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A Pastoral Theology of Desire: Reading Augustine's Theology of Desire in a Broader Corpus[1]

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Abstract: *Enarrationes in Psalmos* are an important source for understanding the Augustinian theology of desire, linking it to his systematic theology and his pastoral practice. In this paper I illustrate by overviewing the expositions on Psalms 10 (11 in the Masoretic numbering), 11 (12), 12 (13), 23 (24), and 26 (27). These Psalms teach us to love, trust, and seek God only, a failure to do which marks the Donatist schism. Augustine mingles ideas from pagan philosophy's quest for *eudaimonia* or *beata vita* – the good, happy, and blessed life – with biblical ideas. We want a stable happiness, and we must pursue wisdom; we can find stability in the rock that is Christ, to follow whom is to pursue wisdom rightly. Our desires must be converted to God, the only complete and perfect good and the source of eternal happiness, whom we must single-mindedly pursue with prayer and faith. While we must desire the eschaton and look to no earthly satisfaction, earthly goods may be received as gifts from God. One thing we can learn from studying the *Enarrationes* is how closely connected are the ideas of right love, the right church, and the right end; all three go together in Augustine's theology.

Keywords: Augustine; *Enarrationes in Psalmos*; desire; ecclesiology; eschatology; eudaimonia

Enarrationes in Psalmos are an important source on Augustine's theology of desire, integrating it with his systematic theology and his preaching. I will illustrate by overviewing a few expositions. I recently took a more thorough look at more than 90 of them, explaining how Augustine's theology of desire is integrated with his Christology, ecclesiology,

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ethics, and eschatology[3]. However, the exploration of *Enarrationes*, with its over 200 expositions, has barely begun[4]; I will continue here with a narrower focus on ecclesiology and eschatology. *Any* selection would be instructive; every *enarratio* is worth considering for a theology of desire. However, after making a beginning one must continue *somewhere*. Among the *enarrationes* on the first 40 or so Psalms, the passages selected here make up nearly all those which focus on ecclesiology or eschatology and which were not considered in my recent book.

Specifically, I will look at Psalms 10 (11 in the Masoretic numbering), 11 (12), 12 (13), 23 (24), and 26 (27). These *enarrationes* vary in length, and so accordingly will our consideration of them. The *enarrationes* on Psalms 11 (12), 12 (13), and 23 (24) as well as the first one on Psalm 26 (27) appear to be among those earlier *enarrationes* which were not preached; these are Augustine's early work at biblical exegesis after his ordination in Hippo under Bishop Valerius. The sermon on Psalm 10 (11) was preached during the throes of the Donatist schism. Scholars indicate that the sermon on Psalm 26 (27) may have been preached at Hippo in 411-412 or 415 AD[5].

In Augustine's reading these psalms teach us to love, trust, and seek God only, a failure to do which marks the Donatist schism[6]. Augustine mingles ideas from pagan philosophy's quest for *eudaimonia* or *beata vita* – the good, happy, and blessed life – with biblical ideas. We want a stable happiness, and we must pursue wisdom; we can find stability in the rock that is Christ; to follow Christ is to pursue wisdom rightly. Our desires must be converted to God, the only complete and perfect good and the source of eternal happiness, whom we must single-mindedly pur-

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[3] M.J. Boone, *Augustine's Preaching and the Healing of Desire in the Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Lanham 2023.

[4] On the present state of research in the area, I suggest Boone, *Augustine's Preaching and the Healing of Desire*.

[5] S. Aurelii Augustini Opera Omnia, Editio Latina; Sant'Agostino, in: https://www.augustinus.it/latino/index.htm (accessed 21.05.2024) (from the URL for the *Enarrationes*, one can click on "Tavola cronologica delle Esposizioni sui Salmi" to access some scholarly views on location and dating of the *enarrationes*).

[6] For more on Donatism and the critique of Donatism in *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, see M. Cameron, *Augustine's Construction of Figurative Exegesis Against the Donatists in the Enarrationes in Psalmos* Chicago 1996 (Ph.D. diss.); A. Ployd, *Augustine, the Trinity, and the Church: A Reading of the Anti-Donatist Sermons*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology, Oxford 2015; and Boone, *Augustine's Preaching and the Healing of Desire*, p. 16, and other sources I cite there.

sue with prayer and faith. While we must desire the eschaton and look to no earthly satisfaction, earthly goods may be received as gifts from God.

Thus, the Augustinian theology of desire involves not only topics like Augustine's relationship to neo-Platonism, his theory of free will, and his metaethics of goodness built into the structure of creation[7], but also his ecclesiology and eschatology. Ecclesiology connects to Christology, and both ecclesiology and Christology connect to eschatology. And this connects to Augustinian eudaimonism, for eschatology and eudaimonism are both concerned with the end-state in which we reach the greatest good. Theology of desire is *everywhere* in Augustine's writings, wherein every topic connects to it as well as, directly or indirectly, to all the *other* topics. Even Augustine's critique of Donatism connects to a theology of desire – the Donatists love their own righteousness too much!

Before we begin, a word on terminology. Augustine defines desire in *De Civitate Dei*, Book 14: "Love [*amor*], then, yearning [from *inhio*] to have what is loved, is desire [*cupiditas*]; and having and enjoying it, is joy [*laetitia*] (…)"[8]. The use of *cupiditas* here does not mean that he means bad desire, although a noun like *cupiditas* or *concupiscentia* can have that connotation, and a word like *desiderium* might be used instead for a good desire. Rather, "these motions are evil if the love is evil; good if the love is good". All desire is love, but not all love is desire: desire is love that lacks full enjoyment of its object. Having that full enjoyment, love is no longer desire but delight or joy. Whether desire or delight, love is good or bad depending on its *object* – on whether we are loving the right thing. The only thing rightly loved without reference to anything else is God, the greatest good; other things may be loved only in reference to God and in proportion to their own lesser degree of God-given goodness[9].

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[7] I focused on these ideas in M.J. Boone, *The Conversion and Therapy of Desire: Augustine' Theology of Desire in the Cassiciacum Dialogues*, Eugene 2016; and M.J. Boone, *Reason, Authority, and the Healing of Desire in the Writings of Augustine*, Lanham 2020.

[8] Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* 14, 7. English translation from M. Dods, *Saint Augustine: The City of God*, New York 1871.

[9] The reader interested in an introduction to desire in Augustine might begin with Boone, *Reason, Authority, and the Healing*, chapter 1. Or the explanation by W. Desmond, *Augustine's Confessions*: *On Desire, Conversion and Reflection,* ITQ 47 (1980) p. 24-33, of how a human being in *Conf.* is a creature of infinite desire who finds fulfillment in a process of conversion from inferior to superior, from external to internal, from internal to divine goods. Or see R.E. Edwards, *The Flight from Desire: Augustine and Ovid to Chaucer*, New York 2008, p. 13-37, on desire as the path of Augustine's

1. *Enarratio* on Psalm 10 (11)

The exposition on Psalm 10 (11) critiques the Donatists, who fail, in prioritizing the righteousness of the church, to trust in God. The psalmist teaches us not to trust in people. This is a lesson on ethics and on ecclesiology. God's blessings are *God*'s, not the blessings of faithful Christians, who may receive them without fear that unfaithful churchmen have corrupted them. There are some interesting reflections on hermeneutics and some lessons on desire, such as the reminder to prefer spiritual interpretations to carnal ones that sanction sinful desire. Another is that the desires of the righteous are satisfied whereas sinful desire leads to misery. A third is that we should not love the righteousness of any mere humans, but trust in and seek only God – a requirement for right desire which the Donatists botch. After overviewing Augustine's exegesis in this *enarratio*, I shall summarize its theology of desire.

The psalm's heading "To the end, a psalm of David himself" has a meaning by now familiar to Augustine's hearers[10]. Augustine, briefly alluding to earlier Christological explanations (perhaps those in the beginning of *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 4 and 9), explains his interpretation of the psalm supporting the universal church against her detractors. The Donatists believed the true church is a pure church – *their* church – and that the follower of Christ must leave the universal church and come over to them. This psalm is for singing "against the heretics", Donatists who urge Christians to leave the true church, "asserting that Christ is

journeys in *Conf.* and a guiding theme of the book; J.-I. Lindén, *Desire and Love in Augustine*, in: *Platonic Love from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. C.S. O'Brien – J. Dillon, Cambridge 2022, p. 133-150, on Augustinian notions of love in relation to the Bible, Platonism, and Aristotle; P. Camacho, *The Weight of Love: Augustine on Desire and the Limits of Autonomy* Leuven 2016 (Ph.D. diss.), on how Augustinian freedom does not involve individual autonomy but fulfillment by learning rightly to love God and other people. See also, of course, the distinction between *uti* and *frui* in *De doctrina Christiana* 1.3.3-5.5.

[10] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 1. tr. M. Boulding, *Expositions of the Psalms*, v. 1: *1-32*, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century 3/15, Hyde Park 2000. I am also consulting an online edition of the Latin: S. Aurelii Augustini Opera Omnia: Editio Latina. This is an older critical text of the *Enarrationes*, but it seems there is not much difference in newer critical texts. In any case, Boulding's translation is attentive to significant textual variants, none of which affect my analysis. On the textual history of the *Enarrationes*, see G. McLarney, *St. Augustine's Interpretation of the Psalms of Ascent*, Washington 2014, p. 80-81.

with them"[11]. They are urging the psalmist to "migrate to the mountains like a sparrow". Christ is allegorized as a mountain in biblical prophecy; the psalmist is being asked to leave the one mountain, Christ, and go to the wrong mountains[12]. We should stick with Christ and his true church – Augustine alludes to the sparrow who has her own house in Psalm 83 (84). Although the Donatists warn us about sinners in the church and their arrows, Augustine suggests that the arrows in the psalm actually refer to scriptures carnally misinterpreted by the Donatists (10, 2). The Christian's response must be to say with the psalmist, "I trust in the Lord".

Vetus Latina translations refer to the darkness in which the sinner aims his arrows and to the moon. Perhaps the darkening of the moon means the ignorance and confusion of many Christians[13]. Before elaborating, Augustine must explain why the moon can refer to the church[14]. "There are two plausible theories about the moon", and current astronomy cannot say which is correct; either way, the moon can symbolize the church. Perhaps half of it is dark and the other has its own light; waxing and waning results from the moon rotating as it revolves around us (Augustine explains this theory well with the illustration of a ball half black and half white). Perhaps the moon is like the church because the church also has two sides, one spiritual and one carnal. Or perhaps it simply reflects the sun's light. If this is correct, the moon is like the church, which lacks her own light and is illuminated by Christ. Since all of this can be "more troublesome than fruitful", Augustine suggests another way of comparing the moon to the church that will work for those lacking the wherewithal to ponder astronomy. We need only observe that the moon "wanes in order to be renewed", taking this as a symbol of the church's belief in death unto resurrection.

Augustine reviews different ways the moon can be darkened, applying them to several aspects of past persecution or slander against the church[15]. Another possible meaning applies to the present: perhaps the church is darkened by Donatist slanders. They accuse the universal (*catholica*) church of being home to many sinners, trying to create doubt as to which is the true church. But this need not worry one who trusts in the Lord.

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[11] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 1.

[12] For a related use of the mountain metaphor, see Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 35.

[13] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 2.

[14] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 3.

[15] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 4.

"Trust in the Lord, then"[16]. Their association with the violent Circumcellions undermines the Donatist insistence that only a thoroughly righteous church can be legitimate. More important is their failure to heed the psalm. They trust in man, saying that only sacraments offered by pure and holy people are legitimate. The Christian must trust *God*'s goodness, of which she may be certain. We should trust in the Lord and not fly off to some other mountain[17]. The psalmist's mention of those who have "destroyed what [God] made perfect" may be referred to the Donatist schism[18]. Against them he appeals to Christ, who shared the eucharist with Judas and who, Augustine reminds us, "sent him out to preach" [19]. This shows that God's gift is sufficient in itself; it comes to faithful recipients, not only to those who receive through the right ministers.

The psalmist continues by commenting on God's temple, which Augustine interprets in light of Paul in 1 Corinthians[20]. The temple is God's people (Paul's Greek says "you", in the plural, and the Latin likewise). The temple should behave as Paul instructs, with "many members, each carrying out its own duties and functions, built together by love (*caritas*) into one structure". The Donatists undermine this when they separate from the *catholica* fellowship "for the sake of their own pre-eminence".

The Latin version of the psalm states that "His eyes look kindly on the poor" – God's eyes, that is, and those who are poor in spirit before Christ – and "His eyelids question the sons of men"[21]. The Donatists are *not* poor in the relevant sense[22]. Augustine reads this as a lesson on reading the Bible. God's eyes are a figure for biblical meaning. God "questions" (*interrogo*) the faithful through Scripture. When we do not understand a passage, his eyes are closed to us; when we can understand it, his eyes are open. The "easily interpreted passages" help to clarify others – a basic rule for biblical hermeneutics, presented by Augustine in *De doctrina christiana* 3, 26, 37. Biblical obscurity keeps us humble, leading us to

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[16] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 5.

[17] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 6.

[18] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 6.

[19] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 6.

[20] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 7.

[21] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 8.

[22] See also N. Kamimura, *Rhetorical Approach to the Poor and Poverty: A Case Study of Augustine's Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Research Grant Report: Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research: *Augustine's Understanding and Practice of Poverty in an Era of Crisis* (2012) p. 32-33.

seek understanding[23]. When we find it, we are not proud, but confirmed in our faith (This passage reminds us of remarks on how humble readers do better with Scripture even as it grows them in *Confessiones* 3, 5, 9 and 4, 16, 31)[24]. Finding the truth of Scripture should be our desire and joy; "they are enlightened (…) and this gives them joy"; more literally, "they are illuminated that they might rejoice" – *illuminantur ut gaudeant*.

God oversees the sacraments as well as the reading of Scripture, and we need not worry that some ungodly person will take sacraments with us[25]. "But", reads the Latin, "whoever loves iniquity hates his own soul". When we love sin rather than God, we only harm ourselves; we do not achieve happiness through sin, but misery. Nor do we harm others, but ourselves; the faithful who trust in God are *not* harmed by others.

The psalmist says God "will rain snares down upon sinners", and Augustine suggests that the clouds required by this image are prophets, whether real or fake[26]. God may use a false prophet to snare sinners. Or perhaps the clouds are only the true prophets – snares to sinners who misinterpret them. The same prophetic word "makes fruitful the hearts of the Godfearing and the faithful". Augustine elaborates with a characteristic distinction between spiritual interpretations and carnal interpretations leading to carnal desires; for example, Genesis on the one flesh of husband and wife may be read carnally "as an encouragement to lust (*libido*)", but Paul shows us how to read it as a metaphor for the church.

Lessons on desire are most obvious in *Enarratio* 10, 11. The psalmist warns of the punishment of the wicked, mentioning fire. The wicked "are ruined by the fire of their own lusts (from *cupiditas*)". "This is the portion of their cup, unlike the cup of the righteous", described in Scripture as "intoxicating" (from *inebrio*) and "lovely" (*praeclarus*); the "rich abundance" (*ubertas*) of God's house will inebriate the faithful. The cupidity of the wicked leaves them miserable, while the desires of the righteous are satisfied.

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[23] See also F. Van Fleteren, *Principles of Augustine's Hermeneutic: An Overview*, in: *Augustine: Biblical Exegete*, ed. F. Van Fleteren – J.C. Schnaubelt, New York 2001, p. 9-10.

[24] The interested reader might consult also Michael Cameron, Totus Christus *and the Psychagogy of Augustine's Sermons*, AugSt 36 (2005) p. 62, on this topic and on *Enarratio* 10 as an example.

[25] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 9.

[26] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 10. For some other uses of this cloud metaphor, see Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 17, 13; 35, 8; and 103/3, 11.

Augustine welcomes multiple interpretations of Scripture if they are orthodox and edifying. The moon might also refer to the synagogue, and the psalm critiques Jews who reject the messiah, condemning him for allegedly destroying the law as in fact *they* had done "by living corruptly" and setting up their own law[27]. So the psalm can be read as giving us the words of Christ, speaking in his human capacity as trusting God in the face of persecution. Alternatively, the darkening of the moon can mean the corruption of the synagogue with many sinners; the arrows are their criticisms of Christ's followers. On this reading, the psalmic reference to God in the temple or in heaven can refer to the incarnation of the heavenly Word in a man or to Christ ascended to heaven. The poor on whom God looks favourably may be Christ himself or those he helped. The questioning eyelids might mean God's eyes closing and opening in death and resurrection, and so on.

Now David could possibly have had in mind some general critique of false doctrines, but not the Donatists specifically. Augustine welcomes meanings beyond those intended by a biblical author. God, the supreme author, could have had in mind whatever the church needed the psalm to mean. Augustine does not mean, through his use of Psalm 10 (11), to give an original-meaning exegesis; he does not say "Here is what David meant", but "it seems to me that it should be sung against the heretics" (*mihi videtur adversus haereticos canendus*). The psalm should of course be read according to its human author's intention, but *also* in whatever way the church *needs* it to be read in order to love Christ, and God knew we would have this particular need. Indeed, in *Enarrationes* 10, 4 he suggests multiple meanings for a verse pertaining to several different eras of church history.

Finally, I see three major lessons on desire in this *enarratio*. We have already noted two, from *Enarrationes* 10, 9-11. One is that our interpretations of Scripture should support spiritual desires rather than carnal. The Bible is not giving license to our desires for sex and food, but teaching us of Christ and the church, and we should beware of carnal interpretations pointing in a different direction. If a carnal, fleshly reading seems to support carnal desire, we should prefer a spiritual, non-physical reading supporting holy desires. Another lesson is that bad love harms the lover[28] while righteous desires will be satisfied[29]. Good desire seeks the infinite

[27] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 12.
[28] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 9.
[29] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 11.

goodness of God, which will satisfy any longing; Augustine does not explain this in detail here, focusing on three priorities. First, he aims to strengthen the *catholica* church against the Donatist schism. Second, he wants to show how we can read a psalm consistently with orthodoxy and as a living word applied to the church's current travails. Third, he wants to show how a proper ecclesiology points to trusting God alone rather than the righteousness of mere humans.

And here we may find a third major lesson on desire. The Donatists are infected with "sacrilegious pride"[30]. They fail to love the people of God[31]. They ask us to depart from God and flee to other mountains. Their sin is partly one of desire: They do not trust the goodness of God because they desire the righteousness of man, particularly their own. Those trusting in God – lacking both physical lusts and the desire for the righteousness of mere human beings – are safe from other people's sins[32].

2. *Enarratio* on Psalm 11 (12)

Psalm 11 (12) receives a short exposition in which Augustine connects the psalm to the New Testament and gives a lesson in eschatology. We should desire the one complete and perfect good, not the many temporal goods sought by the wicked. Augustine links the psalm's Latin heading "To the end, for the eighth, a psalm of David" to eschatology via a brief look at numerology[33]. Referring to his explanation of the number eight in *Enarrationes* 6, he explains that it refers to "the eternal age, because after this time which revolves in a seven-day cycle eternity will be given to the saints". He will shortly return to this eschatology, for desiring eternity rather than the cycle of temporal goods is the psalm's moral thrust[34].

For a few paragraphs Augustine gives a straightforward, brief explanation of the psalm, which speaks of holy people failing, meaning that they are "nowhere to be found"[35]. It refers to "expressions of the truth",

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[30] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 5.

[31] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 7.

[32] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 10, 9.

[33] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 11, 1.

[34] See Kamimura, *Rhetorical Approach to the Poor and Poverty*, p. 28-29 for an analysis of how the numerology here leads to a discussion of spiritual poverty.

[35] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 11, 2.

of which we may say there are many – one for each soul that knows the truth – although the truth itself is one. Everyone lies to his neighbour, and everyone *is* a neighbour[36]. The psalmist invokes God's punishment of "*all*" lying lips to warn us that, as Paul says, *all* are guilty[37]. Pride is likewise condemned[38].

When he comes to Psalm 11:6 (12:5) Augustine shifts towards an explanation of Christology and New Testament connections to the psalm[39]. God will help the poor, whom we learn from Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount are the poor in spirit, "those who suffered need and poverty in lacking spiritual good". The psalmist "will set in salvation", meaning in Christ. Specifically, he will set in Christ "whatever relates to the taking away of the wretchedness of the poor [in spirit] and the relief of the destitute who are groaning". We can be confident in Christ's authority as reported in Matthew at the Sermon on the Mount's conclusion, and hence the psalmist says, "In him I will deal confidently".

"The words of the Lord are pure words", the psalmist writes, referring to the absence of deceit[40]. God's words, like silver, are "tested and proved through hardship, *purified seven times*". As Boulding points out, Augustine thinks the psalm may be referred to the seven effects of the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 11:2-3. Returning again to Matthew's Gospel and to the poor in spirit, Augustine also points to seven statements of blessedness in the Beatitudes. The eighth statement refers to persecution, suggesting the fire that purifies silver, linking Matthew back to Isaiah. We have a complex set of inter-biblical connections: Matthew links to Isaiah 11, which links back to Psalm 11 (12), linking back to the end of the Sermon on the Mount! What has all this to do with desire, and with the eschatology suggested by the psalm's heading? Augustine explains as he closes his *enarratio*. God protects his people, "here" poor and "there" rich[41]. By "here" he means this era of history, by "there" the eternal state. Now we lack the perfect happiness we seek; then we shall be satisfied with eternal

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[36] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 11, 3. Instead of invoking the story of the Good Samaritan – which he likely has in mind – Augustine justifies this by explaining that everyone is someone to whom we should not do evil, and that such people are those we should love as neighbours according to Paul.

[37] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 11, 4.

[38] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 11, 4-5.

[39] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 11, 6.

[40] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 11, 7.

[41] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 11, 8.

spiritual goods. The psalmist in the Latin speaks of the wicked walking "round in a circle"[42], referring to the cycle of seven days. In their "greed (*cupiditas*) for temporal things", they keep rolling (*volvo*) through finite goods and never reach the eighth day, which symbolizes the happiness of eternity. Temporal goods are increased, and the mortal body "weighs down the soul" as the wicked are distracted by many finite, temporary, and unsatisfying goods. But, the psalmist says, God has increased humankind, meaning the just. The just are those who love God, for they turn from these many things to the one complete good. In fact, although he has spoken of spiritual *goods* – in the plural – there is only *one* good we must desire, which is God, in the perfect enjoyment of whom we shall be satisfied in the end.

3. *Enarratio* on Psalm 12 (13)

This short *enarratio* is concerned with eschatology and happiness. It teaches us to love eternal and heavenly rather than worldly things. As Augustine understands Psalm 12 (13), it uses the metaphor of the *day* to signify the temporality of this life and contrast it with heavenly eternity. Carnal habit and Satan may hinder us from loving and knowing God, and prayer and faith come to our aid. Pride also opposes holy desires, but the psalmist more wisely rejoices in Christ, practices moderation with respect to earthly goods, and finds his desire for eternal good satisfied.

The psalm is "To the end" because "Christ is the end of the law", as Paul explains[43]. The psalmist prays, asking how long God will forget him. Will God forget "even to the end"? Since Christ "is the Wisdom of God and the true end (*rectus finis*) of every intention of the soul", the psalmist is asking when he will be able to understand Christ. A similar question appears: How long will God turn his face from the psalmist? Although God neither forgets nor turns his face away, the Bible speaks in human idioms of God refusing "knowledge of himself to a soul whose spiritual eyes are not pure".

In short, this psalm is interpreted Christologically as pertaining to the human end: Our purpose is to know God and Christ, but we need a pure

[42] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 11, 9.
[43] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 12, 1.

mentis oculus – eye of the mind. The psalmist asks how long he will take counsel in his mind, perhaps answering his earlier question[44]. For God will give us knowledge of himself and Christ if we take counsel within ourselves that we may do "perfect mercy". The psalmist refers to his grief (*dolor*) "all day long". The word "day" refers to some "period of time" within this life. In fact, it is a metaphor for that very life's temporality, from which we yearn to escape into the greater good of the "eternal life" of knowing God; he says, "a person who longs (from *desidero*) to be delivered from this temporal existence" grieves within, asking for eternal life to replace day. A theology of desire and eschatology in miniature: The eternal enjoyment of God is what we should long for now, not the material world with ever-rolling time. Both Satan and "habitual weakness of the flesh (*consuetudo carnalis*)" resist us – the enemy the psalmist references in the next verse is either of these[45]. Against this, the psalmist asks God to "Enlighten my eyes", a prayer that the eyes of his heart will not be closed by pleasurable (*delectabilis*) sin[46]. The heart's eyes are its desires. Like Job, faith protects the psalmist from the devil's harassment[47]. Against sinful habits and Satan, the psalmist uses prayer and faith for the healing of his desires.

Another enemy is pride[48]. The psalmist has trusted in God's mercy, and Augustine warns against pride. Trusting God is good, and we get no credit for it; the moment we are proud for standing, that pride may cause us to fall. The psalmist instead rejoices (*exsulto*) in God's salvation, which is Christ. His "I will sing to the Lord, who has granted good things to me" refers to "spiritual goods" having nothing to do with that day. The heart's longing to enjoy God is satisfied. Meanwhile, the psalmist calls for moderation in earthly goods – his reference to a harp-song to God means that he will live with temperance using his body with the greatest order (*ordinatissime utor corpore*)[49].

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[44] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 12, 2.

[45] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 12, 3.

[46] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 12, 4.

[47] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 12, 5.

[48] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 12, 6.

[49] The use of *utor*, as Boulding notes, calls to mind the famous *uti*/*frui* distinction from *De doctrina christiana* 1.3.3-5.5.

4. *Enarratio* on Psalm 23 (24)

"A psalm of David himself, on the first day of the week", the Sunday resurrection of the Messiah[50]. This exposition is a short commentary on Christology, ecclesiology, and soteriology, in which salvation involves a conversion of desire. This commentary is also rooted in the eudaimonistic tradition of pagan philosophy. Christ delivers us from worldly uncertainty to heavenly joys.

"The earth is the Lord's" because the risen Christ is preached everywhere and the world comes to him[51]. Absent here are the refutations of the Donatists who missed this aspect of the Psalms – the theme of the second *enarratio* on Psalm 21 (22). Instead, Augustine develops a eudaimonistic account. He uses the sea as a metaphor for the uncertainties of life, as he had done in the prologue to *De beata vita*[52]. The Lord, according to the psalm, established the earth, now understood to be the church, "on the seas" and "above the rivers". Christ established the church firmly "above all the stormy waves of this world", and keeps it safe above the rivers of greedy people entering the world. For "With earthly cravings conquered through God's grace, the Church has been made ready by love to receive immortality". Worldly change and life's storms do not threaten the church's happiness – it has learned to love God instead.

Who, the psalmist asks, will climb God's mountain or stand in God's presence?[53] It will be the innocent person[54] who, Augustine explains, has learned to value what is truly valuable. The usual ranking of things: the soul is worth more than other created things, and God is worth most. The innocent person does not sell her soul to fleeting things, but recognizes its immortality "and longs for a settled and changeless eternity". This one is blessed by God[55]. This one seeks God[56].

Vetus Latina is a bit different from the King James words we remember from Handel. Instead of "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be lifted up, ye everlasting doors", Augustine reads of the gates of princes being

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[50] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 23, 1.
[51] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 23, 2.
[52] See Boone, *The Conversion and Therapy of Desire*, chapter 3.
[53] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 23, 3.
[54] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 22, 4.
[55] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 23, 5.
[56] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 23, 6.

sent away and "everlasting gates" lifting themselves up[57]. This contrasts ways of living and loving. The gates of princes are a life of worldly pride, greed, and fear. They are to give up their place to the "gates of renunciation of this world and conversion to God (…)". The "king of glory" opens the gates to heaven. And "Who is this king of glory?"[58]. Who else but he who is victorious in battle, as the psalm reports? This is Christ, who defeated death and was glorified.

It is incumbent upon us to follow him[59]. Augustine advises even "heavenly princes", the demonic powers, "The way lies open now from earth to heaven. Let the prophet's trumpet sound again; get rid of your gates (…)", He advises that the everlasting gates be lifted up, through whom the king of glory will enter to intercede for us. He closes his exposition with a commentary on the superiority of Christ, the king of glory, to any angelic beings[60].

5. *Enarrationes* on Psalm 26 (27)

Psalm 26 (27) has a short *enarratio* consisting of Augustine's written commentary followed by a longer "sermon to the people" (*sermo ad plebem*). In the first, Augustine explains that the psalm is written in the voice of the follower of Christ starting off on the journey. He understands that we are to return to God, the greatest good. We desire God's goodness now, forsaking the love of earthly things, and are eventually to delight in having it. This is a rich and somewhat eclectic moral theory. It, likely enough, draws from philosophical notions such as the stable happy life, the pursuit of wisdom, and the neo-Platonic idea of the soul as having fallen from divine immateriality. It is also linked to the biblical ideas of sin, the incarnation, and the righteous person building his life on that rock, which is God[61].

In the second exposition Augustine explains that the psalm is the voice simultaneously of church and God, and also explains how David's

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[57] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 23, 7.

[58] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 23, 8.

[59] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 23, 9.

[60] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 23, 10.

[61] Byassee seems disappointed at this *enarratio*'s focus on "the spiritual state of believers without much effort at christological mediation"; J. Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine*, Grand Rapids 2007, p. 228.

anointing prefigures Christ as king, priest, and sacrifice, and how the church is anointed with him. The psalm teaches us to desire the eschaton, where we may expect to enjoy a pleasure complete, secure, and unthreatened: eternal enjoyment of the infinite goodness of God, the Platonic Form of goodness. Happiness depends on a single-minded pursuit of this greatest goodness, one far surpassing the joys of created things. This joy is known fully in heaven, although now God blesses us in our troubles, especially by the believer's identity in Christ. Even the goods of this world are a cause for joy, to be recognized as signs of the greater goodness of God. Until the eschaton, those still on the journey must pray for help[62]. Even having a right will depends on God's grace. We do not shun temporal goods, but recognize them as gifts of God alone, and desire satisfaction in God rather than earth.

"For David himself, before he was anointed. Christ's raw recruit, approaching faith, speaks these words: The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"[63]. A prayer associated with David, who is Christ, and more specifically with his follower just starting out. God will give light, meaning "knowledge of himself", and salvation. Along the way there are difficulties. Enemies attack – in the Latin, "to eat my flesh"[64]. Augustine interprets: May they eat only his carnal desire (*carnale desiderium*). The psalmist's enemies have "weakened and fallen", for through their errors they are "too weak to believe in better things", and they have learned to hate the gospel. Perhaps he means that they are unable to believe the truth. Or perhaps Augustine is saying that the psalmist's enemies are too weak to *trust* (from *credo*) in better things (from *melior*, the comparative of *bonus*); perhaps they are not willing to stake their happiness on immaterial realities, loving only the physical world.

Regardless of the number of his enemies, the psalmist turns to prayer and trusts God[65]. And he seeks "to live in the Lord's house all the days of my life" – to be in the worldwide community of them that "uphold the unity and truth of faith in the Lord"[66]. This is "That I may contemplate the Lord's delight (*delectatio*)" – that through faith eventually he may know directly the goodness of God in "the delightful (*delectabilis*) vision". The

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[62] On which, with reference to this psalm, see T.J. van Bavel, *The Longing of the Heart: Augustine's Doctrine on Prayer*, Walpole 2009, p. 108.

[63] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 1.

[64] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 2.

[65] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 3.

[66] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 4.

psalmist looks to the protection of God's temple – trusting that he will be God's temple even after death. God's tent, which protects the psalmist, is the incarnation of the messiah, protecting us from temptation in this life[67] (although a look at Augustine's commentary on the Gospel of John suggests that his Latin Bible uses the verb *habito*[68], he is perhaps aware that the Greek version of John 1:14 could be translated using "tabernacle" as a verb – the Word became flesh and "tabernacled" or "pitched his tent" among us – a connection noted by Boulding). As Paul says, he believes and is counted righteous. God has set him "on a rock", meaning his belief has been set on God's "unshakable strength"[69]. Like the Stoics before him, Augustine is seeking a stable happiness. He identifies his own happiness with faith resting on God, the rock. Old Testament references to God as a rock and the gospel parable of the man who built his house on the rock are in the background. Augustine is following Ambrose before him, and a pattern he himself established in *De beata vita*. The idea of perfect stable happiness corresponds to pagan philosophy, but such happiness rests on grace[70]. The psalmist, speaking for the new believer, begins to rejoice in God, joyfully praising God for the incarnation in God's tent, which is the community of Christ's followers. He will rejoice in both heart and life – expressed by the metaphor of singing and playing the lyre.

He asks God to hear his entreaty and have mercy – not audible words but his heart's cry to see God[71]. His heart speaks to God, professing to seek his face[72]. What is to be desired is to understand and enjoy God's infinite goodness. For "it is not any worthless thing I look for, Lord, but your countenance only, that I may love you freely. Nothing more precious than that can I find". The seeking of God is the seeking of wisdom (*sapientia*)[73], the goal of philosophy and of Old Testament wisdom literature.

In Augustine's metaethics, God is the greatest good, which the human heart is built to love[74]. The Augustine scholar naturally thinks of

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[67] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 5.

[68] Cf. Augustinus, *In Ioannis Evangelium Tractatus* 2, 16.

[69] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 6.

[70] For additional analysis and sources, see Boone, *Conversion and Therapy*, chapter 3.

[71] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 7.

[72] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 8.

[73] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 11.

[74] For a closer look at Augustine's metaethics, see the analysis and other sources cited in Boone, *Reason, Authority, and the Healing of Desire*, introduction and chapter 2.

the neo-Platonic spirituality (or cosmology) in Plotinus' *Enneads* with its model of the fall of the soul from the divine immaterial reality – and its need to return. This is most likely an influence on Augustine here, but at least as important is the broader biblical background of the Psalms themselves, with the model of exile (from the Garden of Eden or from Jerusalem) and return. How these models interact – whether one dominates the other and so on – is an important topic in the study of Augustine. He does not give us much material here by means of which to answer it, but he does give us an interesting model of the soul in motion. It moves in relation to the God who is the greatest good, and its motion away from and toward God are, respectively, sin and redemption. Thus here: "Do not scorn a mortal's search for what is eternal, for you, O God, heal the wound of my sin"[75]. The psalmist teaches Christ's recruit to pray for the attainment of his desire: "Do not turn your face away from me, but let me find what I am seeking".

Filling in the picture of the soul's return journey toward God, Augustine interprets the psalmist's announcement that his parents have abandoned him as a reference to his abandonment by "the kingdom of this world"[76]. They abandoned him because he first disdained their unsatisfying goods. But God gives himself to him and adopts him into his own family (perhaps a reference to Galatians 4)[77].

On the journey, the psalmist prays. He asks for God's law to be appointed for him, that he may stay on "those straight and narrow ways"[78]. He prays for deliverance from his enemies[79], expecting to "see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living", because Christ also passed through this victoriously[80]. The psalmist advises those on the same journey to "Hold out for the Lord" and to "let your heart be strong"[81]. We may wonder how long we must go without the satisfaction of our desire, and indeed the wait is difficult. Nevertheless, hold out for the Lord, and "endure the searing of your affections bravely"[82] until they are satisfied.

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[75] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 9.

[76] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 10.

[77] See also van Bavel, *The Longing of the Heart*, p. 50.

[78] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 11.

[79] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 12.

[80] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 13.

[81] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/1, 14.

[82] "Affections" being Boulding's translation of the plural of *ren*, kidney; see on the subject Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 25/2, 7.

The second *enarratio* is an impressive piece of theological rhetoric. Augustine's preaching crams a lot of theology and exhortation into a little space. He begins by explaining how God speaks comfort to us in this psalm[83]. No doubt his idea of comfort here is shaped by biblical passages such as Isaiah 40. He argues that Psalm 26 (27) must be the words of God, for we can only trust the Scriptures if they are God's word, but also of the church, for they express suffering which may not be ascribed to God. In two voices the psalm speaks, both of God and of church, and in this way the God who is merciful (*misericors*) shows mercy to sinners who are miserable (*miseri*), speaking even in their own voice.

The psalm is attributed to David before his anointing![84] By the custom of the time, anointing was for priests or kings, so it prefigures Christ, who therefore speaks this psalm. His church is anointed along with her head, king, interceding priest, and priestly sacrifice. So the psalm is spoken also by the church, anointed in a prefiguring of the life to come. And "this psalm is the cry of one who longs for (from *desidero*) that life, who longs for that grace of God which will be perfected in us at the end".

The psalmist testifies that God is his light and salvation, asking, therefore, "whom shall I fear?"[85]. Nothing can snatch away God's mercy, no shadow threaten his light; there is no one to fear but God, who takes us from "darkness and weakness"[86] to being illuminated and saved. Although enemies pursue the psalmist to eat his flesh, he need not fear[87]. These enemies are the persecutors of the church, and the only flesh they eat is our "carnal sensibilities". God may use persecution to purify the church, presumably because worldly suffering teaches us not to love worldly things (an insight dating back to the Cassiciacum dialogues)[88]. If they should consume his flesh, his soul remains, inaccessible to the persecutor, where God dwells; he "shall be spirit, and spiritual". This may be the soul surviving martyrdom or spiritual desires outlasting carnal – probably both. God's salvation is so great that he promises a bodily resurrection. We have nothing to fear for the soul, where God is, or for the body, destined for resurrection. If the emperor may be unafraid while

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[83] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, l.

[84] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 2.

[85] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 3.

[86] Perhaps a reference to Eph 5:8.

[87] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 4.

[88] See the prologue to Augustinus, *De vita beata* and Boone, *The Conversion and Therapy*, chapter 3.

protected by physical shields, how shall the Christian be afraid when protected by God as his shield?

The Psalmist continues, saying he "will not fear" no matter what his enemies may do[89]. For the Christian, only God is worth fearing. Eternal goods given by God cannot be taken away at all. Even temporal goods given by God cannot be taken away unless God should permit. Based on the book of Job and on Jesus' remark about Satan asking to sift the disciples, Augustine says what I myself was told in church: Satan cannot harm us without God's permission. The psalmist seeks one thing that he might never be afraid, the one thing which the fearless seek: "To live in the Lord's house all the days of my life"[90]. For our earthly sojourn, the proper term would be a "tent", but heaven is a house and home (*domus*)[91].

The next few paragraphs (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 7-9) beautifully portray Augustinian ethics. What is this home, and what exactly is the "one thing" the psalmist will do when dwelling in it? Augustine prepares his answer by commenting on Psalm 83 (84), where those who dwell in God's house and praise God eternally are said to be blessed. "The psalmist here is aflame with greed, one might almost say. Burning with love, he longs to live all the days of his life in the house of the Lord, to spend all those days in the Lord's house not as days which must come to an end, but as eternal days"[92]. Not literal days, but eternal life! But what, we might ask, does he expect actually to *do* in this eternity? Why does he want it? The key question is: "Where will your joy come from?". Happiness comes from the enjoyment of some object which we love. However, the one "who is truly happy (*vere felix*)" is not one who has whatever he loves, but who has that which must be loved (*quod amandum est*)! This is a great insight from the philosophers, which in *De beata vita* 2, 10 Augustine attributes to Cicero and praises his mother for understanding through her piety. So also his sermon here unites spiritual insights from pagan philosophy and Christian Scripture. The psalmist understands that some are made more *unhappy* by *having* what they want, some *happier* by *not* having what they want[93]. Augustine explains that Paul teaches this

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[89] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 5.

[90] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 6.

[91] On this, see M. Boulding, *St. Augustine's View of the Psalms as a Communion of Faith Between Generations*, "The Downside Review" 126/443 (2008) p. 130.

[92] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 7.

[93] See also C. Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity*, Oxford 2008, p. 159.

when in the letter to the Romans he explains that sinners were given over to their own lusts, gaining what they desired in condemnation for their sin, while Paul was not given what he desired, the removal of the thorn in his flesh. But when we should learn to love "what God wants us to love", we will surely receive it from God, to our satisfaction. This, which we should love, is to dwell in God's house eternally.

But what exactly is the psalmist eternally going to *do* in God's house? Augustine, in his own pastoral and rhetorical way, is explaining things not so as directly and immediately to answer the question, but to please and persuade his audience. The answer approaches, and first he reminds us that people "like to have different sorts of luxuries and comforts" in our earthly homes, looking for happiness in "many things"[94]. He suggests another round of questioning the Psalmist about what exactly "he, and we ourselves, will be doing in that house, where he desires (*cupio*), longs (*opto*), yearns (*desidero*) and prays to dwell (…) as the one petition he makes to the Lord". This has all been a prelude to the psalmist's next line, which is the answer – "To contemplate the Lord's delight (*delectatio*)!". He longs "to contemplate the Lord's own joy (*delectatio*)". Looking forward to eternity, "mortal lovers long to be immovably established in God's light". "We shall stand before him and contemplate, and the greatest delight will be ours to enjoy, delight beyond measure". The enjoyment of the infinite goodness of the *summum bonum* is the perfect happiness awaiting the saints in eternity; their job in the meantime is to long for it.

Such has been Augustine's moving rhetoric that his audience "cried out in longing", or exclaimed (from *exclamo*) with desire (*desiderium*), for this joy (*Enarr. in ps.* 26/2, 8)[95]. Augustine seizes on this, exhorting them to stretch their hearts past familiar physical things. Much like his ascent with Monica at Ostia in book 9 of *Confessiones*, he urges his congregation to ascend with him to a working understanding of the divine nature[96]. Whatever presents itself to the mind deriving from the senses (im-

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[94] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 8.

[95] Much the same happened when Augustine, teaching much the same lessons in a sermon on the Gospel of John, referenced this psalm. For further details, consult Augustinus, *In Ioannis Evangelium Tractatus* 3, 20-21 and Ployd, *Augustine, the Trinity, and the Church*, p. 38-39.

[96] P. Cary, *Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine's Thought*, Oxford 2008, p. 186: "(…) we should expect to find Ostia's experiences happening all the time, and I think if we look at Augustine's life and work through Augustinian eyes, we will see that they do. Consider his sermons".

ages, sounds, etc.) should be put away, for as something derived from the physical it is not the good sought. "In this way", he explains, "you will be desiring something good. What sort of good? The Good of all good, from which all good derives, the Good to which nothing can be added to explain what goodness is". As Boulding notes, this is the Platonic Form of the Good![97] This is the Good from Plato's *Republic*, that for which the sun is an analogue in the famous cave analogy. God is Goodness itself, the source of the goodness all good things have; God is the explanation for their goodness, needing no further explanation – the first cause of goodness. *This* goodness "is the delight of the Lord" which the psalmist seeks to enjoy! And, Augustine urges his congregation to consider, since we enjoy the goodness of things in this world, how much better will it be directly to enjoy Goodness itself?

For this reason the psalmist has spoken of his longing "to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life"[98]. This joy will be complete, lacking no measure of delight, for what delight will be lacking for one who enjoys infinite goodness itself? It will be entirely secure, for "God will protect his own temple (…)".

This is an eschatological, heavenly hope. The psalmist says God "has hidden me in his tent on the day of my troubles; he has protected me in the hidden recesses of his tabernacle"[99]. For we are promised this delight – this heavenly home, where we are to be God's temple – after this life, but in life's troubles we are comforted by living in God's tent. We are assured by his promise. The tabernacle's recesses are likely Christ, our high priest. Thus God greatly blesses us in times of trouble. While unbelievers experience trouble without this grace, God has not abandoned them, since Christ died for them. Augustine exhorts us to join the Psalmist: "Let the human soul make bold, then, to seek that one thing (…)".

Augustine finds in the rock on which God has set the psalmist a confirmation of his Christological analysis of this comfort, for "Christ is certainly a rock", as we find in the New Testament[100]. Thus God has raised the psalmist's head up. This is due to the church's identity in Christ. Christ, coming down in the incarnation, is always present with us – the

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[97] See also J. Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, Eugene 2007, p. 107-108.

[98] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 9.

[99] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 10.

[100] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 11. Boulding notes 1Cor 10:4 in this regard. I agree, but I would add Matt 7.

believer's tent or tabernacle on earth. Christ, raised up and exalted, brings with him those who are in him; so even now the believer is lifted up with Christ, and is with Christ in heaven "in faith and hope and love", as a pledge of the future completion of his delight in God (Various New Testament passages are behind this analysis, probably including Phil 2:9-11 and Col 3:1-3).

The psalmist, having traveled the world, has "offered in his tent a sacrifice of great joy"[101]. The tent is the tabernacle, which by extension of its link to Christ is also the church. Although ultimate happiness awaits the eschaton, in the present there is joy in our partial understanding of God, and in thanksgiving – "Superabundant and inexpressible gladness (…)". We offer up this sacrifice with wordless rejoicing. Words fail even to express the goodness of creation, which points to God as its creator – a doctrine from *Confessiones* 10. We should enjoy the goodness of created things with reference to God – enjoy God's goodness by enjoying the goods he created[102].

Augustine can endorse a better interpretation which promotes his Christology and does not directly teach about desire[103]. This verse builds on what has already been established. The psalmist is on the rock – Christ, whose head is lifted up over his enemies. His triumph is the former persecutors of the church now surrendering to it, which the psalmist confirms by looking around at the church throughout the whole world. So he praises God with joy.

Yet the psalm goes right back to theology of desire. The psalmist will "sing and play the lyre to the Lord", referring to his future joy[104]. For this life, he repeats his request to God. He suffers, but has learned to desire God: "He has made an end of all desires; that one plea alone is left". The next line clarifies the nature of his future delight. As usual, there is some vivid Platonic imagery elaborated with biblical citations. What is the one thing left? The psalmist's heart has spoken to God[105]. In Plato, the sun is the physical analogue to the ultimate reality, the Good. In theistic appropriations, the Good is God. Thus Augustine explains that we enjoy the light of the sun with bodily eyes, but the light of God with the heart. The psalmist earlier spoke of his desire to "contemplate the Lord's delight", and now gives a parallel statement – his heart longs to see God's face.

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[101] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 12.

[102] On these matters I recommend van Bavel, *The Longing of the Heart*, p. 13-14.

[103] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 13.

[104] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 14.

[105] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 15.

Augustine points to John's statement that God is light and the statement in Matthew that the pure of heart will see God, and thus exhorts his listeners to desire God above all carnal attachments. The heart, not the eye, is our organ for the pursuit of good. God, not anything under the physical sun overhead, is to be sought.

Now Augustine makes explicit a crucial point of his theology of desire. If we seek satisfaction, we must single-mindedly seek only this one thing, the greatest good. "Do you want to get what you ask for? Ask for nothing else; be satisfied with that single one, for that one will satisfy you"[106]. The psalmist asks God not to look away or turn from him in anger. Augustine elaborates on his earlier assertions[107] that only God is to be feared: the psalmist fears only that God might take away his beloved self from the psalmist. The way of the world is to seek after never-ending "earthly desires (*terrenae concupiscentiae*)", endlessly accumulating worldly pleasures. But those who truly are loving – *qui vere amant* – know better. They would happily sacrifice all lesser pleasures for the joy of knowing and enjoying God, whose face being turned away is the one thing left to fear[108] (Augustine pauses to clarify that we certainly want God to turn his face away from our sins, but not from *us*).

Augustine elaborates by making his own words a prayer in imitation of the psalmist: "*Be my helper, I beg; do not forsake me.* Look at me, I am on the way. I have put one request to you, that I may dwell in your house all the days of my life, to contemplate your delight, to be protected as your temple"[109]. Perhaps God will tell him to keep it up, to use the free will (*liberum arbitrium*) God gave him, to persevere. Augustine warns that we should not be over-confident about free will: "do not trust yourself". The psalm teaches us to ask for God's help, for free will cannot be used rightly without God's help.

The psalmist's parents abandoned him. In his shorter exposition Augustine said this means his having been abandoned by the world[110],

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[106] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 16.

[107] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 3 and 5.

[108] On this theme, see Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, p. 215-216. On fear as a servant of love – and how Augustine in *Enarrationes in Psalmos* advocates a fear of judgement as an incentive to conversion, leading ultimately to holy love – see P.J.J. van Geest, *Space in Coercive Poetry: Augustine's Psalm Against the Donatists and His Interpretation of the Fear of God in Enarrationes in Psalmos*, "Perichoresis" 14 (2016) p. 30-33.

[109] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 17.

[110] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 10.

and he explains now what else it may mean[111]. The father and mother who left the psalmist may be his biological parents. They may be Satan, the father of unbelievers in the Gospel of John, and Babylon. Mother Babylon is the biblical metaphor for the community of the lost – the City of Man from *De Civitate Dei*. Babylon has also been used as the name for Rome, whose power is waning. In place of these the believer has God; God is like a father because he creates, causes, orders, and rules; God is like a mother because he cherishes, nourishes, holds, and gives us milk[112]. Or God may be considered as father and the church as mother – not the visible institution of the church but the City of God, the New Testament's Jerusalem to replace the metaphorical Babylon – the community of God-lovers.

A pastor must attend to the corruptions of his flock's religion. Ambrose taught Monica not to leave offerings at memorials to the martyrs[113]. Here in *Enarratio* 26/2, 19 Augustine leads his followers away from a more overt departure from orthodox worship, the worshipping of demons alongside God. This is actually a standard Christian interpretation of ancient polytheism. Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 10:20 that sacrifices to pagan gods are made to demons, and here Augustine specifically mentions Juno and Neptune. These gods were no real divinity, but were (or represented) real beings, the fallen angels of Christian cosmology. Augustine describes Christians who looked to God for eternal goods but honored demons – the Greco-Roman gods – for the temporal goods allegedly under their control. It's no good expecting worldly goods from any other source than God who rules over all; demons do nothing without his permission. God does "console us with temporal things", and we must trust God alone for them while seeking the greatest good, the one thing.

Because he understands that God has taken him up, the psalmist is able to ask for a law[114]. He relies on God's help, with which he will be able to adhere to it. He asks for a law "in your way", which is Christ. He is reminding us to stick to Christ, who is both the way and the law of wisdom and mercy.

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[111] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 18.

[112] On the relevance of this imagery to Augustine's view of women as the image of God no less than men, see T.J. van Bavel, *Augustine's View on Women*, "Augustiniana" 39 (1989) p. 29.

[113] Cf. Augustinus, *Confessiones* 6, 2, 2.

[114] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 20.

The psalmist prays that he might not be delivered to the will of his enemies[115], but the emphasis is on the will of *the psalmist*. He prays that it will not join in their corruption. If our will is to be holy it needs God's help. God may deliver his body into the hands of persecutors, as with the martyrs who themselves were preserved. If God graciously guards the believer's heart, his will will be preserved from the lies of iniquity, which will then have no one to lie to but itself – an indication of the Augustinian teaching that evil is inherently destructive, especially to itself.

And now "the psalmist returns" to his one aim[116]. "I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living. Ah, the good things of the Lord, how sweet they are, undying, beyond compare, everlasting, unchangeable!". This goodness is not to be seen in the mortal earth marked by death and decay. The incarnation delivers us from this death into the eternal land of these good things. Christ took on the mortality of our body for this deliverance. Until this joy is fulfilled, the psalmist teaches us how to desire it, and how to pray for it, surrounded by temptations and hoping in God's mercy.

The *enarratio* closes with God's reply to the psalmist, the last line of the psalm. God, who "has heard our groanings" and "seen our yearnings" and "taken notice of our desire", hears our prayer through Christ and replies to the desiring church[117]. God answers, "Hold out for the Lord": Stick with it, for there is nothing greater or more to be desired. God defers satisfaction for now, but promises this joy to those who hold out.

6. Conclusion

Augustine's theology of desire is the central focus of his own writings, and, while everyone knows something about it, it is rarely a direct focus of scholarship. In order to understand it properly, we need to consider his sermons. *Enarrationes in Psalmos* develop a theology of desire with reference to ecclesiology and eschatology as well as the idea of the *Totus Christus* – the whole Christ, Jesus joined with his bride the church,

[115] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 21.
[116] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 22.
[117] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 26/2, 23.

who speaks in Scripture[118]. It is the whole Christ who establishes the precious unity of the church[119]. In this paper I have focused on ecclesiology and eschatology. Complete enjoyment of the goodness of God is an eschatological business; we will not experience it in this life. Such goods as we partake of here and now are gifts of God, to be referred back to God in thankfulness rather than serving as a distraction from the perfect and complete goodness of God. The eudaimonistic quest of the pagan philosophers yields to the church's eschatological hopes: we are to expect full satisfaction only in the eschaton and we are, moreover, to desire the eschaton. The healing of desire is part of the life of the church, an effort built on prayer and faith.

We may also take a lesson on the healing of desire from the methodology of *Enarrationes*. The reading of the scriptures, especially *communally* as the orthodox church, is a practice for the healing of desire. It is especially in taking on the words of Christ and making them our own that we come to *imitate*, to *rehearse*, and to cultivate the habit of *having* the desires of Christ.

The dullest of the *enarrationes* would still be very interesting. These particular *enarrationes* may not be among them, but they do lack the exciting Christology of the sermons on Psalms 44 (45) and 21 (22). Nor do they display the mature bishop reflecting on the importance of the Bible in the quest for happiness in the sermons on Psalm 118 (119), or the soaring proclamations of the sermons on the Psalms of Ascent. Yet they fascinate with an applied theology of desire. A detailed mapping of the connections of the themes here to other *enarrationes* and other Augustine writings is not possible here, but I can suggest a few threads for the interested reader to pull on. The sermon on Psalm 75 (76) explains that we must resist evil desires so our hearts may be pure enough for God to dwell in[120]. Bad desires will not always trouble us; we confess and resist now, and in the resurrection God will graciously cure all sin, enabling us to enjoy God in perfected peace. Meanwhile, God's light now shines from or through the mountains[121]. But it does not originate there. We lift up our eyes to the hills,

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[118] On this guiding theme of *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, see M. Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis*, Oxford 2012, and other sources cited in Boone, *Augustine's Preaching and the Healing of Desire*, p. 3-6.

[119] K. Baker, *Augustine's Doctrine of the Totus Christus: Reflecting on the Church as Sacrament of Unity*, "Horizons" 37 (2010) p. 7-24.

[120] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 75, 3-5.

[121] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 75, 7.

and our help comes from *the Lord* (Ps 120 [121]). The mountains are not God, but the apostles and their successors. Donatus is a false mountain. A true mountain is humble and loves the unity of the church[122]. Thus Augustine ties together desire, final things, and the doctrine of the church. These are also combined in the sermon series on the Psalms of Ascent – the *enarrationes* on Psalms 119 (120) through 133 (134) – where the church ascends to the heavenly vision of God, its stronger members like angels descending on Jacob's ladder to help others climb. Part of the reformation of love that accompanies ascent is learning to love the unity of the church, unlike the Donatists. In the sermon on Psalm 83 (84), the ultimate goal is the sparrow's home – heaven[123]. Those on the way have the turtledove's nest, the embodied life of producing good works *in fide vera, in fide catholica, in societate unitatis Ecclesiae* – in the true faith, in the catholic faith, in the communion of the unity of the church.

Rectus finis, *vera ecclesia*, and *rectus amor* – right end, true church, and right love – all go together.

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[122] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 75, 8.

[123] Augustinus, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 83, 7.

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