themselves in order to be filled with divine love.<sup>647</sup> The Donatists have proven their love of the world by separating themselves from the communion of churches across the world. The proof of walking in charity is that one maintains unity with the body of Christ. Commenting on 1 John 2:11, Augustine affirms that to hate one's brother is to walk in darkness. To avoid walking in darkness, Christians must "love the brotherhood" and make sure they do not "tear apart its unity, because [they] uphold charity."<sup>648</sup> By boasting in the validity of their own baptism and rejecting the baptism of the Catholics, the Donatists exalt the name of Donatus above the name of Christ.<sup>649</sup> Baptism belongs

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<sup>646</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 2.3. Cf. Augustine's sermons on the Feast of Pentecost. In *s.* 267.3–4, he describes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost with the sign of tongues as signifying that the nascent church would one day speak in the languages of all the nations. In *s.* 269.2, Augustine states that only those in the one church that speaks in the tongues of all nations have the Holy Spirit. In *s.* 267.4 and 286.2, he describes the Holy Spirit as the soul of the church, which gives life to the body of Christ just as the soul gives life to the body. Just as the life of the soul does not go with a member of a body once it is severed, the Holy Spirit does not go with a schismatic once he/she sever themselves from the unity of Christ's body the church. One can only remain in the life of the Spirit if one remains joined to the one church in love. These arguments are central to Augustine arguing for the lack of efficacy in the Donatist sacraments, which possess the outward form but no power of the Holy Spirit. Cf. *bapt.* 3.16.21. See Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 72–73, 78.

<sup>647</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 2.8. Augustine expounds upon the two loves (love of God and the love of the world) in *ciu.* XIV.28.

<sup>648</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 2.3 (BA 76: 120): "Vnde non erimus in tenebris? Si amemus fratres. Vnde probatur quia amaus fraternitatem? Quia non conscindimus unitatem, qui tenemus caritatem."

<sup>649</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 2.3. Cf. *Io. eu. tr.* 6.23. The Donatists do not suffer for Christ, but for Donatus, which proves that they are not in the one church.

to Christ, not Donatus; those reborn in baptism belong to Christ, not to the one who baptizes them.<sup>650</sup> To embrace heresy or schism, as the Donatists have done, is to be cut off from the root of charity and the life of God communicated in the sacraments.<sup>651</sup>

Because charity is given by the Holy Spirit, Augustine says in his sixth homily, the Donatists have also therefore proved that they lack the Holy Spirit. Charity is not only commanded by Christ; it is, per Paul, “*poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit* (Rom 5:5).”<sup>652</sup> Charity binds the members of Christ’s body in unity, not in disunity.<sup>653</sup> The true test of whether the Spirit abides in a Christian, then, is “a love of peace and unity” with the church.

If a person loves his brother, the Spirit of God is abiding in him. Let him look, let him probe himself before God’s eyes. Let him see if there is in him a love of peace and unity, a love of the Church spread around the whole earth. Let him be attentive not only to loving the brother who is before him and upon whom he is intent, for there are many brothers of ours whom we do not see, and we are joined to them in the unity of the Spirit. Why should it surprise us that they aren’t with us? We are in one body; we have one head in heaven.<sup>654</sup>

This church across “the whole earth” is “one body” with “one head,” which together make up the whole Christ. The Spirit only abides in this one body of Christ.<sup>655</sup> The Donatists, therefore, by

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<sup>650</sup> *ep. Io. tr. 2.4*. Cf. *bapt. I.18.28*

<sup>651</sup> *ep. Io. tr. 2.9*. Cf. *ep. Io. tr. 6.11*.

<sup>652</sup> *ep. Io. tr. 6.8* (BA 76: 266, trans. Ramsey, WSA, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, I/14, 95–96): “...*caritas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum Sanctum qui datus est nobis*?” See Romans 5:5, a favorite verse of Augustine in his discussion of charity.

<sup>653</sup> *ep. Io. tr. 6.10*.

<sup>654</sup> *ep. Io. tr. 6.10* (BA 76: 270, modified trans. Ramsey, WSA, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, I/14, 97): “Si diligit fratrem, manet Spiritus Dei in illo. Videat, probet se ipsum coram oculis Dei. Videat si est in illo dilectio pacis et unitatis, dilectio Ecclesiae toto terrarum orbe diffusae. Non adtendat eum solum diligere fratrem quem adtendit ante se. Multos enim non uidemus fratres nostros et in unitate Spiritus illis copulamur. Quid mirum, quia nobiscum non sunt? In uno corpore sumus; unum caput habemus in caelo.” For more on the Holy Spirit as the bond of charity, see Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 67–69. See also Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J., “‘The Glue Itself Is Charity’: Ps 62:9 in Augustine’s Thought,” in *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, ed. Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J., Earl C. Muller, S.J., and Roland Teske, S.J. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 375–84.

<sup>655</sup> C.f. Augustine’s sermons preached on the Day of Pentecost, esp. *s. 267.4*; *268.2*.

cutting themselves off from “the love of peace and unity” with the church of the whole earth have been cut off from the whole Christ and the life of the Holy Spirit.

The Donatists hail their members who suffer death under state suppression as martyrs, but true martyrs, Augustine says, die in charity for Christ the bridegroom *and* his bride the church. Those who die in schism call themselves martyrs and may appear to be laying down their lives for fellow Christians. However, if they truly loved their brothers and sisters in Christ, “they would not be separating themselves from the universal brotherhood.”<sup>656</sup> Moreover, their persistence in schism and willingness to die in that schism reveals that their martyrdom is motivated not by charity, but by pride. In the eighth homily on the First Epistle of John, he argues that the works of charity and pride often appear to be the same, but only works done in charity are approved by God. Both charity and pride feed the hungry, clothe the naked, fast, bury the dead, and welcome the stranger. Likewise, “charity dies—that is, the person who has charity confesses the name of Christ and undergoes martyrdom. Pride also confesses; it also undergoes martyrdom. The one has charity; the other doesn’t have charity.”<sup>657</sup> Charity seeks the praise of God; pride seeks the praise of self. The Donatists claim to have martyrs, but their martyrdom is done out of pride for Donatus, not Christ. In fact, not only are they *not suffering* for Christ; they actually *cause suffering* for Christ the head and his body the church by their schism.

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<sup>656</sup> *ep. Io. tr. 6.2* (BA 76: 338, modified trans. Ramsey, WSA, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, I/14, 88): “Si pro fratribus animam poneret, non se ab uniuersa fraternitate separarent.”

<sup>657</sup> *ep. Io. tr. 8.9* (BA 76: 338, trans. Ramsey, WSA, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, I/14, 123): “...moritur caritas, id est homo habens caritatem, confitetur nomen Christi, ducit martyrium, confitetur et superbia, ducit martyrium. Ille habet caritatem; ile non habet caritatem.” See 1 Cor. 13: 3.

## *The Donatists as the Persecutors of the Totus Christus*

As I will discuss below, Augustine frequently recounts cases of Circumcellion violence to argue that the Donatists are the actual persecutors and to justify the use of imperial coercion against the Donatists. However, he also casts the Donatists and their martyrs as persecutors by implementing his *totus Christus* theology in his *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* and his *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*. Though the Donatists claim to be hated and persecuted, Augustine argues, *they* actually hate and persecute Christ and his church through their schism, their rejection of charity for one body of Christ, and their disregard for Catholic baptism.

Whereas Christ's commandment calls for the flame of brotherly love to be directed toward all members of Christ's body, the Donatists have cut themselves off from Christ the head and his body—i.e., the *totus Christus*—by cutting themselves off from the love of Christians across the world. In his tenth homily on the Gospel of John, he says:

And somebody or other is placing the boundaries of charity in Africa! Spread your charity throughout the whole world, if you want to love Christ, because Christ's members lie throughout the world. If you love a section, you have been torn apart; if you have been torn apart, you are not in the body; if you are not in the body, you are not under the head.<sup>658</sup>

The Donatist claim to love Christ without loving his members is comparable to a person kissing another's head while trampling that other's feet.<sup>659</sup> Augustine even uses Acts 9:4, one of the key Scriptures he cites in his discussions of the *totus Christus*, as an appeal to the Donatists and all

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<sup>658</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 10.8 (BA 76: 422, modified trans. Ramsey, WSA, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, I/14, 155): "...et nescio quis ponit in Africa fines caritatis. Extende caritatem per totum orbem siu is Christum amare quia membra Christi per orbem iacent. Si amas partem, diuisus es ; si diuisus e, in corpore non es ; si in corpore non es, sub capite non es."

<sup>659</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 10.8–9. Augustine's arguments against the Donatists, are not only ecclesiological, but Christological. Christ ascended into heaven knowing that to honor him in heaven while trampling his members on earth underfoot is useless. This Christological argument arises again in my discussion below. As we will see, those who deny Christ's charity deny the Incarnation.



who hate the members of Christ's body.<sup>660</sup> Just as Saul's persecution of the church was a persecution against Christ himself, the Donatist hatred for the members of Christ's body is a hatred of Christ the head.<sup>661</sup> The Donatists claim to have suffered persecution, but by their dividing the body of Christ, they have caused persecution.<sup>662</sup>

By removing themselves schismatically from the unity of the church, the Donatists do violence to the body of Christ and even become deniers of the Incarnation. In his sixth homily on the First Epistle of John, Augustine contrasts the Donatist who by their schism "mutilate the body of Christ" with Christ who "came in the flesh so as to bind up [his body] together."<sup>663</sup> Christ in his great charity came in the flesh to die for his church. The laying down of his life was the greatest act of charity. Because the Son assumed flesh to lay his life down for humanity in perfect charity and to gather his body together as one, those who deny this charity and unity of Christ's body, which is one flesh with him, deny Christ:

It was charity, then, that led him to the flesh. Whoever doesn't have charity, therefore, denies that Christ has come in the flesh.<sup>664</sup>

You want to sunder the members of Christ. How do you not deny that Christ has come in the flesh, you who break up the Church of God that he gathered together? You have come against Christ, therefore, you are an antichrist.<sup>665</sup>

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<sup>660</sup> See *en. Ps.* 30[2].3; 37.6; 142.3

<sup>661</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 10.9.

<sup>662</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 10.10.

<sup>663</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 6.13 (BA 76: 282, modified trans. Ramsey, WSA, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, I/14, 102): "...diuidis Ecclesiam per schismata ; dilanias corpus Christi. Ille ueni in carne ut colligate ; tui deo clamas ut spargas."

<sup>664</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 6.13 (BA 76: 280, trans. Ramsey, WSA, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, I/14, 102): "Caritas ergo illum adduxit ad carnem. Quisquis ergo non habet caritatem negat Christum in carne uenisse."

<sup>665</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 6.14 (BA 76: 282, trans. Ramsey, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, WSA, I/14, 103): "Distringere uis membra Christi. Quomodo non negas Christum in carne uenisse, qui disruptis Ecclesiam quam ille congegauit? Contra Christum ergo uenis ; antichristus es."

The Donatists may profess with their lips that Christ has come in the flesh, but they deny Christ and his charity with their deeds of schism. Thus the Donatists, in Augustine's eyes, are not only schismatics; they are heretics. With this line of reasoning, Augustine effectively *equates* schism with heresy.<sup>666</sup>

In his seventh homily, Augustine quotes 1 John 4:7-8 to remind his listeners that love is not only from God, but God *is* love.<sup>667</sup> To act in opposition to love is to act in opposition to God. The Donatists profess love for God, but they demonstrate a lack of love for their Catholic brothers.<sup>668</sup> Therefore, the Donatists hate and oppose God himself, who is love.

In his tenth homily, Augustine frames his interpretation of 1 John 5:1-2, which describes the test of one's love for God, in the language of his *totus Christus* theology:

He who shortly before was saying the *Son of God* said the *sons of God*, because the sons of God are the body of the only Son of God, and, since he is the head and we are the members, the Son of God is one. Therefore, he who loves the sons of God loves the Son of God, and he who loves the Son of God loves the Father. Nor can anyone love the Father unless he loves the Son, and he who loves the Son also loves the sons of God. Which sons of God? The members of the Son of God.<sup>669</sup>

The one who loves the sons of God, who are members of body of the Son of God, becomes joined to that body in love. Moreover, the love of the members for one another and the love of

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<sup>666</sup> Understanding the Donatists' schism as heresy becomes key in the use of imperial legislation to suppress Donatism, ultimately leading to the Edict of Unity in 405 and the legislative measures against the Donatists at the Council of Carthage in 411. Initially, Augustine defended his classification of the Donatist schism as heresy because the Donatists rebaptized Catholics that later joined the Donatist communion. See discussion below. See Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 290–92; Maureen A. Tilley, "When Schism Becomes Heresy in Late Antiquity: Developing Doctrinal Deviance in the Wounded Body of Christ," *J ECS*, no. 15.1 (2007): 1–21.

<sup>667</sup> *ep. Io. tr. 7.4.*

<sup>668</sup> *ep. Io. tr. 7.5.*

<sup>669</sup> *ep. Io. tr 10.3* (BA 76: 404, trans. Ramsey, WSA, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, I/14, 147–48): "...filios Dei dixit, qui Filium Dei paulo ante dicebat, quia filii Dei corpus sun unci Filii Dei, et cum ille caput, nos membra, unus est Filius Dei. Ergo qui diligit filios Dei, Filium Dei diligit, et quie diligit Filium Dei, Patrem diligit. Nec potest quisquam diligere Patrem nisi diligat Filium, et qui diligit Filium diligat filios Dei. Quos filios Dei? membra Filii Dei."

the Son of God for the sons of God results in a union of love between the head and body.

Augustine describes this union of love as “one Christ loving himself. For when the members love each other, the body loves itself.”<sup>670</sup>

Furthermore, Augustine claims that the Donatist practice of rebaptizing former Catholics amounts to a spiritual persecution that is even worse than bodily persecution. Contrasting images of the Catholics/Donatists as Isaac/Ishmael and Hagar/Sarah become important.<sup>671</sup> For this discussion, I briefly turn to *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*.<sup>672</sup> The persecution that the Donatists inflict on Christians, he says in his fifth homily on the Gospel of John, is worse than the persecution that pagan rulers inflicted upon the true martyrs of the past. Pagan emperors persecuted with swords and burning hot irons to cause Christians to deny that they were Christians. Donatists persecute Catholic Christians with their tongues by seducing them to commit the same apostasy.<sup>673</sup>

In his eleventh homily, he says that just as Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman Hagar, persecuted Isaac, the legitimate son of promise through Sarah, the Donatists persecute true members of Christ’s body by denying the validity of Catholic baptism and seducing Catholics to receive a Donatist baptism.<sup>674</sup> The Donatists may suffer bodily from Catholic imperial rulers, but they have become “persecutor[s] of the soul” (*animae persecutorem*) by telling Catholics that

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<sup>670</sup> *ep. Io. tr* 10.3 (BA 76: 404, trans. Ramsey, WSA, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, I/14, 148): “...unus Christus amans se ipsum. Cum se enim inuicem amant membra, corpus se amat.”

<sup>671</sup> These typologies resurface in his justification of imperial coercion in *ep.* 185. See discussion below.

<sup>672</sup> See also *ep. Io. tr.* 10.10.

<sup>673</sup> *Io. eu. tr.* 5.13.

<sup>674</sup> *Io. eu. tr.* 11.12-13.

they need a Donatist baptism for salvation.<sup>675</sup> Just as Sarah disciplined her unruly maidservant for mocking her and her son Isaac, so God uses the Catholic church to discipline the Donatists who mock Catholic baptism, which births true sons of promise. As the angel appeared to Hagar in her affliction and told her to return to Sarah, so God is calling the Donatists to return to the Catholic church. In fact, like Hagar, the affliction—i.e., the imperial suppression—that the Donatists suffer is precisely because they mock and persecute the sons of the Catholic church.<sup>676</sup>

Baptism, per Augustine's larger argument, belongs to Christ and is performed by Christ, regardless of the measure of purity of the minister.<sup>677</sup> When one is baptized, one is cleansed of sins, clothed with Christ, and reborn of water and spirit.<sup>678</sup> For one baptized in the Catholic church, to be *rebaptized* is to deny that she has been baptized at all. To deny that she has been baptized—when, in fact, she has been—is to deny that she belongs to Christ and is cleansed of sin, clothed with Christ, and reborn.<sup>679</sup> Just as a rejection of charity is a denial of the Son who came in the flesh to lay his life down in charity for the church, a rejection of baptism is a denial of the grace of baptism and the one (Christ) who administers it. Therefore, the spiritual persecution that the Donatists inflict here, according to Augustine, is worse than any bodily suffering that they endure at the hands of the government. The bodily afflictions and deaths about which the Donatists complain are “temporal;” however, by seducing Catholics to be

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<sup>675</sup> *Io. eu. tr.* 11.13 (CCSL 36: 118): “Caue quando uult ludere Ismael cum Isaac, quando tibi blanditur, quando offert alterum baptismum, responde: Habeo iam baptismum. si enim uerus est iste baptismus, qui tibi uult dare alterum, illudere te uult. caue animae persecutorem.”

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.* To justify this use of imperial discipline, Augustine compares the Catholic rulers to Nebuchadnezzar, who threatened to punish those who blasphemed the God of Israel after the miraculous deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. This same comparison arises in *ep.* 185.

<sup>677</sup> See *c. litt. Pet.* 1.5.6–7.8; 3.52.64. See Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 71.

<sup>678</sup> *Io. eu. tr.* 11.1. Augustine is commenting on John 3:5.

<sup>679</sup> *Io. eu. tr.* 11.14.

rebaptized and thus deny Christ, the Donatists inflict “everlasting deaths.”<sup>680</sup> Those who fall prey to Donatist deception cut themselves off from Christ the head and his body both in this age and in the age to come.

For Augustine, Donatist heresy on the subject of baptism is therefore a persecution of the whole Christ, head and members. By their disdain for baptism performed in the Catholic church, the Donatists slay the Christ who dwells in the hearts of the baptized.<sup>681</sup> To despise the sacrament of rebirth by rebaptizing former Catholics who join the Donatists is to despise, even kill, those who became Christians by that very sacrament. Because Christ and his church are joined as one flesh by the incarnation,<sup>682</sup> to kill Christians is to kill Christ.<sup>683</sup>

### ***The Catholic Mother and the Totus Christus***

Because Augustine uses the Catholic mother metaphor frequently in his discussion of imperial coercion, which I discuss in the next section, I take a short digression to demonstrate the relationship of this image to his understanding of the *totus Christus*. The distinct, yet close relationship between Augustine’s understanding of the *totus Christus* and the church as the Catholic Mother is most evident in *s.* 198. As David Meconi notes, the *totus Christus* “is always

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<sup>680</sup> *Io. eu. tr.* 11.15 (CCSL 36:119, trans. Hill, WSA, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, I/12, 226): “Occidunt animas, affliguntur in corpore; sempiternas mortes faciunt, et temporales se perpeti conqueruntur.”

<sup>681</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 2.4. Augustine here, like many patristic authors, refers to Jews as the original “Christ-slayers.” Augustine’s point here is that the Donatists, who apparently viewed the Jews in the same way, are more wicked and guilty than the Jews. For a convincing demonstration of Augustine’s much more positive view of the Jews in comparison with other patristic authors, see Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

<sup>682</sup> *ep. Io. tr.* 2, 2.

<sup>683</sup> *C.f. Io. eu. tr.* 5, 12.

a matter of solidarity and dissimilarity” between Christ the head and his body the church.<sup>684</sup> In s. 198, Meconi continues, this pattern again emerges: “God as Father, church as mother, Christ as the one in whom divinity and humanity uniquely meet, and his agency in bringing human persons into a new union with God.”<sup>685</sup> Christians, Augustine says, are begotten by Father God and mother Church.<sup>686</sup> Christians then, have a divine Father and a human mother. Mother church nourishes her children and leads them to the Father’s table. Some remain with mother church but have severed themselves from the Father by turning to sorcery, divination, and other pagan practices. The Donatists, on the other hand, claim that they cling to the Father while abandoning mother church and turning others away from her. Christians must hold fast to both parents.<sup>687</sup>

Moreover, Christ, who is both divine and human, is the mediator who “in assuming our human flesh assumes the Church to himself.”<sup>688</sup> Though the divine father and human mother remain dissimilar in nature, Christ the mediator brings the church into solidarity such that Christ and the church become one flesh, bridegroom and bride, head and body.<sup>689</sup> He communicates the life of God to the faithful and brings them into union with God. To be clear, Christ is still dissimilar to his bride the church in virtue of his divine nature and his place as bridegroom and head.<sup>690</sup> Commenting on Pasquale Borgomeo’s emphasis on the unitive and restrictive nature of

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<sup>684</sup> Meconi, *One Christ*, 213. The solidarity is one of will and the dissimilarity one of nature.

<sup>685</sup> Meconi, *One Christ*, 213.

<sup>686</sup> s. 198.42.

<sup>687</sup> s. 198.42. Meconi, *One Christ*, 214.

<sup>688</sup> s. 198.43 (Dolbeau, “Nouveaux,” 122): “Adsumpsit carnem salvator tuus, adsumpsit carnem mediator tuus, et carnem adsumendo adsumpsit ecclesiam.” See Meconi, *One Christ*, 214.

<sup>689</sup> s. 198.43.

<sup>690</sup> Meconi, *One Christ*, 213.

Augustine's *totus Christus* theology, Meconi notes, "The Son of God may have become human so humans may become one with God, but that does not mean that humans will become God the same way the Son is God."<sup>691</sup>

The solidarity effected by the incarnation enables the body of Christ to share in the anointing of Christ the head in order to minister the sacraments to the faithful. Christ is the ultimate high priest and anointed one, yet in him all Christians are anointed. Though mother church shares in Christ's mediatorial role in her administration of the sacraments, the dissimilarity remains in that Christ himself—not the church—is the mediator, the "sinless head of the Church," and the source of sacramental efficacy.<sup>692</sup> This is one of the grave mistakes of the Donatists: they conflate the mediatorial role of Christ with that of Donatist bishops. In their assertion that their own sacraments alone are valid, they substitute Donatus and their bishops as mediators in place of Christ the mediator. They attribute the efficacy of their sacraments to their own anointing, not the anointing of Christ. Furthermore, they despise the peace of the church and vainly call themselves martyrs. In reality, they suffer for Donatus, not Christ.<sup>693</sup> When peaceful attempts to call the dissident Donatists and violent Circumcellions back to the unity of Christ's body fail, mother Church must resort to "persecuting" the Donatists through the use of imperial coercion.

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<sup>691</sup> See Meconi, *One Christ*, 214.

<sup>692</sup> s. 198.51 (Dolbeau, "Nouveaux," 131, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/11, 220): "...caput ecclesiae sine peccato...." Meconi, *One Christ*, 215.

<sup>693</sup> I further discuss Augustine's understanding of Christ as mediator in this sermon in chapter 2.

## *Imperial Coercion, Donatist Persecution, and the One Church of All Nations*

One issue that arose in the Donatist controversy was what level of imperial coercion was acceptable in the settling of the long-standing dispute between the Catholics and the Donatists. The imperial intervention to force the Donatists and Catholics into unity at the onset of the controversy failed, and the horrors of the violent Macarian repression of 347 remained alive in Donatist consciousness during Augustine's career. Neither Augustine nor his predecessor Optatus of Milevus denied the massacre at a Donatist basilica in 347.<sup>694</sup> For the Donatists, the Catholic alignment with the state suppression of Donatism, which continued in varying degrees up to Augustine's time, was the final stroke of Catholic guilt and undeniable proof of their ecclesial illegitimacy.

The shift in Augustine's attitude towards the use of imperial coercion in the Donatist controversy is well-acknowledged by scholars.<sup>695</sup> His eventual approval has attracted the attention of a number of scholars over the past couple of decades. Too often in scholarship, little attention is given Augustine's theological defense of his position.<sup>696</sup> Of course, many historical

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<sup>694</sup> See Optatus of Milevus, *De schismate Donatistarum*, III.iv.10. Optatus openly acknowledged it but blamed the Donatists. The Donatists painted their own perspective of this incident, which records horrific detail of the brutal killing of men, women, and children, some of whose bodies were either dismembered and scattered or left half-dead.

<sup>695</sup> See *ep.* 93 and *retr.* II.5. For a few examples, see Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 240. Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Discipline, Coercion, and Correction : Augustine Against the Violence of the Donatists in *Epistula* 185," *Scrinium* 13, no. 1 (November 28, 2017): 114–30; Donald X. Burt, *Friendship and Society: An Introduction to Augustine's Practical Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Peter Brown, "St. Augustine's Attitude to Religious Coercion," *JRS*, no. 54 (1964): 107–16. Brown cites in this article a plethora of older scholarship on this issue, including many sharp critiques of Augustine.

<sup>696</sup> Adam Ployd makes a brief reference about how Augustine's rhetoric of *non poena sed causa* becomes a basis for his justification of imperial coercion. Augustine uses this argument "to deny the Donatists the title of martyr and the rhetorical power that went with it...[and] also helped to justify Augustine's embrace of imperial coercion in religious matters...." See Ployd, "*Non Poena Sed Causa*," 30. Primarily offering extended excerpts of primary sources, William Harmless highlights key theological features of Augustine's wider polemics against the Donatists, including his approval of the use of imperial coercion. See William Harmless, S.J. ed., *Augustine in His Own Words* (Washington, District of Columbia: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 232–73. For non-theological treatments of this topic, see Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*; Peter Iver Kaufman, "Donatism Revisited: Moderates and Militants in Late Antique North Africa," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 2, no. 1 (2009): 131–42; Noel Lenski, "Imperial Legislation and the Donatist Controversy: From Constantine to Honorius," in *The Donatist Schism: Controversy and*



features deeply influenced the development of Augustine's position, such as the origin of the Donatist schism, ecclesial councils and imperial intervention from the onset of the controversy, the acts of Donatist/Circumcellion violence committed in the controversy,<sup>697</sup> and the eventual categorization of the controversy by both the state and the Church as heresy rather than schism.

However, Augustine's understanding of what it means to be the church lay at the heart of his defense. For his most specific ecclesiological justification of imperial coercion against the Donatists, one must turn to *Epistula* 185.<sup>698</sup> Augustine wrote this letter to Boniface around 417, well after the government-enforced unity proscribed in the Edict of Unity in 405 and its reinforcement at the Council of Carthage in 411.<sup>699</sup> As the tribune of Africa, Boniface was responsible for the implementing of the government's punitive measures against the Donatists. In this letter, Augustine employs biblical metaphors for the church related to his *totus Christus* theology: the body of Christ, the great olive tree, the Catholic mother, and the wedding banquet

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*Contexts*, ed. Richard Miles (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018), 166–219; Brent Shaw, *Sacred Violence*; Edward L. Smither, "Persuasion or Coercion: Augustine on the State's Role in Dealing with Other Religions and Heresies," in *Faculty Publications and Presentations*, Paper 14 (Liberty University, 2006), Paper 14, [http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/its\\_fac\\_pubs/14](http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/its_fac_pubs/14). Émilien Lamirande, *Church, State, and Toleration: An Intriguing Change of Mind in Augustine* (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1975). Dunn, "Discipline, Coercion, and Correction."

<sup>697</sup> Brent D. Shaw notes the complication of such incidents as they often involved the Circumcellions. Historians, as Brent D. Shaw notes, have contested views as to the level of connection between the Donatists and the Circumcellions. As Shaw notes, Augustine associates the two with one another in *en. Psa.* 132.6 and *c. ep. Parm.* I.II.17. However, in other places, Augustine dissociates the two at least to some degree in *De Haeres.* 69.4, *ep.* 108.5.14. See Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 635, 671, 672.

<sup>698</sup> For another significant letter in which Augustine defends his own change in attitude towards the use of imperial coercion, see *ep.* 93.

<sup>699</sup> For some brief (and not-so-brief) narratives on the history of both ecclesial councils and imperial decrees in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, see Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 162–73, 271–86, 287–305. Tilley, "General Introduction;" Richard Miles, "The Donatist Controversy: Parallel Histories, Multiple Narratives," in *The Donatist Schism: Controversy and Contexts*, ed. Miles (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 1–33. Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 544–86; Harmless, *Augustine in His Own Words*, 232–37. For a convincing argument that persuasion remained Augustine's preferred method of reunification with the Donatists even after his change in attitude towards imperial coercion, see Smither, "Persuasion or Coercion."

present in all nations. Using this ecclesiology, Augustine argues that the Catholic church rightly uses the state as an instrument of divine discipline against the rebellious Donatists.

In the opening passages of his letter to Boniface, Augustine charges the Donatists for failing to recognize this church of all nations in the Scriptures. Though Donatists recognized Christ in the Scriptures, Augustine says, they failed to recognize the church in the very same Scriptures.<sup>700</sup> The Donatists recognize Christ crying out to God in Psalm 22, Christ as the beloved Son of the Father in Psalm 2, the necessity of Christ's passion and resurrection described in Luke 24, and the affirmation of the divinity and equality of the Logos with the Father in John 1. Yet they fail, Augustine says, to recognize in the very same passages, the repentance and worship of God *from* all the nations (Psalm 22), Christ's inheritance *in* all the nations (Psalm 2), the proclamation of the gospel *to* all the nations (Luke 24), and the dwelling of the Word made flesh *among* all the nations (John 1).<sup>701</sup>

He contrasts the *unity* of this one Church, composed of the Catholic communion, which extends across the nations, with the *disunity* of the one schismatic faction, composed of the Donatist communion which resides in *Africa alone*. The localized Donatists who split from the "unity of all nations" (*unitate omnium gentium*) reside only in Africa, thus they cannot be the church which the Scriptures declare will spread to all nations.<sup>702</sup> For Christians to experience the life of God, they must be in the unity of the one church. Following Paul in Romans 11, Augustine refers to the Church as the "great tree" and "Catholic mother" spread throughout "the whole world;" the Donatists, on the other hand, warred against this mother and became the

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<sup>700</sup> *ep.* 185.1.2.

<sup>701</sup> *ep.* 185.1.3.

<sup>702</sup> *ep.* 185.1.4 (CSEL 57:3).

“small branch [that] was broken off in Africa.”<sup>703</sup> The presence of the Catholic communion across the nations confirms, for Augustine, its identity as the true church. In order for the “small branch” of the Donatist communion to have “true life,” it must return to the mother tree, which is the Catholic church.<sup>704</sup>

The presence of persecution and so-called martyrdom in one’s communion, Augustine holds, does not determine whether that communion is the true Church of the Martyrs. The true church with true martyrs is the one people from all nations, tribes, and tongues. To have true martyrs, one must be in communion with this church of all nations. The Donatists and their martyrs have “separated from the joint bodily structure, the only body to which the Spirit makes alive.”<sup>705</sup> Because they lack the life of the Holy Spirit that abides in the one body of Christ, Donatist sacraments and martyrdoms have no effect. If suffering persecution were the criterion for determining who abides in the true church, then Caecilian, who suffered the persecution in the form of false accusations from the Donatists of the past, would be included in the true church. However, Augustine argues, it was not suffering persecution alone that qualifies one as a true Christian or true martyr: true martyrs are persecuted for the sake of righteousness and die within the mother church.<sup>706</sup>

While one of Augustine’s primary tactics is to cast the Donatists as those who *inflict* persecution by rejecting charity, dividing the members of Christ’s body, hurling false

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<sup>703</sup> *ep.* 185.8.32 (CSEL 57:29, trans. Teske, WSA, *Letters*, II/3, 197): “sic ergo catholica mater bellantibus aduersus eam quid aliud quam filiis suis, quia utique ex ipsa magna arbore, quae ramorum suorum porrectione tote orbe diffunditur, iste in Africa ramusculus fractus est....”

<sup>704</sup> *ep.* 185.8.32 (CSEL 57:29): “...sine qua ueram uitam habere non possunt....”

<sup>705</sup> *ep.* 185.10.46 (CSEL 57: 40): “...ubi a corporis campagne diuisi, quod solum corpus uiuificat spiritus sanctus....”

<sup>706</sup> *ep.* 185.2.11. C.f. *c. Gaud.* 1.23, 30. *Io. eu. tr.* 11.15; *ep.* 89.3. See Klöckner, “Martyrium, Martyres,” 1192.

accusations, and denying Christ's baptism in the Catholic church,<sup>707</sup> Augustine concedes that the Catholic church does in fact 'persecute' the Donatists. As Sarah disciplines her slave Hagar for her pride, so the Catholic Mother 'persecutes' the Donatists with appeals to imperial legislation (and the enforcement thereof) for their pride and schism.<sup>708</sup> The Donatists are like Hagar, who inflicted more persecution on Sarah with her pride than she suffered under the discipline of her mistress.<sup>709</sup> Using this Sarah/Hagar typology, he distinguishes the nature of persecution inflicted *upon the Donatists by church* from the persecution inflicted *by the Donatists upon the church*.

If then, we want to speak or recognize the truth, that persecution is unjust which the wicked inflict upon the Church of Christ, and that persecution is just which the churches of Christ inflict upon the wicked. The Church, therefore, is blessed that suffers persecution on account of justice, but those people are wretched who suffer persecution of account of injustice. The Church persecutes by loving; [the Donatists] persecute by raging. The Church persecutes in order to correct; they persecute in order to destroy. The Church persecutes in order to call back from error; they persecute in order to cast down into error. The Church, finally, persecutes and lays hold of enemies until they collapse in their vanity so that they may grow in the truth. They return evil for good because we have at heart their eternal well-being, while they try to take from us even our temporal well-being. They love murder to the point that they commit murder upon themselves when they cannot murder others.<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>707</sup> *ep.* 185.2.8–10.

<sup>708</sup> *ep.* 185.2.11; Teske, WSA, *Letters*, II/3, 185–86. Sarah as the metaphor for the Catholic church and Hagar as the metaphor for the Donatist church also emphasizes Augustine's views 1) that the Catholic church was superior in ecclesial authority to Donatist church and 2) that the true children of promise who would inherit eternal life are those in communion with 'Sarah,' not 'Hagar.'

<sup>709</sup> *ep.* 185.2.11. For other references to the Sarah and Hagar typology, see *Io. eu. tr.* 11.10, 11, 12, 13, 15; *ep. Io. tr.* 10.10

<sup>710</sup> *ep.* 185.2.11 (CSEL 57:10, trans. Teske, WSA, *Letters*, II/3, 185): "si ergo uerum dicere uel agnoscere uolumus, est persecutio iniusta, quam faciunt impii ecclesiae Christi, et est persecutio iusta, quam faciunt impiis ecclesiae Christi. Ista itaque beata est, quae persecutionem patitur propter iustitiam, illi uero miseri, qui persecutionem patiuntur propter iniustitiam. Proinde ista persequitur diligendo, illi sauiendo, ista ut corrigat, illi ut euertant, ista ut reuocet ab errore, illi ut praecipitent in errorem; Denique ista persequitur inimicos et comprehendit, donec deficient in uanitate, ut in ueritate proficient, illi autem retribuentes mala pro bonis, quia eis consulimus ad aeternam salute, etiam temporaelms nobis conantur auferre six amantes homicidia, ut in se ipsis ea perficiant, quando in aliis perpetrare non possunt."

The church's 'persecution' against the Donatists, then, is a loving, corrective discipline that aims to reconcile schismatics back into the unity of church. The Donatists' persecution against the church of Christ is done to destroy, deceive, and murder; they even murder themselves in suicidal 'martyrdoms.' For Augustine, the eternal destiny of the Donatists—and those who might potentially be seduced into their error and schism—is at stake.

The government, for Augustine, serves as an instrument in the hands of Father God and mother church to discipline her unruly Donatist children that they might be reconciled to the one church. The church uses the rod of imperial discipline, even if it results in the loss of some Donatist lives, in order to stop their 'persecution' of schism and to restore to the Catholic Mother many Donatist clergy and laity.<sup>711</sup> Many of these former Donatists, Augustine claims, desired such restoration but were prevented from it by more belligerent Donatists. The desire of the Catholic Church, he says, is to show mercy even in the midst of discipline in order to bring quarrelsome Donatist children back to their Catholic Mother.<sup>712</sup> Just as David commanded his army to show mercy to Absalom that he might live and be reconciled to his father's house, so the Catholics appeal to their own laity and to the government to show mercy to the Donatists. Whereas Augustine wants to emphasize genuine compassion and concern on the part of the

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<sup>711</sup> Augustine admitted that Catholics themselves held Donatists in custody and, despite the appeals of Catholic bishops, some Catholic laity prosecuted and even harmed the Donatists. While Augustine denounces these instances of Catholic violence against Donatists, he nonetheless affirms the use of imperial coercion to stop Donatist violence and enforce unity. Augustine will, however, insist that when Catholic clergy were involved, no harm was done to the Donatists. And even when Catholic laity prosecuted and harmed Donatists, 1) it was done to Donatists who had personally attacked or robbed those Catholics (or their families) who now held them in custody, and 2) it was always done despite the objection of Catholic bishops that the Donatists remain unharmed and even unprosecuted. See *ep.* 88.9.

<sup>712</sup> See "St. Augustine's Attitude to Religious Coercion," *JRS*, no. 54 (1964): 114. Brown interprets Augustine's attitude as that of a loving parent rather than as a sort of militant officer.

Catholic clergy, he also mentions the sobering reality of the story of Absalom and David: the house of David had no peace until Absalom, even though he was David's son, was killed.<sup>713</sup>

Likewise, according to Augustine, the Catholic mother wants her Donatist children to safely return despite the crimes they have committed (whether through schism or acts of violence). Peace in the church of all nations may require, however, some military action against the stubborn, war-mongering *few* in the laborious attempts to reconcile the peace-loving *many*.<sup>714</sup> On Augustine's account, military coercion against the few was much less cruel than abandoning the many; coercion mercifully freed the many from the trap of the Donatist clergy and the plague of schism.<sup>715</sup> The failure to use military action in the midst of Donatist violence would not only have allowed the violence to continue, but the souls of this "many" who rejoined the Catholic Church would have otherwise been "abandoned to perish forever and be tormented in everlasting fire."<sup>716</sup> Thus, the consequences for the many would not only have been temporal, but eternal.

The establishment of righteous laws against wickedness through the state, for Augustine, is entirely consistent with Scripture, which records God's use of secular authorities as an instrument to discipline his people and to punish wickedness. If God had used *non-Christian* emperors in the past to discipline his people and to institute righteous laws against the wicked,

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<sup>713</sup> *ep.* 185.8.32. However, he and the Catholic clergy describe in *ep.* 88.9 the failed attempts of clergy to convince Catholic laity not to prosecute or even physically harm captured Donatists and circumcellions who had resorted to violence.

<sup>714</sup> *ep.* 185.8.32.

<sup>715</sup> *ep.* 185.8.32. See Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 213; Lamirande, *Church, State, and Toleration*, 18. Both note that Augustine started approving of state coercion because it successfully brought many Donatists over to the Catholic Church.

<sup>716</sup> *ep.* 185.8.32 (CSEL 57: 30, trans. Teske, WSA, *Letters*, II/3 198): "isti in aeternm perdendi et sempiternis ignibus cruciandi relinquerentur." Along these same lines, Augustine will evoke the image of the Donatist communion as a house about to collapse that would require coercive rescuing for those who believed the house would not fall. Here again, Augustine argues that the lack of state coercion would have left countless souls in eternal damnation. See *Ibid.*

surely he would now use a *Christian* emperor who acted according to God's will to do the same.<sup>717</sup>

For Augustine, the degree of coercion for temporal rulers to use in this cause was proportional to the offense.<sup>718</sup> The severity and frequency of Donatist crimes demanded that the Church appeal to the state to maintain peace and safety and to establish unity-in-charity between Catholics and Donatists. Many of these Donatist crimes, including the destruction of homes, setting buildings on fire, and the brutal beating of husbands and fathers, were committed against laity and clergy who returned to the Catholic communion from the Donatists.<sup>719</sup> The outbreak of such violence, Augustine says, demanded that the Catholics appeal to the state.<sup>720</sup>

The worst incident that Augustine reports involved the severe beating of Maximian, the Catholic bishop of Bagai, a former Donatist who was (allegedly) brutally beaten with clubs, stabbed in the groin with a dagger, dragged across the ground, and pushed off a tower. Miraculously, Augustine says, the injured bishop survived, and after recovering appealed to the

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<sup>717</sup> *ep.* 185.5.19 and 185.7.28. Augustine appeals to the kings of Israel who served God when destroying pagan temples and high places, to pagan kings like Cyrus and Darius who enacted just laws. Even Paul appealed to the government to avoid flogging and death. See Smither, "Persuasion or Coercion," 26. "In keeping with Augustine's philosophy of government, a Christian emperor ought to be able to serve the church by helping it with its disciplinary matters." Also, commenting on Augustine's references to Circumcellion violence, Smither says, "Augustine believed that the government was entitled to intervene to protect the innocent as well as the state itself." See Burt, *Friendship and Society*, 200. He says Augustine views the state authorities as "agents of God with the responsibility of promoting God's interests on earth and that those interests included the protection of the religious body that was the interest of his grace and revelation in time." Also see Brown, "Saint Augustine's Attitude," 110. Brown highlights Augustine's view that Christian Roman emperors had "unquestioned legal right" of coercion.

<sup>718</sup> *ep.* 185.5.19.

<sup>719</sup> *ep.* 185.4.15. Augustine and other Catholic clerics complained of the same kind of instances in an earlier (406-411) letter written to Januarius, the Donatist primate of Africa. See *ep.* 88.6

<sup>720</sup> Augustine notes in *ep.* 88.8, however, that after the incident of the beaten priest, the Catholics still did not call in secular authorities. Instead, they first convened a council. They decided that Donatists should likewise call their own council and afterward meet together with the Catholic bishops. This, he says, only incited further violence, including putting out the eyes of Catholic clerics and hurling at them lime mixed with acid. Because ecclesial negotiations failed and violence resulted, he says, Catholics finally turned to the state.

emperor to protect his Church members from experiencing similar attacks.<sup>721</sup> Neglecting to do this, Augustine, says, would have left the Catholic communion guilty of negligence and worthy of blame.<sup>722</sup> In light of such violence, Augustine says, the Catholic church rightly resorted to the state, who then enforced godly legislation in order to correct and “to bring [the Donatists] back to the Catholic unity by terror and coercion.”<sup>723</sup>

Another important metaphor in Augustine’s ecclesiology related to the *totus Christus* that justifies his approval of state coercion is Jesus’s parable of the wedding banquet. In the Luke 14 parable, Augustine notes, Jesus commanded a certain order of action to ensure that his wedding hall was full of guests. Initially, guests are “gently invited,” and the hope is that they will respond obediently; however, if invitees are disobedient and refuse to come, they are “afterwards forced.”<sup>724</sup> Augustine asserts that Catholic bishops attempted just such a gentle invitation through the gathering of Church councils, itinerant preaching, and appeals to Donatist bishops.<sup>725</sup> When this failed, the Catholic bishops, he says, asked the emperor to fine dissident clerics in

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<sup>721</sup> *ep.* 185.7.28. Augustine also notes that their dragging Maximian across the ground actually saved him by blocking the hemorrhaging from the dagger wound. For the controversy around Maximian’s lack of popularity even among Catholics prior to this event and its implications in the conflict as a whole, see Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 707–708.

<sup>722</sup> *ep.* 185.7.28. In *ep.* 88.7, Augustine says that it was after the report of this very incident that the emperor issued coercive measures. In *ep.* 185, however, he suggests that other “such cases” were brought before the emperor.

<sup>723</sup> *ep.* 185.7.28 (CSEL 57: 27, trans. Teske, WSA, *Letters*, II/3, 196): “...ad unitatem catholicam terrendo et coercedo redigere...” Prior to these incidents, Augustine notes that the imperial laws only fined offending persons 10 pounds of gold, which, he says, the Catholic Church mercifully did not demand on a number of occasions. After reports of such extreme incidents, however, the military resorted to physical force.

<sup>724</sup> *ep.* 185.6.24; (CSEL 57: 23, trans. Teske, WSA, *Letters*, II/3, 193): “in illis ergo, qui leniter primo adducti sunt, complete est prior oboedientia, in istis autem, qui coguntur, inoboedientia coercedur...” He also justifies forcing the Donatists to do what is good by referring to the conversion of Paul. Paul, too, he notes, was ready to discipline the disobedience of the church in Corinth. Thus the church imitates Christ in its coercive measures against the Donatists. See *ep.* 185.6.23.

<sup>725</sup> See Smither, “Persuasion or Coercion,” 29. Commenting on Augustine’s use of this parable, Smither says, “Hence, for Augustine forcing the Donatists to unite with the church simply put them in an environment where they could be persuaded.”



towns where Catholics were met with violence from Donatist clergy and Circumcellions.<sup>726</sup> After incidents like the almost fatal attack upon Maximian, however, imperial laws that enforced more severe disciplinary measures were necessary.<sup>727</sup>

In approving of such legislative measures, Augustine says, the church imitated the Lord who commanded that disobedient guests be coerced into joining the wedding banquet, which for Augustine, is “the unity of the body of Christ not only in the sacrament of unity but also *in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:3).”<sup>728</sup> Thus, for Augustine, unity entails not only the outward sharing of the Eucharist, but relational reconciliation among Christians.<sup>729</sup> The goal, then, of imperial legislation, including laws which involved confiscation of property, disbanding of churches, and the threat of capital punishment, for Augustine, was both to cease Donatist-Circumcellion violence and to restore as many Donatists as possible to peace and unity in the church of all nations, who is the body of Christ, the Catholic mother, the great tree, and the Lord’s wedding banquet.

## Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Augustine’s understanding of Christ and the church as the *totus Christus* united in the bond of charity deeply impacts his understanding of the martyrs’

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<sup>726</sup> See *ep.* 185.6.25. This, he notes, was the law enacted by Theodosius. He also notes that other Catholic bishops insisted upon taking more forceful action, but upon Augustine’s advice, the council decided to attempt to avoid coercion. Augustine was well aware of how imperial legislation could result in producing Catholic Christians who merely made a profession of Catholic faith and unity. Frend highlights violence committed against Catholic missionaries sent to Numidia. See Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 257–58.

<sup>727</sup> *ep.* 185.7.26 and 185.7.28.

<sup>728</sup> *ep.* 185.6.24 (CSEL 57:23, trans. Teske, WSA, *Letters*, II/3, 194): “conuiuium domini unitas est corporis Christi non solum in sacramento altaris sed etiam in uinculo pacis.”

<sup>729</sup> The Eucharist for Augustine, however, is the sacrament of unity which not only represents unity but mystically effects that unity. See *s.* 272. Augustine is not trying to undermine the effects of the sacrament here. Rather, he is emphasizing that the unity for which he advocates is not only an outward, visible unity, but also an inward unity of genuine brotherly love.

participation in Christ's passion and divine life. Because Christ and his bride the church are one flesh, the two possess a share in the other's life and sufferings. By his incarnation, Christ united himself to the humanity, the cries, and sufferings of the faithful. Likewise, in virtue of their union with Christ the head, the members of Christ's body share in the sufferings of their head. Christ's passion in his own body was a sign that his mystical body, which is spread across the nations, would suffer for their witness to the truth. Moreover, the resurrection of Christ the head signifies and guarantees that the ultimate destiny of his members is not suffering and death, but eternal life. Only those who remain in communion with the *totus Christus*, which is united in the bond of charity, share in the passion and eternal life of Christ the head.

The Donatists and their false martyrs, because they have severed themselves from the *totus Christus* and the Holy Spirit that unites the head and members, lack participation in the life of Christ and his Spirit both now and in eternity. Their martyrdoms, like their baptisms, are of no effect because they have severed themselves from the unity of the church. Though Cyprian held rigorist views regarding purity and the invalidity of sacraments performed within schism, he never allowed his views to separate him from unity with the church of all nations. Donatist martyrs, by contrast, are false martyrs that pridefully attempt to imitate the sufferings of Christ and the true martyrs without imitating their unity-in-charity. True martyrs imitate Christ's charity, which is poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit and strengthens them to endure persecution. This charity includes remaining in unity with the church across the nations, as Cyprian of Carthage demonstrated.

Augustine pushes this argument further by claiming that the Donatists, rather than being persecuted by the state and the Catholic Church (as they claim), are instead the persecutors of the visible-invisible, transtemporal *totus Christus*. They persecute the church with their schism, their

practice of rebaptism, and their hatred of charity. This persecution of the church is worse than the sufferings of the Donatists because it deceives the faithful into denying Christ by denying the validity of their Catholic baptism. Because Christ's head and body are one, the Donatist persecution of Christ's members is also a persecution of Christ himself. Furthermore, the one church of all nations, Catholic mother, great tree, and wedding banquet imitates Christ the head by implementing imperial coercion as divine discipline for the Donatists' prideful schism and acts of violence against Catholics. The state serves as an instrument of correction in the hands of Christ and his body the church for upholding the unity and charity of the one church across the nations.

With this ecclesiology, Augustine asserts that the Catholics—not the Donatists—hold the rightful claim to be the true Church of the Martyrs. Because the Catholic Church and her martyrs imitate Christ, Cyprian, and the previous generations of martyrs by remaining in unity with the *totus Christus* in the bond of charity, they—not the Donatists—participate in Christ's passion and resurrection life. Augustine appeals to the Donatists to return to this unity of charity that they may be reincorporated into the body of Christ and eternally participate with the one church and her martyrs in the life and immortality of Christ the head. It is to this eschatological vision and its impact on Augustine's theology of martyrdom that we now turn.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE ETERNAL IMPACT OF MARTYR INTERCESSION

From no later than the third century, the North African Church wrestled with the status of the martyrs vis a vis the life of the church. To what degree were the intercessory prayers of the martyrs efficacious? Though debates around this question certainly dealt with whether the martyrs' prayers could ensure pardon for sins and reconciliation to the church in this life, another highly contested aspect of this debate dealt specifically with the subjects of eschatology and the afterlife: To what degree can the prayers of the martyrs impact the *eternal* destiny of an individual? Can their intercession guarantee one's forgiveness of sins in this life *and* the next? Can their prayers ensure one's entrance into eternal life and prevent—or, at least, limit—one's reception of divine punishment in the next life? Such questions were alive and well in Augustine's time. The pressures of popular opinions and veneration practices in the fourth and fifth centuries compelled the bishop to offer his own answers to these questions.

Of course, Augustine did not tackle such questions in a vacuum. Earlier martyr narratives, popular practices of martyr veneration, and the crisis of persecution in the third century drove Augustine's predecessors Tertullian and Cyprian to take their own stance on these

matters.<sup>730</sup> Like Tertullian and Cyprian, Augustine at once affirms both an efficacy and a clear limitation of the martyrs' intercessory prayers for the pilgrim church. Unique to Augustine's response, however, is the centrality of Augustine's view of the afterlife, the last things, the resurrection of the body, and the final judgment of the righteous and the wicked. Few North African authors prior to Augustine dealt with these subjects in such depth, especially with regard to their relationship to a theology of martyrdom. Though Tertullian and Cyprian were certainly concerned about such topics, neither match Augustine's detailed consideration of the relationship between these eschatologically focused topics and martyrdom. For Augustine, the interrelationship of these subjects is such that martyrdom itself *becomes* an eschatologically focused topic.

With a focus on Augustine's *Sermones ad populum* preached on the feast days of the martyrs, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, and *De ciuitate dei*, this chapter will analyze Augustine's contribution to this discussion. The structure of this chapter is both topical and, for the most part, chronological (with the exception of some late sermons), to show the consistent eschatological emphasis in Augustine's martyrology across various genres of his works and over the course of his mature thought.<sup>731</sup> In his sermons, Augustine casts the martyrs as Christian exemplars who lived with their hearts fixed on the immortal life that Christ promised. This hope for the next life empowered them to deny temporal pleasures and endure the suffering of persecution and death. Celebrating the martyrs during liturgical feast days admonishes and strengthens the faithful to despise the lusts of this life in a hopeful longing for the eternal joys of the next. He

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<sup>730</sup> Though other authors and ecclesial sees prior to and contemporaneous with Augustine addressed this issue, this chapter will limit its scope to texts, authors, and practices unique to the church in North Africa.

<sup>731</sup> The *Sermones* included in this chapter are dated anywhere between 396 and 428. Paula J. Rose has convincingly dated *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* to some time between 421 and 424. The final books of *De ciuitate dei* were completed by 426–427. See notes for scholarship on the dating each work in the respective sections below.

simultaneously praises the martyrs for their example and reminds his listeners that martyrs too are flesh and blood creatures who are to be venerated, but not worshipped. However, because of their deaths for their witness to Christ and love of eternal life, God has granted them a postmortem glory that exalts their ecclesial status, makes their prayers for the pilgrim church efficacious, and makes their bodily remains a memorial for prayer and worship of the one true God.

In *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, Augustine reflects deeply upon the interaction between the martyrs in heaven and the faithful on earth as he explicates his stance on the efficacy of burial *ad sanctos*. The advantage of the practice for the departed in the immediate afterlife and in eternity is determined by two necessary conditions: the deeds that the departed committed while in the body and the prayers of the living on behalf of the departed. Moreover, he challenges the popular notion that the martyrs in heaven possess a conscious awareness of particular states of affairs of individual members of the pilgrim church, despite the claims of copious individuals to have been visited by a martyr in a vision or dream. The martyrs pray on behalf of the pilgrim church in general, which excludes no member of Christ's body on earth. He doubts, however, that the martyrs abiding in eternal rest before God pray specifically for uncle Lucius's gout, or visit cousin Constantina to reveal the location of their relics, or intercede for the departed soul of aunt Victoria to cross into paradise.

In the final books of *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine offers a detailed outline of events immediately preceding Christ's return, which includes a final persecution of the faithful under the temporary reign of the Anti-Christ, the second advent of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the last judgment. Within this discussion, the eschatological significance of martyrdom and martyr veneration for the bishop becomes even more apparent. Martyrdom, for Augustine,

did not end with the Edict of Milan under Constantine and the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of Rome under Theodosius. The prophets, apostles, and Jesus himself each proclaimed that the faithful would again shed their blood under a final oppressor during the most troubling period of time that the church ever will experience. Knowledge of this coming tribulation makes martyr veneration not just a memorial of martyrs from the past, but a preparation necessary for the church's endurance in the days to come.

Moreover, Augustine challenges various theologies of temporal punishment prevalent during his time. One of these theories in particular defended its claims to the temporality of God's eschatological punishment with appeals to the intercessory power of the martyrs. In his rejection of each of these temporal punishment theories, Augustine articulates his understanding of the extent to which the prayers of the martyrs can impact one's eternal destiny. The prayers of the most righteous saints, he argues, cannot benefit the impenitent.

Finally, in his discussion of the eternal blessedness of the saints, Augustine explains martyrdom and the healing miracles associated with martyr relics ultimately as a witness to the resurrection. Martyrdom, then, is not merely a one-way ticket to paradise and relics are not merely healing charms; both are a testimony to the truth of the past resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. Celebrating the martyrs and venerating their relics benefits the faithful by testifying to these past and future realities. Such a testimony strengthens the pilgrim church in its faith *in* Christ, its love *for* Christ, and its hope for eternal glory *with* Christ.

Augustine's understanding of eschatology, I argue, is not only central to his theology of martyrdom; it gives meaning to the very reality of martyrdom. Without eschatological hope, martyrdom is meaningless. This hope is also crucial for making sense of the present significance

of popular veneration practices, especially the liturgical feast days, the practice of burial *ad sanctos*, and the veneration of relics. Finally, it forms the theological bedrock for Augustine's understanding of the extent to which the intercessory prayers of the martyrs affect the pilgrim church in this life and in the next.

As with the other theological loci discussed in this dissertation, secondary literature offers little to no discussion of the relationship between Augustine's eschatology and his theology of martyrdom. Studies on burial *ad sanctos* and the use of martyr relics in Augustine's time focus primarily on the practice itself rather than Augustine's theology regarding these practices.<sup>732</sup> Though others have tracked the development of martyrology and veneration practices in North Africa, Augustine's eschatological focus in his understanding of martyrdom and martyr veneration receives little attention.<sup>733</sup>

In order to contextualize Augustine's contribution to this debate in North Africa, an overview of the positions of his North African predecessors, including the martyr *passiones* of the third century, the writings of Tertullian of Carthage, and the writings of Cyprian of Carthage,

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<sup>732</sup> For excellent studies on these topics, see Saxer, *Morts, martyrs, reliques*; Duval, *Loca sanctorum Africae*; Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*; Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*; Brown, *The Ransom of the Soul: Afterlife and Wealth in Early Western Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Eliezer González, *The Fate of the Dead in Early Third-Century North African Christianity: The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas and Tertullian* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*; Lander, *Ritual Sites and Religious Rivalries*; Stephen Potthoff, *The Afterlife in Early Christian Carthage: Near-Death Experience, Ancestor Cult, and the Archaeology of Paradise* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2017). Each of these studies discuss the martyr shrine and veneration practices as a touchpoint between heaven and earth and this life and next, but each approaches the topic from an archaeological and/or socio-cultural perspective. Potthoff spends more time than the other scholars mentioned here on Augustine's theology, especially on death and the afterlife, in relation to his views on the practice of burial *ad sanctos*. However, his study focuses primarily on an historical and cultural approach that draws on "the significant but less well-known body of archaeological and epigraphic materials from both Roman and early Christian cemeteries at the site" (*Afterlife*, 3).

<sup>733</sup> For the most part, scholars briefly mention (often in a single sentence or paragraph) that Augustine sees the martyrs as witnesses to eternal life and imitable exemplars of those who have received the crown of life. See J. den Boeft, "'Martyres sunt, sed homines fuerunt': Augustine on Martyrdom," 123; Dupont, "Augustine's Homiletic Definition of Martyrdom," 160–61; Dupont, "Imitatio Christi, Imitatio Stephani," 39–40. Other sources very briefly describe the miracles of the martyrs in Augustine's martyrology as testimonies to the resurrection. See Klöckener, "Martyres, martyrium," 1194; Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 547–48.



will be helpful. Each of these writings highlight competing views of martyrdom and of the efficacy of the prayers of the martyrs in the North African church over the course of approximately two centuries. Moreover, this overview demonstrates that Augustine is the first in North Africa to approach these topics from a thoroughly eschatological perspective.

### **The Efficacy of the Prayers of the Martyrs Prior to Augustine**

#### ***The Charismatic Focus of the Passiones***

Though a number of North African *acta* and *passiones* were circulated in the third century and were read during the feast days of the martyrs during Augustine's time,<sup>734</sup> I will examine the *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* as a representative of popular notions in North Africa regarding the power of the martyrs' intercession. Though the exact time of the persecution recorded in this text is still debated among scholars, traditionally it has been dated to March of 203, which places it as one of the earliest extant accounts of martyrdom in North Africa.<sup>735</sup> Tertullian referenced the *Passio* in *De anima*, which indicates that this text is among the earliest known North African martyr narratives.<sup>736</sup> Augustine preached on this narrative

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<sup>734</sup> For collections of these *acta* and *passiones*, see Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* and Rebillard, *Greek and Latin Narratives*. As Rebillard notes, the inclusion of reading martyr narratives during the liturgical festivals of the martyrs in North Africa was approved, though likely largely in practice already, by the Council of Hippo in 393. (*Greek and Latin Narratives*, 26. Rebillard cites the *Conc. Hippon.* 393 c. 5 (Munier 1974: 21). During the fourth and fifth centuries, a number of Donatist martyr *passiones* began to circulate. These Donatist *passiones* differed greatly in style and emphasis to justify the Donatist claim to being the true church with true martyrs. See Tilley, *Donatist Martyr Stories*.

<sup>735</sup> Thomas J. Heffernan argues that is this the most likely date of the persecution, and that the original text of the *Passio* was completed sometime between 206 and 209. See Thomas J. Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 60–78.

<sup>736</sup> Tertullian, *De Anima* LV. See Heffernan, *Passion*, 66.

during the feast day of Perpetua and her companions, hailing the martyrs as noble victors whose eyes were set on eternity.<sup>737</sup>

Though divine judgment and the next life are common themes in the *Passio*, one might characterize its approach to the authority of the martyrs as primarily *charismatic* in nature. Appealing to the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the second chapter of the Book of Acts, the editor of the *Passio* regards these martyrs as contemporary examples of charismatic, Spirit-empowered Christians who demonstrate great faith, miraculous giftings, and prophetic visions and dreams.<sup>738</sup> The martyrs testify that these charisms of the Spirit did not cease or lessen with the apostles; rather, the spiritual gifts are alive and well in the contemporary church. Their stories were to be proclaimed for the honor of God, the strengthening of the church, and as proof of God's existence and sovereignty to unbelievers.<sup>739</sup> By hearing these accounts, moreover, the faithful would enjoy "a communion with the holy martyrs and through them a participation in our Lord Jesus Christ..."<sup>740</sup>

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<sup>737</sup> See *s.* 280; 281; 282.

<sup>738</sup> I use "charismatic Christians" to refer to those who emphasize the immediate presence of the Holy Spirit and the present manifestations of the charisms of the Holy Spirit, especially prophecy, healing, visions, and dreams. This is identical to the modern use of the term used to describe ecclesial bodies that emphasize these same teachings and practices. Though technically the term is anachronistic, I find it helpful to distinguish a particular emphasis in the *Passio*.

<sup>739</sup> *Pas. Perp. I.*

<sup>740</sup> *Pas. Perp. I* (Heffernan, *Passion*, 104, modified trans. Heffernan, *Passion*, 126): "...et qui nunc cognoscitis per auditum *communione*m habeatis cum sanctis mart[y]ribus, et per illos cum Domino nostro *Iesu Christo*..." Both the Latin and English text of the *Passio* have been taken from Heffernan. The initial page number in this note corresponds to the Latin text and the second page number corresponds to Heffernan's English translation (when used). I follow this citation format in the notes that follow. Augustine takes up this traditional understanding of the *communione*m with the martyrs and Christ through the reading of the *passiones* during the martyr festivals. See chapter 3 of this dissertation.

The martyrs in this narrative have visions and dreams of heaven, angels, demons, and martyrs;<sup>741</sup> they hear the voice of God and of angels;<sup>742</sup> they bravely stand up to guards who refuse to nourish them in prison and who attempt to dress them in pagan priestly garments;<sup>743</sup> and they boldly warn their spectators, including the emperor himself, of divine judgment.<sup>744</sup> Their guards recognize “some great power” in them;<sup>745</sup> clergy fall before their feet,<sup>746</sup> and four glorious angels even hail them for their unwavering commitment to Christ and their courage to endure suffering.<sup>747</sup> The editor of the *Passio* frequently honors their disregard for this temporal life and their hope of eternal life.<sup>748</sup>

The editor’s notion of the spiritual authority of these charismatic martyrs in the church becomes most evident in accounts of their ability to affect outcomes for the living and the dead by their intercession. Prior to their martyrdom, the martyrs-to-be pray for the early delivery of pregnant Felicitas’s baby. Had the delivery tarried, Felicitas’s martyrdom would have been postponed, and she would have suffered alone. The martyrs’ prayers ensured the healthy delivery

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<sup>741</sup> *Pas. Perp.* IV; VIII; X; XI–XIII. The *passione* only records the visions and dreams of Perpetua and her catechist Saturus.

<sup>742</sup> *Pas. Perp.* VII.

<sup>743</sup> *Pas. Perp.* XVI; XVIII.

<sup>744</sup> *Pas. Perp.* XVIII.

<sup>745</sup> *Pas. Perp.* IX (Heffernan, *Passion*, 111, trans. Heffernan, *Passion*, 129): “...qui nos magnificare coepit intellegens magnam virtutem esse in nobis...”

<sup>746</sup> *Pas. Perp.* XIII. Optatus the bishop and Aspasius the priest. This encounter with the clergy occurs in a vision of Saturus, the catechist of Perpetua and her companions.

<sup>747</sup> *Pas. Perp.* XI.

<sup>748</sup> *Pas. Perp.* IV, X, XII, XIII, XVIII, XIX. The visions of Paradise often aid the martyrs in their focus on gaining the crown of life through their martyrdom.

and care of the baby and secured Felicitas's martyrdom alongside her companions.<sup>749</sup> In a vision of Saturus, the catechist of Perpetua and her companions, Optatus the bishop and Aspasius the priest fall before the martyrs who are about to enter the gates of paradise. To the surprise of the martyrs, the clergy beseech them to assist their reconciliation with one another. The point of the editor of the *Passio* is clear: martyrs have the authority in their postmortem state to effect reconciliation for the living faithful, including those in hierarchical positions in the church. The fact that the clergy remain outside of the gates and kneel demonstrates their inferiority.

Moreover, on the day prior to her martyrdom, Perpetua sees a vision of Pomponius the deacon, who had been previously martyred. He tells her that he and other martyrs in heaven were awaiting Perpetua and her companions, and he assures her that she need not be afraid in the amphitheater of wild beasts because he would be present and "struggle" with her.<sup>750</sup> Postmortem appearances of martyrs to encourage martyrs-to-be were not uncommon in later North African martyr narratives.<sup>751</sup> The martyrs in heaven, according to the popular North African tradition, are conscious of particular affairs of the living, can be present with the living, and can fight

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<sup>749</sup> *Pas. Perp.* XV.

<sup>750</sup> *Pas. Perp.* X (Heffernan, *Passion*, 112, trans. Heffernan, *Passion*, 129): "Noli expavescere: hic sum tecum et conlaboror tecum."

<sup>751</sup> *Passio Sanctorum Martyrum Fructuosi Episcopi, Auguri et Eulogi Diaconorum* 6.3, 7.1 (See Rebillard, *Greek and Latin Narratives About the Ancient Martyrs*, 258–63). Fructuosus the bishop, who was burned alive under the governor Aemilianus appears to rebuke both the governor who sentenced him and the Christians who had kept his remains for themselves. Augustine preached on Fructuosos and his companions in s. 273. Musurillo notes that recent scholars reject the latter incident as part of the original manuscript, and that it is not mentioned by Prudentius, *Peristeph.* vi. See Musurillo, *Christian Martyrs*, 185n16. See also *Passio sanctorum Mariani et Iacobi* 6.10–15, 11.3–6 (*Greek and Latin Narratives About the Ancient Martyrs*, 178–195). In the first instance, Marian, who was to be martyred, sees a vision of Cyprian of Carthage sitting beside Christ, leading Marian through heavenly groves, and offering him drink from a spring. In the latter, the martyr Agapius and boy who had been martyred appear in a vision to Marian's companion James in prison. They assure James of his victorious martyrdom and subsequent celebration in a heavenly banquet. See also *Actus et visio martyrum Luci Montani et ceterorum comitum quod est X Kal. Iunii* 21.3–7, 8–10, 11 (*Greek and Latin Narratives About the Ancient Martyrs*, 288–91). Flavianus sees visions of Cyprian, the previously martyred bishop Succesus, and his previously martyred mother. All assure him that he will be martyred and encourage him. For Augustine's sermon on the feast day of Marianus and James, see s. 284.

alongside the living in their temporal struggles. As we will see later, Augustine resists this notion of the martyrs' conscious awareness of and involvement in particular affairs of the pilgrim church.

Most pertinent to the central question of this dissertation chapter is Perpetua's ability to secure her brother's entrance into paradise through her intercession. While in prayer, Perpetua hears the name of her brother Dinocrates, who had died of cancer, and begins to cry out to God on his behalf. Though separated from him by a wide chasm, she sees his soul suffering "in a dark place" with many others.<sup>752</sup> She immediately realizes that she is "worthy" to pray for him,<sup>753</sup> and she continues praying day and night for him until she is assured in another vision that he "was transferred from his punishment."<sup>754</sup> Charismatic martyrs like Perpetua, then, are counted worthy to aid the departed in crossing over from penal suffering into eternal life. What is not clear, however, is whether Dinocrates was among the baptized. If he had been baptized, then the *passione* indicates a belief that the martyrs—even prior to their martyrdom—can help the faithful departed transition from a penal, purgative state of suffering to eternal rest. Since Perpetua's father was not a Christian and since she had been recently baptized, it seems unlikely that Dinocrates would have been baptized.<sup>755</sup> If this were the case, then the *Passio* has profound implications for the authority of the martyrs: the intercession of these charismatic martyrs is able

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<sup>752</sup> *Pas. Perp.* VII (Heffernan, *Passion*, 110, trans. Heffernan, *Passion*, 128): "Video Dinocratem exeuntem de loco tenebroso, ubi et conplures erant...."

<sup>753</sup> *Pas. Perp.* VII (Heffernan, *Passion*, 109, trans. Heffernan, *Passion*, 128): "Et cognovit me statim dignam esse et pro eo petere debere."

<sup>754</sup> *Pas. Perp.* VIII. (Heffernan, *Passion*, 111): "Tunc intellexi translatum eum esse de poena." Heffernan translates as "was freed from his suffering" (*Passion*, 129), but the Latin use of *poena* suggests the penal, retributive nature of this suffering.

<sup>755</sup> Heffernan seems to adopt this view (*Passion*, 207). Heffernan notes a similar example of Christians praying for the non-Christian dead in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 1.28. He also notes the lack of "explicit textual warrant" for the interpretation of this "loco tenebroso" as purgatory (*The Passion*, 209).

to dramatically alter a person's eternal destiny, from everlasting punishment to everlasting life. Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, however, argue for restrictions on the intercessory power of the martyrs.

### ***The Hamartiological Focus of Tertullian***

Tertullian and Cyprian make their own contribution to the traditional North African notions of the ability of the martyrs' intercession to impact one's eternity in the context of heated debates regarding the readmittance of lapsed Christians into the Eucharistic fellowship. Both challenge popular notions of the authority of the martyrs to forgive and reconcile to the church those who have committed serious sins, such as idolatry, blasphemy, adultery, fornication, and murder. Moreover, each of them ground their stances on the matter in their understanding of God's justice and mercy, the gravity of sin, and the role of the church in administering discipline to and remitting the sins of its members.

For Tertullian and Cyprian, a wrong understanding of the authority of the martyrs' intercession in relation to these other topics jeopardizes one's eternal destiny. Though Cyprian later modifies certain aspects of Tertullian's position, Cyprian shares many fundamental elements of his predecessor's view. Unique to Tertullian, however, is his *hamartiological* focus in his understanding of the eternal impact of the prayers of the martyrs. His discussion of this topics arises in *Ad martyrs*, *De Anima*, *De carne Christi*, and *De Pudicitia*. For Tertullian, the stain of serious sins and the holiness of God is so great that the intercession of neither the martyrs nor ecclesiastical hierarchs has the ability to pardon or reconcile to the church those who commit such sins.

Following the North African tradition that preceded him, Tertullian regards the martyrs as particularly privileged during their suffering and after their deaths. In his early ministry, in his work *Ad martyras*, Tertullian exhorts the martyrs to remain firm under persecution. The Spirit of God has entered the dungeon with them,<sup>756</sup> severed them from the world,<sup>757</sup> anointed them for spiritual combat against the devil,<sup>758</sup> and prepared them for the prize of the eternal crown.<sup>759</sup> Those who suffer persecution, then, receive a special assistance from the Holy Spirit not available to them otherwise. This is not to say that the Holy Spirit does not assist other Christians; however, because the martyrs are facing a particular challenge, they receive particular aid from the Spirit of God.

In *De Anima*, another work written early in his career, Tertullian argues that the martyrs are the only souls allowed entry into Paradise after they die. The remainder of Christian souls will remain in a region of Hades until Jesus returns. He appeals to John's vision of the martyrs under the heavenly altar<sup>760</sup> and Perpetua's visions of Paradise, in which she saw only martyrs.<sup>761</sup> In his treatise *De carne Christi* against the Marcionites, Valentinian Gnostics, and others who denied the human flesh of Christ and the resurrection of the flesh, Tertullian reiterates the claim that martyrdom provides the only direct passage from this life into Paradise; the remainder of

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<sup>756</sup> Tertullian, *Ad martyras* I. The *ANF* series gives the work a dating of c. 197. See *ANF* III: 693n8961.

<sup>757</sup> *Mart.* II.

<sup>758</sup> *Ibid.* III.

<sup>759</sup> *Ibid.* III.

<sup>760</sup> See Revelation 6:9.

<sup>761</sup> Tertullian, *De anima*, LV. Cf. *Scorpiace* XII; *De oratione* V. Interestingly, though he appeals to the *Passio* on this point, he later departs from the *Passio*'s position on the intercessory power of the martyrs to grant pardon for souls in Hades. See below.

Christian souls remain in Hades.<sup>762</sup> Also, he affirms that the souls of the martyrs beneath the heavenly altar pray fervently and await their eschatological recompense.<sup>763</sup> Whether he affirms any intercession of the martyrs for the pilgrim church is not clear. In his comments in a later work, however, he places clear boundaries on the efficacy of their intercession prior to their death.

Tertullian's arguments on the limited intercessory power of the martyrs arise most explicitly in the final chapter of *De Pudicitia*. Written after his association with the charismatic and morally rigorous New Prophecy, Tertullian challenges an edict of the *Pontifex Maximus*, who is the *episcopus episcoporum*.<sup>764</sup> The bishop's edict granted pardon and peace with the church to Christians who had committed adultery following their fulfillment of an ecclesiastical administration of penance. Such a decree departed from traditional penitential standards of the North African church, which previously barred those who had committed such sins after baptism from the Eucharistic fellowship for life.<sup>765</sup> In Tertullian's biting response, his discussion of the efficacy of the martyrs' intercession is framed within his understanding of the distinct categories

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<sup>762</sup> *De Carne Christi* XLIII.

<sup>763</sup> *Carn. Chr.* XXV; XXXVIII.

<sup>764</sup> Tertullian, *De Pudicitia* I.6 (CCSL 2: 1281–82). Traditionally, the majority of scholars supposed that this title referred to the bishop of Rome. Initially, scholars held that the Roman bishop was Zephyrinus (c. 198–217). However, after Hippolytus's *Refutatio omnium haeresium* was discovered and published, scholars concluded that Tertullian was referring to Zephyrinus's successor Callistus (218–223). However, more recent Tertullian scholars, as David Wilhite notes, have held to the view that Tertullian is referring to an African bishop (i.e., the bishop of Carthage) rather than a Roman bishop. Wilhite argues that both the Roman view and African view rest on assumptions, and, without making definitive conclusions, he defends the traditional Roman view. What is ultimately at stake for Wilhite is the identity of Tertullian's "in-group" and "out-group" (the *psychici*). See David Wilhite, "Identity, Psychology, and the *Psychici*: Tertullian's 'Bishop of Bishops,'" *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 5 (2009): 1–26. See also Jane Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

<sup>765</sup> For an overview of the ritual of penance in Tertullian's time, see Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 296–313. Burns and Jensen's narrative assumes that Tertullian's *Pontifex maximus* refers to the Bishop of Carthage. Even if they are wrong, the substance of their narrative remains helpful.



of sin, the gravity of sins like adultery under the New Covenant, the authority of the church to bind and loose such sins, and the efficacy of the martyrs' blood in purging sins.

Tertullian places post-baptismal sins into two basic categories: remissible and irremissible.<sup>766</sup> After due penance, one may receive pardon for remissible sins and be restored to the peace of the church.<sup>767</sup> However, pardon is unattainable for those who commit irremissible sins after their baptism, no matter how much penance is performed.<sup>768</sup> Adultery and fornication are essentially the same for Tertullian,<sup>769</sup> and those who commit them have violated God's holy laws—encapsulated in the Ten Commandments—which strictly forbid and condemn adultery

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<sup>766</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* II.12 (CCSL 2: 1285): “Causas paenitentiae delicta condicimus. Haec diuidimus in duos exitus. Alia erunt remissibilia, alia inremissibilia.” Going forward, I will interchange the adjectives “irremissible,” “serious,” “grave,” and “capital” sins. For the purposes of this dissertation chapter, I treat these words as synonymous.

<sup>767</sup> Tertullian outlines in his earlier work *De Paenitentia* the details of early penitential practice of *exomologesis*, which involved a public confession of sin in the midst of the church community. The process of penitence, according to Tertullian, involved penitential actions, such as wearing sackcloth and ashes, mourning, sorrows, fasting from delicacies, prayer, weeping, and outcries to God. The penitent must perform all of these temporal mortifications in order to cleanse the soul and purge one from eternal consequences. See Tertullian, *Paen.* IX.1–3, 4; XI.1–3. See also *Pud.* I.21; V.14; *Or.* VII.1; X.2. See Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 297–99.

<sup>768</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* II.16. In chapter III of this treatise, Tertullian responds to the objection that requiring penance without the promise of pardon is vain. For Tertullian, God alone pardons, not the church. The church may grant peace, but not pardon, especially in the case of serious sins. Adulterers who are penitent have no hope of peace with the church in this life, but they may still obtain pardon in the next. See discussion below.

<sup>769</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* IV.2–3. As all types of homicide fall under the same category of murder, all types of sexual defilement of the flesh count as adultery. However, one who commits other forms of “frenzied lust, vicious, unnatural uses of the body and of sex,” are barred “not only from the threshold of the Church but also from any shelter within it, since they are not sins, but monstrosities.” Tertullian, *Pud.* IV.5 (CCSL 2: 1287, trans. William P. Le Saint, S.J., S.T.D., *Tertullian: Treatises on Penance* (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1959), 62): “Reliquas autem libidinum furias impias et in corpora et in sexus ultra iura naturae non modo limine, uerum omni ecclesiae tecto submouemus, quia non sunt delicta, sed monstra.” In other words, not only are committers of such sins excluded from the community; public penance is not an option. The exact sins which he mentions here are not clear, but drawing from Leviticus 18, one could assume he is referring to incest, bestiality, and homosexuality.

alongside idolatry and murder.<sup>770</sup> Though irremissible sins were already serious offenses to God in the Old Covenant, under the New Covenant their gravity increases rather than decreases.<sup>771</sup>

Moreover, ecclesiastical leaders have no power to remit serious sins. Though they claim to exercise the power of the apostles, especially Peter, to remit sins, they fail to exercise his power to perform miracles.<sup>772</sup> The church of the Spirit—that is, the New Prophecy—can technically claim such power to bind and loose sins on the basis of the miracles its members perform. However, the Spirit had directed the leaders of the New Prophecy not to forgive sins if

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<sup>770</sup>Tertullian, *Pud.* V.1–6. Moreover, Tertullian finds the church’s granting of pardon and peace as a departure from the Scriptural and traditional North African understanding of the gravity of adultery that endangers the purity of other members of the church. The North African church traditionally treated the sins of idolatry (including blasphemy and apostasy), adultery (including fornication), and murder in the same category with the same degree of penalty. The new edict of the *Pontifex maximus*, however, causes adultery to move into the category of lesser, remissible sins. Tertullian counters this reclassification with the placement of adultery in the Ten Commandments. The prohibition of adultery directly follows the prohibition of idolatry and directly precedes the prohibition of murder; thus, God considers adultery on the same level as the other two sins. The church, he argues, ought to do the same.

<sup>771</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* VI. Citing Jesus’s words in Matt. 5:21–22, he reminds his readers that the New Covenant forbids not only adulterous *actions*, but adulterous thoughts. He concedes that covenant members of the community in the Old Testament, such as King David, had received pardon for adultery and murder. However, God also smote 24,000 Israelites who had worshipped the golden calf and engaged in revelry with a plague. Moreover, he finds no instances of pardon for such sins in the New Testament. Since the Incarnation, the flesh of those who by purification of water and Spirit are now in Christ become Christ’s body and God’s temple. To cite Old Testament examples of God pardoning adultery, for Tertullian, is to undermine the drastic change that has occurred in human flesh since the Incarnation. Over the next few chapters, he acknowledges that his opponents frequently cite passages on the woman at the well in John 4 and the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son in Luke 15. But these passages, Tertullian argues, refer to individuals *prior* to conversion. To say that these passages refer to lapsed Christians is to abuse the text and undermine the sanctity of the New Covenant and the impact of serious sins on the baptized. See Tertullian, *Pud.* VI, VIII–IX. Prior to his Montanist affiliation, Tertullian did hold that the parables of Luke 15 referred to lapsed Christians who, after a proper penance, had one—and *only* one—additional opportunity for pardon and peace. See Tertullian *Paen.* VII. Thus, *Pud.* demonstrates a marked shift in Tertullian’s position on the matter following his Montanist association. See Lee, *The Church in the Latin Fathers*, 20–21.

<sup>772</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* XXI. Supporters of the edict claim that the bishops have received power to remit these sins “in persona Petri” (CCSL 2: 1326). However, Tertullian responds, Peter never used such power to pardon capital sins. Moreover, if the bishops want to base their authority to remit serious sins on the power given to Peter, they ought to perform the same miracles that the apostle did. Because they fail to do so, they can lay no claim to the power to bind and loose sins.

doing so would negatively influence others.<sup>773</sup> The committing of grave sins defiles the offender, but readmitting the offender to the church defiles the community.

To be sure, eschatological hope remains for the penitent, and repentance without reconciliation in this life is not in vain. The defilement incurred by committing an irremissible sin can be purged through lifelong penance performed in hope of God's pardon in the next life:

And if [penance] reaps not here the harvest of peace, it sows the seed of it with the Lord. It does not lose its fruit but rather makes provision for it. It will not fail of its reward, if it fail not in its duty. And so penance of this kind is not done in vain, nor is a discipline such as this harsh. Both do honor to God.<sup>774</sup>

God alone can forgive mortal sins, so the sinner ought to entrust himself to the pardon of God, not the peace of the church. Though the sinner's repentance does not grant him peace with the church in this life, it prepares him to receive pardon from God in the next life. Those who refuse to perform penance for serious sins altogether, however, forfeit any hope of pardon in this life or the next.

Tertullian at this point has responded to his opponents' arguments from instances of pardon in the Old and New Testaments and the church's power to forgive sins. In the final chapter of *De Pudicitia*, he addresses his opponents' final justification for pardoning adultery: the intercessory power of the martyrs. Building on his previous arguments, Tertullian asserts that the martyrs, just like the church, have no authority to grant pardon and peace to those who commit serious sins after their baptism. To attribute such authority to the martyrs is to misapply the efficacy of their sacrifice. The shed blood of a martyr purges her own sins, not the sins of

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<sup>773</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* XXI.7–8.

<sup>774</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* III.5–6 (CCSL 2: 1286, trans. le Saint, *Tertullian: Treatises on Penance*, 61): “Et si pacem hic non metit, apud Dominum seminat. Nec amittit, sed praeparat fructum. Non uacabit ab emlumento, si non uacauerit ab officio. Ita nec paenitentia uismodi uana nec disciplina eiusmodi dura est. Deum ambae honorant.”

others.<sup>775</sup> The Son of God alone by his death redeemed others from death. For a martyr to “bestow on others with careless abandon what [the martyr] himself received at a great cost” is a sign of either his pride or ungratefulness.<sup>776</sup> His opponents also argue that because Christ uniquely dwells in the martyrs as they suffer, the martyrs have the ability to absolve adulterers and fornicators. Tertullian challenges this claim on two accounts. First of all, one cannot truly be called a ‘martyr’ until the time of death.<sup>777</sup> Secondly, if Christ so uniquely dwells in soon-to-be-martyrs such that they can forgive sins that God alone can forgive, why do they not evidence the power of Christ in them by performing the miracles that Christ performed?<sup>778</sup>

Moreover, Tertullian argues, to appeal to the martyrs’ intercession to justify pardoning adultery is utter hypocrisy in light of the church’s traditional categorization and penitential practice in regard to idolatry, murder, and apostasy. How can the church sentence idolaters and murderers to lifelong weeping, groaning, and fasting in sackcloth and ashes outside of the church, yet grant peace to adulterers and fornicators? If the church can remit the sins of adulterers on the basis of the authority of Peter in the bishops or of Christ in the martyrs, then it should be compelled to grant peace to and remit the sins of idolaters, murders, and apostates who practice penance.<sup>779</sup> After all, some commit apostasy after severe torments from their persecutors. Yet in granting pardon and peace to adulterers and not apostates, the church has made reconciliation easier for those “who have fallen in the heat of lust...than those who have

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<sup>775</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* XXII.4.

<sup>776</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* XXII.4 (CCSL 2:1348, trans. le Saint, Tertullian: *Treatises on Penance*, 123): “Ingrate uel superbi est in alios quoque spargere, quod pro magno fuerit consecutus.”

<sup>777</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* XXII.3.

<sup>778</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* XXII.6–8.

<sup>779</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* XXII.11.

fallen in the heat of battle.”<sup>780</sup> As we will see below, by Cyprian’s time, an increasing number of North African Christians were willing to grant pardon and peace to those who fell under the pressure of persecution.

### ***The Ecclesiological Focus of Cyprian***

A generation later, Cyprian of Carthage follows Tertullian in limiting the intercessory power of the martyrs to grant pardon and peace for grave sins, especially the sin of apostasy. Unique to Cyprian’s approach to this topic is his *ecclesiological* focus. Under the Decian persecution, a large number of North African Christians committed apostasy by offering sacrifices to the Roman and Punic gods at the command of the emperor. The controversy arose as to whether or under what conditions such lapsed Christians could be reconciled to the church. The rigorist party of Novation took Tertullian’s approach of sentencing these offenders to lifelong penance with no hope of reconciliation to the church. The laxist party of Felicissimus granted pardon and peace to the lapsed who had received certificates of absolution from the confessors in prison.<sup>781</sup>

Cyprian, in league with a company of other bishops, sought a compromise that granted reconciliation to the lapsed after their completion of a penitential protocol administered by the bishops. Cyprian’s view of the intercessory power of the martyrs arises most clearly in selected letters and in his treatises *De lapsis* and *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate*. Each of these works were written in response to this crisis of reconciling the lapsed to the church. He challenges the notion

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<sup>780</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* XXII.11 (CCSL 2: 1329, trans. le Saint, Tertullian: *Treatises on Penance*, 124): “...ut facilis in ecclesiam redeant, qui subdendo quam qui diminicando ceciderunt.”

<sup>781</sup> While Cyprian often distinguished the terms “confessor” (one who has been imprisoned and anticipates death for one’s witness yet remains alive) and “martyr” (one who has died for their witness), at times he uses “martyr” to refer to both. See Cyprian, *epp.* 15–20. See Graeme W. Clarke, *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage* (New York: Newman Press, 1984), 1: 272n1, 275n8, 298n5.

that the martyrs had the authority to grant absolution and peace with the church. For Cyprian, God has ultimately entrusted the bishops, not the martyrs, to administer church discipline and reconcile to the church Christians who had caved to the pressures of persecution.

As I have argued elsewhere, Cyprian's urgency to establish a penitential program for apostates under the supervision of the bishops lies in his theological convictions regarding divine command, divine judgment, and divine order.<sup>782</sup> On the one hand, Cyprian argues, the laxist party, which relies solely on the certificates of absolution from the martyr for ecclesial reconciliation, disregards the holiness and justice of God. This holy and just God has issued divine commands in the Scriptures that forbid idolatry and apostasy. Moreover, such sins incur the wrath of God on the offender.<sup>783</sup> When anyone, including a Christian, commits these grave sins, atonement must be made through penitential actions of fasting, prayer, weeping, and groaning outside of the Eucharistic community.<sup>784</sup> Otherwise, the offender is destined to eternal punishment for their denial of Christ.<sup>785</sup> The degree and duration of penance depends upon the degree of offense.<sup>786</sup> To be sure, these penitential actions guarantee peace, but not pardon. Grave

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<sup>782</sup> Matthew Esquivel, "Penance and Ecclesial Purity: The Divine Urgency Behind's Cyprian's Response to the Decian Persecution," *Studia Patristica* CXXVI (2021): 341–50. I summarize in this section the main points of the argument that I made in this article.

<sup>783</sup> Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 7. Cyprian quotes *Deuteronomy* 6:13 and *Exodus* 22:19.

<sup>784</sup> Cyprian, *ep.* 15, 1.2. For a detailed description of this public penance and ecclesial intercession on behalf of the penitent in Cyprian's time, see Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 315–17.

<sup>785</sup> Cyprian, *Laps.*, 7

<sup>786</sup> See Cyprian, *ep.* 15.14.1; 55.6.1; 55.13.2. Cyprian recounts that some offenders rushed without hesitation to offer the idolatrous sacrifices, others sacrificed after the pangs of torment, others sacrificed on behalf of their family members, and others bribed the authorities to receive a government certificate of verification without actually sacrificing. Such degrees of offense, for Cyprian, ought to be taken into consideration in prescribing proper penitential protocol. None, however, were to be reconciled rashly lest the morality of the gospel be compromised. See Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 316–17.

sins are committed directly against God, therefore only God can forgive sins. Peace with the church, however, is essential to offering hope of God's pardon.<sup>787</sup>

On the other hand, the rigorist party, which sentenced apostates to lifelong penance with no hope of reconciliation to the church, disregarded the mercy of God. Penitential discipline, Cyprian argues, ought to be prescribed and performed in view of the compassion of the God who pardons the penitent.<sup>788</sup> This discipline, for Cyprian, is not merely punitive, but salutary. The Great Physician prescribes penance to ensure atonement for grave sins committed and hope for reconciliation to God and the church.<sup>789</sup>

Furthermore, the ecclesial authority to prescribe and oversee this penitential process rests on the shoulders of the bishops, not the martyrs. Though Cyprian acknowledges the moral exemplarity of the martyrs in the life of the church,<sup>790</sup> he denies that they possess the authority to override God's divine order of the episcopate. Christ established "the honor of the bishop and the ruling order of his church" in his words to Peter in Matthew 16:18–19 about binding and loosing.<sup>791</sup> Christ founded the church on the bishops and gave them the charge to govern and direct the church.<sup>792</sup>

Moreover, God has sovereignly placed the bishops as the foundation and source of the church's unity and order. Thus the bishops, not the martyrs, have been granted the authority to

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<sup>787</sup> See J. Patout Burns, Jr., *Cyprian the Bishop* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 46.

<sup>788</sup> Cyprian, *ep.* 55.29.1.

<sup>789</sup> Cyprian, *Laps.* 14.

<sup>790</sup> Cyprian, *Laps.* 2; *ep.* 15.1.1.

<sup>791</sup> Cyprian, *ep.* 33.1.1 (CCSL 3B: 164): "...episcopi honorem et ecclesiae suae rationem...."

<sup>792</sup> *Ibid.*

ensure the purity and unity of the church.<sup>793</sup> As God is one and Christ is one, so is the church and its episcopate one and indivisible.<sup>794</sup> The factions of the laxist Felicissimus and the rigorist Novatian have departed from the one, indivisible church founded upon the unity of the one, indivisible episcopate.<sup>795</sup> The intercessory appeals of the martyrs must be subject to this divine order, not vice versa. For the martyrs to assert the authority to grant pardon and peace to the unrepentant is to endorse the violation of the divine command that forbids apostasy, to disregard the temporal and eternal divine judgment that results from such violation, and to overthrow God's divine order of episcopal leadership in the church.

The chaos of mob riots demanding the bishops' granting of admittance to the Eucharistic fellowship,<sup>796</sup> the admonishments from visionary experiences of various laity,<sup>797</sup> and the sober fate of unrepentant persons suffering divine judgement and dropping dead in church confirm Cyprian in his position.<sup>798</sup> Appeals to a wrongly elevated status of the martyrs' intercessory power and a misunderstanding of the divinely ordained governmental structure of the episcopate jeopardizes not only the purity and unity of the church, but also the eternal destiny of apostates. The laxist appeal to martyrs' certificates of absolution required no confession or repentance.

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<sup>793</sup> *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate*, 4.

<sup>794</sup> Cyprian, *ep.* 43.5.1.

<sup>795</sup> Cyprian, *ep.* 43.5.1; 43.7.2; *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate*, 6.

<sup>796</sup> Cyprian, *ep.* 27.3.1; 15.4.1; 16.1.1. Cyprian challenged the use of absolution certificates granted by the martyrs. Some of these, he claims, were being used to grant pardon for multiple people claiming relation to the one named on the certificate.

<sup>797</sup> Cyprian, *ep.* 15.3.1; 16.4.1; 11.3.1. For more on the elevated place of dreams and visions for Cyprian and his church, see Clarke, *The Letters of St. Cyprian*, 1:243n21, 287–91n27–30.

<sup>798</sup> Cyprian, *Laps.* 23–26. Instances of apostates receiving judgment that he mentions include a man struck dumb, a woman possessed by an evil spirit who bit her tongue to pieces and died of severe pains in her vital organs, and a young girl convulsing and vomiting. One person was prevented from partaking of the Eucharist after fire blazed from the sacrament. Another was prevented when the sacrament turned to ashes before him.



Confession and repentance for such apostasy is granted only on earth; in hell, certainly the future home of the impenitent, “there is no public confession....”<sup>799</sup> For the same reason, contrary to the rigorist position, penitents are to be granted reconciliation so that they are properly strengthened in the event of future persecution and comforted with the hope of forgiveness as they pass from this life to the next.<sup>800</sup>

Though the bishops as servants of God are granted the authority to reconcile the penitent in this life, the Judgment Day will make the final call for the individual in the next life. If God deems one’s confession and repentance as true, the decision of the bishops will be confirmed. If the bishops were wrong and God judges that one’s confession and repentance was feigned, as the rigorist party worries, God may “amend the judgment of his servants....”<sup>801</sup> The unified decisions of the divinely ordained episcopal leadership, though imperfect, ensures the best possible eternal outcome for the apostate.

Though God’s present and future judgment were of great concern to Cyprian, he gives little information on the nature of the afterlife and its relationship to the intercession of the martyrs. Like Tertullian, his limitation of the intercessory power of the martyrs primarily centers on *this* life. Though such limitation certainly has consequences for the next life, nowhere do we find Cyprian giving further explanation of the authoritative status of the martyrs and their prayers while in their glorified, disembodied state in heaven.<sup>802</sup> Augustine, as we shall see, is the first in North Africa to give such a detailed explanation.

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<sup>799</sup> Cyprian, *ep.* 55.17.3 (CCSL 3B: 276): “...quia exomologesis apud inferos non est...”

<sup>800</sup> Ibid.

<sup>801</sup> Cyprian, *ep.* 55.18.1 (CCSL 3B: 276–77): “...deus qui non deridetur et qui cor hominis intuetur de his quae nos minus perspeximus iudicet et seuorum sententiam Dominus emendet....”

<sup>802</sup> Martyr narratives composed after Cyprian’s death, however, depict the disembodied soul of the martyr-bishop as appearing to Christians to strengthen them during their approach to martyrdom. See *Passio sanctorum Mariani et*

### **Augustine's Eschatological Focus: Eschatological Hope the in *Sermones ad Populum***

Augustine follows Tertullian and Cyprian's limitation of the intercessory power of the martyrs. However, within his unique social, ecclesial, and theological context, Augustine centers his notion of the intercessory power of the martyrs on his understanding of the afterlife, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment of the righteous and the wicked. Thus, his approach to the topic is thoroughly *eschatological* in nature. This section will analyze how Augustine develops his understanding of the relationship between the martyrs' intercessory power, the afterlife, and the last things in his *Sermones ad populum* preached on the feast days of the martyrs, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, and the final books of *De ciuitate dei*.

Augustine's sermons preached on the feast days of the martyrs demonstrate the eschatological significance of martyrdom and the liturgical celebrations of the martyrs. For Augustine, eschatological hope gives meaning to martyrdom. Moreover, martyr veneration is an occasion for the faithful to contemplate the eternal life that the martyrs currently enjoy and the future hope of the resurrection of both the martyrs and the faithful. As briefly discussed in a previous chapter, many of Augustine's sermons focus on hailing the martyrs as exemplars of those who lived with eternity in mind.<sup>803</sup> Celebrating these eternity-minded martyrs admonishes and strengthens the faithful to imitate the martyrs' love of eternal life. Moreover, Augustine's eschatology grounds the manner in which he communicates his understanding of the efficacy of

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*Iacobi* 6.10–15 (Rebillard, *Greek and Latin Narratives*, 184–187) and *Actus et uisio martyrum Luci Montani et ceterorum comitum quod est X Kal. Iunii* 11.1–7 (*Greek and Latin Narratives*, 277). Therefore, the traditional understanding of the post-mortem intercessory role of the martyrs continued past the time of Cyprian. See also *Vita Caecilii Cypriani* (*Greek and Latin Narratives*, 205–35).

<sup>803</sup> See chapter 3 of this dissertation.

the prayers of the martyrs on behalf of the pilgrim church. Though the sermons I discuss in this section span the course of approximately two decades, the eschatological focus in his earlier and later sermons remains consistent.

In a sermon preached in 396 on the *natale* of the bishop Fructuosus and the deacons Augurius and Eulogius, Augustine describes these martyrs as those who had “received an eternal crown, immortality without end, in exchange for temporal well-being.”<sup>804</sup> Even though they feared the death of the body, hope of life after death strengthened them to endure torment.<sup>805</sup> Augustine quotes from the passion narrative of these martyrs, which had been read just prior to Augustine’s sermon, an interchange between Fructuosus and one of the faithful to remind his listeners that the martyrs pray for the Catholic church in their post-mortem state. These prayers are offered for the entire Catholic church, not individuals; thus, to benefit from these prayers, the faithful must remain in the church of all nations.<sup>806</sup> Moreover, the feast days call the faithful to celebrate and imitate the martyrs’ hope for eternal life and patience in suffering. Just as the

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<sup>804</sup> *s.* 273.2 (PL 38: 1248, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 17): “...illi acceperunt pro temporali salute aeternam coronam, sine fine immortalitatem.”

<sup>805</sup> *s.* 273.2. For more on the theme of the fear of death in Augustine’s martyrology, see Robert Dodaro, “Christus Iustus’ and Fear of Death in Augustine’s Dispute with Pelagius,” in *Signum Pietatis. Festgabe Für Cornelius Mayer Osa Zum 60. Geburtstag* (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1989), 341–61. As Robert Dodaro has shown, in the Pelagian controversy, Augustine places greater emphasis on the humanity of the martyrs and their fear of death. Peter was unwilling to die (*en. Ps.* 30[2]1.3; *ep.* 140.10.27). Paul did not desire death (*s.* 299.7–9). The martyrs suffered even though they willed otherwise (*en. Ps.* 68.1.1). The martyrs endure what they do not love (*s.* 299.8). The martyrs need God’s grace to despise the life that they love (*s.* 335D, 335B). The martyrs’ faith in the resurrection overcomes their natural fear of death (*ciu.* 13.4). Straw, “Martyrdom,” 540.

<sup>806</sup> *s.* 273.2. To be sure, prayers for the entire church includes every individual member. This topic of whether the martyrs pray for individuals or more generally for the entire church arises again in *cura mort.* See discussion below.

martyrs followed the example of Jesus in his suffering,<sup>807</sup> and the faithful are to pray that they might “be able to follow in the footsteps of the martyrs.”<sup>808</sup>

In a sermon possibly preached in the year 400, Augustine describes martyrs like Perpetua and Felicitas as those who despised temporal pleasures for the love of eternal pleasures, temporal consolation for eternal consolation, and temporal life for eternal life.<sup>809</sup> Empowered by the virtues of faith, hope, and love, the martyrs disdain the “very great attachment to living and fear of dying,” and their example teaches the faithful to overcome “the tyrannous power...of love of this life...”<sup>810</sup> Such detachment causes the faithful to gain victory against every worldly lust, which derive their power from a love of this temporal life.<sup>811</sup>

Moreover, liturgical feast days provide an opportunity for the faithful to behold worthy heroes who lived for eternal glory, not temporal glory. In a sermon preached sometime between 405 and 411 on the feast day of an unnamed martyr, Augustine appeals to the practice of celebrating the martyr *natales* to prove that the martyrs have far greater glory than Roman war heroes.<sup>812</sup> Their tombs are visited by masses of people to celebrate their death and admission to

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<sup>807</sup> s. 273.1.

<sup>808</sup> s. 273. 9 (PL 38: trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 21): “Ideo, charissimi, exsultate in iebus sanctorum martyrum : orate, ut sequamini vestigia martyrum.”

<sup>809</sup> s. 280.4. As Hill notes, the date is uncertain. Hill posits this earlier date in view of the “elaborate style” of the sermon. See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 76n1. Though the evidence is inconclusive, the sermon demonstrates the prevalence of eschatological themes in the bishop’s discussion of martyrdom.

<sup>810</sup> s. 280.4 (PL 38: 1282, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 74. “Hanc igitur vivendi tantam jucunditatem metumque moriendi charitate sincera, spe certa, fide non fieta martyres Christi praecipua virtute contemnunt...qui tamquam tyrannum subjugate amorem vitae hujus...”

<sup>811</sup> Ibid. C.f. s. 282.1. In this sermon preached on the feast day of the same saints, Augustine does a clever wordplay on the names of Perpetua and Felicity. He describes them as those who courageously endured suffering “in order to enjoy perpetual felicity” (PL 38: 1285, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 81): “...nisi ut perpetura felicitate gauderent.”

<sup>812</sup> Lambot proposes this date range, but Hill posits that this sermon is a compilation of sermons. See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 227n1.

paradise. Though many notable men have shed their blood for Rome, the Christian emperor visits not *their* tombs, but the tombs of the martyrs. Roman war heroes died for a temporal, earthly country. The martyrs died for an eternal, heavenly country. The glory of the martyrs can already be seen in part during liturgical celebrations and visits to their tombs, but “What amazement and wonder would overwhelm us if we could see the martyrs triumphing among the angels...?”<sup>813</sup> For this reason, the faithful ought to “seek the invisible rewards of the martyrs.”<sup>814</sup> Even though the faithful may not experience the same kind of suffering and death as the martyrs, they may still attain to such invisible rewards by enduring their own trials and temptations with love for Christ, patience in suffering, and hope for eternal life.<sup>815</sup>

In a later sermon preached sometime between 410 and 412 on the feast day of some unnamed martyrs, Augustine describes martyrdom as a denial of temporal life for the sake of eternal life.<sup>816</sup> To illustrate this point, he presents a mock conversation between a martyr and his persecutor. When the persecutor threatens the martyr with death lest he deny Christ, the martyr responds with, “Shall I deny life on account of life? On account of a brief life, shall I deny eternal life?”<sup>817</sup> This love of eternal life empowered the martyrs to make light of death and endure it bravely.<sup>818</sup> For Augustine, then, the martyrs’ willingness to suffer the bitter pangs of

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<sup>813</sup> Augustine, s. 335C.11 (PLS 2: 753, trans. Hill, *Sermons*, III/9, 225): “Quantum nos stupor admirationis apprehenderet si uideremus martyres inter angelos gloriantes, quorum natalicia uidemus populos celebrantes?”

<sup>814</sup> s. 335C.12 (PLS 2:753, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 225): “...inuisibilia martyrum quaerite...”

<sup>815</sup> s. 335C.12.

<sup>816</sup> This date is given by Fischer and Kunzelmann. See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 220n1.

<sup>817</sup> s. 335B.3 (PLS 2: 633, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 217): “Propter vitam negabo vitam? Propter breuem vitam negabo aeternam vitam?”

<sup>818</sup> s. 335B.3

death is unintelligible without the reality of eternal life. Without eternity, the suffering and death of the martyrs have no lasting purpose or glory—the reality that justifies their celebration.

In this same sermon, Augustine draws the attention of his listeners to the reality of eternal death. As they celebrate the martyrs, the faithful are to direct their love toward eternal life lest they find themselves inheriting eternal death. The blessedness of eternal life will far surpass what so many love about this life, such as desire, pleasure, and hope.<sup>819</sup> Likewise, the wretchedness of eternal death will far surpass what so many despise about this life, such as pain, sorrow, disappointment, and suffering.<sup>820</sup> Thus, he admonishes his listeners not to fear death, but sin which leads to eternal death. Though a fear of death is natural to all, Augustine calls his listeners, not to fear the first death—that is, the death of the body—such that they sin in order to avoid it. He does, however, admonish them to fear the *second* death and the sin which leads to it. The second death, which is eternal, is not a destruction of the soul and body such that they cease to exist; rather, it is an ongoing experience of death for the soul and body, for in the second death “the soul is not wrenched from the flesh, but the soul is tormented with the flesh.”<sup>821</sup>

Martyr veneration sets the hopes of the church on the resurrected, spiritual body, which will forever be clothed with eternal life and imperishability. In a sermon preached in 413 on the feast day of Vincent, a deacon who was martyred in 303 during the Diocletian persecution, Augustine describes this hope for a resurrected body as that which empowers martyrs like Vincent to endure severe, yet temporal torments in his physical body.<sup>822</sup> The martyrs by dying

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<sup>819</sup> s. 335B.3

<sup>820</sup> s. 335B.5

<sup>821</sup> s. 335B.5 (PLS 2: 636, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 219): “Timete secundam mortem, ubi non dirimitur anima a carne, sed torquetur anima cum carne.”

<sup>822</sup> s. 277.3. For notes on the dating, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 45n1.

are not despising their bodies like the pagan philosophers who deny the resurrection of the body and regard bodies as prisons. God, after all, both created and recreates both body and spirit. The martyrs actually demonstrated a love for their bodies by setting their minds on receiving resurrected flesh.<sup>823</sup> Vincent knew that if he were to deny Christ, he would not only be avoiding his inevitable future death by natural causes; he would have received a new body at the resurrection that would be “cast into perpetual fire.”<sup>824</sup> Instead, Vincent set his eyes on an imperishable, spiritual body that would be transfigured into the glory of Christ’s own body.<sup>825</sup> The martyrs have hope that their bodies, many of which have been “torn to pieces in savage barbarity,” burned to ashes, and “scattered all over the earth,” will be raised imperishable “in the twinkling of an eye.”<sup>826</sup> The faithful are to imitate Vincent’s love of the resurrected body that they might resist the worldly lusts that tempt them while they remain in perishable bodies.<sup>827</sup>

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<sup>823</sup> s. 277.3.

<sup>824</sup> s. 277.2; (PL 38: 1253, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 34): “Quid ageret in resurrection, cum in aeternum ignem praecipitaretur?”

<sup>825</sup> s. 277.12. The term “spiritual body” (see 1 Corinthians 15:44) does not mean, Augustine clarifies, that the resurrected body will lack the ability to taste, touch, smell, hear and see. Christ’s resurrected body continued to engage all five senses, yet it also possessed the ability to walk through a closed door and appear suddenly. Since Christ is our model, the faithful can surmise that their own resurrected bodies will possess the same capabilities, because the Lord will transfigure the perishable bodies of the faithful into the imperishable glory of his own body. See Philippians 3:21.

<sup>826</sup> s. 277.12 (PL 38: 1263–64, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 40): “Laniata sunt corpora a saevientibus: toto licet mundo dissipentur membra moruorum, per totam terram cineres dispergantur; de toto tam grandi sinu totum quod sparsum est in ictu oculi reparatur.” See 1 Corinthians 15:52. Vincent’s body, for example, was thrown into the sea. See s. 274.1. As Hill notes, tradition held that the governor ordered the martyr’s body to be thrown into the sea tied to a great stone, only to have it miraculously resurface and wash ashore. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 24n3. For other references to the rising of the torn bodies of the martyrs, see s. 344.1; *en. Ps.* 139.16; *en. Ps.* 78.5. For more on the hope of the martyrs in the resurrection and the raising of their tortured bodies, see Augustine M. Reisenauer, *Augustine’s Theology of the Resurrection* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 157–63.

<sup>827</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. s. 277A.2. This sermon was preached between 410 and 412 on the feast day of the same martyr. The sufferings of Vincent in his body, Augustine says, were incomparable to the future glory he would experience. This sets the minds of the church on future glory and empowers them to endure sufferings in this present age. For notes on dating, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 49n1. See also s.335A.2; s. 335B.4.

Those who love eternal life like Vincent will inherit eternal life; those who love this temporal life, however, will face eternal fire and judgment.<sup>828</sup>

Augustine's understanding of the relationship between martyrdom, the afterlife, and the resurrection also grounds his understanding of why the prayers of the martyrs for the pilgrim church are effective. In a sermon preached on the feast day of Perpetua and Felicitas on an uncertain date,<sup>829</sup> Augustine differentiates the post-mortem experience of the martyrs in their disembodied state and their future experience at the resurrection. Presently, the souls of the martyrs in heaven abide in the presence of God and enjoy a foretaste of the eternal glory they will experience in their resurrected bodies. Though the life that they experience in heaven now far surpasses "any felicities or delights of this world," such life is but a portion of what God has promised at the resurrection and "no more than a consolation for the delay."<sup>830</sup> The departed souls of the wicked, on the contrary, suffer a foretaste of the eternal punishment they will face in their resurrected bodies, which will involve an everlasting torment of body and soul.<sup>831</sup> Just as the delights and torments of those who are awake surpass the delights and torments of those

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<sup>828</sup> s. 277.2.

<sup>829</sup> The feast day of these martyrs occurred on March 7, but the year is uncertain. Hill posits the year 400 based on its "elaborate style." See Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 76n1.

<sup>830</sup> s. 280.5 (PL 38: 1283, modified trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 74): "Et haec quidem vita, quam nunc beati martyres habent, quamvis jam nullis possit saeculi hujus felicitatibus vel suavitatibus comparari, parva particula promissionis agitur, imo solatium dilationis." Augustine here is specifically talking about the departed souls of the martyrs, not of the faithful dead. However, in s. 335C.12, he says, "All of the souls of the blessed" (*omnes animae beatorum*), experience joy in Christ even as they await their resurrected bodies (PLS 2:754). Though he does not name the martyrs specifically, here, he opens the sermon with the phrase *beati martyris* (PLS 2:750). Perhaps by saying "All of the souls of the blessed," Augustine is in fact referring specifically to the martyrs or to any departed soul that has been perfected. Important to note is that his statement here directly follows a discussion of the thief on the cross, who received the promise of being with Jesus in Paradise (Lk 23:42–43). In *cura mort.*, as I discuss below, Augustine distinguishes between the departed state of the martyrs and that of the faithful dead. The martyrs abide in glory because they have been perfected by their sufferings. He does say, however, that other souls may be perfected through trials in this life and/or purification in the next prior to the resurrection.

<sup>831</sup> The resurrection of the body and soul, and the participation of both in either everlasting life or everlasting judgment arises again in relation to martyrdom in *cura mort.* and *ciu.* See discussion below.



dreaming, so will the delights and torments of those who rise again exceed the delights and torments of the departed souls.<sup>832</sup>

Though the faithful and the martyrs will share a glory similar to the heavenly bodies of the angels at the resurrection, the resurrected bodies of the martyrs “will be resplendent with the special light that distinguishes them, and the bodies in which they endured *unworthy torments*, will be transformed for them into *worthy ornaments*.”<sup>833</sup> The resurrected bodies of the martyrs, then, will forever possess a distinct radiance from the remainder of the faithful.<sup>834</sup> As F. van der Meer says, this exalted status of the martyrs has implications for their status in the afterlife: “[Augustine] recognizes their high place in the intermediate condition of the next world. They are the *coronati*, those who have already won the crown.” He goes on to quote *s.* 329.1 on some unnamed martyrs, where Augustine describes the martyrs as participants in the great heavenly banquet feeding on Christ himself.<sup>835</sup>

Their love of eternal life and exalted status has implications for their intercessory role in the life of the church. In a sermon preached between 416 and 420 on the feast day of Peter and Paul, Augustine states that the death the martyrs faced for the love of eternal life is why the pilgrim church does not pray *for* the martyrs, as it does the faithful departed, but commends itself

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<sup>832</sup> *s.* 280.5. To be clear, by describing the disembodied state of departed souls as a sort of post-mortem sleep, Augustine is not suggesting that such souls are unconscious, unaware, or unable to experience pain (for the wicked) or pleasure (for the righteous). On the contrary, his discussion clearly indicates that the opposite is true.

<sup>833</sup> Augustine, *s.* 280.5 (PL 38: 1283, modified trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 75): “...in qua gloriosissimi martyres praecipua sui honoris luce fulgebunt ipsaque corpora in quibus indigna tormenta perpassi sunt, eis digna in ornamenta uertentur.” Emphasis mine. I modified Hill’s translation in attempt to capture at least somewhat the cleverness of Augustine’s wordplay between “indigna tormenta” and “digna in ornamenta.”

<sup>834</sup> As I noted in chapter 1, Augustine regards the glory of the martyrs as “first in the church” and surpassing any other degrees of glory (*s.* 306B.C). He also calls the martyrs “greater” and more abundantly crowned than the other faithful dead (*s.* 297.3). See footnotes 137 and 142 above.

<sup>835</sup> van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 473. See also Potthoff, *Afterlife*, 149.

to the prayers of the martyrs.<sup>836</sup> He makes the same statement in another sermon preached on the feast day of the martyrs Castus and Aemilius. The martyrs, he says, “have been perfected by their sufferings,” which is why the “faithful departed are prayed for, not the martyrs.”<sup>837</sup> Because they have been perfected, they do not *depend* on the pilgrim church for prayers; rather, they *advocate* for the pilgrim church with their own prayers.<sup>838</sup> For Augustine, then, most of the souls of the faithful still need to be perfected after death. The prayers of the martyrs, who are already perfected, aid all of the faithful (living and dead), and the prayers of the living faithful aid the departed faithful. Death, then, does not sever an integral connection between the living and the departed. The liturgy, especially the liturgical feast days of the martyrs, make present this communion shared between Christ’s living and departed members.

Furthermore, the presence of and miracles associated with martyr relics have a two-fold purpose: they direct the faithful to the glory of God and testify to eternal life. In another sermon preached in 411 on the feast day of the martyr Vincent, Augustine discusses the miraculous discovery of the martyr’s remains.<sup>839</sup> Though his persecutors tied him to a stone and cast him into the sea, a “divine nod” (*nutu diuini*) revealed the location of his dead body.<sup>840</sup> The Lord out of his love for the death of his saints preserves the martyr’s remains, which are honored by the

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<sup>836</sup> s. 297.3. C.f. s. 284.5.

<sup>837</sup> s. 285.5 (PL 38: 1295, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 98): “Martyrum perfecta iustitia est, quoniam in ipsa passione perfecti sunt. Ideo pro illis in Ecclesia non oratur. Pro aliis fidelibus defunctis oratur, pro martyribus non oratur...” As Hill notes, the sermon is traditionally dated to 397. However, other scholars pose later dates (as late as 416). See *Sermons*, 100n1.

<sup>838</sup> s. 285.5 (PL 38: 1295, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 98): “...tam enim perfecti exierunt, ut non sint suscepti nostri, sed advocati.”

<sup>839</sup> s. 275. For notes on dating, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 28n1.

<sup>840</sup> s. 275.3 (PL 38: 1255). The same reportedly occurred with Stephen’s relics and those of Gervase and Protase. See s. 318.1.

faithful for the glory of God.<sup>841</sup> By granting miracle-working power to these martyr corpses and adorning their “lifeless flesh” with “such a powerful mark of divinity,” God “confers more abundant honor” on “lifeless relics” to reveal himself as “the present giver of life.”<sup>842</sup> God cares for the material body and continues to use the bodies of the martyrs as a means to communicate divine life to the faithful. These miracles, however, are to bring glory to God, not to the martyrs. In another sermon mentioned above preached in 413 on the feast day of Vincent, Augustine states that God has granted the church the remains of the bodies of the martyrs so that memorials for prayer and worship to God, not the martyrs, might be erected.<sup>843</sup>

The eschatological significance of these martyr relics and their miracles arise in other sermons. Shortly after the arrival of Stephen’s relics in Hippo Regius, many in Augustine’s church gathered on the saint’s feast day to behold the relics. Augustine took this as an opportunity to remind his congregation that everyone gathers primarily not to view Stephen’s remains, but to behold and imitate Stephen’s faith.<sup>844</sup> The bishop admonishes the people to hope for “receiving temporal benefits”—i.e., healing miracles—such that “by imitating that faith,”

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<sup>841</sup> *s.* 275.3.

<sup>842</sup> *s.* 275.3 (PL 38: 1255, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 28): “...caro tanto exanimis tanto effectu divinitatis ornatur...abundantiorem honorem exsanguibus reliquiis hominum circumponit...ibi evidentius praesens vitae dator apparet.”

<sup>843</sup> *s.* 277.1. C.f. *s.* 318.1. The memorial that housed Stephen’s relics was made not to build an altar to Stephen, but to God.

<sup>844</sup> *s.* 317.1 (PL 38: 1435): “Caro sancti Stephani per loca singula diffamur: sed fidei ejus meritum commendatur.”

they “may be worthy to receive eternal ones.”<sup>845</sup> Thus, in addition to potentially healing bodies, martyr remains strengthen the church’s faith and hope in the resurrection of the dead.<sup>846</sup>

The eternal benefits of martyr relics are especially important to keep in mind because healing miracles are not always effected through the prayers of the martyrs. Even when people seeking a miracle from the martyrs are not granted their request, venerating the martyrs strengthens the faithful to live in light of eternity. Augustine makes this clear in a sermon preached in 428 on the feast day of the martyrs Protase and Gervase.<sup>847</sup> He contrasts the testimony of a miraculous healing of a blind man at the shrine of these martyrs with those who do not receive a healing miracle. Though not all receive a healing miracle through the martyr relics, he says, God promises immortality “to all who imitate the martyrs.”<sup>848</sup> Even those who are healed, he reminds his congregation, eventually die; but “those who rise again at the end will live with Christ forever.”<sup>849</sup> People who are not healed should not complain, but should look forward to the final promise of immortality. God is the good father and the great physician who at times uses sickness to discipline a person that he may be “received as a son.”<sup>850</sup> Maladies, then, can be a tool in the hand of God who attends to spiritual health by conforming an individual into the

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<sup>845</sup> s. 317.1 (PL 38: 1435, modified trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 142): “Sic exspectemus consequi temporalia beneficia, ut eum imitando accipere mereamur aeterna.” He reminds his listeners in s. 319.6 that Stephen does not always succeed in effecting miracles; the faith and persistence of the recipient can play a factor in the outcome of the miracle. Moreover, the miracles that Stephen does effect are not performed in his own name, but Christ’s name.

<sup>846</sup> Reisenauer, *Augustine’s Theology of the Resurrection*, 161–62.

<sup>847</sup> For proposals of various scholars on exactly which year Augustine preached this sermon, see Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 105n1.

<sup>848</sup> s. 286.5 (PL 38: 1299, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 103): “Non omnibus donat per martyres sanitatem: sed omnibus promittit imitatoribus martyrum immortalitatem.”

<sup>849</sup> s. 286.5 (PL 38: 1299, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 103): “Nam et qui modo sanatur, post paululum aliquando moriuntur: qui in fine resurgunt, cum Christo vivent.”

<sup>850</sup> s. 286.7 (PL 38: 1299, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 105): “Flagellat, inquit, omnem filium quem recipit.”

image and likeness of Christ, thus preparing one to enjoy the promise of life in a body that will never grow sick or weak.

In this same sermon, Augustine uses the eschatological reality of the resurrection and God's medicinal, disciplinary use of sickness to discourage Christians from using pagan healing charms when one is not healed through a martyr relic.<sup>851</sup> As discussed in chapter 1, people on their sickbeds even endure a type of martyrdom by resisting Satan's efforts to seduce them in their suffering to seek healing from pagan charms.<sup>852</sup> The one who resists the devil's temptation even in his physical weakness "conquers the devil...becomes a martyr on his sickbed, and he is crowned by the one who hung for him on the tree."<sup>853</sup> Therefore, because gathering around the remains of the martyrs primarily calls the faithful to imitate the martyrs' virtues and points them to eternal life and immortality, the relics give testimony to immortal life both when someone *is* healed and when someone *is not* healed.

What we find throughout Augustine's sermons is his consistent discussion of the meaning and significance of martyrdom and martyr veneration in terms of eschatology. A love of eternal life is what strengthens the martyrs to despise temporal pleasures and overcome the fear of death. Without eternal life with Christ in view, the martyrs die for no reason. Martyr veneration, relics, and post-mortem healing miracles impact the eternal destiny of the faithful by providing an example of and exhortation toward this love of eternal life. In celebrating the martyrs, the faithful are strengthened to imitate the virtues of the martyrs which merited for them

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<sup>851</sup> Reisenauer, *Augustine's Theology of the Resurrection*, 163.

<sup>852</sup> Fruchtmann has identified seven references to martyrdom on the sickbed: s. 4.36; 335D.3–5; 318.3; 328.8; 286.7; 306E.7. Fruchtmann, *Living Martyrs*, 176.

<sup>853</sup> s. 286.7 (PL 38: 1301, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/8, 105): "Uires non habet, et diabolus uincit. Fit martyr in lecto, coronante illo qui pro illo pependit in ligno."

immortality. The relics impart the life of God in healing miracles and testify to God's glory, God's care for the earthly body, and God's promise to raise the bodies of the martyrs and the faithful to immortal life. What we do not find is a detailed account of the *extent* to which the prayers and relics of the martyrs impact the eternal destiny of an individual. Such an account arises in *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* and *De ciuitate Dei*. It is to these works we now turn.

### **Burial *ad Sanctos*, the Afterlife, and Postmortem Martyr Visitations in *cura mort*.**

In *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, written sometime between 421 and 424,<sup>854</sup> Augustine's understanding of the eternal impact of the prayers of the martyrs on behalf of the living and dead becomes clearer. Augustine responds to Paulinus of Nola, who questioned Augustine regarding the benefits of the common practice of burial *ad sanctos*, which involved the burial of a loved one near the tombs of the martyrs. In addition, this practice included the commemoration practices of the offering of the Eucharist, the giving of alms, and prayers on behalf of the departed loved one.<sup>855</sup> As Paula J. Rose notes, these three elements of commemoration, for

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<sup>854</sup> For scholarly debates on dating, see Paula J. Rose, *A Commentary of Augustine's De cura pro mortuis gerenda: Rhetoric in Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 7–12. Basing her position on Augustine's chronological list of his works in *Retractiones* 63–65 and evidence for the approximate dates of *Enchiridion* and *De octo Dulciti quaestionibus*, Rose has convincingly argued for a dating of “an undetermined time in the period between the spring of 421 and Easter 424.” Contrary to her opening statement in this section that the text of *cura mort*. “reveals no clue to its dating,” however, Augustine references his first book of *ciu.* in *cura mort*. 2.3. We do know therefore that this treatise was composed after the initial books of *ciu.* had been completed and circulated. She does acknowledge Augustine's reference to *ciu.* later in the book, but she does not seem to consider this to be a clue to the dating of *cura mort*. (*Rhetoric in Practice*, 115–17, 127–28). Perhaps at the very least it is not much of a clue, given that the first three books of *ciu.* were likely circulated as early as 413 or 414. See Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 35–37.

<sup>855</sup> See *cura mort*. 18.22. For further studies on this practice in early and late antique Christianity, see Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*; Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, trans. Elizabeth Trapnell Rawlings and Jeanine Routier-Pucci (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Lander, *Ritual Sites and Religious Rivalries*; Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*; Rose, *Rhetoric in Practice*; Potthoff, *The Afterlife*. For a study on non-Christian funerary practices and discussion of funerary practices in patristic authors, see Ulrich Volp, *Tod Und Ritual in Den Christlichen Gemeinden Der Antike* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

Augustine, serve as a means by which the living and the dead “are joined in a community”; moreover, they “may be seen as an expression of the belief that all of the faithful, including the dead, the living, and the unborn, are part of the body of Christ.”<sup>856</sup>

Augustine’s understanding of the efficacy of these three commemoration practices and burial *ad sanctos* arises as he addresses the inquiry of a devout woman named Flora to Paulinus. Flora desired to bury her son near the tomb of the famous martyr St. Felix the Confessor, whose departed soul had purportedly appeared to the town of Nola while it was under siege. Paulinus told the grieving mother that such an act would surely benefit her son’s soul in the next life, yet he sought Augustine’s input for greater clarity on the matter.<sup>857</sup>

For Paulinus, proof of the efficacy of this widespread form of martyr veneration primarily lies in the universal church’s custom of praying for the dead. The universal church would not engage in praying for the dead if it did not believe that such an action actually accomplished something for the dead. Moreover, the martyrs are believed by the universal church to aid by their prayers and healing miracles the living faithful who visit their shrines, venerate their relics, and celebrate their feasts. Why would the martyrs not aid by their prayers the souls of the faithful dead buried near their tombs? Paulinus, then, understood burial *ad sanctos* as a visible, material act of commending the soul of a loved one to the prayers of the martyrs. For him, the action seemed to guarantee aid from the martyrs for the departed soul in the afterlife. Paulinus, however, had trouble squaring this conclusion with Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 5:10 that

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<sup>856</sup> Rose, *Rhetoric in Practice*, 31–32.

<sup>857</sup> See Lacy’s introduction to Augustine, *The Care to be Taken for the Dead*, trans. John A. Lacy, M.A., in *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, Vol. 27, ed. Roy J. Deferrari (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1955), 349.

each person will be judged at Christ's tribunal according to one's *own* deeds performed in the body, not the deeds of the martyrs or anyone else.<sup>858</sup>

Augustine concisely resolves the matter from the start. Both the Scriptures and the authority of the universal church, he says, confirm the efficacy of religious actions performed on behalf of the faithful departed. The Book of Maccabees mentions the offering of sacrifices for the dead, and in the liturgy the priest regularly offers intercession for the faithful departed.<sup>859</sup> However, the advantage of any such religious action—whether it be praying for that soul or burying that one's dead body near the tombs of the martyrs—is determined “by the sort of life which one has exhibited through the body....”<sup>860</sup> If those near the tombs of the martyrs had practiced good works worthy of merit while *alive*, their souls may be aided by the religious actions performed on their behalf while *dead*. If they lived like people of hell, however, no amount of prayers of the church or proximity of their dead bodies to the remains of the martyrs would aid such wretched souls. Moreover, if a person's works were so perfect that they needed no further aid, burial *ad sanctos* would be superfluous.<sup>861</sup>

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<sup>858</sup> *cura mort.* 1.1–2. Augustine uses a similar argument in his refutation of *parentalia*, which were funerary meal offerings for the dead. Pagans and Christians alike engaged in the practice, which Tertullian, Augustine, and other early church leaders rejected. Such meals and offerings, Augustine argues, do nothing to benefit the dead, including the martyrs. He attempts to redirect Christians towards an Eucharistic celebration, offerings to the poor, prayers for the dead, and invoking the prayers of the martyrs. See *en. Ps.* 48[1].15; *s.* 361.6.6; *ep.* 22.6. For a discussion of *parentalia* and common disapproval of the practice amongst bishops, see Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*; Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, 140–75.

<sup>859</sup> *cura mort.* 1.3. Augustine even seems to grant greater weight to the universal church's authority. Had Maccabees made no mention of sacrifice for the dead, he says, the weight of the universal church's authority would still stand.

<sup>860</sup> *cura mort.* 1.2 (CSEL 41:623): “genere igitur vitae, quod gessit quisque per corpus...”

<sup>861</sup> *cura mort.* 1.2. Augustine does not provide examples of those whose deeds may have been so perfect. One obvious example would be the martyrs. As we saw above in his sermons, those who die for their testimony to Christ are perfected and need no assistance from the prayers or merits of others. Augustine makes the same argument about the necessity of good deeds performed in the body in order for burial *ad sanctos* and prayers and offerings for the dead to be of any benefit in *ench.* 29.109–110 and *Dulc. qu.* 2.1–4 (Rose, *Rhetoric in Practice*, 97).



Augustine's longer response reveals important aspects of his understanding of the postmortem status of departed souls, the interaction between the martyrs and the living faithful, the ministry of angels involved in dreams and visions, and the manner in which the practice of burial *ad sanctos* benefits departed souls. Contrary to the claims of Virgil in the *Aeneid*, the burial of the dead is not necessary for departed souls to cross over into the afterlife. Such a belief not only fails to account for the numerous souls of those who have died in wars; it fails to account for the bodies of the martyrs that were unable to be buried. Some martyrs were torn apart or devoured by wild beasts, others were cast into the sea, others were burned to ashes and scattered. Surely their lack of burial would not prevent them from entering the paradise they most certainly merited by their disregard for this life and their love of eternal life. Jesus, after all, taught his disciples to fear not those who could only harm the body, but the one who could throw body and soul into eternal fire.<sup>862</sup>

The eternal destination of one's soul, then, is not determined by what happens *to* one's body, but by what one *does* while in the body. Neither the actions done to one's dead body, the location of its burial, nor a lack of burial in any way inhibits resurrection, "for the presence of the one who knows from where to revive that which he has created fills all of heaven and earth."<sup>863</sup> Neither torture of the already dead bodies of martyrs by beasts or savage human beings nor a lack of burial would "lessen the Christian joy of the dead" or "work to the harm even of their very bodies to prevent their rising intact."<sup>864</sup> If such abuse of dead bodies were to affect one's

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<sup>862</sup> *cura mort.* 2.3–4. See Matthew 10.8. See van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 495.

<sup>863</sup> *cura mort.* 2.4 (CSEL 41:626): "...quam totam inplet praesentia sui, qui nouit unde resuscitet quod creauit."

<sup>864</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* 6.8. (CSEL 41: 634, trans. Lacy, FC, *The Care to be Taken for the Dead*, 27, 362): "...nihil quo minueretur christiana defunctorum felicitas fieret, nihil inde ad sensum post mortem uiuentium perueniret, nihil ad detrimentum saltem ipsorum corporum, quo minus integra resurgerent, pertineret."

destination in the immediate afterlife or in eternity, God would not have permitted it. He allows this mistreatment of the faithful dead to teach the living to hate this life and love the next.<sup>865</sup>

God's power to bring a departed soul into a postmortem repose or to raise the dead is not limited by the actions or inactions done to the bodies of the departed faithful and martyrs.

To be sure, Augustine argues that burial *ought* to be done for the martyrs and all of the faithful whenever possible for four main reasons. First of all, burial of the dead brings “more of a consolation for the living than assistance for the dead.”<sup>866</sup> Second, burial of the dead is a sign that God cares for the body, and scripture shows that God honors such acts of piety.<sup>867</sup> Third, the body is an essential element to human nature. The soul uses the body to perform holy actions. Loved ones often cherish rings, garments, and other ornaments of their departed loved one; how much more ought they to care for their loved one's body?<sup>868</sup> Bodies, after all, are not mere disposable ornaments or external supports for the soul; rather, bodies “are proper to human nature itself.”<sup>869</sup> When Christians care for a dead body, then, they honor its very humanity. The fourth main reason for burial is eschatological in nature. It demonstrates a “firm faith in the resurrection of the dead.”<sup>870</sup> Though departed souls currently lack a body, on the last day, the

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<sup>865</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* 6.8.

<sup>866</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* 2.4 (CSEL 41: 626): “...magis sunt vivorum solacia quam subsidia mortuorum.”

<sup>867</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* 2.4. Augustine specifically cites Tobias's burial of the dead, the woman who poured expensive perfume on Jesus before his death, and those who took Jesus's body down from the cross and buried it. See Tobit 2:9, 12:12; Matthew 26:7–13; John 19:38.

<sup>868</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* 3.5.

<sup>869</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* 3.5 (CSEL 41:627): “haec enim non ad ornamentum uel adiutorium, quod adhibetur extrinsecus, sed ad ipsam naturam hominis pertinent.” C.f. *mor.* 4; *ciu.* 9.9.

<sup>870</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* 2.5 (CSEL 41: 628): “...corpora quoque mortuorum pertinere significant propter fidem resurrectionis astruendam.”

Lord will raise the dead and transfigure the bodies of the righteous into the glory of Christ's own body. Burial, then, is a sign of this eschatological hope.

A lavish burial, however, even near the tomb of a famous martyr like Felix the Confessor, will by no means aid the departed soul of one who lived wickedly. In the same way, a lack of burial for faithful Christians or martyrs, such as those brutally murdered in the sack of Rome, those devoured by beasts, or those cast into the sea, will not inhibit their passage into eternal rest. The departed faithful are neither grieved by, harmed by, or even cognizant of any such lack; rather they remain in a peaceful repose "in the hidden resting places of the devout."<sup>871</sup>

The advantage of the practice of burial *ad sanctos* primarily depends not only upon the merit of the deeds performed by the departed while in their mortal bodies, but also upon the prayers of the living offered on behalf of the dead. For Augustine, the commemorative practices of offering the Eucharist, alms, and prayers on behalf of the departed faithful bring aid to the spirits of the dead who lived in a manner worthy of such aid.<sup>872</sup> Though I am focusing on *cura mort.*, a sermon of Augustine preached on 1 Thessalonians 4:13 about the afterlife on an unknown provides additional insight into the bishop's understanding of the benefit of these practices:

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<sup>871</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* 3.5 (CSEL 41: 629): "...non efficiunt miseros in occultis piorum sedibus iam quietos!" Augustine is unclear here whether *all* of the faithful dead or just *some* of the faithful dead enjoy this peaceful repose immediately after death. His main point here seems to be that what is done to the bodies of the faithful dead does not inhibit their passage into or bring them any sort of harm or grief in the next life.

<sup>872</sup> Such practices were already in place during Tertullian and Cyprian's time. For almsgiving, see Tertullian, *De monogomia.* 10.4; Cyprian, *ep.* 1.2.1. Cyprian specifically mentions that the offering is made with the Eucharist. See Rose, *Rhetoric in Practice*, 36.n26; H. Kotila, *Memoria Mortuorum: Commemoration of the Departed in Augustine*, (Roma: Institutum Patristicum "Augustinianum," 1992), 51. Augustine believed that such practices ought to be done only on behalf of the baptized. See Augustine, *De anima et eius origine* 2.11.15. See Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead*, 169. Rebillard discusses these commemorative practices in other early eastern and western Christian writers.

It is not to be doubted, though, that the dead are helped by the prayers of [the] holy Church, the salutary sacrifice, and alms distributed on behalf of their spirits; so that they may dealt with them more mercifully by the Lord than their sins have deserved.<sup>873</sup>

The eternal benefit, then, includes receiving mercy from God in the next life.<sup>874</sup> Having inherited these practices from the fathers, the church does not vainly perform these actions on behalf of those “who have died in the communion of the body and blood of Christ.”<sup>875</sup> These supplications involved 1) the mentioning of the names of these departed loved ones at the Eucharistic altar in a given location and 2) the mentioning that the Eucharist was offered for them.<sup>876</sup> Even if specific names are not voiced, the unnamed faithful dead still receive the benefit of such supplications in

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<sup>873</sup> s. 172.2.2; (PL 38: 936, modified trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/5, 252): “orationibus uero sanctae ecclesiae, et sacrificio salutari, et eleemosynis, quae pro eorum spiritibus erogantur, non est dubitandum mortuos adiuuari, ut cum eis misericordius agatur a domino, quam eorum peccate meruerunt.” Augustine here also limits the benefit of these practices to those whose works were worthy of such aid. See Rose, *Rhetoric in Practice*, 32n16; Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead*, 170. Tertullian and Cyprian mention offerings in commemoration of the dead. Tertullian, *De corona militatis* 3.3; *De exhortatione castitatis* 11; *De monogomia* 10. Cyprian, *ep.* 1.2.1–2. See Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead*, 153–157.

<sup>874</sup> He also mentions the benefits of such prayers for the dead in *ench.* 29.109–110 and *Dulc. qu.* 2.1–4. In these works, he clarifies that the benefit can include either total forgiveness of sins or relief from punishment. He does not clarify whether this forgiveness or relief occurs in the immediate afterlife or at the final judgment. In light of the works examined here and statements he makes in *ciu.* about the fire of 1 Cor. 3 (see below), he seems to indicate that the benefits apply at the last judgement. What also is not clear is whether punitive relief applies only to the worthy dead in need of further purification or perhaps even to the wicked in hell, such that their condemnation is hell is lessened, but not removed. As Hill notes, in *en. Ps.* 105.3, “Augustine cautiously offers the hypothesis that the divine mercy may alleviate the punishments of some of the damned, without removing them completely (Bruce Harbert, WSA, *On Christian Belief: The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Charity*, I/8, 345n191). For other references to the post-mortem rest of the faithful and punishment of the wicked, see *conf.* IX.3.6, *trin.* XV.25.45; *ciu.* XII.9.2; XIII.8; s. 280.5. References taken from Harbert, *The Enchiridion*, 345n190.

<sup>875</sup> s. 172.2.2 (PL 38: 936, trans. Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, 252): “Hoc enim a patribus traditum uniuersa obseruat ecclesia ut pro eis qui in corporis et sanguinis Christi communione defuncti sunt, cum ad ipsum sacrificium loco suo commemorantur, oretur ac pro illis quoque id offerri commemoretur.”

<sup>876</sup> s. 172.2.2. Augustine also adds here the performing good deeds on behalf of the dead. How these good deeds differ from almsgiving is not clear. For other references in Augustine to the recitation of the names of the dead in Augustine’s time, see s. 359.6; *ep.* 78.4; *conf.* 9.11.27 and 9.12.30. The names of the martyrs, because they were already perfected, were not recited; rather, the faithful sought the prayers of the martyrs: s.159.1; 284.5; 297.2.3; 273.7). See Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead*, 157–161. Also, as Rose notes, archaeological discoveries reveal prayers for the names of individuals written on burial epitaphs. See Rose, *Rhetoric in Practice*, 35 and n25. Rose cites U. Volp, *Tod und Ritual in den christlichen Gemeinden der Antike* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 232 and n580; Yvette Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*, 185 sqq. For more on the liturgical practice of the funerary Eucharist, see Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead*, 134–139. The Eucharist was celebrated at both Monica’s and Augustine’s burials. See *conf.* 9.12.32; Possidius, *Life of Augustine* 31.5.

the general commemoration of the dead.<sup>877</sup> Though not all of the dead benefit, since not all lived lives worthy of such aid, “it is better that these [prayers and alms] be performed in abundance for those to whom they neither hinder nor profit, than that they be lacking for those who do profit.”<sup>878</sup> If the benefit of burial *ad sanctos* lies in the acts of offering the Eucharist, prayers, and alms on behalf of the spirits of the departed—acts that technically could be performed in any location with a Eucharistic altar—what advantage, then, is burying the departed loved one near the tombs of the martyrs?

### ***Advantages of Burial Location***

Contrary to the statements of some scholars, burying a loved one near the martyrs’ tombs for Augustine is not superfluous; rather, it enhances the efficacy of the commemorative practices via its memorial nature. Some scholars tend to present Augustine’s emphasis on the memorial value of burial *ad sanctos* as an indication that the bishop regards proximity to the body of a martyr as either secondary or of no real benefit at all.<sup>879</sup> Such views undermine Augustine’s own

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<sup>877</sup> *cura mort.* 4.6. See Rose, *Rhetoric in Practice*, 34.

<sup>878</sup> *cura mort.* 18.22. (CSEL 41: 658): “Melius enim supererunt ista eis, quibus nec obsunt nec prosunt, quam eis deerunt, quibus prosunt.” See Rose, *Rhetoric in Practice*, 32n14. As Rose notes, Augustine is not clear in this particular passage whether the Eucharistic celebration for the dead was incorporated into the ecclesial liturgy or performed privately in the company of family (*Rhetoric in Practice*, 32). In *cura mort.* 1.3, however, Augustine speaks of a general liturgical commemoration given by the priest (*Rhetoric in Practice*, 33n18).

<sup>879</sup> Peter Brown, for example, plainly states, “Burial beside the saints [for Augustine] did nothing whatsoever to aid the soul. All that such prominent burial did was to jog the memory of the bereaved by reminding them to resort with yet greater fervor to the traditional means of helping the departed—prayers to God and to the saints, almsgiving, and mention of the dead at the Eucharist” (*The Ransom of the Soul*, 78–79). Paula J. Rose argues that burial *ad sanctos* is “secondary, whereas prayers form the most important commemoration ritual; *depositio ad sanctos* is no more than a stimulus for the intensification of the prayers” (*Rhetoric in Practice*, 36). Rebillard says that Augustine sees burial near the martyrs as “useful only to the extent that the proximity might encourage the prayers of their loved ones.” (*Care of the Dead*, 86). Burns and Jensen say that for Augustine “physical proximity to the remains of a martyr brought no particular religious benefit...[it] might remind the surviving relatives, as well as pilgrims to the shrine, to pray for divine mercy upon the deceased who were buried there” (*Roman Africa*, 544).

statements on *why* and *how* the burial *ad sanctos* benefits both the living and the dead via its memorial nature. In order to help explain the significance of the various elements of *burial ad sanctos*, for Augustine, I distinguish its ‘spatial’ and ‘commemorative’ aspects. The spatial aspects include the act of burying a loved one near the tomb of a martyr and subsequent visits of living relatives to that burial site, where a Eucharistic altar or *mensa* was present.<sup>880</sup> The commemorative aspects include the devotional, faith-filled offerings of prayer, alms, and the Eucharist and the commending of their departed loved ones to the martyrs.<sup>881</sup>

Though the spatial aspects on their own profit nothing without the commemorative aspects, the two together offer important benefits to both the living and the dead. Regardless of how holy a particular burial site is, location of burial “would be of no profit” to the spirits of the dead without the commemorative aspects.<sup>882</sup> This is not to say that Augustine regards the spatial aspects of burial *ad sanctos* as unnecessary or unimportant. The spatial elements stir the living faithful to engage in the commemorative elements—i.e., to contribute their prayers and to

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<sup>880</sup> Each memorial shrine included a *mensa* (table) where the Eucharist was celebrated, see Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 530. For more on archaeological finds of inscriptions on these *mensae*, see Duval, *Loca sanctorum Africa*, 2:331–37, no. 157; Lander, *Ritual Sites and Religious Rivalries in Late Roman North Africa*, 97–99.

<sup>881</sup> Using ‘spatial’ and ‘commemorative’ as categories certainly has its limitations. The act of burial itself is a commemorative act. However, Augustine spends a significant amount of time distinguishing between the location of burial and the ‘commemorative’ practices I have mentioned. I considered using ‘material’ and ‘spiritual’ aspects, respectively, but these categories seem to create more problems. After all, the prayers of the living could also be considered material because they involve the body’s physical acts of kneeling, bowing, raising hands, and speaking (even though, as Augustine says, prayers may be offered in silent devotion). The prayers of the martyrs in heaven, however, currently lack material bodies; thus, to call the prayers of the martyrs “material” would be incorrect. Moreover, the people in engaging in burial *ad sanctos* would likely have seen every aspect of the practice as spiritual in that they regarded each aspect as beneficial to their own spirits, the spirits of the dead, and as spiritual devotion to God.

<sup>882</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* 4.6 (CSEL 41:629): “si autem deessent istae supplicationes, quae fiunt recta fide ac pietate pro mortuis, puto, quod nihil prodesset spiritibus eorum, quamlibet locis santis exanima corpora ponerentur.” He reiterates the necessary condition of the departed having committed deeds in the body worthy of aid in the next life.

commend the dead to the martyrs.<sup>883</sup> The prayers of the living combined with the prayers of the righteous martyrs on behalf of the departed souls are powerful and effective.<sup>884</sup>

Though the offering of alms, the Eucharist, and prayers on behalf of the dead can be done in any church, the memorial shrines call the living to a devotional recollection of the merits of the martyrs. This recollection reminds the faithful to pray for their departed loved ones and commend the departed to the prayers of the martyrs, “as it were to patrons” (*tamquam patronis*).<sup>885</sup> The memorials work in the living an affectionate memory which results in their loving, faith-filled prayers on behalf of the dead. Such prayers, Augustine says, ought to be offered for all of the faithful dead regardless of where they were buried.<sup>886</sup> However, the memorials keep the memory of the dead and the efficacy of the prayers of the martyrs alive in the minds of the living. The devout mother Flora could (and should) pray for her departed son no matter where he is buried. To be sure, it is her devotion and frequent prayers that aid her son’s soul, not the place where he is buried. Nonetheless, the proximity of her son’s body to the memorial stirs her to pray for her son and commend him to the martyrs more frequently and more fervently.<sup>887</sup>

Also, visiting her son’s burial site benefits Flora’s own soul: her inward love and affection for both her son and the martyr Felix that her son’s burial site stirs in her are “by no

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<sup>883</sup> Augustine places priority on the deeds that the departed commit while alive in their mortal bodies. This is the primary necessary condition for the benefit of burial *ad sanctos*. Without it, the other elements of burial *ad sanctos* are of no effect. The greatest benefit, however, occurs when all three of these elements are in place.

<sup>884</sup> See James 5:16.

<sup>885</sup> *cura mort.* 4.6 (CSEL 41:630).

<sup>886</sup> Augustine is speaking generally here. As discussed above, he says in this work that some of the dead live such good lives that they need no further assistance from the prayers of the living.

<sup>887</sup> *cura mort.* 5.7 (CSEL 41: 361): “et quod ad idem sepulcrum recurrit animo et filium precibus magis magisque commendat, adiuuat defuncti spiritum non mortui corporis locus, sed ex loci memoria uiuus matris affectus.

means unprofitable” (*non utique infructuose*).<sup>888</sup> Just as the bodily actions performed in prayer, such as bowing, kneeling, or raising the hands, benefit one’s soul by inclining one to a more fervent devotion, the bodily action of Flora visiting her son’s burial site near a memorial shrine likewise impacts and thus benefits her soul.<sup>889</sup> Therefore, the spatial aspects of burial *ad sanctos* are not superfluous, but very important and beneficial:

Indeed, then, it is a matter of *very great importance* where one buries the body of his dead relative. And when one supplicates God in behalf of some dear soul after his devotion has chosen a holy place and there has buried the body, the recollection of the holy place renews and increases the devotion of [the one] who selected the place.<sup>890</sup>

For Augustine, therefore, the memorial nature of burial *ad sanctos* makes the physical proximity of the departed to a martyr all the more important. The spatial and commemorative aspects of burial *ad sanctos* are deeply interconnected, and the greatest advantage for both the living and the dead occurs when both aspects are present.<sup>891</sup> Without the spatial aspects, the frequency and fervency of the living’s prayers and commending of the departed soul to the martyrs might be greatly neglected. Without the commemorative aspects, the spatial aspects are of no effect.<sup>892</sup>

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<sup>888</sup> *cura mort.* 5.7 (CSEL 41: 631).

<sup>889</sup> *cura mort.* 5.7. Augustine acknowledges that those that have bodily limitations may still offer fervent and affection prayers that God sees; nonetheless, the visible demonstrations of invisible devotion are efficacious.

<sup>890</sup> *cura mort.* 5.7 (CSEL 41: 632, trans. Lacy, FC, *The Care to be Taken for the Dead*, 27, 360–61, emphasis mine). “ita etiam cum plurimum intersit, ubi ponat corpus mortui sui, qui pro spiritu eius deo supplicat, quia et praecedens affectus locum elegit sanctum et illic copore posito recordatus locus sanctus eum qui praecessaert renouat et auget affectum, tamen etiamsi non possit ubi religious animus elegit humare quem diligit...” To be sure, he goes on to say that prayers ought to be offered for the departed even if it is not possible to choose the desired burial site.

<sup>891</sup> This is not to say that Augustine thinks every Christian should be buried near the tomb of a martyr. The martyrs themselves, after all, did not receive such an opportunity. Burial near a martyr, however, has memorial benefits that are not otherwise present.

<sup>892</sup> For a detailed study of both written and non-written evidence for early Christian beliefs about the benefit of burying loved ones near the tomb of a martyr, including physical protection from robbers and demons, assistance to a departed soul in the interim period prior to the resurrection, and assistance at the last judgment, see Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme*. For a brief summary, see Rose, *Rhetoric in Practice*, 38–39.



More insight into Augustine's understanding of the afterlife, the interaction between the living and the dead, and the impact of the prayers of the martyrs on one's eternity arises in his response to the numerous contemporary claims of being visited by a martyr in a vision or dream, often to reveal the location of the martyr's relics. Augustine by no means dismisses the veracity of the reports of such experiences. On the contrary, he generally affirms the authenticity of such accounts.<sup>893</sup> Nonetheless, the truth of such claims, he holds, does not confirm the way in which these instances are commonly *interpreted*. Many considered these experiences as visits from the actual souls of the martyrs, leading people to believe that the martyrs in heaven are consciously aware of—and involved in—particular states of affairs on earth. This is no surprise given the popularity of this view that had been circulating in North Africa in the form of *passiones* for the past two centuries. Tertullian and Cyprian had maintained no direct stance on this matter, as far as we know. Augustine, however, unashamedly rejects this common belief.<sup>894</sup>

For Augustine, the martyrs in heaven remain in a peaceful repose in which they are generally unaware of the state of affairs of the living faithful. This is easily confirmed, he reasons, by the fact that many people have reported having dreams and visions of the living. When such a dream or vision occurs, however, these living persons are never aware of their own supposed visitations.<sup>895</sup> Consequently, the 'appearances' of the living or the dead in a vision or

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<sup>893</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* X.12. Augustine was immersed in a world where visions and dreams were rampant. He always affirmed that God communicated to persons in such a manner. See *ep.* 158 and 159, where Augustine engages in an exchange with Bishop Evodius some years earlier (414/415) about dreams and visions that many have of the departed faithful. For a discussion of this exchange, see Brown, *The Ransom of the Soul*, 70–74. For Augustine's detailed discussion of various types of visions, see *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim* 12.6.15–12.12.26.

<sup>894</sup> Augustine's rejection of this belief is in stark contrast to Prudentius. For Prudentius, the faithful are to throw themselves at the tombs of martyrs, weeping and beseeching their prayers because "they listen to our prayer and immediately carry it to the ear of the everlasting king...." See Prudentius, *Peristephanon* I.16–20, trans. and quoted in Eno, *Saint Augustine and the Saints*, 37.

<sup>895</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* X.12. See Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 546–547.

dream is most likely done “by the operation of angels.”<sup>896</sup> Though God may permit *images* of the martyrs to appear to someone and reveal the location of their bodily remains, the martyrs themselves have no knowledge of their supposed appearance.<sup>897</sup>

Generally speaking, Augustine argues, the dead are unconscious of the affairs of the living. The dead are either suffering for their wicked deeds or enjoying a peaceful repose for their good deeds done in the body.<sup>898</sup> Departed souls resting peacefully are undisturbed and undergo no harm, evil, or even “compassionate suffering for others”: instead, they “are liberated from all evils” that they endured during their mortal life.<sup>899</sup> To be sure, the martyrs in heaven pray for the pilgrim church while “in a state of utmost repose, far away from us for seeing other much better visions....”<sup>900</sup>

Despite his pointed stance on the matter, Augustine does admit a few instances in which the departed may have knowledge of and interaction with the affairs of the living. After all, God is God, and he can do as he pleases. Recently departed individuals may report certain affairs to

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<sup>896</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* X.12 (CSEL 41:640): “angelicis igitur operationibus fieri cederim...”

<sup>897</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* X.12. Such dreams led to the building of many unauthenticated martyr shrines. In 401, the Council of Carthage decreed that shrines erected solely on the basis of a vision or dream with no verifiable relics were to be destroyed. *Council of Carthage* (401), canon. 83. Ed. C. Munier, *Corpus Christianorum* 149 (Turnhold: Brepols, 1974), 204–205. See Brown, *The Ransom of the Soul*, 75–76; van Bavel, “The Cult of the Martyrs,” 352.

<sup>898</sup> C.f. *Conf.* IX.3.6. In Augustine’s discourse on his departed friend Nebridius, he says that the faithful dead must be mindful of the living faithful in some sense. Departed Christians are in Abraham’s bosom, and they are inebriated with God’s wisdom and joy. Since God is mindful of the living faithful, then surely those imbibing God’s wisdom are as well.

<sup>899</sup> *cura mort.* 13.16 (CSEL 41: 649, trans. Lacy, FC, *The Care to be Taken for the Dead*, 27, 375): “...ubi mala ulla nec patiendo nec conpatiendo sustineant, liberati ab omnibus malis, quae patiendo et conpatiendo, cum hic uiuerent, sustinebant.” See also *ciu.* XIII.9. Augustine also affirms this intermediary place of rest for the righteous and punishment for the wicked in *ench.* 29.109. Augustine refers to death as a deep sleep (*s.* 98.2 and 221.3) and a dead body as a house void of its occupant (*s.* 65.5). See Rose, *Rhetoric in Practice*, 25–43. See also Potthoff, *Afterlife*, 147–150.

<sup>900</sup> *cura mort.* 17.21 (CSEL 41: 657): “...in summa quiete positus et ad alia longe meliora uisa seorsum a nobis orantibusque pro nobis....”

the souls they encounter upon their entrance into heaven. Angels, likewise, may report information to the departed regarding the living as God wills.<sup>901</sup> Also, God on occasion may—and in fact does, at times—decide to cause certain martyrs or departed faithful to actually visit the living to offer strength or wisdom. The Scriptures affirm such exceptional occasions. The departed Samuel visited Saul, and the departed Moses and Elijah visited Jesus. Paul, moreover, while living visited the Third Heaven. If God at times sends the living to visit the dead in heaven, why wouldn't the departed, at times, be sent by God to visit the living on earth?<sup>902</sup>

Contemporary events also persuade Augustine that the dead occasionally intervene in the affairs of the living via divine power. First of all, he is convinced of the veracity of reports given by “reliable eye-witnesses” (*testibus certis*) that Felix the Confessor appeared during the siege of Nola.<sup>903</sup> Such instances, however, are the rare exception, not the general occurrence. Jesus’s miracles of turning water into wine and raising of Lazarus from the dead in no way indicate that all water naturally and regularly transforms to wine or that all the dead are raised whenever they wish. Likewise, the appearance of the dead to the living is not a regular, natural occurrence, but “a rare, in fact, an isolated instance of such divine operation.”<sup>904</sup> Second, the martyrs at times may heal or aid certain individuals when their prayers are beseeched in memorial shrines, but such isolated instances do not mean that *any* of the dead (including the martyrs) can interact in

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<sup>901</sup> *cura mort.* 15.18.

<sup>902</sup> *cura mort.* 15.18.

<sup>903</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* 16.19 (CSEL 41: 652).

<sup>904</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* 16.19 (CSEL 41: 653, trans. Lacy, FC, *The Care to be Taken for the Dead*, 27, 378): “...ab istius divini operis raritate vel potius singularitate....”

the affairs of the living *at any time*. The martyrs' ability to intervene in the affairs of the living occurs "through divine power," not through their own power.<sup>905</sup>

This last instance, however, raises a question Augustine is hesitant to answer firmly. When someone invokes the martyrs' intercession at a memorial shrine and subsequently receives healing or aid in some way, have the martyrs *themselves* come to intervene? Or is this occurrence the working of angels who may at times appear as martyrs? Perhaps both options are viable, he says; i.e., perhaps there are times when the martyrs themselves intervene and other times when the angels appear as martyrs. Augustine defers such questions to those with a special endowment of "the gift of discernment of spirits," which "is the gift that enables one to know things just as they should be known."<sup>906</sup>

In summary, Augustine's response to Paulinus in *cura mort.* addresses the question of the impact of the prayers of the martyrs on one's eternity from a focus on the immediate afterlife and the future resurrection of the dead. Without this eschatological grounding, praying for the departed, commending the departed to the prayers of the martyrs, and the practice of burial *ad sanctos* can easily be misunderstood and even practiced in vain. With this perspective, however, an individual can be greatly aided by these practices. This eschatological focus, for Augustine, also helps make sense of postmortem martyr sightings and healing miracles. He expands upon

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<sup>905</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* 16.19 (CSEL 41: 653): "...quod per diuinam potentiam martyres uiuorum rebus intersunt, quoniam defuncti per naturam propriam uiuorum rebus interesse non possunt."

<sup>906</sup> Augustine, *cura mort.* 16.20 (CSEL 41: 655, trans. Lacy, FC, *The Care to be Taken for the Dead*, 27, 380): "cuicumque data est diiudicatio spirituum, ipse scit ista sicut scienda sunt." One such individual, he continues, is a man named John the Monk. The monk claims that he told the husband of a woman eager to see him that she would see the monk in her dreams that very night. The woman verified that such occurred. Augustine regards the monk as a reliable and believable man, yet he wishes he could have questioned the monk further on the matter. See *cura mort.* 17.21.

his eschatological understanding of the phenomena of healings miracles at martyr shrines and the intercession of the martyrs on behalf of the faithful in *De ciuitate dei*.

### **The End-time Martyrs, the Intercession of the Saints, and Miracles in *De ciuitate dei***

In the final books of *De ciuitate dei*, completed by 426–27,<sup>907</sup> Augustine continues to develop his understanding of martyrdom, martyr veneration, and the eternal impact of the prayers of the martyrs in view of eschatology. The return of Christ, the afterlife, and the resurrection of the dead ground his understanding of these martyrological topics.

#### ***The End-time Martyrs (Book XX)***

Though the church in Augustine’s time lived in relative peace, the bishop reminds his readers in Book XX that martyrdom is not merely a relic of the past. In the final events of this present age, martyrdom will occur in an unprecedented measure. The last things include the coming of Elijah the Tishbite, the conversion of the remnant of the Jews, the persecution of the Antichrist, the judgment of Christ, the rising of the dead, the separation of the righteous from the wicked, and the renewal of the heavens and the earth. All of these are literal, future events that the faithful are compelled to believe will in fact occur.<sup>908</sup> Though the manner and order in which these events will occur, Augustine believes they will follow this sequence that he outlines.<sup>909</sup>

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<sup>907</sup> Following this dating, which is held by the majority of scholarship, places the completion of the final books of *ciu.* after *cura mort.* See O’Daly, *Augustine’s City of God*, 36; David Vincent Meconi, “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine’s City of God*, ed. David Vincent Meconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 1–18.

<sup>908</sup> *ciu.* XX. 30 (CCSL 48: 758): “Quae omni quidem uentura esse credeum est...”

<sup>909</sup> *Ibid.*

To be sure, Augustine is no chiliast.<sup>910</sup> He understands various portions of the events described in Revelation 20 as occurring at different times of redemptive history. The binding of Satan is a past event that occurred at Christ's death and resurrection and continues until his release just prior to the second coming of Christ.<sup>911</sup> The first resurrection of the saints that the book of Revelation describes likewise occurred at this time and initiated the one-thousand-year reign of the saints. The one thousand years are not literal. They indicate either 1) the *final portion* of the sixth age, which consist of an unknown number of years that was inaugurated by Christ's first coming and culminates in a final, seventh age of the eternal sabbath rest of the saints; or 2) the *entirety* of this sixth age.<sup>912</sup>

The mention of the martyrs in Revelation 20 reveals their present and future role in human history. Though the martyrs have died, they are still included in the church, which is the

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<sup>910</sup> 'Millennialism,' or 'chiliasm,' which regards the one thousand years of Revelation as a literal, future reign of Christ on the earth, was challenged as early as Clement of Rome. See Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Future Hope in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). For an overview of Origen's refutation of millennialism, see Hill, *Regnum Caelorum*, 127–141. This source was republished in 2001 as Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001). As Markus, O'Daly, and Daley note, Augustine seems to have previously upheld a millennialism view (see *s.* 259.2) that he later rejected. R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*; Brian Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>911</sup> The event, then, lasts until the end of the present age. During this time, Satan still deceives many, but he is unable to deceive the church. Augustine admits that Satan still deceives the baptized, but Satan is unable to deceive unto eternal damnation those predestined to salvation. The logical implication is that those in the church that are not among the predestined, however, can and will be deceived unto such damnation. See *ciu.*, XX.7–8. Moreover, Satan's binding means that "he is not permitted to exert his full power of temptation, whether by force or by guile, to deceive people into his own party either by compelling them with violence or by duping them with illusion." *ciu.*, XX.8 (CCSL 48: 713, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 445): "...sed alligatio diaboli est non permitti exerere totam temptationem, quam potest uel ui uel dolo ad seducendos homines in partem suam cogendo uilenter fraudulenterue fallendo."

<sup>912</sup> Both possibilities locate the millennium in the sixth age. Augustine seems to favor the second view. He outlines the seven ages in *ciu.* XX.30. See O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God*, 212. The church, then, which Augustine identifies with the kingdom of God, has been reigning with Christ since his first coming. In this kingdom of God, both the righteous and sinners presently dwell, but the two will be separated like wheat and tares at the end of the age. Though the tares grow alongside the wheat in the present age, they neither reign with Christ in this age nor in the next. The reign of the saints will be become magnified after the last judgment, but in the meantime they reign with Christ. *ciu.* XX.9.

kingdom of God.<sup>913</sup> Death does not separate the martyrs or any of the departed faithful from the living faithful who comprise the kingdom of God; both reign with Christ during this figurative millennium and both remain members of Christ and rulers in the kingdom of God.<sup>914</sup> Proof of this belief in the church lies in its practice of commemorating the faithful at the Eucharistic celebration.<sup>915</sup> *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. Though this passage in the Book of Revelation specifically mentions the martyrs, the martyrs are representative of all of the faithful dead. Therefore, all of the living faithful and departed faithful—whether martyrs or not—reign with Christ in the present age.<sup>916</sup>

In addition, Revelation 20 demonstrates that the bloodshed of the martyrs is not an icon of the past; the martyrs will again shed their blood in the worst persecution that the church will have ever experienced. At the close of the sixth age, Satan will be unbound. There will be a final three-and-a-half year period where Satan will “rage with all his powers.”<sup>917</sup> Moreover, love will grow cold, iniquity will abound, and many will fall prey to “unprecedented and overwhelming persecutions and deceptions of the devil” that will occur through a human tyrant called the

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<sup>913</sup> *ciu.* XX.9 (CCSL 48: 715): “...profecto non etiam nunc diceretur ecclesia regnum eius regnumue caelorum.”

<sup>914</sup> *ciu.* XX.9. Revelation 20:4 specifically names the souls of the martyrs as those who reign with Christ. This passage, Augustine says, speaks of the souls of the martyrs who have not yet received a resurrected body.

<sup>915</sup> *ciu.* XX.9. Augustine seems to be speaking of commemorating the faithful dead, not the martyrs. However, the same principle would apply. Invoking the prayers of the martyrs indicates that they are still members of Christ’s body and reign with Christ as the kingdom of God.

<sup>916</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>917</sup> *ciu.* XX.8; (CCSL 48: 714, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 404): “Vtrum autem etiam illis ultimis tribus annis et mensibus sex, quando solutus totis uiribus saeuiturus est, aliquis, in qua non fuerat, sit accessurus ad finem, nonnulla quaestio est.”

Antichrist.<sup>918</sup> This final persecution will demonstrate the complete malignance of Satan and the perseverance of the saints.<sup>919</sup> The war of the two cities will break out across the entire earth, such that “whole city of Christ will suffer...at the hands of the whole city of the devil...”<sup>920</sup> This final persecution, then, will not be local or regional like many of the persecutions in the early church. It will be more akin to the Decian and Diocletian persecutions which were empire-wide in scale. Christians across of the entire earth will suffer for their testimony to Christ at the hands of the demonically influenced rulers. Following this final three-and-a-half year period of unprecedented trouble and persecution, the devil will be judged and the faithful dead will rise from the grave to rule and reign with Christ forever.<sup>921</sup>

Though Augustine does not say this explicitly here, one can infer that this eschatological reality of martyrdom makes martyr veneration more than a commemoration of the virtues and sufferings and even more than a present exhortation for the faithful to imitate those virtues. With the consummation of all things in view, martyr veneration becomes a preparation for the future in which the entire church will suffer what the martyrs of the past suffered. Liturgical feast days, memorial shrines, and relics, therefore, call the church to remember the love of eternal life that

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<sup>918</sup> *ciu.* XX.8; (CCSL 48: 715, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 404): “Sicut enim fatendum est multorum refrigescere caritatem, cum abundat iniquitas, et inusitatis maximis que persecutionibus atque fallaciis diaboli iam soluti eos, qui in libro uitae scripti non sunt, multos esse cessuros...”

<sup>919</sup> *ciu.* XX.30.

<sup>920</sup> *ciu.* XX.9; (CCSL 48: 720, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 410. Add Latin. “...quam sancta ecclesia toto terrarium orbe patietur, scilicet ciuitas Christi ab uiuersa diaboli ciuitate, quantacumque erit utraque super terram.”

<sup>921</sup> *ciu.* XX.13. Augustine makes no indication that this three-and-a-half years is a figurative time frame. In fact, he seems quite clear that the time frame is literal, based on its recurring appearance in the Book of Revelation and the Book of Daniel. This period directly follows the figurative one thousand years but precedes the second coming of Christ. O’Daly agrees that Augustine sees this time frame as literal (*Augustine’s City of God*, 212). It does seem inconsistent for Augustine to take this time frame literally and the one thousand year time frame figuratively, but that is a matter that goes beyond the scope of this dissertation.



the martyrs demonstrated in the past, to imitate that love in the present, and to be ready to suffer for that love in the future. As a result, the various practices of martyr veneration have potential to prepare the church for the greatest persecution it will face.

### ***The Intercession of the Saints (Book XXI)***

Augustine further grounds the meaning of martyrdom and martyr veneration in his understanding of eschatology in Book XXI of *De ciuitate dei*. In this book, Augustine's understanding of the impact of the prayers of the martyrs on an individual's eternity arises explicitly. He grounds his position in his understanding of how God's mercy relates to divine justice in the eternal punishment of the devil, demons, and wicked human beings. At the resurrection, the wicked will rise to receive new bodies that will *consciously* and *eternally* suffer the torments of "eternal flames" in both the body and the soul "without being dissolved by death"<sup>922</sup> In these eternal flames, there is no hope for the soul to escape this pain because at the resurrection, one's soul and body are eternally joined together.<sup>923</sup> Augustine's view on the

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<sup>922</sup> *ciu.* XXI.2 (CCSL 48: 759, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 449): "...posse human corpora animate atque uiuentia non solum numquam morte dissolui, sed in aeternorum quoque ignium durare tormentis?"

<sup>923</sup> *ciu.* XXI.3. Unlike the first death, which separates body and soul, no amount of pain in the second death will dissolve the union of body and soul. Augustine realizes that others, such as the pagan Celsus, have rejected this view. In nature, they argue, there exist no solid, visible bodies (whether human or non-human) capable of experiencing pain that do not at some point die and cease to have bodily sensations. The bishop's firmness on the materiality of resurrected bodies and the eternal fire of punishment is evident as he spends eight chapters explicating the natural, philosophical, and theological possibility of a material body continually experiencing such torment. He could have simply stated his counter argument in XXI.3 that individuals who make such an objection are basing their views on their limited experience with mortal flesh. However, in his customary fashion, he strikes down opposing viewpoints as thoroughly as possible while still attempting to remain focused on the matter at hand. Natural wonders that cause one to consider the possibility of bodies burning without being destroyed include straw, the effects of fire on various substances like wood, stones, charcoal, limes, diamonds, the lodestone, silver, magnets, Agrigentine salt, and, believe it or not, a roast peacock! He also cites the supposed works of sorcerers and demons. Ultimately, Augustine argues, the one true God who created the universe possesses the power to create or alter nature as he wills. See *ciu.* XXI.2–9. For the development of Augustine's view on the nature of resurrected bodies, see Isabelle Bochet, "Resurrectio," in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, ed. Robert Dodaro, Cornelius Mayer, and Christof

materiality of resurrected bodies further demonstrates his denial of Platonic notions of the body as an evil, or at best an accommodation. On the contrary, the human person is most complete when the soul is joined together with the body. The separation of the two after death is only temporary; the resurrection of the dead will forever reunite the soul and the body.

The issue of the intercession of the martyrs arises in Augustine's refutation of views on the temporality of the judgment of the wicked. While some of his contemporaries found his insistence on the suffering of the wicked in body and soul at the final judgment difficult to swallow, others found his stance on the *eternality* of such punishment equally, if not more, disturbing. Augustine responds to the various viewpoints of "merciful ones" in the church (*miseri cordibus nostris*), which all affirmed that God would dispense a duration and severity of judgment in accordance with the gravity of each person's sins.<sup>924</sup> Proponents of these more "merciful" viewpoints concluded that wicked persons who met certain conditions would eventually be released from their suffering and welcomed into eternal beatitude.<sup>925</sup> Where adherents of each viewpoint differed was in their understanding of how narrow, exactly, the path to eternal life is.

One viewpoint available in Augustine's day directly appeals to the intercession of the saints. Augustine consistently says "saints" instead of martyrs. Though he seems to refer to the intercession of all of those perfected in the next life, the martyrs, who have been made perfect by their sufferings, would certainly fall in this category. This view claims that God eventually grants

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Müller, vol. 4, fasc. 7/8 (Basel: Schwabe, 2018), 1163–76, esp. 172–73; Augustine M. Reisenauer, *Augustine's Theology of the Resurrection* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023), esp. 173–240.

<sup>924</sup> *ciu.* XXI.17 (CCSL 48: 783).

<sup>925</sup> *Ibid.* Except for his debatable reading of Origen, all of Augustine's interlocutors held that the devil and his demons would in fact suffer forever. See *ciu.* XXI.17. Augustine also responds to views of temporal punishment in *ench.* 29.112–113.

mercy and everlasting life to *all* human beings, no matter how uprightly or wickedly they lived. God’s mercy, they claim, is sure to triumph over judgment because “the merciful God will forgive them in response to the prayers and intercessions of his saints.”<sup>926</sup> On this view, the prayers of the righteous martyrs in heaven on behalf of the wicked avail much because their prayers are 1) unhindered by the imperfection of sin, 2) full of compassionate pleas of mercy for even the most wicked, and 3) because of the perfection of the martyrs, most certain to be granted.<sup>927</sup> Thus, the gates of hell will not prevail against the unhindered, compassionate, and irresistible prayers of the saints, and eventually all of the wicked will be reconciled to God and enter paradise. Therefore, the only qualifier for eternal life is being a human.

Another view that paves a less wide road to life claims that God grants mercy to all who at one point participated in the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. Such a view promises eternal life for the impenitent who commit adultery or murder, fall into heresy, or live ungodly lives. Their lack of repentance and growth in virtue, this view says, does not overpower the efficacy of the sacraments. However, this view excludes from eternal life any who had *never* received the sacraments. No sacraments, no salvation.<sup>928</sup>

A third viewpoint narrows the road further, asserting that God grants mercy only to those who at one point received *Catholic* sacraments. Again, the presence of sin, falling into heresy or idolatry, and lack of repentance has no bearing on their eternal destiny. Catholics who live

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<sup>926</sup> *ciu.* XXI.18 (CCSL 48: 784 trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 473):“Donabit enim eso, iniquiunt, misericors Deus precibus et intercessionibus santroum suorum.”

<sup>927</sup> *ciu.* XXI.17.

<sup>928</sup> *ciu.* XXI.19.

wickedly will certainly undergo punishments in the next life, but eventually they will escape the prison of hell and walk into the garden of Paradise.<sup>929</sup>

A fourth viewpoint narrows the path to life to those who *remain* in the unity of the Catholic church. Even if they are bad Catholics, they will be saved through fire.<sup>930</sup> If one breaks unity with the Catholic church, however, game over; everlasting delights with the faithful will be replaced with everlasting torments in the company of the devil and his angels.<sup>931</sup>

Finally, a fifth view of temporal punishment holds that God grants mercy at the last judgment to Catholic Christians who perform works of mercy, such as almsgiving.<sup>932</sup> Having at one time received the Catholic sacraments or remaining in the unity of the Catholic church is not enough. Only those who show mercy, as Jesus says, will be shown mercy.<sup>933</sup> However, like the previous viewpoints, a lack of reformation of morals and growth in virtue do not block the road that eventually leads to life. Brother Atticus may be getting drunk every weekend and sleeping with prostitutes, but as long as he regularly participates in the sacramental life of the church, throws a few pieces of silver in the offering plate, shares his bread with the homeless, and prays

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<sup>929</sup> *ciu.* XXI.20.

<sup>930</sup> *ciu.* XXI.21. Augustine quotes 1 Corinthians 3: 11–15.

<sup>931</sup> *ciu.* XXI.21.

<sup>932</sup> *ciu.* XXI.22 (CCSL 48: 787). Babcock notes that Augustine understands the Latin term *elemosynas* (which Babcock translates as (almsgiving)) “very broadly,” such that it is not limited to money. See Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 476n82.

<sup>933</sup> Augustine cites Jas 2:13 and Mt 6:12–15 as key proof texts to which proponents of this particular view of temporal punishment appeal. *ciu.* XXI.22, 27.

the Lord’s prayer every day, his sins are forgiven and his future in eternal paradise—after a period of long and severe torments—is secure.<sup>934</sup>

Though all of these views advocate for a wide path to salvation, Augustine counters, they in fact lead to destruction. By misinterpreting the nature of God’s mercy and justice, especially as they relate to the last judgment, those who hold these viewpoints have misunderstood the efficacy of the prayers of the martyrs, the Catholic sacraments, Catholic unity, and works of mercy. Though Augustine affirms the efficacy and necessity of each of these to attain eternal life, they are not in themselves sufficient for attaining eternal life, nor are they to be used as a license to continue to live in sin without any repentance or fear of eternal punishment. In order to benefit from the prayers of the martyrs, the Catholic sacraments, Catholic unity, and works of mercy, one must also demonstrate the fruit of repentance,<sup>935</sup> abandon the works of the flesh,<sup>936</sup> persevere in faith in Christ, abide in Christ,<sup>937</sup> and keep Christ as the foundation by placing “nothing earthly or temporal before him.”<sup>938</sup>

A Scriptural understanding of divine mercy in the midst of judgment, Augustine argues, allows one to properly understand and apply the efficacy of the prayers of the martyrs, the Catholic sacraments, Catholic unity, and works of mercy. In Matthew 25, Augustine reminds his readers, Jesus warns of eternal punishment and promises eternal life in the same passage.

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<sup>934</sup> *ciu.* XXI.22, 27. The Lord’s prayer is key for this argument because the prayer, which was prayed daily in the life of the early church, includes a petition for forgiveness. See *Didache* 8, which exhorts Christians to pray the Lord’s prayer three times a day. See also Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 476n84.

<sup>935</sup> *ciu.* XXI.24.

<sup>936</sup> *ciu.* XXI.25.

<sup>937</sup> *ciu.* XXI.25.

<sup>938</sup> *ciu.* XXI.26 (CCSL 48: 796, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 485. “ut ei terrena et temporaria nec ea...praeponat.”

Adherents of these views of temporal punishment inconsistently interpret this passage to say that ‘eternal’ suffering that Christ mentions here is in fact *temporal*, while the eternal joy that he mentions is in fact *eternal*.<sup>939</sup> In order to be consistent with the plain words of Jesus, eternal life and eternal punishment must both be eternal or both be temporal.<sup>940</sup> Contrary to these “merciful” views of punishment, God’s mercy is not such that he punishes temporarily or not at all. Rather, God’s mercy in the midst of his anger is such that even in divine judgment, the wicked “will suffer lighter and less harsh punishments than they deserve.”<sup>941</sup> These punishments, however, are still eternal and truly experienced in the body and soul. This “merciful” views are based on “human sentiment” and a misunderstanding of divine mercy, concluding that “the misery of the people condemned will be temporal but that the happiness of all who are sooner or later set free will be eternal.”<sup>942</sup> Though such persons claim to affirm the authority the Scriptures and seek to interpret this matter in view of God’s mercy, they are “monstrously and perversely in error over against the righteous words of God.”<sup>943</sup> Proponents of all of these views contradict and misinterpret the clear testimony of Scripture, which indicates that the path to life is narrow,

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<sup>939</sup> *ciu.* XXI.23. For more on the eternality of the penal suffering of the damned, see Reisenauer, *Augustine’s Theology of the Resurrection*, 200–14. He also decisively rejects any type of annihilationism, whereby the wicked as punishment at the judgment seat of Christ simply cease to exist. See *en. Ps.* 36.1.11 (*Augustine’s Theology of the Resurrection*, 205).

<sup>940</sup> Of course, Augustine would also find it absurd to interpret both eternal life and eternal punishment in this passage as temporal.

<sup>941</sup> *ciu.* XXI.24 (CCSL 48: 791, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 480): “non ut eas poenas uel numquam subeant uel aliquando finiant, sed ut eas mitiores quam merita sunt eorum leuiores que patiantur.”

<sup>942</sup> *ciu.* XXI.17 (CCSL 48: 783, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 473. “Longe autem aliter istorum misericordia human errat affect, qui hominum illo iudicio damnatorum miserias temporales, omnium uero qui uel citius uel tardius liberantur aeternam felicitatem putant.” C.f. *s.* 362.23; *ciu.* 20.1; *en. Ps.* 52.4. Reisenauer, *Augustine’s Theology of the Resurrection*, 201–202.

<sup>943</sup> *ciu.* XXI.17 (CCSL 48: 783, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 473. “Et tamen tanto inuenitur errare deformius et contra recta Dei uerba peruersius, quanto sibi uidetur sentire clementius.”

repentance is necessary, and the punishment for the wicked at the last judgment is in fact eternal, not temporary.<sup>944</sup>

Temporal punishment, Augustine holds, does occur in both this life and after death prior to the last judgment; however, at the final judgment, any punishment exacted will be eternal. For the wicked, these temporal punishments are purely punitive. For the elect, some temporal punishments are purgatorial and corrective.<sup>945</sup> Some suffer purgatorial punishments “only in this life, others after death, and still others both in this life and after death, but always prior to the final and most severe judgment.”<sup>946</sup> At this final judgment, the punishments of the wicked will become eternal, and the purgatorial punishments of the righteous will cease in order to be replaced by eternal beatitude.<sup>947</sup>

Even the martyrs undergo a type of fire before the last judgment. Commenting on Paul’s statement that some at the last day will be “saved as through fire” (1 Corinthians 3: 11–12), Augustine says that all of the elect, whether martyrs or not, will endure a “fire of tribulation” prior to the last judgment.<sup>948</sup> This fire will either *purge* the elect of their temporal attachments or

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<sup>944</sup> Mt 25:41–46 and Rev 20:10 are key texts to which Augustine repeatedly appeals.

<sup>945</sup> *ciu.* XXI.13. See also *ciu.* XX.25 and *ench.* 68–69. Augustine is hesitant to affirm the notion that post-mortem purgatorial punishments involve suffering in fire. See *ciu.* XXI.26. See O’Daly, *Augustine’s City of God*, 222n44.

<sup>946</sup> *ciu.* XXI.13 (CCSL 48: 779, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 486. “Sed temporarias poenas alii in hac uita tantum, alii post mortem, alii et nunc et tunc, uerum tamen ante iudicium illud seuerissimum nouissimumque patiuntur.”

<sup>947</sup> *ciu.* XXI.13. Augustine is not saying that these purgatorial punishments for the faithful occur in the intermediate state between death and the last judgment. He acknowledges the possibility of such a view upheld by some in his time in *ciu.* XXI.26. See note below. Rather, he seems to say that these purgatorial punishments happen at Christ’s tribunal on the final day of judgment. The punishment of the wicked, however, extends beyond the day of judgment.

<sup>948</sup> *ciu.* XXI.26 (CCSL 48: 797): “...saluus erit per ignem...tribulationis ignis exuret.” Those who equate the fire of 1 Corinthians 3 with the eternal fire of Matthew 25, he says, are mistaken. The fire of 1 Corinthians 3 is a temporal, refining fire for the elect; the fire of Matthew 25 is an eternal, punitive fire for the damned. Also, he acknowledges the belief upheld by others that some in the interval between death and the last judgment, which follows bodily resurrection, the spirits of the faithful dead “patiently suffer in fire” (CCSL 48: 798–99): “Post istius sne corporis mortem, donec d illum ueniatur...si hoc temporis interuallo spiritus defunctorum eius modi ignem dicuntur peti....” On this view, those who remained attached to worldly loves and built their lives with wood, hay, and

prove the quality of their eternal attachments.<sup>949</sup> For one still clinging to earthly attachments, this fire will burn away such delights and his fruitless works, and he “will be tormented by the loss of things he rejoiced to enjoy.”<sup>950</sup> However, such persons will be saved because they did not place these attachments before Christ their foundation.<sup>951</sup> Under the pressure of martyrdom, they would have chosen Christ above those attachments.<sup>952</sup> For the martyrs, who were perfected in their trial of martyrdom, this same fire will prove the eternal endurance of their deeds committed in the body.<sup>953</sup> Persecutions of the martyrs and the trials that all Christians face, Augustine also says, are fiery trials which prove the quality of each person’s work. The greatest tribulation will come during the persecution of the church at the time of the Antichrist.<sup>954</sup>

Augustine’s detailed response to each view of temporal punishment reveals important insight into his understanding of ecclesiology, sacramental theology, and hamartiology. However, most pertinent to this dissertation chapter are insights into his understanding of the extent to which the prayers of the saints are efficacious. Divine justice and mercy, predestination,

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straw, feel the pains of this fire; those who out of rightly ordered love built their lives with gold, silver, and precious stones, however, would not feel this fire. Augustine acknowledges the possibility of this view, but he does not strongly support it. Reisenauer, *Augustine’s Theology of the Resurrection*, 214–15. He does posit that physical death, martyrdom, and trials faced in the body are part of this fire.

<sup>949</sup> Antonie Wlosok notes the scarcity of Augustine’s discussions on this purgatorial fire. Augustine refers to it as: *ignis purgationis* (*ench.* 69; *Dulc. qu.* 1.13), *poenae expiratoriae* (*ciu.* XX.25 and XXI.16), *poenae expiatoriae* (*ciu.* 21.13), and *tormenta puragtoria* (*ciu.* XXI.16). Antonie Wlosok, “Ignis Purgatorius,” in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, ed. Cornelius Petrus Mayer et al. (Basel: Schwabe AG, 1986), 3: 487-91.

<sup>950</sup> *ciu.* XXI.26 (CCSL 48: 797, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 486) “...et eorum amissione cruciabitur, quibus fruendo utique laetabatur. “

<sup>951</sup> Wlosok, “Ignis Purgatorius,” 3: 488–89.

<sup>952</sup> *ciu.* XXI.26. Cf. *Dulc. qu.* 1.12–13.

<sup>953</sup> *ciu.* XXI.26.

<sup>954</sup> *Ibid.*



the liturgical practice of the church, and the events of the last judgment, are important reference points for Augustine's conclusion on this matter.

The prayers of the saints, even after their final perfection at the last judgment, will by no means deliver wicked people or wicked angels from eternal flames. In fact, though the saints at the last judgment will be perfected and "equal to the angels of God," they simply *will not* pray on behalf of departed wicked persons.<sup>955</sup> If his opponents were correct on this matter, then the saints and even the angels might as well pray for the devil and his demons.<sup>956</sup> None of the above views of temporal punishment, however, would be so bold to affirm that God's mercy extends to evil angels. So not only would it be impossible for the prayers of the saints to snatch evil humans and evil angels out of eternal punishment; the saints simply *do not* pray for such persons.<sup>957</sup>

Evidence of this truth lies in the liturgical practice of the church. If the perfected church is going to pray efficaciously at the last judgment for the salvation of departed wicked persons, the devil, and fallen angels, then the church on earth would pray *now* for them since God has commanded her to intercede for her enemies. The church, however, prays at the present time only for "human enemies" who are still living because the opportunity for true repentance remains.<sup>958</sup>

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<sup>955</sup> *ciu.* XXI.24 (CCSL 48: 789): "...aequales erunt angelis Dei...." Augustine speaks of the saints here in the universal and future sense. I.e., he is referring to the church following the last judgment, who "will then be perfect in holiness." *ciu.* XXI.24 (CCSL 48: 789, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 479): "...quamuis perfecta sit sanctitate...." However, as noted above, *ciu.* XXI.18 suggests that Augustine has the martyrs in mind, as well. Given that he has acknowledged elsewhere that the martyrs have been perfected and currently make intercession for the pilgrim church, applying Augustine's statements here to the martyrs would certainly be appropriate.

<sup>956</sup> *ciu.* XXI.24.

<sup>957</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>958</sup> *ciu.* XXI.24 (CCSL 48: 789): "Nunc enim propterea pro eis orat, quos in genere humano habet inimicos, quia tempus est paenitentiae fructuosae."

The church's current lack of knowledge regarding which human beings are among the elect also affects their prayers for the departed. If the church knew which individuals were elect and which were not, she would pray no more for those "who have been predestined to go into eternal fire with the devil... than she does for the devil himself."<sup>959</sup> However, because she does *not* know this information, she prays for the faithful dead and "for all her strictly human enemies while they remain in the body,"<sup>960</sup> not the "unfaithful and impious dead."<sup>961</sup> The efficacy of the prayers of the church, however, is limited by divine predestination:

But her prayers are not always heard. For they are heard only when she prays for people who, even if they oppose the Church, are predestined to have her prayers heard on their behalf and to become her sons.<sup>962</sup>

Moreover, a precise boundary between a life worthy of receiving pardon through the merits of the saints and a life unworthy of such benefit is not clear and perhaps should not be clear.

Otherwise, Christians would be tempted to live slothfully and aim to meet the minimum requirement for eternal life. Not knowing exactly which or how many sins prevent one from

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<sup>959</sup> *ciu.* XXI.24 (CCSL 48: 789, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 479): "Denique si de aliquibus ita certa esset, ut qui sint illi etiam nosset, qui, licet adhuc in hac uita sint constitute, tamen praedestinati sunt in aeternum ignem ire cum diabolo: tam pro eis non oraret, quam nec pro ipso." Though he does not discuss divine predestination in depth here, this isolated passage suggests a possibility of Augustine holding to a sort of double predestination in which God actively predestines some human beings to salvation and others to damnation. To be sure, this quote should be taken in light of Augustine's more detailed explications of predestination.

<sup>960</sup> *ciu.* XXI.24 (CCSL 48: 789, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 479): "Sed qui de nullo certa est, orat pro omnibus dumtaxat hominibus inimicis suis in hoc corpore constitutis..."

<sup>961</sup> *ciu.* XXI.24 (CCSL 48: 789): "...tamen iam nec nunc oretur pro infidelibus impiis que defunctis." What is clear is that the church prays for the departed who were baptized. Though he does not say so explicitly, the implication is that church further limits its prayers to those who remain in the unity of the church. Thus, the name of a Donatist, though she was baptized in the Catholic church, will likely not be named in the liturgical prayers for the dead. And similar to what he says in *cura mort.*, Augustine states here that the efficacy of the church's prayers for a departed soul is also contingent upon how that person lived while in the body.

<sup>962</sup> *ciu.* XXI.24 (CCSL 48: 789, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 479): "...nec tamen pro omnibus exauditur, Pro his enim solis exauditur, qui, etsi aduersantur ecclesiae, ita sunt tamen praedestinati, ut pro eis exaudiatur ecclesia et filii efficiantur ecclesiae.

receiving pardon through intercession of the saints causes Christians to be “more vigilant in our eagerness to advance” in godliness, uprooting vice, and engaging in works of mercy.<sup>963</sup>

Ultimately, for Augustine, those who argue that the intercession of the saints delivers one sent into the lake of fire after the last judgment, whatever duration that punishment may be, are wrong. The departed who *are* helped by the intercession of the saints are not cast into the lake of fire at the last judgment and then rescued; they are those who are never sent into such fire in the first place.<sup>964</sup> Though they do undergo a purifying fire *prior* to the last judgment, the lake of fire, which is the second death, never touches them.

The conditions that Augustine places on the efficacy of the intercession of the saints does not minimize the importance or even the necessity of such intercession. The church rightly prays for the conversion of her living enemies on earth and for mercy upon the souls of the faithful dead. Moreover, living devout persons rightly commend themselves to the prayers of the saints.<sup>965</sup> However, just as he argued in *cura mort.*, the prayers of the pilgrim church and the perfected saints, which includes the martyrs, only benefit the departed *faithful* who lived lives worthy of such aid, not impenitent unbelievers or excessively worldly Christians.<sup>966</sup> Ultimately, only those predestined to receive aid from the prayers of the church in fact receive aid. For Augustine, a proper interpretation of the nature of God’s justice and mercy, divine

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<sup>963</sup> *ciu.* XXI.27 (CCSL 48: 805, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 493): “Nunc uero dum uenialis iniquitatis, etiamsi perseueret, ignoratur modus, profecto et studium in meliora proficiendi orando et instando uigilantius adhibetur et faciendi de mammona iniquitatis sanctos amicos cura non spernitur.”

<sup>964</sup> *ciu.* XXI.27 (CCSL 48: 805): “Verum ista liberatio, quae fit siue suis quibusque orationibus siue intercedentibus sanctis, id agit ut in ignem quisque non mittatur aeternum, non ut, cum fuerit missus, post quantumcumque inde tempus eruatur.

<sup>965</sup> *ciu.* XXI.27 (CCSL 48: 804): “...quod frequentatur ore christiano, cum se cuique sanctorum humilis quisque commendat et dicit: “memor mei esto”, atque id ut esse possit promerendo efficit).”

<sup>966</sup> Also, the prayers do not benefit the faithful who lived lives so worthy that they don’t need any aid. The martyrs would certainly fall into this category.

predestination, the liturgical practice of the church, and the events of the last judgment, are essential to arriving at this conclusion. In the final book of *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine describes another way in which the example and intercession of the martyrs aid the pilgrim church on her journey to eternal life.

### ***Martyr Relics as a Testimony of Bodily Resurrection and Immortality (Book XXII)***

In Book XXII of *De ciuitate dei*, Augustine closes his magisterial work with his promised discussion of the eternal beatitude of the heavenly city, and he further elucidates the relationship between eschatology and the intercession of the martyrs with a focus on the resurrection of the dead and the faithful's eternal share in the immortality of Christ. The resurrection, as scholar Augustine M. Reisenauer has shown, "consists in human revivification, the return of humans from death to life"—a life which is "the eternal life of happiness."<sup>967</sup> More simply put, the resurrection means "nothing less than the revivification of dead humanity to the eternal life of beatitude in God."<sup>968</sup> For Augustine, the resurrection of Jesus Christ signifies, effects, and guarantees the resurrection of the faithful.<sup>969</sup> After arguing against the Platonists with the

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<sup>967</sup> Augustine M. Reisenauer, *Augustine's Theology of the Resurrection*, 4. He cites *trin.* 8.5.8 and *Gn. Litt.* 8.16.34. For other studies on Augustine's theology of the resurrection, see Bochet, "Resurrectio," 4: 1163–76; Gerald O'Collins, *Saint Augustine on the Resurrection of Christ: Teaching, Rhetoric, and Reception* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Marie-Anne Vannier, "Saint Augustin et La Résurrection," in *La Résurrection Chez Les Pères*, Cahiers de Biblia Patristica 7 (Strasbourg: Université Marc Bloch, 2003), 247–54. Each of these scholars has noted in the introduction to their works the lacuna of scholarship on Augustine's theology of the resurrection and their intent to help fill that gap.

<sup>968</sup> Reisenauer, *Augustine's Theology of the Resurrection*, 5. Reisenauer also provides a helpful list of sources grouped under two prevalent trends in modern scholarship on Augustine's theology of the resurrection: 1) a focus on the resurrection of the body, and 2) a focus on "the resurrection and on the integral wholeness of the resurrected person and community" (*Ibid.*, 7–8). Reisenauer's work focuses on Augustine's preaching and teaching on "the historical resurrection of the dead human flesh of Christ; on the historical resurrection of the dead human souls of Christians; and on the eschatological resurrection of the dead human bodies not only of the saints, but also of the damned." (*Ibid.*, 9).

<sup>969</sup> See *trin.* IV.3.6; *c. Faust* 16.29; *Io. eu. tr.* 120.6; *s.* 160.6. Bochet, "Resurrectio," 4: 1165. As Studer and Reisenauer both note, Christ's single resurrection serves as "the sacrament of [the faithful's] spiritual resurrection

possibility of and divine testimony to the resurrection of the body in his final book of *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine (of Hippo) explicates the significance of the miracles associated with the relics of the martyrs in relation to the final resurrection.

First of all, the martyrs, along with the apostles, testify to the resurrection of Christ by their witness to Christ and their willingness to die for that witness. Despite being compelled to recognize that the world came to believe in Christ's resurrection through such few and uneducated men as the apostles, the Platonists pridefully refuse to acknowledge the resurrection. The persuasiveness of the apostles, however, rested in "the eloquence of miraculous deeds, not words."<sup>970</sup> As the Book of Acts testifies, their preaching was not in word only, but in manifestations of power, such as speaking the tongues of all nations, causing the lame to walk, healing multitudes in the streets by the laying on of hands and by contact with their handkerchiefs, and raising the dead.<sup>971</sup> Likewise, the death of the martyrs testifies to the truth of resurrection and the deity of Christ. Not even fear of death at the hands of persecutors could prevent "a whole multitude of martyrs among all the people of the world from not only worshiping Christ as God but even openly professing him as God."<sup>972</sup> The miracles of the apostles and the testimony of the martyrs, then, testify to the world and the church that Christ is

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and the example of our fleshly resurrection." Reisenauer, *Augustine's Theology of the Resurrection*, 11; Studer, "<<Sacramentum et exemplum>> chez saint Augustin." Studer and Reisenauer explore this theme throughout Augustine's corpus.

<sup>970</sup> *ciu.* XXII.5 (CCSL 48: 811, modified trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 501): Eloquia namque persuadentium, quae dicebant, mira fuerunt facta, non uerba.

<sup>971</sup> *ciu.* XXII.5.

<sup>972</sup> *ciu.* XXII.6 (CCSL 48: 813, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 503): "...a Christo autem Deo non solum colendo, uerum etiam confitendo tantam per orbis terrae populos martyrum multitudinem metus reuocare non potuit non leuis offensionis animorum, sed immensarum uariarum que poenarum et ipsius mortis, quae plus ceteris formidatur." As Ramsey notes, Augustine was not the first to cite martyrdom as proof of the veracity of Christianity (*The City of God*, I/7, 503n24). Though Babcock translated this version, Boniface Ramsey recorded the notes. Ramsey references Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Athanasius.

God and truly rose from the dead. Miracles that testify to the resurrection, however, did not die with the apostles.

In addition to the accounts of miracles in the martyr *passiones*, Augustine had witnessed numerous present-day miracles that occurred through the sacraments, prayers, and martyr relics. These were not rare occurrences, but “signs of divine power like those of ancient times [that] were occurring frequently in our own time,” which he wanted recorded so that they would not be forgotten.<sup>973</sup> Though miracles documented in the canon of Scripture are much more memorable, widely known, and authoritative, he says, the present-day miracles are not to be discounted.<sup>974</sup> These miracles included 1) the healing of maladies, such as blindness, gout, serious anal fistulae, violent bodily tremors, fatal illnesses, and death; 2) the exorcism of persons severely afflicted by demons; and 3) the sudden conversion of a non-Christian who had stubbornly persisted for decades in his rejection of Jesus Christ.<sup>975</sup>

For whatever reason, secondary literature tends to exclude details of these reports in discussions of the bishop’s understanding of miracles.<sup>976</sup> Therefore, I offer a summary of

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<sup>973</sup> *ciu.* XXII.8; (CCSL 48: 824, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 514): “Id namque fieri uolumus, cum uideremus antiquis similia diuinarum signa uirtutum etiam nostris temporibus frequentari et ea non debere multorum notitiae deperire.”

<sup>974</sup> *ciu.* XXII.8. Augustine’s reason for the memorability and knowability of the miracles recorded in the New Testament is both practical and theological. Practically speaking, the miracles in the Scriptures are continually read in the liturgy of the church all across the world. Most present-day miracles were localized, known by few people, and not proclaimed in the liturgy. Augustine, however, sought to document miracles of which he was aware and even incorporate the testimony of such miracles within his own church liturgy. Theologically speaking, the authority of the now closed canon of Scripture assures Christians that New Testament miracles most certainly did happen. Christians, he says, are naturally more immediately convinced of the miracles of the past reported by the Scriptures than miracles of the present reported by potentially suspect people.

<sup>975</sup> *ciu.* XXII.8.

<sup>976</sup> A notable exception is Van Deer Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 527–57. Perhaps his detail accounts for the lack of detail in other sources. Some brief references to Augustine’s miracle accounts can be found in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 417–422; Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 546. Most references to these accounts usually arise in a discussion about whether Augustine, after the importation of the relics of St. Stephen into North Africa, significantly changed his view about miracles. More focus is typically given to his theology of miracles than to the miracles themselves. See Dupont, “Augustine’s Homeletic Definition of Martyrdom,” 157n6; Dupont, “Imitatio Christi,

miracles specifically related to martyr intercession in order to emphasize their significance. For Augustine, these instances prove not only that the presence of such phenomena persists in the present-day church; they demonstrate that the operation of miracles continues to be one of God's primary means of testifying to the resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of the dead.

One miracle involved Augustine and a large crowd witnessing a blind man regain his sight in Milan before the bodies of the martyrs Protasius and Gervasius, which were reportedly discovered through a divine revelation given in a dream to Ambrose.<sup>977</sup> At a local shrine of the same martyrs in the town not far from Hippo Regius, a demon-possessed man had been delivered. Also, the man's eye, which had popped out of its socket due to the violent departure of the demon, was miraculously healed seven days later due to the prayers of the saints.<sup>978</sup>

Augustine reports that nearly seventy miracles in Hippo occurred at the shrine of St. Stephen within two years of its building. In the town of Calama, where a shrine to the same saint had been built some time earlier, the reports of miracles "surmounted an incomparably greater number."<sup>979</sup> In the town of Uzalis just northwest of Carthage, "many remarkable things were done through the same saint."<sup>980</sup> Multiple people were healed after praying at the St. Stephen shrine or coming into contact with the saint's relics, including a blind woman, a man who had

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Imitatio Stephani," 34; Saxer, *Morts, martyrs, reliques*, 124; Paul de Vooght, "La notion philosophique du miracle chez saint Augustin," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 10 (1938): 317–43; Paul de Vooght, "La Théologie Du Miracle Selon Saint Augustin," *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 11 (1939): 197–222; Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 648–70; Klöckener, "Martyres, martyrium," 3: 1194. For a convincing argument that Augustine's view of miracles changed only slightly over time, see van Bavel, "The Cult of the Martyrs in St. Augustine," 351–61. For a helpful discussion of Augustine's response to Donatist claims to miracles, see Burns and Jensen, *Roman Africa*, 545–46.

<sup>977</sup> *ciu.* XXII.8. See *conf.* IX.7.16.

<sup>978</sup> *ciu.* XXII.8.

<sup>979</sup> *ciu.* XXII.8 (CCSL 48: 824): "...incomparabili multitudine superant."

<sup>980</sup> *ciu.* XXII.8 (CCSL 48: 824): "...multa praeclara per eundem martyrem facta cognouimus."

long suffered from anal fistula, a man with a tumor, a man with gout, and a small boy who had been crushed under the wheel of an oxcart.<sup>981</sup>

Also, Augustine knew of a number of individuals who had died and immediately revived as a result of visits to St. Stephen's shrine. A young woman and a girl revived after contact with clothing that had been taken from the shrine; a man revived after contact with oil from the shrine; and a baby revived after his father tearfully prayed at the shrine. In addition, a man of high military rank named Martialis who had stubbornly rejected faith in Christ suddenly converted and received baptism before his death. This conversion followed the fervent, tearful prayers of his Christian son-in-law at the shrine of St. Stephen. Another woman of noble standing had been miraculously healed of an incurable illness after visiting the shrine.<sup>982</sup>

Augustine narrates at length the healing testimony story of two siblings with a malady that caused their limbs to tremble violently. After grasping the rails at the shrine of St. Stephen in Hippo, not far from Augustine's church, both were instantly healed. Interestingly, these miracles occurred during Easter week, and Augustine devoted five sermons that week to the recounting of these miraculous healings.<sup>983</sup> As Boniface Ramsey notes, though these sermons were preached during Easter week, none explicitly mention Easter and the resurrection of Christ; all focus on

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<sup>981</sup> *ciu.* XXII.8.

<sup>982</sup> *ciu.* XXII.8.

<sup>983</sup> See s.320–324. This instance has been recounted at length elsewhere (Van Deer Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 547–53). But a few points are worth reiterating to grasp the impact of Augustine's understanding of the supernatural realm and the reasons for his urgency to describe the event in such detail. The cause of the malady, according to the siblings, was a curse that their mother had pronounced upon them. The sermons that Augustine delivered immediately following the miraculous healings demonstrate that he did not doubt the veracity and plausibility of such a cause. Also, the brother reported that they had received a revelation from God telling them to come to Hippo to be healed. He claims that he saw Augustine in a vision prior to his arrival in Hippo. As is clear from his statements in *cura mort.* discussed above, Augustine also affirms the reality of present-day divine communication.



the miracle that has occurred.<sup>984</sup> These miracles, for Augustine, seemed to be enough of a testimony to Christ's resurrection on their own. A "continual, tearful cry" from the congregation carried on without a foreseeable end interrupted Augustine's liturgical celebration.<sup>985</sup> Though they were excited about the occurrence of something that seemed impossible, Augustine attributes the real cause of their exuberant cries to "the very faith in Christ for which Stephen's blood had been shed."<sup>986</sup>

One of the sermons that recounts the healing of these siblings at the shrine of St. Stephen alludes to Augustine's eschatological priority when it comes to postmortem martyr miracles. After explaining the cause for the commotion that interrupted his sermon the previous day (that is, the miraculous healing of the woman Palladia), Augustine describes another story of a mother whose desire for a miracle was driven by an eternal focus, not a temporal one. The mother's baby had died prior to receiving baptism. The mother, he says, wept and prayed for her son to be revived out of a desire for him to be baptized, that he might enjoy life in eternity. She confidently ran to the shrine of St. Stephen and started to "demand her son from him" that she might have her son not in this life but "before the sight of the one who crowned [Stephen]."<sup>987</sup> The woman did not ask for, but *demand*ed a miracle from the saint. Her desire for her son to enter the kingdom of God in the next life, then, drove her confidence and forcefulness at the shrine. Her

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<sup>984</sup> See WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 517n64. Though Babcock translated this version, Boniface Ramsey recorded the notes.

<sup>985</sup> *ciu.* XXII.8 (CCSL 48: 827): "...ut uox continuata cum lacrimis non uideretur posse finiri.

<sup>986</sup> *ciu.* XXII.8 (CCSL 48: 827, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 517): "quid erat in cordibus exultantium nisi fides christi, pro qua stephani sanguis effusus est?"

<sup>987</sup> *s.* 324 (PL 38: 1447, modified Hill, WSA, *Sermons*, III/9, 165): "Impleta affectu fiducia tulit illum mortuum, et cucurrit ad memoriam beati martyris stephani, et coepit ab illo exigere filium... Redde filium meum, ut habeam eum ante conspectum coronatoris tui."

request was granted, Augustine says, but her heart was tested as her son was revived only long enough for him to be baptized. The woman's tranquility at the funeral proved that she passed the test.<sup>988</sup>

Though Augustine diligently documented reports of miracles to give God glory for the temporal advantage of these miracles, he was most concerned about the testimony of these miracles to the resurrection. Just like the miracles performed by Christ and his apostles, present-day miracles testify to the past resurrection of Christ, the future resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, and the immortality of the resurrected body. The postmortem miracles of the martyrs are a sort of present extension of the miracle-confirming apostolic testimony to the resurrection and ascension of Christ. The reason that St. Stephen, whose intercession healed so many individuals, was able to perform these postmortem miracles was "precisely that he laid down his life" for his faith "in the one who ascended into heaven with the flesh in which he had risen again."<sup>989</sup> The martyrs, then, by their deaths and their miracles testify to the resurrection:

For, if the resurrection of the flesh to eternal life has not already come in Christ, and if it is not going to come according to what has been foretold by Christ, and according to what was told by the prophets who foretold Christ, how is it that the dead, who were killed for the very faith that proclaims this resurrection, are able to do such wondrous things?<sup>990</sup>

As he does in *cura mort.*, Augustine discusses possible ways in which these miracles associated with martyr shrines and relics occur: either through God himself, through the spirits of the

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<sup>988</sup> s. 324.

<sup>989</sup> *ciu.* XXII.8 (CCSL 48: 825, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 515): "qui ascendit in caelum cum carne, in qua resurrexerat, credidit; et ideo per eum tanta fiunt, quia pro ista fide animam posuit <suam>."

<sup>990</sup> *ciu.* XXII.9; (CCSL 48: 827, modified trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 518): "Nam si carnis in aeternum resurrectio uel non praeuenit in christo uel non uentura est, sicut praeununtur a Christo uel sicut praeununtur a prophetis, a quibus praeununtur est Christus: cur et mortui tanta possunt, qui pro ea fide, qua haec resurrectio praedicatur, occisi sunt?"

martyrs, through angels in response to the prayers of the martyrs, or through some other incomprehensible means. Regardless of how the miracles are executed, “all bear witness to the faith in which the resurrection of the flesh to eternal life is proclaimed.”<sup>991</sup>

The miracles of the martyrs, moreover, far surpass the miracles that supposedly occurred at pagan temples, which demonstrates that God is the one true God and the resurrection is real. If such pagan miracles did actually occur, they were worked by demons that wished to be gods. The miracles of the martyrs, however, are not meant to testify that the martyrs are gods to be worshipped—since they share the same God as the faithful—but “to advance the faith by which we believe.”<sup>992</sup> Unlike the pagans, Christians do not build temples or altars to worship the martyrs as gods, but “memorial shrines, as for dead persons whose spirits live with God” in order to “offer sacrifices to the one God who is both the martyrs’ God and ours.”<sup>993</sup> The testimony and miracles of the martyrs is to be believed more than the miracles of those who try to exalt themselves as gods:

[The martyrs] both speak the truth and work wonders. For in speaking the truth they suffered, and as a result of their suffering they are able to work wonders. And chief among the truths they spoke is the truth that Christ rose from the dead and first showed, in his own flesh the immortality of the resurrection which he promised would be ours either at the beginning of the new age or at the end of this.<sup>994</sup>

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<sup>991</sup> *ciu.* XXII.9 (CCSL 48: 827–28, modified trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 519): “...ei tamen adtestantur haec fidei, in qua carnis in aeternum resurrectio praedicatur.”

<sup>992</sup> *ciu.* XXII.10 (CCSL 48: 828, modified trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 519): “...ut fides illa proficiat...cum habere credamus.”

<sup>993</sup> *ciu.* XXII.10; (CCSL 48: 828, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 519): “...nos autem martyribus nostris non templa sicut diis, sed memorias sicut hominibus mortuis, quorum apud deum uiuunt spiritus, fabricamus; nec ibi erigimus altaria, in quibus sacrificemus martyribus, sed uni deo et martyrum et nostro...” As Augustine has stated in other works examined in this dissertation, his evidence of this statement lies in the fact that the liturgical prayers recited by the priest explicitly mention that the sacrifice is offered to God, not the martyrs.

<sup>994</sup> *ciu.* XXII.10 (CCSL 48: 828, trans. Babcock, WSA, *The City of God (Books 11–22)*, I/7, 520). “...uera dicentibus et mira facientibus. dicendo enim uera passi sunt, ut possint facere mira. in eis ueris est praecipuum, quod christus resurrexit a mortuis et immortalitatem resurrectionis in sua carne primus ostendit, quam nobis adfuturam uel in principio noui saeculi uel in huius fine promisit.”

Therefore, the act of venerating the martyrs, beseeching their prayers, and touching their relics strengthens the church's faith in the resurrection. Moreover, such veneration admonishes the church to remain strong in this faith until the end, so that she might receive the immortal life to which the martyrs and their relics testify.

### **Conclusion**

Augustine is the first in the North African martyr tradition to make sense of martyrdom, martyr veneration, and the efficacy of the martyrs' intercession from a thoroughly eschatological perspective. The North African martyr narratives cast the martyrs as charismatic, Spirit-empowered prodigies whose prayers have the power to achieve peace with the church and pardon for sins in this life and in the next. For Tertullian, the martyrs are certainly to be commended for their long suffering for Christ and their offering of blood as seed. The Spirit of God uniquely ministers to them to strengthen their resolve to remain steadfast. However, he argues from a hamartiological perspective that the intercession of the martyrs does not carry the authority to remove the stain of grave sins. One who is guilty of grave sins yet truly penitent may still hope for pardon in the *next* life, but neither martyrs nor bishops have power to sway the mind of God to expedite or ensure pardon and peace in *this* life.

From an ecclesiological standpoint, Cyprian recognizes a certain degree of intercessory power of the martyrs to forgive sins, but pardon and peace for the lapsed must be administered by the bishops, not the martyrs. God does not always grant the requests of the martyrs, especially in regard to church discipline, which he has entrusted to the bishops. The prayers of the martyrs on behalf of a lapsed Christian may influence the clergy to consider prescribing a lighter degree or lesser duration of penance. However, the ultimate decision lies in the hands of the bishops,

who are the source and foundation of the church's unity. Moreover, without the evidence of true confession and repentance of the lapsed, the bishops grant no pardon or peace, no matter how many martyr certificates they present to the church.

From an eschatological perspective, Augustine hails the martyrs as exemplars who lived with eternity in mind. The martyrs have attained by their suffering for Christ to the highest rank of honor in the church, and God has granted them efficacious prayers on behalf of the church. For this reason, the church on earth does not pray *for* the martyrs, but seeks prayer *from* the martyrs to aid her on her pilgrimage in this life. Celebrating the martyrs during the liturgical feast days strengthens the faithful to despise this life and love the next. The feast days also serve as a reminder and a foretaste of the eternal participation in Christ's divinity. In order to benefit from martyr veneration in this age and the following, however, the faithful must also imitate the martyrs. True veneration of the martyrs, after all, includes celebration *and* imitation.

Moreover, Augustine's views of the afterlife and the last judgment ground his understanding of the efficacy of burial *ad sanctos*. Burying the dead near the tombs of the martyrs reminds the faithful to commend their loved ones to the prayers of the martyrs. The prayers of the church on earth and of the martyrs in heaven benefits the faithful dead in the next life and contributes to their entrance into eternal life by securing mercy from God and relief from punishments faced at Christ's tribunal. A godless, impenitent person, however, receives no benefit from burial *ad sanctos* or the prayers of the saints. The expectation for such an individual is nothing less than the flames of hell, no matter how closely their corpse lies to a blessed martyr's.<sup>995</sup> Though many claim to have received visitations from the departed souls of some martyr, the martyrs (and all of the faithful departed) generally lack knowledge of particular

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<sup>995</sup> As noted above, a possible exception includes a lessened punishment in hell for the wicked.

earthly affairs and likely do not visit the living. The appearance of the martyrs in visions and dreams is most likely the working of angels. Though the martyrs pray general, efficacious prayers on behalf of the pilgrim church, their minds are fixed on the eternal rest and peace they now enjoy in God's presence, not the temporal cares of the living. God may at times permit exceptions, but this is the general rule.

Furthermore, Augustine's view of everlasting punishment frames his response to popular views of temporal punishment that appeal to the intercession of the saints. The prayers of the martyrs in heaven and the faithful on earth are unable to reconcile impenitent persons to God in the next life. The church on earth prays for her living enemies, but not her dead ones. Like Tertullian and Cyprian, Augustine holds to an uncompromising view of salvation and eschatology: No penance, no paradise. No amount of prayers from the saints can cause the eternal punishment of the godless to become temporal. Even though the impenitent may have received the sacraments, remained in the unity of the church, or performed works of mercy, they will suffer in body and soul from eternal flames alongside the devil and his angels.

Finally, Augustine's understanding of the ultimate benefit of the martyrs' intercession via miracles is grounded in his understanding of the resurrection. The miracles that occur after praying to the martyrs or touching their relics certainly have praiseworthy temporal benefits, but ultimately they strengthen the church's faith in the past resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of the dead. The deaths and the postmortem miracles of the martyrs further draw the attention of the church to the reality of Christ's divinity and the resurrection of the dead, where all will be judged according to their deeds committed in the body.

Augustine's understanding of the significance of martyrdom, the veneration of the martyrs, and the power of their intercession is uniquely eschatological in nature. Without

eschatological hope, the death of the martyrs, popular veneration practices, and the prayers of the martyrs have limited benefit and no ultimate meaning. Though inadequate to alter the eternity of the impenitent, the example, intercession, and miracles of the martyrs strengthen the faithful to hold fast to their faith in the resurrection, their love for eternal life, and their hope for an everlasting city. The church on earth looks to the martyrs, imitates them, and beseeches their intercession that she might one day perfectly share as one body with them in the life and immortality of Christ the head.

## CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have explored the meaning of martyrdom for Augustine in the post-Constantinian Roman empire, where the likelihood of becoming a martyr had virtually disappeared. I have also explored how Augustine responds to pagan and Manichean accusations that Christians worship the martyrs, and to Donatist claims that the Donatists are the true Church of the Martyrs and that the Catholics are the new persecutors of Christ's church. Moreover, I have asked what Augustine saw as the benefits of the various practices of martyr veneration.

I have demonstrated that various loci of Augustine's theology, which were formed and matured in a Nicene creedal context, are central to understanding his theology of martyrdom and martyr veneration, as well as his response to claims of Manicheans, pagans, Donatists and even erroneous Catholic Christians<sup>996</sup> on these matters. Analyzing Augustine's theology of martyrdom as it relates to these other aspects of his theology reveals the participatory nature of martyrdom and martyr veneration for Augustine. Both martyrdom and martyr veneration are a participation in the life and virtues of Christ, and both aid the pilgrim church on her journey toward eternal union with Christ, which includes an everlasting participation in Christ's immortality and blessedness.

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<sup>996</sup> That is, those who mistakenly worshipped the martyrs or engaged in drunken revelry during the martyr feast days.



My hope is that this dissertation helps scholars see the dependence of Augustine's theology of martyrdom on his wider theological vision. Too often, recent research on Augustine's martyrology gives little to no attention to this relationship. The work of mid- to -late twentieth century scholars like Hans von Campenhausen, Guy Lapointe, Michele Pellegrino, Tarsicius van Bavel, and J. van Boeft, and the more recent work of scholars like J. Patout Burns, Robin Jensen, and Anthony Dupont have consistently employed a theological approach to martyrdom. However, the tendency to focus on socio-cultural, political, and rhetorical approaches to martyrdom in Augustine and Late Antiquity at the expense of theology remains strong. Approaches like these have resulted for some scholars in turns toward skepticism about the reality of early Christian martyrdom, neglect of the reality and analysis of modern Christian claims to martyrdom, and implementing discussion of martyrial discourse in the past and/or present as tools for political discourse. As I will show momentarily, the approach I have taken is relevant for a host of other important historical and contemporary issues.

This dissertation has sought to build on the work of scholars taking a theological approach—while remaining conversant with scholars taking alternate approaches—by focusing more intently on how specific aspects of Augustine's theology bear upon his theology of martyrdom and martyr veneration. The fruit of this study has included a view to Augustine's understanding of the participatory nature of martyrdom and martyr veneration and his understanding of the communion between the living and the dead. Scholars like Peter Brown have dismissed these crucial features of Augustine's martyrology and reduced the bishop's understanding of the value of martyr veneration to an imitation that lacks participatory communion between the living and the dead. As I have argued, this is an incorrect depiction of Augustine's understanding of the martyrs. With his wider theological vision in view, Augustine's

notion of the participatory nature of martyrdom and martyr veneration and of the communion between the living and dead come to the forefront.

To recap, from his Christology of Christ as the one true mediator between God and humanity, Augustine argues that the martyrs (and the faithful) not only participate in Christ's divinity in virtue of the Incarnation; by their deaths the martyrs uniquely participate in the disarming of demonic principalities that Christ effected by his own death and in Christ's ongoing intercession for the pilgrim church. The martyrs in heaven are not mediators, as the pagans conceive of their own gods and *eudaimones*, and the martyrs are not gods to be worshipped.<sup>997</sup> However, as the martyred members of the body of Christ the one true mediator, they uniquely share in the royal priesthood and mediation of Christ. Though they are not substitutes for Christ the one true mediator, they participate in Christ's mediatorial work through their shed blood, their example, and their intercession, which are all efficacious for the strengthening of the church in charity and the expansion of the church across the nations. As those crowned in heaven, they are not *dependent upon* the pilgrim church and her prayers, but they are *advocates for* her who participate in the intercessory work of the one Advocate Jesus Christ. Finally, as worshippers of the one true God, they direct the faithful not to the worship not of themselves, but to the worship of God.

From his theology of salvation as a participation in the life of Christ, Augustine asserts that the martyrs, by their imitation of Christ's virtues and passion, uniquely participate in the 'Martyred Christ,' if you will, who is the chief martyr and head of the martyrs and the church.

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<sup>997</sup> To be sure, Augustine agrees that the pagan gods and *eudaimones* are in fact mediators, but false ones that mediate misery and death.

By imitating the martyrs, the faithful imitate Christ and participate in his patience and charity. By engaging in the liturgical feast days of the martyrs and visiting martyr shrines, the faithful not only are reminded to imitate the martyrs; the faithful on earth in fact commune with the martyrs in heaven and join them in the worship of Christ. Celebration without imitation, however, is merely lip service to the martyrs and constitutes neither a participation in Christ's life and charity nor a communion with the martyrs.

From his *totus Christus* theology and his theology of the Holy Spirit as the bond of charity, Augustine affirms that the martyrs and the faithful are incorporated into Christ via the sacraments. As members of Christ's body indwelt and united to one another and to Christ the head by the Holy Spirit, they share in Christ's divinity and charity. The Son of God by the Incarnation assumed the humanity, cries, and suffering of his members; thus he himself suffers in the martyrs during their passion. Likewise, in Christ's own passion, the church through the martyrs mystically bled and suffered with Him in the passion of the martyrs. Though the martyrs are ones who suffered for their witness, the faithful nonetheless share in the passion of the martyrs by virtue of their union with the martyrs as the one body of Christ joined together by the Holy Spirit.

To be sure, the Spirit of God indwells only those in communion with the one church of all nations. One who lacks this unity and charity thus lacks the Holy Spirit. To be considered a true member of Christ's body and a true martyr, one must remain in this one church, who is the Bride of Christ, the great tree, and the Catholic mother. Donatist sacraments and martyrdom, therefore, fail to communicate a participation in Christ's life because they lack this unity-in-charity. For this reason, the Donatists do not participate in Christ's suffering, and they are not the true Church of the Martyrs. Rather, they participate in the devil's persecution of the *totus*

*Christus* by their prideful schism and violent actions against Catholics. The Catholic mother's use of imperial coercion is a participation in divine discipline against her wayward Donatist children, aimed at reincorporating the Donatists into communion with the *totus Christus* in the bond of charity.

From his theology of the return of Christ, the afterlife, and the resurrection of the dead, Augustine affirms that martyrdom testifies to the resurrection and that martyr veneration aids the faithful in attaining to the resurrection. Communion occurs between the living faithful, the departed faithful, and the martyrs as the living offer alms, celebrate the Eucharist, and commend the departed to the prayers of the martyrs in the practice of burial *ad sanctos*. The prayers of the martyrs aid the living faithful by strengthening the faith, hope, and charity of the living and, on many occasions, by granting healing miracles through their relics. The prayers of the pilgrim church on behalf of the faithful dead whose deeds in life are deemed worthy of aid secure mercy and relief from the fire of purgative punishment at Christ's tribunal. Finally, the healing miracles effected through the relics of the martyrs grant to the living faithful a testimony to and foretaste of a participation in the resurrection life of Christ.

All in all, Augustine has a thoroughly participatory understanding of martyrdom and martyr veneration in which the martyrs and the faithful together as one body participate in the divinity, virtues, charity, and immortality of Jesus Christ the head. The martyrs and the faithful enjoy a real communion with one another in the worship of the one true God. The various practices of martyr veneration and the intercession of the martyrs offers real aid to the pilgrim church on her journey toward union with God. Recognizing this participatory understanding relocates the topic of martyrdom in Augustine within—not apart from—his understanding of deification. The martyrs are not only exemplars of deification for Augustine, but in many ways

an aid to the faithful in sharing in the life and charity of Christ the chief martyr, the prince of the martyrs, and the head of both the martyrs and the church—or, more simply stated, the Martyred Christ.

### ***Going Forward***

The next steps for this project include a closer look at how Augustine’s theology of grace bears upon his theology of martyrdom. Anthony Dupont has already contributed significantly to this topic.<sup>998</sup> Also, I aim to explore more deeply the participatory nature of imitation and memory for Augustine. Both imitation and memory play a crucial role in Augustine’s martyrology, especially in his understanding of the significance of the liturgical feast days, visiting memorial shrines, and the practice of burial *ad sanctos*. In the future, I aim to broaden this project by exploring the ways in which early Christian authors, including Augustine, understood the communion of the saints, the liturgical celebrations and sacramental rites as aids to the pilgrim church on her journey toward union with God, the role of charisms like prophecy, healing, and exorcism in the church, claims to spiritual authority, and Christian interactions with non-Christian religions. More broadly, I aim to continue exploring Augustine’s understanding of deification, how each of these topics I have just listed (including martyrdom) relate to his notion of deification, and how Augustine influences later understandings of deification in the West.

Augustine’s theology of martyrdom intersects with each of these topics and calls for further exploration. The early church’s understanding of the communion of the saints developed in the context of the early practices of martyr veneration. The liturgical feast days of the martyrs centered on the Eucharist. For Augustine, remembering, imitating, and venerating the saints aid

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<sup>998</sup> Dupont, *Preacher of Grace*; Dupont, “Augustine’s Homiletic Definition of Martyrdom, 155–78.

the pilgrim church in a similar manner as the sacraments in that they strengthen the faithful's participation in the life and virtues of Christ. The charisms of the Spirit are not only recorded in martyr narratives; they occurred in Augustine's own time and location in the context of martyr veneration. The claim to spiritual authority came to the forefront in the midst of the Donatist controversy. Augustine's conception of the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions arises in his defense of martyr veneration before the Manichaean accusations of idolatry and in his admonitions to Christians to refuse the use of pagan healing charms when the martyr relics aren't doing the job. Finally, as this dissertation has argued, Augustine's theology of martyrdom and martyr veneration is participatory at its core. Therefore, this study fits within a broader view of Augustine's understanding of deification and salvation as a participation in the life of God.

### **The Relevance of this Study to Historical and Contemporary Questions**

Viewing Augustine's understanding of martyrdom and martyr veneration within the framework of his wider vision of theology and highlighting his participatory understanding of these topics raises important questions in historical and present Christian thought and practice. These questions revolve around how the living faithful commune with the faithful dead, particularly the "special" dead (i.e., those regarded as martyrs, saints, or special exemplars). These issues have bearing on live questions from multiple Christian traditions. I will briefly discuss three areas of concern in which these questions arise to suggest areas of this study's relevance.

## *Reception and Influence of Augustine's Martyrology*

First of all, my conclusions raise questions regarding the reception and/or development of Augustine's martyrology throughout history. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century iconoclastic controversies, for example, the description of John of Damascus of λατρεία as the type of προσκύνησις (veneration) proper to God alone used to argue in favor of *icon* veneration recalls Augustine's discussion of λατρεία as the type of *cultus* proper to God alone used to argue in favor of *martyr* veneration. John and Augustine, respectively, distinguished these types of veneration to argue that icon veneration and martyr veneration are not idolatry. While historical documents and scholarship frequently link the theology of iconodules like John of Damascus and Theodore of Studion to that of Basil of Caesarea—namely, Basil's famous line “honor shown to an image passes over to the model”<sup>999</sup>—I find little scholarship that suggests the possibility of Augustine's influence in the debate.<sup>1000</sup>

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<sup>999</sup> Quoted in Second Council of Nicaea, *Horos*, Alberigo/Tanner 1.135.36–136.30 (trans. Daley). Cited in Daley, *God Visible*, 250. See Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 18.45. Basil is quoted in John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres* I.21.41–3; II.31; III.48; and Theodore of Studion, *Antirrhetica adversus iconomachos* 2.24. English translations of John and Theodore's works are found in John of Damascus, *St John of Damascus: Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, translation and introduction by Andrew Louth (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003); Theodore of Studion, *On the Holy Icons*, trans. Catharine P. Roth (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981). See Anne Karahan, “Byzantine Iconoclasm: Ideology and Quest for Power,” in *Iconoclasm from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Kristine Kolrud and Marina Prusac (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 79; Andrew Louth, “The Theological Argument about Images in the 8th Century,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm*, ed. Mike Humphreys (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 400–424; Ken Parry, “The Theological Argument about Images in the 9th Century,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm*, ed. Mike Humphreys (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 425–63; Moshe Barasch, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1992).

<sup>1000</sup> An exception is Ronald Thomas Bentley. ““Worship God Alone”: The Emerging Christian Tradition of Latreia” (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2009), <http://proxy.libraries.smu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/worship-god-alone-emerging-christian-tradition-i/docview/305009143/se-2>. Bentley argues that both Augustine and John of Damascus draw their conception of latria from a thoroughly Scriptural use of the term, especially in the Septuagint.

In addition, leading Protestant Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century appealed to Augustine to defend their rejection of the long-held practice of the invocation of the saints.<sup>1001</sup> John Calvin appeals in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* to Augustine's *Contra epistulam Parmeniani* to argue that Christ is the only high priest, mediator and intercessor. It follows, Calvin argues, that the intercession of the saints in heaven is superfluous and robs Christ of his honor.<sup>1002</sup> To claim that the prayers of the saints in heaven aids the pilgrim church, for Calvin, is to make the saints into additional mediators and intercessors. Augustine, on Calvin's reading, supports this claim.<sup>1003</sup> As I have shown in chapter 1, Augustine rejects the idea that the martyrs are mediators, but he affirms that they are in fact advocates for the pilgrim church who participate in Christ's mediation and intercession in virtue of their union with Christ the head.

Calvin also cites the Third Council of Carthage (397), which limits the prayers to the saints to requests for prayer.<sup>1004</sup> Calvin thinks that the bishops, though they would have preferred to terminate the practice entirely, imposed moderation because they could not contain the strong tendency of the people to invoke the saints. Calvin does not consider Augustine's explicit affirmation of invoking the saints.<sup>1005</sup> Calvin sounds very Augustinian at times when arguing that

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<sup>1001</sup> I credit my colleagues Fr. Sylvester Tan, S.J., and Marie Schramper for bringing to my attention 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformers' appeals to Augustine to support the Protestant rejection of the invocation of the saints. Fr. Sylvester and Marie directed me to the sources in which I could find these appeals.

<sup>1002</sup> See Calvin, *Institutes*, III.XX.20. He cites a passage found in *c. ep. Parm.* II.viii.16 (C.f. *en. Ps.* 94.6). See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 2, Library of Christian Classics, XXI (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 878n32. For the context of Calvin's discussion on Christ the mediator and the intercession of the saints, see Calvin, *Institutes* III.XX.17–27.

<sup>1003</sup> What Calvin does not mention is that Augustine in this passage is arguing against the Donatist Parmenian's statement that Donatist bishops are mediators.

<sup>1004</sup> See Calvin, *Institutes* III.XX.22. He specifically cites the Third Council of Carthage (397), canon xxiii. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 2, Library of Christian Classics, XXI (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 881n38.

<sup>1005</sup> See, for example, Augustine, *ciu.* VIII.27.1; XXIII.10; *c. Faust.* XX.21.



Christ is the sole mediator and that the faithful departed do not possess a conscious awareness of particular states of affairs on the earth. However, some key points on which Calvin departs from Augustine are 1) Augustine's affirmation that the martyrs, though not mediators, are in fact advocates whose prayers benefit the church; and 2) that God on rare occasions may in fact make a saint in heaven aware of particular affairs on earth and even send them to perform miracles. Calvin also does not consider Augustine's discussion of the miracles associated with martyr relics.

Similarly, in the *Smalcald Articles*, the Lutherans appeal to Augustine to support their rejection of invoking the saints. In its argument that masses should be abolished because of widespread trafficking, reliance upon masses for salvation, and their begetting of "many noxious maggots and the excrement of various idolatries," the *Smalcald Articles* reject that Augustine and other church fathers support a medieval Roman Catholic understanding of purgatory.<sup>1006</sup> Responding to Roman Catholic appeals to Augustine, the articles admit that Augustine affirmed remembrance of his mother Monica at the Eucharistic altar. However, the Lutheran Reformers regard this merely as an act of human devotion, not an article of faith that binds the consciences of the faithful.<sup>1007</sup>

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<sup>1006</sup> *The Smalcald Articles (1537)* II.5.11, 13 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles P. Arand et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 303–4. The "various idolatries" include purgatory; demons appears as departed souls demanding masses, vigils, and pilgrimages; pilgrimages; fraternities; relics; and indulgences.

<sup>1007</sup> *The Smalcald Articles* II.5.14–15. Though the following section entitled "Concerning the Invocation of the Saints" in *Smalcald Articles* II.II.25–29, which rejects the practices of invoking and venerating the saints, does not specifically appeal to Augustine, it immediately follows the above appeal to Augustine. See also *Augsburg Confession, XXI Concerning the Cult of the Saints* in *The Book of Concord*, trans. Charles P. Arand et al., 59. This article claims that the Lutheran stance on the cult of the saints is supported by Scripture, the universal church, and even the Roman church, insofar as it is consistent with the writings of the Holy fathers.

As I have shown, while Augustine certainly does not provide a detailed description of a medieval Catholic understanding of purgatory, he does affirm that a purgation at Christ's tribunal occurs for the departed faithful. Also, he affirms that the prayers of the living faithful on earth and the martyrs in heaven provide aid and relief to the those undergoing this purgation. Moreover, Augustine practiced the invocation of the saints himself, advocated it in his church, and affirmed its benefits for the living and the dead. Therefore, in their rejection of medieval understandings and practices of the mass, purgatory, indulgences, pilgrimages, relics, and veneration of the saints, the Reformers also rejected Augustine's fundamental understanding of the relationship between the living and dead. Though the Reformers were just as quick to dismiss the statements of Augustine and other fathers of the church, especially when those statements seemed contradictory to or unsupported by the Protestant canon of Scripture,<sup>1008</sup> their appeals to Augustine on this matter call for a close examination of what the bishop actually said.

### ***A Re-evaluation of the Communion of the Saints in Protestantism***

Second, recent Protestant scholarship has called for a re-evaluation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformers' understanding of the communion of the saints and the relationship between the living and the dead within their own traditions. There have arisen calls from Protestants to fellow Protestants to uphold a "canonical theism" that draws from the canonical resources of the early church, including the canon of saints. The late William J. Abraham, in his book *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology*, describes canonical theism as "the version of

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<sup>1008</sup> See *Smalcald Articles* II.II.14.

theism embodied in the rich canonical heritage of the church.”<sup>1009</sup> It is “that rich vision of God, creation, and redemption developed over time in the scriptures, articulated in the Nicene Creed, celebrated in the liturgy of the church, enacted in the lives of the saints, handed over and received in the sacraments, depicted in iconography, articulated by canonical teachers, mulled over in the fathers, and treasured, preserved, and guarded by the episcopate.”<sup>1010</sup> In essence, Abraham calls Christians of various traditions to look to the canon of saints throughout history as a vital resource for Christian theology. Other authors of various Christian traditions support and carry on Abraham’s vision for canonical theism and the significance of turning to the canon of saints to inform theology.<sup>1011</sup>

A more pointed argument comes from Methodist scholar Jackson Lashier in his recent book *Great Cloud of Witnesses: How the Dead Make a Living Church*, in which he boldly states that Protestants should commune with the saints. Responding to the Protestant rejection of communing with the saints, he says, “Nevertheless, I would argue that if one goes beyond a basic, facile search for proof texts to the logic and nature of the story of Scripture, communing with the saints emerges not only as a deeply scriptural practice but also as a grace given by God

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<sup>1009</sup> William J. Abraham, *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology from the Fathers to Feminism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 14.

<sup>1010</sup> *Ibid.*, 43. Rather than an array of arguments or a specific epistemology the intellectual content of canonical theism “is at its core a network of assertions about God, creation, and redemption” and “involves the claim that the one and only God, the creator of the universe, has redeemed the world from sin and death through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit” (*Ibid.*, 15). Abraham also notes that this is not to be confused with classical or traditional theism.

<sup>1011</sup> See William J. Abraham, Jason E. Vickers, and Natalie B. Van Kirk, eds., *Canonical Theism: A Proposal for Theology and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). To be sure, Abraham’s vision for canonical theism has been embraced by scholars that are not Protestant, such as Orthodox theologian Paul L. Gavrilyuk. For sources that discuss the saints from the perspective of virtue ethics, philosophy, and missiology, respectively, see John Stratton Hawley, ed. *Saints and Virtues* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Patrick Sherry, “Philosophy and the Saints,” *Heythrop Journal* 18, no. 1 (1977): 23–37; Eric Trozzo, Weng Kit Cheong, and Joeferick Ating, eds. *Communion of Saints in Context: Theological, Pastoral and Missiological Perspectives from Asia and Oceania* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2020).

to strengthen our lives of discipleship.”<sup>1012</sup> After examining the lives of twelve persons whom either the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant communions have regarded as saints, Lashier suggests three ways in which Protestant Christians may commune with the saints: reading the lives of the saints, celebrating the feast days of the saints, and praying “with” the saints.<sup>1013</sup>

Lashier acknowledges that the third practice will likely be the most difficult for Protestants to accept. He qualifies his use of praying “with” rather than “to” the saints to assure Protestants that such a spiritual discipline does not amount to worshipping the saints or receiving blessings from them. Rather, he argues, it is merely asking the saints to pray for us. He gives examples of prayers that clearly ask the saints to pray for the living, such as the Hail Mary and a novena to St. Thèrése of Lisieux. However, Lashier does not address whether some Catholic prayers to the saints might include language that would suggest to some or most Protestants, including Lashier himself, inappropriate veneration of saints or appeals for their blessings.<sup>1014</sup>

Lashier’s work is intended for a popular rather than a scholarly audience, and his approach does not focus on a careful, elaborated theological analysis and defense for Protestant veneration of the saints.<sup>1015</sup> However, he raises important theological issues about the way in

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<sup>1012</sup> Jackson Lashier, *Great Cloud of Witnesses: How the Dead Make a Living Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023), 2. My colleague Fr. Sylvester Tan, S.J., made me aware of this source. Fr. Sylvester’s graduate studies focus on Protestant views of the communion of the saints. I look forward to interacting with his future findings.

<sup>1013</sup> See Lashier, *Great Cloud of Witnesses*, 193–201.

<sup>1014</sup> The following immediately come to mind: The Hail, Holy Queen, the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel, devotions and prayers to Mary that name her Queen of Heaven and Co-redemptrix or call on her for protection. Each of these include titles and petitions to creatures that Protestants view as inappropriate or idolatrous.

<sup>1015</sup> To be sure, Lashier received a PhD in Religious Studies at Marquette University in 2011, he currently serves as an Associate Professor of Religion at Southwestern College, and he has a number of scholarly publications. For some examples, see Jackson Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Jackson Lashier, “Perpetua and the Meaning of Christian Identity,” in *Wesleyan Theological Society* (2019): 89-103. Jackson Lashier, “Tertullian’s Inconsistent Anti-Monarchianism: *Against Praxeas* 8 and the Influence of Irenaeus,” in *New Narratives for Old: Reading Early Christian Theology Using the Historical Method*, ed. Anthony A. Briggman and Ellen Scully (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, Forthcoming); He also frequently writes theological and

which Protestant Christians might understand venerating and invoking the prayers of the saints.<sup>1016</sup> Questions for further exploration that arise from Lashier's work include: Should Protestants welcome all traditional Roman Catholic and Eastern/Oriental Orthodox veneration practices and prayers to the saints? Or should Protestants form boundaries around veneration practices and the language of prayers to the saints? Are there certain Catholic/Orthodox veneration practices or prayers that Protestants have rightly rejected and should continue to reject? How might a Protestant adoption of these practices (or should this) affect contemporary Protestant communions' relationship to historic Protestant confessional statements? Might a revision of these confessions on this topic be necessary, or should the original text be upheld?

Augustine's distinction between the veneration of the saints and the worship of the one true God, his emphasis on imitation of the martyrs as a participation in Christ and a communion with the saints, and his understanding of the postmortem state of the martyrs and their interaction with the living faithful, could help provide the theological groundwork from which Protestants might understand and perhaps even defend Protestant forms of veneration of the saints.<sup>1017</sup> At the end of the day, theological dividing lines will inevitably be drawn to delineate a Protestant and a

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pastoral articles for popular audiences for Seedbed. See "Article Archives: Author: Jackson Lashier," Seedbed, accessed March 20, 2024, <https://seedbed.com/author/jacksonlashier/>.

<sup>1016</sup> For two recent publications in religious studies scholarship on how Protestants reshape various forms of veneration and uses of relics, see Jamie L. Brummitt, *Protestant Relics in Early America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024); and Christopher Allison, *Protestant Relics: Capturing the Sacred Body in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming). For an earlier publication in the field of material culture, see Teresa Barnett, *Sacred Relics: Pieces of the Past in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). For a survey on how John Wesley and modern Latino/a Methodists have understood the use of images, the intercession of the saints, Marian devotion and apparitions, and miracles at memorial shrines, see Edgardo A. Colón-Emeric, *The People Called Metodista: Renewing Doctrine, Worship, and Mission from the Margins* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2022), 137–59.

<sup>1017</sup> To my knowledge, no scholarly monograph on this has been written, which is surprising given the widely accepted practice of veneration of the saints among Anglo-Catholics. As far as I can tell, articulations of a Protestant acceptance and/or defense of the veneration of the saints lies in brief encyclopedia entries and statements on Anglican websites. For an example, see Ben Jeffries, "The Calendar of Saints: A Rookie Anglican Guide," July 22, 2019, <https://anglicancompass.com/the-calendar-of-saints-a-rookie-anglican-guide/>

Catholic/Orthodox understanding of the veneration and invocation of the saints. However, Protestant attempts to reevaluate the Reformers' rejection of these practices seem to be on the rise. Protestants today, just like their Reformation forebears, are very likely to care about what Augustine had to say on these matters.

### ***Pentecostal/Charismatic Trends Regarding the Living and the Dead***

Thirdly, surprising trends have arisen within Pentecostal/Charismatic circles that say a great deal about their understanding of the relationship between the living and the dead.<sup>1018</sup> On the one hand, such communities tend to utterly reject the historic Catholic and Orthodox understanding and practice of the veneration and invocation of the saints. On the other hand, certain leaders and authors within the broader spectrum of Pentecostalism are increasingly emphasizing to popular Christian audiences the subjects of partnering with ministering angels, engaging the cloud of witnesses, and making contact with departed saints.<sup>1019</sup>

Minister and author Robert Henderson, for example, discusses angels, “the courts of heaven,” and the cloud of witnesses in his book *The Cloud of Witnesses in the Courts of Heaven: Partnering with the Council of Heaven for Personal and Kingdom Breakthrough*.<sup>1020</sup> To date, Henderson has published thirteen books in what he calls The Official Courts of Heaven Series that discuss the ability and necessity of the living faithful to participate in, agree with, and even influence the prayers and decisions that occur in the God's heavenly courtroom, which the author

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<sup>1018</sup> Henceforth, I shall abbreviate Pentecostal/Charismatic with “P/C.”

<sup>1019</sup> A simple Google search of phrases like “Partnering with Angels” or “Angels on Assignment” will reveal a number of blogs, books, and sermon series. Apparently such phrases and slight variations thereof are quite popular for blog, book, and sermon titles in certain P/C circles.

<sup>1020</sup> Robert Henderson, *The Cloud of Witnesses in the Courts of Heaven: Partnering with the Council of Heaven for Personal and Kingdom Breakthrough* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 2019).

describes as consisting of angels, departed Christians, and other heavenly beings.<sup>1021</sup> A number of P/C leaders and organizations endorse Henderson’s work, even naming him an “apostle,”<sup>1022</sup> while others heavily criticize it. Despite the mixed responses to Henderson’s work, his ideas and influence are on the rise through various mediums of communication, including his preaching at churches and conferences, hosting his own conferences, selling CDs, DVDs and mp3 teachings, and offering online courses and webinars.<sup>1023</sup>

In addition, though the formerly popular selling of anointed handkerchiefs by P/C ministries has significantly diminished, admonitions to pray over material objects to impart healing power and accounts of miracles associated with this practice remain in P/C communities.<sup>1024</sup> Also, the relics of past holiness and Pentecostal revivals are fashioned, sold, and publicly memorialized. The Red River Turning Company, for example, sells pens crafted from a tree that stood beside The Meeting House in Logan County, Kentucky, where revivalist Peter Cartwright preached and saw many conversions in 1799–1800. The fascinating implications of the company’s statements on its website call for a lengthy quotation:

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<sup>1021</sup> He has published other books outside of this series, but the “courts of heaven” theme seems to pervade all of his writings and teachings. All of his books are written for popular audiences.

<sup>1022</sup> See the endorsements written for his books. His short biography on many of his books name him a “global apostolic leader.”

<sup>1023</sup> For a description of his ministry, a list of various media, and calendar of upcoming events, see Robert Henderson Ministries, accessed November 11, 2023, <https://www.roberthendersonministries.com/>. For an example of a sharp critique of Henderson’s proposals, see an episode of The Remnant Radio, a podcast led by three P/C pastors: The Remnant Radio, “A Response to the Courts of Heaven Prayer: With Ken Fish,” accessed March 20, 2024, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJF7538\\_LBw&t=74s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJF7538_LBw&t=74s). To date, the podcast has over 145,000 subscribers, and this episode has over 31,000 views.

<sup>1024</sup> Dutch Sheets, a bestselling P/C author, shares such testimonies and admonitions in his popular book, *Intercessory Prayer: How God Can Use Your Prayers to Move Heaven and Earth* (South Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2016). He has published twenty-four books, but this remains his most popular publication with over one million copies sold. See “About Dutch,” Dutch Sheets Ministries, accessed March 20, 2024, <https://dutchsheets.org/index.php/about/>.

These pens came from the big maple that stood at The Meeting House in Logan County, Kentucky. The tree was there when Peter Cartwright preached, James McGreedy prayed, and heaven listened. Through the days of the pioneer circuit riders it shaded feasts and festivals and fiery preachers. It stood through the shouting revivals and outpourings as God moved and the world changed.... This is the place of the beginning of one of the greatest awakenings in history. Lightning struck the tree a few years ago. There was a danger of it falling and crushing the old meeting house. It was to be cut down and hauled away to be destroyed. It came to my attention and I was able to get the whole tree. I sent trucks to Kentucky and brought it to Alabama. We had it milled and began this creative and adventurous way of telling the story of redemption. Now, Denise & I are hand-making these one of a kind pens for those who will value them like we do and tell the story.... It's kind of like *holding a piece of history in your hand and writing the future all at the same time.*"<sup>1025</sup>

Though the company is not clear what it means by "writing the future," the implication is that having these revival pens in one's possession not only recalls history, but also in some way shapes it for the future. In 2022, a friend of mine gave to me and to a handful of others one of these very pens for Christmas. A few years ago, I was in a Pentecostal/Charismatic church service during which the pastor brought out a drum handcrafted from the same tree. The pastor explained the significance of the drum and played it during the worship service as a sort of "prophetic act," i.e., a means of imparting the grace of that past revival to the present congregation.

What do each of these practices say about a P/C understanding of the relationship between the living and the dead? Are the lines between a Catholic/Orthodox and a P/C understanding of the communion of the saints thinner than supposed—or, perhaps, *becoming* thinner? As a patristics scholar who has pastored in Pentecostal/Charismatic church settings

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<sup>1025</sup> "About Us: How We Got Started," Red River Turning Co, accessed March 20, 2024, <https://www.redriverturning.com/about/>. For a brief description of the Red River Revival, pictures of the memorialized Meeting House, and opinions on the revival's connection to the Second Great Awakening, see Jennifer A. Miskov, Ph.D., "Red River Meeting House: Birthplace of the 2nd Great Awakening," July 26, 2021, <https://jenmiskov.com/blog/redriver>. Dr. Miskov describes herself as a Revival Historian. The website includes reprinted excerpts from eye-witness accounts of the revival and dreams that Dr. Miskov has experienced recently, which she believes are messages from God about the present significance of the Red River Revival and other 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century revivals in America.



since 2009, I can't help but think Augustine has much to offer to these discussions.<sup>1026</sup> I have found in discussions with P/C laity and pastors that many are highly interested in Augustine's report of healing miracles, resurrections, and exorcisms resulting from contact with martyr relics. Of course, there tends to be a simultaneous wrestle with the fact that these miracles reportedly occurred when individuals visited a martyr shrine or touched a relic.

The benefit of this dissertation, then, need not be confined to the field of historical theology, though it will certainly find its primary home in such a place. Rather, understanding the centrality of Augustine's wider vision of theology and his participatory understanding of martyrdom and martyr veneration contributes to a variety of concerns in scholarship across a number of disciplines, ecumenical concerns, and spirituality in various Christian traditions.

### **Closing Thoughts**

On a final note, I am compelled to draw attention to the contemporary pastoral benefit of understanding Augustine's theology of martyrdom and martyr veneration. After all, much that we gain from his understanding of these topics arises from sermons he preached to lay Christians and pastoral letters he sent to fellow shepherds of Christ's flock. Augustine preached about martyrdom during a time of peace, which challenged him to make martyrdom meaningful to Christians in a time when they were *unlikely* to become martyrs. Augustine knew, however, that such a time of peace would not always be guaranteed. The Roman empire, though it had adopted Christianity as its official religion, was among the kingdoms of this world. Rome itself was not the City of God, so everlasting peace and triumph was not guaranteed. In addition to the impact

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<sup>1026</sup> I grew up in The Episcopal Church. My sacramental upbringing, P/C pastoring, and patristic scholarship have helped form scholarly and ecclesial inquiries where elements of these backgrounds intersect.

of the sack of Rome under the Arian Visigoths and the Vandal invasion of Augustine's homeland, North Africa would eventually be overtaken by invading Muslim armies during the Arab Conquest in the seventh century. Christians who refused to renounce their worship of Christ for the worship of Allah and former Muslims who forsook the names of Allah and Muhammed for the name of Christ would shed their blood. The former time of peace thus came to a violent end.<sup>1027</sup>

Augustine knew well, and history has proved, that a time of peace for the church prior to the return of Jesus Christ would only be temporary. As I have discussed through various examples above, though a time of peace for the church seems to reign in many parts of Europe and the Americas, in many places of the world, the reality of martyrdom is ever present. Fresh blood continues to be shed for the name of Jesus Christ, and Christ continues to be sacrificed in the martyrs of our own day.

Augustine's call to the church of his own time, therefore, still resounds to the church today. His definition of martyrdom as a witness to Christ unto shedding blood reminds the church that following Christ involves a great cost—at times our very lives—and calls the faithful to look to the martyrs to strengthen our own willingness to pay that price. His understanding of Christ as the one true mediator between God and humanity calls the church to keep Christ at the

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<sup>1027</sup> For a study examining the state-sanctioned violence against Christians in the Islamic world in the seventh–ninth centuries, see Christian C. Sahner, *Christian Martyrs under Islam: Religious Violence and the Making of the Muslim World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018). The martyrdoms that Sahner discusses include a variety of areas—not just North Africa—in the Islamic world of that time. Sahner notes that three main types of Christians suffered under Islamic violence: Christian converts to Islam who later returned to their Christian faith, former Muslims who converted to Christianity, and Christians who publicly blasphemed Muhammed. In addition, “there were smaller numbers of Christians who were executed for refusing forced conversion, who were killed fighting the Arabs in times of war, or who died as a result of random, nonreligious violence.” Sahner, *Christian Martyrs*, 3.

center of our worship and of our honoring of any creature—even men or women who displayed great courage, performed wonderful miracles, or endured immense suffering.

His theology of salvation as a participation in the life of God calls the church to remember, honor, and imitate the martyrs who imitated Christ, that we may be counted worthy of the crown of life. The martyrs are relevant to the churches living in a time of peace because as long as this present age endures, Satan's assaults against the members of Christ's body do not cease; they merely take on different forms. Remembering and venerating the martyrs in a time of peace trains the pilgrim church to follow in Christ's footsteps and resist the devices of the devil with eternity in mind. His theology of the *totus Christus* and the Holy Spirit as the bond of charity calls the church to imitate the unity and charity that the martyrs exemplified and consider what that unity-in-charity might look like amid contemporary schisms in the church. Also, though Christians in one part of the world may be enjoying a time of peace, they, along with Christ, may weep for, pray for, and provide aid for fellow members in Christ's body in other places of the world that may be enduring the refining fires of persecution.

His eschatology reminds the church that the martyrs are witnesses not only to the death and resurrection of Christ; they are witnesses to a future age, an eternal kingdom upon which we are to fix our eyes and according to which we are to order our lives. As Augustine firmly held, in view of the teachings of the prophets, apostles, and Christ himself, all will stand before the judgment seat of Christ at the resurrection—to which the postmortem miracles of the martyrs testify—and be judged according to their deeds in this life. Augustine calls the church to consider and wrestle with the relationship between the living and dead Christians, how they benefit one another, and even how they might in some way depend upon one another.

Furthermore, the martyrs' lives and deaths testify to the possibility that Satan's rage could at any time and in any place of the world take the form of a brutal death for one's witness to Christ. For Augustine, a heated persecution of the saints under yet another demonically inspired world leader would certainly take place before the end of the age. Remembering, honoring, and imitating the virtues of the martyrs thus strengthens the church to endure the persecution to come. The church, even when living in a time or place of peace, must be vigilant, sober-minded, and prepared to suffer and die for the name of Jesus Christ. May those of us counted worthy of such suffering be found ready to imitate our Martyred Lord (Acts 5:41).

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