



The Therapeutic Gospel for the Traumatic World. Stigmata Domini Iesu Christi in Corpore as the Crown of Victory

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Abstract: Drawing on Augustine’s *Epistolae ad Galatas Expositionis Liber Unus*, I would like to explore two insights into the therapeutic understanding of persona trauma. First, for Augustine, Paul’s past *turbulentas contentions* are not in and of themselves *stigmata domini Iesu Christi*. What, then, is the meaning and significance for Augustine of Paul’s statement “For I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ in my body” (Gal 6:17)? Secondly, Augustine recognizes that Paul has been fighting his “*alios conflictus et certamina*”. What is his struggle and how does it relate to the stigmata of the Lord Jesus Christ in the body? In traumatic experiences, our hearts may be troubled by the guilt of the traumatic experiences (for example, by asking questions like: “Did I do something wrong to cause this?”). Paul is able to recognize and reject anyone (or anything) that might tempt him to return to the accusation of the law, hence the declaration: “*De cetero, inquit, laborem nemo mihi praestet*”. I argue that by interpreting the metaphorical sense of *ad coronam uictoriae proficiebant*, Augustine pronounces Christ’s victory on the Cross over sin and death by explaining Paul’s proclamation of his hermeneutic of Christ’s *stigmata*. Through this soteriological lens, Augustine brings his interpretation of Galatians to its climax by proclaiming “*Gratia domini nostri Iesu Christi cum spiritu uestro, fratres, Amen*” (Gal 6:18).

Keywords: Augustine; Galatians; Christ, stigmata; Donatist; trauma; law; marks; crown; victory; soteriology; spirit

1. Introduction

Augustine’s *Epistolae ad Galatas Expositionis Liber Unus* is his only complete commentary on a single book of the Bible². His commentary on

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² As noted by Plumer, Augustine himself tells us in his *Retractationes* that towards the end of his priesthood, he undertook three expositions of Paul: in chronological order, the *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula Apostoli ad Romanos* (*Commentary on Statements in the Letter to the Romans*) and *Epistulae ad Romanos inchoata expositio* (*Unfinished Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*). See Augustinus, *Retractationes*

the Galatians was likely to have been written in 394/5, when Augustine was still a priest and fighting the heresies of the Manichaeans and the Donatists³. Augustine wrote this commentary for both polemical and pastoral reasons. On the one hand, Augustine, like Victorinus⁴, adopts a Platonic concept of the soul⁵ and uses his *Augustinus, Epistulae ad Galatas expositio* to oppose the Manichean dualism and the concept of evil, as well as their denial of the Old Testament⁶. In addition to the anti-Manichean

I 24 (23), 1, CCL 57, 71 (tr. Bogan, 101 (modified)) p. 2-4: “Post hunc librum exposui eiusdem apostoli epistulam ad Galatas non carptim, id est aliqua praetermittens, sed continuanter et totam” (“After this book [that is, his *Propositions from Romans*], I commented on the same Apostle’s Epistle to the Galatians not piecemeal – that is, omitting some things – but continuously and in its entirety”). The result is Augustine’s early work entitled *Epistolae Ad Galatas Expositionis Liber Unus (A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, in One Book)*. See Augustinus, *Retractationes*, ed. R.J. Teske – B. Ramsey, tr. B. Ramsey, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, v. 1/2, Hyde Park 2010, p. 95-97.

³ E. Plumer, *Date of Composition*, in: *Augustine’s Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Notes*, Oxford 2003, p. 3-4: “If the occasion of his visit to Carthage was the Council of 26 June 394, which is highly possible, then we have an earlier limit for the dating of the Commentary on Galatians. Since this work was written while Augustine was still a priest, his ordination as coadjutor bishop of Hippo, which took place in either 395 or 396, provides a later limit. Within these limits an earlier rather than a later date is desirable in order to keep the first two expositions as near to each other as the arrangement and wording of the *Retractationes* imply. *Expositio epistulae ad Galatas* should therefore be dated 394/5”. See also O. Perler – J.-L. Maier, *Les voyages de saint Augustin*, REAug (1969) p. 162-163 for the dating of Augustine’s voyage to Carthage.

⁴ Victorinus’s appearances in *Confessions* and *De Doctrina Christiana* is used as a convincing argument put forward by Plumer to show the strong likelihood that Augustine made use of Victorinus’ *Commentary on the Galatians* when composing his own. Moreover, Augustine rejects the interpretation of Gal 2:11-14 by Jerome (in Hieronymus, *Commentarii in epistulam Pauli apostoli ad Galatas*, CCSL 77A, tr. *The Fathers of the Church*, ed. G. Raspanti, a New Translation 121, Washington 2010, p. 104) who in turn rejects Marius Victorinus’ interpretation of the same passage. See Marius Victorinus, *Commentarii in epistulam Pauli ad Galatas*, ed. F. Gori, CSEL 83, 2, Vienna 1986, tr. *Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, ed. S.A. Cooper, Oxford 2005.

⁵ See S.A. Cooper, *The Platonist Christianity of Marius Victorinus*, “Religions” 7 (2016) p. 14-18. Augustine has expressed in *Confessiones* that he thinks highly of Victorinus, who in turn has demonstrated knowledge of Plotinus and Porphyry. For the former, see Augustinus, *Confessiones* 8, 2, p. 3-6. For the latter, especially Victorinus’ knowledge and interpretation of Porphyry, see A.C. Lloyd, *Review of Porphyre et Victorinus*, “Journal of the History of Philosophy” 3 (1970) p. 340-341.

⁶ For example, in his commentary on Gal 5:17: “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to

subtext in his work, traces of anti-Donatist sentiment⁷ can also be found in his interpretation of Gal 2:11-19, which tells of the conflict between Paul and Peter, in which Augustine emphasizes the latter's acceptance of public rebuke in order to preserve the unity of the Church and to demonstrate the humility of a true Christian leader – the subtext being, that the Donatists failed to do both⁸. On the other hand, Plumer aptly observes, based on a comparison of his *Epistulae ad Galatas expositio* with *Regula*

each other, to prevent you from doing what you would" (RSV), Augustine refers to people who denies there is free choice of the will, the Manichee Fortunatus interpreted Gal 5:17 in precisely this way in his debate with Augustine in 392, and other evidence indicates that this is the usual way of interpretation from the Manichees. Also, in his interpretation Gal 1:3-4: "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father", he rejects the world is evil because of the evil people. Furthermore, Augustine defends the customs ordained in the Old Testament against the attacks of Faustus by citing the practice of Paul, including his circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:1-3). Augustine aptly points out that Paul considered that there was nothing wrong with Jewish customs in and of themselves. See Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians*, p. 64-65.

⁷ For a list of Augustine's anti-Donatist writings, see, for example, B. Ramsey – D.G. Hunter, *General Introduction: The Anti-Donatist Works of Saint Augustine*, in: Augustinus, *The Donatist Controversy*, v. 1, ed. B. Ramsey – D.G. Hunter, tr. M. Tilley – B. Ramsey, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century 21, Hyde Park 2019, p. 20. Augustine's first anti-Donatist letter was *Ep. 23* written in 392 and addressed to Maximian, the Donatist bishop of Siniti. In 393 Augustine wrote his earliest surviving tract, *Psalmus contra Partem Donati*, a polemic psalm against Parmenian's Donatist theology as expressed in their own psalm. See also D.J. Nodes, *The Organization of Augustine's Psalmus contra Partem Donati*, VigCh 63/4 (2009) p. 390.

⁸ See, for example, Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians*, p. 145: "Moreover, it was in his rebuke that the one being rebuked proved the more admirable and difficult to imitate. For it is easy to see what you would correct in someone else and to proceed to do so by censure and criticism. It is not so easy to see what ought to be corrected in yourself and to be willing to be corrected even by yourself, let alone by another, and that a junior, and all this in front of everyone! (11) Now this incident serves as a great example of humility, which is the most valuable Christian training, for by humility love is preserved. For nothing violates love more quickly than pride". Augustine shows no reservation to point out the pride of the Donatists in numerous works, one of which being *Contra litteras Petiliani*, which Augustine wrote a few years (ca. 398 AD) after finishing his *Epistolae Ad Galatas Expositionis Liber Unus*: "[I]f only, laying aside the swelling of their pride, and overcoming the madness of their stubbornness, they [those who held on to the Donatist heretics] would take heed and see what monstrous sacrilege it is to curse the baptism of the foreign churches, which we have learned from the sacred books were planted in primitive times, and to receive the baptism of the followers of Maximianus, whom they have condemned with their own lips".

Sancti Augustini episcopi (Augustine's monastic *Rule*)⁹, that the former "was written for Augustine's monastic community as its primary audience and that Augustine's immediate concern was to discover ways in which Paul's directives for Christian living could be implemented within that community"¹⁰.

This paper is a textual study involving grammatical, rhetorical and intra- and intertextual analysis of Augustine's interpretation of Gal 6:17; the ultimate aim of this study is a deeper understanding of the pastoral intent of Augustine, although where appropriate his polemical subtext will also be highlighted. The choice of scope is intentional, as I argue that, by understanding the pastoral lens of Augustine's interpretation of Gal 6:17, particularly the symbolic use of the *stigmata domini Iesu Christi in corpore* (the mark of the Lord Jesus Christ in the body) that Paul mentions in this verse, we are able to gain an important key to dealing with the trauma of this world as ministers of the gospel or, for that matter, as caregivers who share the Christian faith.

The following text from Augustine's commentary on Gal 6:17 in *Epistulae ad Galatas expositio* will be analyzed:

From now on, he says, let no one trouble me (Gal 6:17). He has no desire to be worn down by turbulent conflicts over a matter sufficiently explained both in his Letter to the Romans and in this letter. (2) For I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ in my body. That is, 'I have other battles and contests to fight with my flesh in the persecutions I suffer'. (3) For by marks are meant the kind associated with the punishments of slaves, so that if a slave, for instance, were in fetters on account of wrongdoing, that is, an offence, or had suffered something of this kind, he might be said to have marks, and for this reason he is of a lower rank in the right to manumission. (4) The Apostle thus wanted to apply the term marks to the marks of punishment, so to speak, coming from the persecutions that he suffered. (5) For he knew that this was

⁹ The original Latin version of Augustine's *Rule*, *Regula Sancti Augustini*, can be found in the "The Latin Library", in: <https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/augustine/reg.shtm> (accessed 10.12.2023). For the English translation of *Regula Sancti Augustini*, see J. Pejza, *The Rule of St. Augustine*, in: <https://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/ru-leaug.html> (accessed 10.12.2023).

¹⁰ Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians*, p. 60. There is implicit polemic against Manicheism, Donatism, Arianism, and paganism, some of which is highlighted in the main text in the introduction; this paper will only focus on that which is directly related to Gal 6:17.

retribution for the offence of persecuting the churches of Christ. As the Lord himself told Ananias when Ananias feared Paul as a persecutor of Christians: (6) I will show him how much suffering he must undergo for my name's sake (Acts 9:16). Nevertheless, because of the forgiveness of sins for which he was baptized, all those tribulations not to destruction but to brought him crown of victory¹¹.

The remainder of this paper will be organized around two key questions that would help to decipher Augustine's pastoral purpose in expounding Gal 6:17: (1) What is the meaning and significance for Augustine of Paul's statement "For I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ in my body" (Gal 6:17)? (2) What does Paul mean for Augustine when he says he has been fighting his "other conflicts and struggles (alios conflictus et certamina)" in relation to Paul's *stigmata* in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ? As exemplified by Ployd's recent work focusing on Augustine's polemics against the Donatists¹², Augustine's use of Galatians has been viewed through a polemical lens that has been privileged at the expense of the pastoral. By exploring these questions, this paper will restore a balance between the two perspectives and provide a new insight into Augustine's interpretation of Paul's *stigmata* in Gal 6:17.

¹¹ Augustinus, *Epistolae ad Galatas expositionis liber unus* 63, CSEL 84, 140: "De cetero, inquit, laborem nemo mihi praestet. Non uult per turbulentas contentiones taedium sibi eri de re, quantum satis erat, exposita et in epistula, quam ad Romanos scripsit et hac ipsa. (2) Ego enim stigmata domini Iesu Christi in corpore meo porto, id est: habeo alios conictus et certamina cum carne mea, quae in persecutionibus quas patior mecum dimicant. (3) Stigmata enim dicuntur notae quaedam poenarum seruilium, ut si quis uerbi gratia seruus in compedibus fuerit propter noxam, id est propter culpam, uel huiusmodi aliquid passus fuerit, stigmata habere dicatur, et ideo in iure manumissionis inferioris est ordinis. (4) Nunc ergo apostolus stigmata uoluit appellare quasi notas poenarum de persecutionibus, quas patiebatur. (5) Propter culpam enim persecutionis, qua persecutus erat ecclesias Christi, haec sibi retribui cognouerat, sicut ab ipso domino dictum est Ananiae, cum idem illum Ananias tamquam persecutorem christianorum formidaret. (6) Ego illi ostendam, inquit, quae oporteat eum pati pro nomine meo. Verumtamen propter remissionem peccatorum, in qua baptizatus erat, omnes illae tribulationes non ei ualebant ad perniciem sed ad coronam uictoriae prociebant", Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians*, p. 234-235. Whenever necessary, I provide my own translation to supplement/challenge Plumer's.

¹² A. Ployd, *Scripture in Augustine's Polemics against the Donatists*, in: *The Bible in Christian North Africa: Part II: Consolidation of the Canon to the Arab Conquest (Ca. 393 to 650 CE)*, ed. J.P. Yates –A. Dupont, *Handbooks of the Bible and Its Reception* 4/2, Berlin – Boston 2023, p. 198-200.

2. The meaning and significance for Augustine of Paul's bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ in the body (Gal 6:17)

For Augustine, Paul's past "turbulent conflicts" (*turbulentas contentions*) are not in and of themselves "stigmata domini Iesu Christi". What, then, is the meaning and significance for Augustine of Paul's statement "For I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ in my body" (Gal 6:17)? The key is that for Paul, the theological disputes that people have raised against the function of the law, which Paul insists cannot be compared with the grace of Jesus Christ according to his gospel. To show how this saving grace informs Augustine's interpretation of Gal 6:17, it would be useful to examine how Augustine's explanation of Gal 6:16. There, Augustine writes:

And for everyone, he says, who follows this rule, peace and mercy are upon them and upon the Israel of God, that is, for all those who are preparing to see God, not for those who receive such a name and, because of their carnal blindness, they refuse to see the Lord, when, while they reject his grace, they want to be slaves of the times¹³.

For Augustine, when Paul speaks of "everyone [...] who follows this rule", he is referring – as he already stated in Gal 6:15: "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" – to those who are truly ready to see God. These are different from those who are called by that name [Israel] and who, in their carnal blindness refuse to see the Lord, spurning his grace, still wanting to be "slaved of the times". For the latter, Augustine rejects the Judaizers of Paul's times who wanted to be "slaves of the [opportune] time"; they lured the church community back to the way of receiving salvation by obeying the law, thus imprisoning themselves and others up in spiritual darkness and dividing the church by their false teaching. Contrary to Paul's instruction to true Christians in Gal 6:10: "While we have opportunity, let's do good to all people", they want to take advantage of earthly fame and rewards whenever they come, so they indulge in this vicious craving of temporal

¹³ Augustinus, *Epistolae ad Galatas expositionis liber unus* 63, CSEL 84, 140: "Et quicumque, inquit, hanc regulam sectantur, pax super illos et misericordia et super Israel dei [Gal 6,16] id est eos, qui uere ad uisionem dei praeparantur non qui uocantur hoc nomine et carnali caecitate uidere dominum nolunt, quando gratiam eius respuentes serui esse temporum cupiunt" (my own translation).

things¹⁴. The Old Latin text¹⁵ for Gal 6:16 renders “et quicumque hanc regulam secuti fuerint, pax super illos, et misericordia, et super Israël Dei”. Assuming that this is the Latin text that Augustine reads, we can see that *hanc regulam secuti fuerant* (“will have followed this rule”, a future perfect participle form) is used in the *Galatians* text, while Augustine uses *hanc regulam sectantur* (“follows this rule”, a present active indicative form) in his *Epistulae ad Galatas expositio*. On the one hand, the future perfect tense of *secuti fuerant* shows how Paul’s eschatological view of those who will have completed their lives following this rule by the time of Christ’s return (as suggested by his earlier comment about true Christians reaping eternal life from the Spirit). On the other hand, by shifting the temporal sense of *secutus* to the present tense, Augustine helps the reader to receive this eschatological message in a more immediate, here-and-now sense. The cross of Christ (*crucis Christi*) – the persecution that the Judaizers or nominal people of God want to avoid – is that of which Paul boasts, by which the world was crucified to him, and he to the world (“per quem mihi mundus crucifixus est, et ego mundo”). Circumcision is the sign (or evidence) of the covenant God made with the Israelites¹⁶. It is a sign of God’s loving kindness, and a sign of the Israelites’ belonging, obedience and faithfulness to Him. But Paul asserts that the true mark of Christians is not circumcision but the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, through which humans become the new creation (*nova creatura*, translated from the Greek word *κτίσις*) which literally means “a newly created ‘thing’” presumably meaning the Church (*ecclesia*), the community of God’s people, rather than a person. In this way, Augustine brings Paul’s text closer to his reader, not only by using the present tense of *sectus*, signifying a here-and-now imminent need to live as a newly created Church, but also by sharing his personal conviction as a priest to defend the unity and true doctrine of the Church.

It is in this spirit that Augustine goes on to explain the meaning of Gal 6:17: “De cetero, nemo mihi molestus sit: ego enim stigmata Domini Jesu in corpore meo porto”. First of all, Paul’s use of *de cetero*, often translated as “from now on” or “in the future”, is a relatively reserved

¹⁴ See Augustinus, *Epistolae ad Galatas expositio* 63, CSEL 84, 140, tr. *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, ed. M.J. Edwards, Downers Grove 1999, p. 103.

¹⁵ See, for example, one of the ‘full digitization’ texts in <http://www.vetuslatina.org/> (accessed 10.12.2023).

¹⁶ Gen 17:9-11.

term used by Augustine: It occurs only 79 times in the entire extant Augustine's corpus¹⁷. For him, at least in the time period (before 400), Augustine uses this term to signify a decisive change of direction. For example, in *Confessiones* IX 4, 10, he uses it to mean a determination to turn away from sin: "Then I read, 'Let your anger deter you from sin, and how these words moved me, my God! I had already learned to feel for my past sins an anger with myself that would hold me back from sinning again'"¹⁸. Like Paul, who chose not to be troubled by the conflicts with the Judaizers, Augustine has determined not to be emotionally troubled by his past sinful ways but to move on to share with his readers a confession of God's mercy and of his past sins of lust and vainglory.

3. The *stigmata* become the crown of victory: A process of transformation from past conflicts to future hope

The second question is this: "For Augustine, what does Paul mean when he says he has been fighting his 'other conflicts and struggles (alios conflictus et certamina)' in relation to Paul's *stigmata* in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ?". To answer this question, we need to look more closely at Augustine's comment: "For I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ in my body, that is, I have other conjectures and contests with my flesh, which I suffer with me in the persecutions of which they are fighting"¹⁹. Ostensibly, Augustine is explaining that the *stigmata* of the Lord Jesus Christ in Paul's body have a physical meaning, since one the *stigmata* can be understood as the physical wounds of his crucifixion (which Paul mentions in Gal 6:12)²⁰. It is worth noting, however, that Augustine uses *carne mea* ("my flesh") to respond to the biblical expression *corpore meo* (τῷ σώματι μου, "my body"). This reflects Augustine's theologi-

¹⁷ This is a result from a keyword search of "de cetero" through the online database C.P. Mayer, ed. CAG-online: Corpus Augustinianum Gissense a Cornelio Mayer editum, Basel 2014, in: <https://cag-online.net/> (accessed 10.12.2023).

¹⁸ Augustinus, *Confessiones* IX 4, 10, CCL 27, 138: "legebam: irascimini et nolite peccare [Ps 4,5], et quomodo mouebam, deus meus, qui iam didiceram irasci mihi de praeteritis, ut de cetero non peccarem".

¹⁹ Augustinus, *Epistolae ad Galatas expositionis liber unus* 63, "Ego enim stigmata domini Iesu Christi in corpore meo porto, id est: habeo alios coniectus et certamina cum carne mea, quae in persecutionibus quas patior mecum dimicant".

²⁰ Gal 6:12: "qui uolunt, inquit, placere in carne, hi cogunt uos circumcidi, tantum ut in cruce Christi persecutionem non patiantur".

cal anthropology where he uses the lexicon *carno* to refer to the weaker, fallen nature of humans²¹. This is one of the examples of this usage with a negative connotation (Another example is also found in Gal 6:12 where he uses the expression *in carne* to describe the weak, prideful nature of the Judaizers who forced others to be circumcised according to the law)²². Paul recognizes his own sinfulness and therefore deserving of these afflictions, and yet the crown of victory is secured by the grace of the forgiveness of sin (*remissionem peccatorum*) through his Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes: “*Ego [...] porto* (I bear) the *stigmata* of the Lord Jesus Christ”, denoting his submission to Christ (hence his ‘slave’ analogy). Paul believes this suffering is his rightful portion given to him by the Lord. He feels it is deserved because he has previously caused other Christians to suffer for their faith. With these *stigmata* on his body, Paul claims that he has “*alios conflictus et certamina*”. These are other pains and sufferings that he has endured. Nevertheless, they are not the same as Christ’s, for no one has the exact marks of Christ on the Cross or suffers exactly as Christ did. Augustine explains that these marks are associated with the punishments of slaves by saying that Paul “wanted to apply the term marks to the marks of punishment”. Is Augustine’s Paul being too hard on himself here? Perhaps. But it is more likely that Augustine is emphasizing Paul’s humility. Paul does not forget the pain and suffering he caused Christians before his conversion. He humbly accepts the consequences, knowing that God is merciful. He alludes to this in the previous verse, Gal 6:16.

Furthermore, Augustine’s comment on Paul’s taking advantage of the cross²³ is intriguing; the imperfect tense of this verb signals a past continuous nuance of “taking advantage”. This shows that for Augustine, Paul found it constantly helpful to receive the crown of victory by being reminded, through his own pain and suffering, that Christ has suffered and atoned for his sins. I will argue, then, that by interpreting the metaphorical sense of “*ad coronam uictoriae proficiebant*”, Augustine proclaims Christ’s victory over sin and death by explaining Paul’s proclamation of his taking advantage of Christ’s *stigmata*, and it is through this soteriological lens that Augustine takes his interpretation of Galatians to its climax by proclaiming “*Gratia domini nostri Iesu Christi cum spiritu uestro, fratres, Amen*” (Gal 6:18).

²¹ G. Lawless, *Augustine and Human Embodiment*, “Augustiniana” 40 (1990) p. 168.

²² See n. 18.

²³ My own translation from the Latin text: “*proficiebant coronam uictoriae*”.

At times, Christians may encounter human conflicts because of differences in their value systems, and their hearts may be troubled by the guilt of traumatic interpersonal experiences and may have been complicit in causing the conflicts. Yet, Augustine's Paul, carrying these inner struggles and sufferings with him, was able to recognize and reject anyone who could lead him or other Christians to believe that their lives were at stake with the accusation of the law and that they must obey the Jewish law for their salvation (again, he declares: "De cetero, inquit, laborem nemo mihi praestet"). By interpreting these *stigmata* "ad coronam uictoriae proficiebant", Augustine reminds his readers that the victory of Christ – that Christians share after they fight hard in their spiritual battles – could leave them with psychological/mental bruises, cuts, wounds and lacerations. Augustine's hermeneutic of Paul's *stigmata* is both Christological and soteriological in nature; Christ's saving grace involves a deep wound in his body, and it is this body that heals Paul and Augustine as well. It is through this soteriological lens that Augustine brings his *Epistulae ad Galatas expositio* to its climax of salvific hope: God in Christ Jesus has promised the people of God the forgiveness of sins as well as grace of healing. Just as the Judaizers (and any Jewish Christians) should not be proud of their marks of bodily circumcision, so Paul and true disciples of Christ should not be troubled or ashamed of their bodily (and mental) wounds. In this way, Augustine underscores Paul's understanding of his wounds as marks of Christ's victory and of Christians' identity as one catholic church, God's new creation²⁴ and a 'healed' community that is able to resist the heresies of his day, including Donatism, that had divided the church for years. There is no need to fear these wounds of division, Augustine seems to imply by invoking Paul's interpretation of his *stigmata*, because the grace of healing and the strength to continue on in the Christian journey are always with the true church of Christ. With this grace and strength, Paul was able to defend the true faith against the

²⁴ Cf. N.K. Gupta, *The Story of God Bible Commentary – Galatians*, ed. T. Longman III – S. McNight, Grand Rapids 2023, p. 261. Gupta rightly interprets this verse in the context of true discipleship of Christians, a community of God's new creation: "In Galatians 6:17, Paul is arguing that the marks of circumcision are not what truly identifies one with God in new creation. Rather, it is the cruciform life of faith that humbly takes up the cross and follows Jesus (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27). Paul opens the Galatians up to a whole new way of looking at the body and its relationship to a social reality and value system. [...] Paul wants to point to the evidence of hard discipleship that reflects deep faith and inspired love".

Judaizers; Augustine was able to defend the true faith against the Donatists (and try in various ways²⁵ to persuade them to return to it). It is up to Augustine's readers to respond by taking up the cross and following Jesus to do likewise.

4. Conclusion and Implications

Augustine's *Epistulae ad Galatas expositio* is more than a commentary; it is an exhortation letter to the Christian readers in the fourth century who were lost, confused or even torn between the different 'versions' of Christian doctrine and church practice. Like Paul who had to deal with the personal attacks of the Judaizers, and the spiritual dissension of the church, Augustine had to deal with the psychological wounds of these tensions with the enemy (Manicheans) and the spiritual wounds to the church (Donatists, Arians) that threatened in the late fourth century. Written in 394, just a few years after Augustine began confronting the Donatists, this often-overlooked work urges God's people to see the church as a therapeutic agent against internal dissensions and external persecution. It addresses not only the Donatists but also other heresies such as Manicheism and Arianism. The work emphasizes that the purity of the church is not found in humans. Even Paul referred to himself as the chief of sinners in 1Tim 1:15, and Augustine echoed this sentiment in his *Confessions*, written shortly after *Epistulae ad Galatas expositio*. Instead, the true Church is sanctified by Christ, who calls us to bring grace to the world, not to inflict further wounds on others, as the Judaizers and fellow Christians did to Paul and the Galatian Churches, or as the Donatists and other 'Christians' did to Augustine and the Church. How can the Church today fail to heed Augustine's comments about Paul and the help he receives from the *stigmata* of Christ?

In Paul's time, slaves were often branded with marks, or *stigmata*, to indicate to whom they belonged. By reinforcing the image of Paul as a slave of Christ marked by the *stigmata* on his body, Augustine uses this hermeneutic of *stigmata* to reorient his readers to the saving grace of Jesus Christ symbolized by his own *stigmata*, the marks of physical wounds on the Cross. In the medieval times, *stigmata* became a term used in Christian mysticism to describe the physical manifestations of bodily wounds, scars

²⁵ For a list of Augustine's anti-Donatist writings, see, for example, Ramsey – Hunter, *General Introduction*, p. 26-27.

or pain in places corresponding to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ, such as the hands, wrists, and feet. However, this paper has shown that *stigmata* in the original sense of the word in Gal 6:17, and in line with Augustine's interpretation, signifies both the physical suffering (scars/wounds) and the psychological turmoil that Paul had experienced for the sake of Christ, as described in 2Cor 11:23-28²⁶. By giving a new meaning to Paul's bodily *stigmata*, that is, an assurance of the crown of victory (which in turn symbolizes heavenly reward) through Christ's saving act of crucifixion, Augustine tactfully exhorts his readers to accept suffering for Christ and his church with peace and hope, for God's grace will always be with his church – this is Paul's final prayer and blessing at the end of *Galatians*, Gal 6:18: "Gratia domini nostri Iesu Christi cum spiritu uestro, fratres, Amen".

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²⁶ Paul describes these in 2Cor 11:23-28 (RSV): "Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one – I am talking like a madman – with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches".

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