

Fall 1-1-2016

The Return of Participatory Scriptural Hermeneutics in Evangelicalism: An Augustinian Philosophy of Communication

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THE RETURN OF PARTICIPATORY SCRIPTURAL HERMENEUTICS IN
EVANGELICALISM: AN AUGUSTINIAN PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Joshua D. Hill

December 2016

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Joshua D. Hill

2016

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EVANGELICALISM: AN AUGUSTINIAN PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

THE RETURN OF PARTICIPATORY SCRIPTURAL HERMENEUTICS IN EVANGELICALISM: AN AUGUSTINIAN PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION

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Dissertation supervised by Dr. Janie Harden Fritz

Using a philosophy of communication approach adapted from St. Augustine's rhetorical theory, I propose the recovery of Augustinian scriptural hermeneutics to meet the hermeneutical crisis in current Evangelicalism. Evangelical identity is centered on scripturally mediated belief and mission that ties together its ecumenical coalition, but its hermeneutic principles were co-opted by modernism and have now become further embattled by the turn away from modernism to philosophical hermeneutic approaches. Augustine's hermeneutical principles of charity, hermeneutical humility through responsiveness to the Word, and the social/communal action of lived hermeneutics are explained in terms of Augustine's pre-modern cosmology of "participation" and are clarified by comparison with the hermeneutic theories of Gadamer, Ricoeur, and their

Evangelical respondents. Fulfilling its philosophy of communication emphasis, this project concludes with a conceptual sketch of Evangelical interpretation as practiced through Augustinian participatory hermeneutics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the consistent support, clearly communicated mission, and intellectual freedom of the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies, a tradition built up and maintained rhetorically over several years by Ronald Arnett, Janie Harden Fritz, Richard Thames, Pat Arneson, and Calvin Troup. The organizational philosophy of communication on display has not only been helpful to me in my academic work but has also served me as a sign of hope for my possible future in academia. I give special thanks to my committee chair, Dr. Fritz, who modeled both academic breadth and charity in her review of my dissertation (and its early false starts). I also thank Dr. Troup for giving me an excellent set of coordinates by which to explore Augustine otherwise than convention, and I thank Dr. Thames for driving home the importance of the historical moment by means of his battery of required history readings. And I thank Dr. Arnett for his courage in preaching and practicing intellectual generosity.

As part of the long intellectual tradition in the temporal measure of the city of God, I am thankful for Augustine's labors, his love, and his life of service. Closer to home, I confess that I would not have been able to complete any part of my program here without the labors, love, and life of my wife, Stacy, who has endured much for the sake of a work whose value she can take only by faith.

Finally, as befits my project, I confess that whatever good this work communicates to any reader is a result of its participation in the Truth, in whom "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28) and apart from whom we "can do nothing" (John 15:5). I acknowledge God as the ground of being and communication.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Hermeneutics in the Historical Moment of Evangelicalism

This project takes an Augustinian philosophy of communication interpretive approach to the current problem of biblical hermeneutics that has taxed the confidence in both the interpretive praxis and communicative identity of the Evangelical coalitional community. Bypassing the long-traveled Christian rhetorical focus on homiletics, this project applies philosophy of communication to hermeneutics as the other main rhetorical concern of Evangelical “people of the book.” After setting out the complexities and history of the crisis in Evangelical biblical hermeneutics, this project explains and proposes the recovery of Augustinian *participation* (an early Christian view of the cosmos), interpretation, and social dynamics to provide linguistic-conceptual resources by which to meet that crisis. These Augustinian philosophical resources are developed in the context of Evangelical conversations about philosophical hermeneutics and Augustine for current biblical hermeneutics and ecclesiology. After developing these conceptual tools from an Augustinian philosophy of communication, the project concludes with a rhetorical turn, proposing a socially embodied praxis of scripture reading as one solution to the Evangelical hermeneutical problem.

Telling the historical narrative of how Evangelical hermeneutics has interacted with the broader hermeneutic tradition—under the prevailing Evangelical identity markers of unity through mission and shared biblical reading practices¹—this chapter sets the parameters of the larger project, defines the hermeneutical problem within its rhetorical context, clarifies the interpretive approach, and defends the appropriation of Augustine’s hermeneutic and social theory in the move towards a new Evangelical hermeneutical praxis.

The Problem of Evangelical Hermeneutics

As Robert Bellah et al. have noted, the Christian church in the United States has been radically compromised in its ability to communicate to itself, its members, and the culture at large its mission/telos and rule of life, an indictment that holds for the significant Christian subculture of Evangelicals.² From their origins in biblical communal narratives, Bellah says that American churches have largely shifted to being gathering places (“lifestyle enclaves”) for people operating according to “expressive” and “instrumental” concepts of individual meaning.³ According to Evangelical historian Mark Noll, Evangelicals in particular have “lost all sense of history” and have “ignored their own tradition’s resources” in their 20th century cultural transformation into a fideistic and pragmatic political powerhouse, and historian Molly Worthen argues that the root of this Evangelical “anti-intellectualism” stems from their community’s “deep disagreement over what the Bible means,” as seen in their contradictory hermeneutic that joins fideistic presuppositionalism and Enlightenment textual rationalism.⁴

The shift from an earlier Evangelical community for which the *scriptures* permeated community and mission (constituting the background) to a 20th century movement organized largely around the defense of a *bible* very much in the foreground was the result of a combination of factors—sociological, theological, and historical—but the most telling blow was to the *practice* of an evangelical biblical hermeneutics that, though undertheorized and imperfect, had enabled many earlier Evangelicals to be both historically responsive and scripturally focused, both socially constructive and an instrument of social critique.⁵ To use the bible as *scripture* was to submit to it as the voice of God, authoritative for life and practice, even when it stands over against one’s preferences, community ethos, or culture, whereas the focus on the bible as *bible* was to stand over it as an authoritative interpreter, finding materials with which to

justify one's own position or attack another's position.⁶ Hermeneutic responsiveness to the bible as scripture was not the only mode of engagement with the book—in large part because of the pressures to use the bible as a weapon of defense and polemic in the post-Reformation milieu.⁷ But the continually outward and otherward direction of Evangelical missions provided a perpetual check on hermeneutic ossification and a return to hermeneutic responsiveness.⁸

Over the first part of the 20th century, though, even as “foreign” missions proceeded apace, American evangelicalism adopted a strong modernistic hermeneutic because of the intensification of its polemics with an encroaching secular society and educational structure.⁹ This shift moved Evangelicalism from a pragmatic and ecumenical hermeneutic centered in the gospel to a hermeneutic focused on comprehensive objectivity and the policing of the boundaries of orthodoxy. Since the 1970s, this loss of a missional narrative core has been recognized and addressed to some degree through the recent resurgence in Evangelical “missional” language and theorizing,¹⁰ which seeks to reconstitute Evangelical churches around some central “missional” concept. However, there is a diversity of rhetorical grounds within the “missional” movement and a significant range of Evangelical thought and practice still unaffected by even those solutions. This situation highlights a number of unanswered—and sometimes unasked—questions in Evangelical rhetorical practice.¹¹ In Evangelical academic circles, the hermeneutics problem has been more clearly framed, but no more satisfactorily solved, as Brevard Childs summarizes in his Foreword to the initial volume of the Scripture & Hermeneutics Series, scholarly volumes organized to address this problem:

For at least a decade it has become commonplace to speak of a crisis in biblical interpretation. Most everyone engaged in the study of the Bible is fully aware that the enterprise has run into real difficulty. The present crisis has been described in different

ways: methodological impasse, conflicting private agenda, loss of clear direction, extreme fragmentation, unbridgeable diversity, and even a deep sense of resignation.¹²

Therefore, while the aspect of *mission* in Evangelical identity moves relentlessly forward, the question of unity and of the aspect of *shared biblical foundations* weighs heavily on the movement, putting to the question its future vitality.

As a project within the purview of philosophy of communication, this investigation is particularly focused on questions in real historical communities that require real rhetorical responses. The stated “community” is the evangelical one, and the issue is the crisis in biblical hermeneutics in evangelicalism (its too-successful replacing of its orthopraxical hermeneutic foundations with a modernistic textual epistemology that is now collapsing) that demands a rhetorical response in both its theoretical and its social aspects.

The designation “evangelical,” however, is a problematic one. It has been suggested by some that the label “Evangelical Christian” is “meaningless,”¹³ and that evangelical hermeneutics is a contradiction in terms.¹⁴ These criticisms are understandable, especially since the term “Evangelical” does not reference one group bounded by a single communal history, longstanding non-negotiable institutions, and an official identifying liturgy. These difficulties, and more, notwithstanding, I argue that both *evangelicalism* and *evangelical hermeneutics* identify real communities, practices, institutions, and actions. They constitute a MacIntyrean tradition that is modified and contested from within,¹⁵ and thus these terms function as more than purely analytic sociological labels. To understand the tensions within and foibles of the current evangelical community and its hermeneutics—and thus define its current horizon with regard to its past—we must follow, briefly, the torturous history of evangelicalism and evangelical hermeneutics.

Gabriel Facke identifies six different types of evangelicals,¹⁶ and George Marsden labels Evangelicalism a coalitional movement involving many different Christian denominations, both before and after the Fundamentalist/Modernist wars of the early 20th century.¹⁷ The “evangelical” “trans-denominational” identity, therefore, could be described first with the “basic beliefs of the old nineteenth-century evangelical consensus”:

(1) the Reformation doctrine of the final authority of the Bible, (2) the real historical character of God’s saving work recorded in Scripture, (3) salvation to eternal life based on the redemptive work of Christ, (4) the importance of evangelism and missions, and (5) the importance of a spiritually transformed life.¹⁸

This early Evangelicalism arose as a social phenomenon about the same time that biblical hermeneutics in academic circles began shifting to a historical-critical perspective—in Legaspi’s serendipitous title, “the death of scripture and the rise of biblical studies.” The social phenomenon was initiated by the revivals of the First Great Awakening (1730-1755), following the Moravian revival of 1727, which put more stress on conversion experience than on people’s religious adherence to specific doctrinal creeds or liturgies. With leaders who were pronouncedly Arminian (the Wesleys) and Calvinist (George Whitefield; Jonathan Edwards), the movement largely transcended those theological tensions to present an ecumenical proof of God’s evangelical work beyond the bounds of any one confession. The social phenomenon of evangelicalism continued and became even more ecumenical in the Second Great Awakening in the United States (1802-1835).¹⁹ The specter of continental Deism and Atheism, on the one hand, and the expectation of the incoming of the millennial Kingdom of God, on the other hand, set the stage for an ecumenical evangelical explosion,²⁰ encouraged by the numbers coming to faith

under preaching that emphasized even more strongly the importance of personal decision and the experience of conversion.²¹

These religious experiences specifically called into question both rationalist skepticism of the bible from French Enlightenment thinkers and the Deistic emphasis on God's non-interference in human affairs. Thus Jonathan Edwards, while still influenced by Enlightenment thought, could write his treatise *Religious Affections* to critique a philosophy of interpretation closed to the activity of God, and Timothy Dwight, president of Yale, could initiate revival on that campus through public lectures that exposed the presuppositions of Enlightenment skepticism.²² That is, while "reason" was commencing its reign over the Continent (in hermeneutics through a mathematical application of philology against all dogma), its impact in America and England was mitigated by the renewal of the experience of the mission of the gospel, along with a greater social tolerance for denominational pluralism.

The 19th century emphasis on evangelism and social action, on what was seen as the eve of Christ's return, continued through the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, but millennial hopes slowly disintegrated after their high point in the abolition of slavery, hurt by the secularization of politics and education, the prevalence of corruption, and the disintegration of the social undergirding of evangelical life through urbanization and industrial revolution.²³ As George Marsden argues, the American Revolution had fused, for politically pragmatic purposes, orthodox Christian communities with rationalist republicans who looked to the ancient Roman republic for their charter. This fused national character was the motive for and product of American universities through most of the 19th century, training leaders for both Christian service and rational service to the American republic.

During the latter half of the 19th century, however, the evangelical response to their local world began to be defensive, reacting to the continuing influence of Continental historicism and rationalism, the advent of Darwinism,²⁴ and the seeming unification of the world without Christ—through globalizing markets, technological advances in transportation and communication, and an abnormally long period in the West with no significant internecine wars.²⁵ With many American universities adopting the system and presuppositions of the German system, which was also the home of higher criticism of the bible, the late 19th century witnessed the movement of many Evangelicals toward separate bible colleges, creating a split between the academically respectable but no longer orthodox universities and the disreputably dogmatic but pious bible colleges.²⁶ This separatist move became most fully expressed in the subset of Evangelicals called Fundamentalists, a group that briefly spoke for the larger evangelical community during their last major public engagement, the Scopes trial, but then withdrew from the public sphere.²⁷

Thus, the waning of evangelical dominance in American politics, society, and culture influenced evangelical hermeneutics in two key ways: first, institutionally, evangelicals-turned-fundamentalists separated from the larger public conversations, leading to a narrowing of hermeneutic interests and retrenching of evangelical social groups;²⁸ second, from these bastions, evangelical-fundamentalists adopted the dominant culture's rationalism of language and epistemology to recast hermeneutics as a primarily apologetic enterprise. "These self-proclaimed critics of modernity actually fell under the spell of modernity," Dan Stiver says, summarizing this paradoxical move. He says that

conservatives labored to lay down an impregnable foundation of historical and propositional verities that could rival the positivistic foundations of the natural sciences,

which were growing in prestige ... the scientific and evangelical worlds both strove to live up to a notion of science and faith that looked more like Descartes and Locke than the Deuteronomist and Luke.²⁹

Apologetics before this point had not been a stranger to evangelical hermeneutics, as, for example, Dwight's broadsides against French Enlightenment thought at Yale demonstrate.³⁰ However, the academic and scientific forces newly arrayed against the bible, along with the sociological upheavals of industrial modernity, seemed to provoke a survivor mentality in evangelical biblical hermeneutics, and with that survivor mentality,³¹ a narrowing of the cultural and educational tools used in hermeneutics and apologetics.

Possibly as a result of the seeming slide into cultural darkness, a new end-times theology, pre-millennial dispensationalism, gained the ascendancy, encouraged and promoted through the popular evangelist D. L. Moody and the best-selling Scofield study bible.³² Pre-millennial dispensationalism not only did its best imitation of a serious textual science, building a minutely detailed and comprehensive eschatology from a systematic study of scripture as an ahistorical and intrinsically unified work,³³ but it also provided an explanation to its constituents of the contemporary cultural slide into degradation and apostasy. Instead of teaching that the church was to usher in the millennium through the gospel and the amelioration of social ills, as had the previously dominant eschatology, pre-millennial dispensationalism taught that after a certain period of chronological time (carefully calculated from the book of Daniel), there would be a great falling away from Christ, with the morality of the world growing progressively worse, until Christ "raptured" his church out of the world and then returned in glory to exact vengeance on a fully depraved world. When the World Wars destroyed liberal Christians' dream of a millennium of Western Christian idealism, therefore, dispensationalists were confirmed in their conclusions;

when the state of Israel was created as a Zionist haven at the end of World War II, dispensationalists were delighted, for that event also fit their system.³⁴ Their biblical hermeneutic was apparently paying dividends, and the foreordained terrible state of the world was both a spur to more intense evangelization and a convenient explanation for the lack of positive impact the gospel was having on society.³⁵ With the same theological stroke, evangelism was intensified *and* emptied of much of its content, especially its social content of the kingdom of God.

Thus, evangelicalism had started as an ecumenical movement through a renewed emphasis on personal conversion. While the bible was being subjected to analysis and critique by 18th and 19th century academics, the mass of evangelicals of that era continued to read the bible as scripture—that is, as a both *historical* and *spiritually discerned* word to be obeyed, with a particular emphasis on evangelism, or “mission” as it is now called. Faced with the philosophical and sociological challenges of the late 19th century, however, especially the institutionalization of rationalist biblical hermeneutics, evangelical leaders and institutions adapted more and more their aims, methods, and language to those of their opponents. Conservative evangelicals adopted the language, methods, and assumptions of positivistic science, which was (and still is) the culturally recognized language of certainty and truth. This scientific hermeneutic, presupposing a Cartesian subject/object split, was the tool used to find the one-and-only-one meaning of the text which would equal the state of reality if properly interpreted. With a tool of presumably such precision and with the dangerous encroachment of end-time apostasy, the biblical hermeneutics of fundamentalist evangelicals no longer sought ecumenism, which could lead to a fatal watering down of the gospel. Not surprisingly, the history of some sectors of Evangelicalism has been a history of church and denominational splits, featuring the rise of the fiercely independent local church under the oracular headship of an “anointed” pastor-teacher.³⁶

From this milieu, neo-evangelicalism re-emerged from fundamentalism in the 1950's, rejecting the defensive and separatist attitude of fundamentalism.³⁷ Its emergence was the result of what amounted to a marketing campaign put together by several prominent Christian leaders,³⁸ a campaign that featured the enterprising publishing gambit of *Christianity Today*, a handful of evangelical seminaries, associations, and journals, and the renewed hope of a gospel-centered movement through the Crusades of Billy Graham.³⁹ Despite the top-down organization of the renewed Evangelical movement, by 1976, the "Year of the Evangelical," "the socialization and sense of identification among divergent evangelical groups ha[d] been so complete within this institutional complex that ... scholars [were] compelled to invent a nomenclature for the rest of the established Protestant denominations."⁴⁰ Moreover, as Noll says, these "modern conservative evangelicals are the lineal descendents of ... earlier movements" that emphasize the possibility and authority of popular interpretation of the bible fused with a salvific paradigm of personal and societal transformation.⁴¹ Perhaps aided sociologically by the pressures of the Cold War, the foundation for the coalescing of a significant Evangelical identity was certainly prepared by the way Evangelical leaders *retained* Fundamentalist apologetics and hermeneutics while seeking to re-engage politics and social issues in a positive way.

As long as the broader culture still operated on the basis of a modernistic Cartesian epistemology, scientific Evangelical evangelism and apologetics could prosper and engage the world without too much internal tension, but once the linguistic turn in philosophy started to work its way through the other academic disciplines and into popular culture in the 1960s and 70s, bringing the "foundationalist and objectivist assumptions of science, philosophy, and theology ... [under] heavy attack,"⁴² the uneasy truce between evangelicals and the rest of American culture came to an end. At this point, "evangelical" became again a highly politicized

term, and the policing of the borders of its identity, like with fundamentalism before it, became important. What identity boundaries could be created for a movement that encompassed believers and denominations of a wide range of theological convictions and practices?⁴³ As Gerald Sheppard argues, what Evangelicals had retained from their Fundamentalist forebears became the core again of their identity, but instead of a list of fundamental doctrines, the Evangelicals gathered around a *hermeneutic process* tied to a specific perspective on the biblical text. He says that “the official language of social identification, over against other so-called ‘non-evangelical’ institutions, was and continues to be the language of biblical hermeneutics.”⁴⁴

As a religious movement birthed into the sociological patterns of the modern age, the institutional boundaries of evangelicalism have been strongly tied to print and literacy, and thus to publishing and education institutions. Evangelical hermeneutical practice is, to a significant degree, maintained and supported through evangelical journals, bible reference material, apologetics books and seminars, seminaries, and lay educational programs, many of them in para-church organizations.⁴⁵ Evangelicals are self-confessedly and proudly people of the book, an identity filtered through the individualistic and highly literate culture of the late 19th century, as seen in Princeton theologian Charles Hodge’s description of biblical interpretation:

The fact that all the true people of God in every age and in every part of the Church, in the exercise of their private judgment, in accordance with the simple rules [of interpretation] above stated, agree as to the meaning of Scripture in all things necessary either in faith or practice, is a decisive proof of the perspicuity of the bible, and of the safety of allowing the people the enjoyment of the divine right of private judgment.⁴⁶

Having grown up in the center of this identity in its late 20th century manifestation,⁴⁷ I can attest that “evangelical” is a formidable identity that protects and promotes certain goods, binds

individuals into communities, and gives meaning and direction to a wide range of individual and shared actions—all centered on accessible and traditional readings of scripture.⁴⁸

However, while Evangelicals began to defend again, in the 1970s, their underlying identity vis-à-vis the bible, they discovered a further tension brought about through the other side of their identity, viz., their openness to and engagement in the world.⁴⁹ The world of hermeneutics had moved on from philology, authorial intention, and correspondence, with philosophical hermeneutics making its presence felt in every discipline by the late 1960's.⁵⁰ In biblical studies, this influence manifested first through the “literary turn” in the 1970's, which excited some Evangelical scholars while alarming others.⁵¹ Though understandably missed by outsiders to Evangelicalism, the community of evangelical interpreters attempted a balance between the need for a clear-cut definitional identity—through a traditional and bounded hermeneutics—and the need to respect their own internal diversity and the diverse interpretive demands of missions.⁵² Politically and organizationally, the 1977 Statement on Biblical Inerrancy and the 1982 Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics tried to set terms for Evangelical identity that would provide accountability tools that would be powerful and easy to use,⁵³ but the evangelical community of scholars was already significantly “postcritical ... encyclopedic ... fiercely pluralist,”⁵⁴ motivated in part to keep biblical interpretation accessible and relevant to “the priesthood of all believers”⁵⁵ and peoples of other cultures receiving the bible for the first time. This balancing act, especially as recorded in the 1982 Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics (Statement), was not entirely successful as an evangelical “consensus” but was, as Iain Provan points out, rather “a patchwork of compromises between different views.”⁵⁶

The Statement is structured as twenty-five “Articles” which each contain an affirmation and a denial, along with an explanation, of some issue the participants felt was essential to the

identity of Evangelical hermeneutics, though as Provan notes, the Statement “is less interested in helping us read well ... than it is in ensuring that the historicity of these texts is safeguarded.”⁵⁷

That is, the Statement is still more a defensive than a constructive program of interpretation. Key tensions visible in the document, especially as some articles are read alongside others, are

1) the placing of meaning in the author’s intention (Articles VII, XV) vs. beyond the author’s intention (Article XVIII);⁵⁸

2) rejecting the separation of meaning from the form of the biblical words (Articles II, XV) while upholding the separation and restating of meaning in translation (Articles XI, XII);⁵⁹

3) the upholding of a necessary level of grammatical-historical and genre knowledge (Articles XIII, XV, XVI, XX) while also arguing for the perspicuity of scripture to the “priesthood of all believers” (Article XXIV);

4) defending one single and fixed meaning of a text (Articles VI, VII) while conceding so much possible human error in interpreting it that confidence in a specific interpretation has no strong warrant (Articles VIII, X, XIII, XIX, XXIII);⁶⁰

5) similarly, locating the fixed meaning of the text in the realm of scientific (if inaccessible) science while identifying *application* as the site for broad and varied interpretation based in a personal or social horizon (Articles VI, VII, IX), which protects biblical interpretation from subjectivism in theory while allowing it in practical *action*;

6) acknowledging the Holy Spirit’s role in the broader hermeneutical process, but keeping the Spirit’s role in application and obedience rather than in the interpretation of the text itself (Articles IV, V, XV);

7) both denying (Article VI) and emphasizing (Article XXIII) that salvation through Christ is the focus and thus the hermeneutical key of the scriptures;

8) warning of accepting alien presuppositions as philosophical foundations of biblical interpretation (such as evolutionism and Marxism; Article XIX) while leaving unexamined their own modernistic presuppositions that may be similarly alien; and

9) acknowledging cultural factors in the creation and reception of the bible (Article XII), which is especially important in the bible's use in missions, but explicitly rejecting the Gadamarian notion of a "fusion of horizons" as descriptive of God's word come down into specific cultural embodiment (Articles VIII, IX)—specifically, Geisler explains that "the reader's understanding has no hermeneutically definitive role."⁶¹

This characterization of hermeneutics as a "fusion of horizons" is also specifically rejected by Robertson McQuilkin and Bradford Mullen,⁶² rehashing the Statement interpretive debate in a 1997 *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* article and unwittingly demonstrating that the tensions inherent in the Statement had not been resolved over the fifteen intervening years. In a misreading of Gadamer presented under the label "postmodernism," McQuilkin and Mullen complain, "We are constantly reminded that the intent of the Bible authors, not to mention the intent of God, is forever out of reach because of the limitations of human language, the blinding effect of preunderstanding, and the cultural encapsulation of the text."⁶³ Though the authors acknowledge diversity in the camp of Evangelical hermeneutic theory,⁶⁴ they categorically reject the positions that make meaning an event of understanding between interpreter and text rather than as fixed linguistic meaning corresponding to the factual description of the real world. Moving into polemical language, they say,

To deny the possibility of words corresponding to reality is ultimately an attack on the nature and activity of God. . . . the correspondence between words (language meaning) and reality is essential to the nature of God and of human beings made in his image. This

connection between revelation in understandable words and the nature of God and of humankind is a major theme.⁶⁵

However, the establishment of the one fixed meaning of this inspired text is portrayed by these Evangelical scholars as a more difficult matter, leading, practically, to a pulling back from the “absolute truth” of the scriptures even as that truth is being defended: “We claim not only that there is not a precise and exhaustive correspondence between every word and its referent but also that there is not always an exact correspondence between our personal interpretation of Biblical words and ultimate reality. Far from it.”⁶⁶ The further problem of cross-cultural communication of the bible, from the authors’ own experience in contextualizing the gospel in Japan, magnifies the tension implicit in the 1982 Statement.⁶⁷ Though their *personal interpretation* of the absolute truth of the scriptures is *fallible*, by their own admission, it still must bear the weight of judging how the “meanings” thus derived from scripture should translate into a radically different culture. Analyzing the similar contradictions in the 1982 Statement, Provan correctly diagnoses the problem as one of the underlying philosophical foundations of current Evangelical hermeneutics: “It is at this point that the reader of the Bible begins to wonder how far the Bible itself is truly guiding the principles of interpretation being advocated in the Statement, and how far other factors are far more determinative.”⁶⁸ Noll agrees, describing the complex historical mixture of modernistic and anti-modernistic philosophies undergirding Evangelical perspectives on the bible.⁶⁹ In his work, he notes the “striking absence of a secure theological framework for the [Evangelical] study of scripture,” and he calls for a systematic and “discerning” engagement with general hermeneutical theory to promote a constructive and coherent “self-understanding” of Evangelical hermeneutics.⁷⁰ This, it seems to me, is a neo-Augustinian call to raid the treasure-houses of our current academic Egypt.

Sociologically and institutionally, therefore, the attempted balancing act (between different Evangelical positions and different missional “goods” to which Evangelical identity is committed) was only partly successful as it tried to shepherd the next generation of evangelicals into a unified fold. It was more successful with evangelicals who continued in the older dominant epistemology of modernism, though it also supported the rising proponents of presuppositional apologetics popularized by Francis Schaeffer, one of the key figures in these Evangelical conferences. The contention of this project is that the modernistic epistemology at the root of the scientific textual criticism that has served as the foundation for Evangelical hermeneutics since the late 19th century is,⁷¹ in many ways, an alien influence whose continued presence in current Evangelical hermeneutics needs to be repaired through the resources of the longer Evangelical and Christian traditions. Taking up Noll’s language, I argue that Evangelicals need to be more clear and self-aware about their antimodernism,⁷² not in its reactionary mode but in its longer history of philosophical resources and faith-embedded practices. That is, Evangelicals need to engage in a philosophy of communication that not only examines critically the “wisdom of this world” that has infused their rhetorical and hermeneutical approaches but also seeks constructive conceptual solutions from the traditional sources of Christian renewal: the Spirit, the scriptures, and the witness of the churches.

The current evangelical movement is my particular focus. While expressly ecumenical⁷³ in its conception, this evangelicalism is still, as we have seen, largely tied by training and temperament to the modernistic biblical interpretation of fundamentalism, a hermeneutic that is built for apologia and separation rather than constructive coalition-building or unity. The movement also shares the conundrum of fundamentalism in how to practice its hermeneutic vis-à-vis the secular academic community to secure both adherence to the faith and respectability in

academic circles.⁷⁴ The big tent of evangelicalism is torn between its ecumenical identity in a missional hermeneutic and its separatist identity in a Cartesian scientific hermeneutic, and torn especially because the nature of the internal disagreements over the tradition has not been acknowledged and addressed in a constructive way. Where disagreements within the tradition have been made public, it has normally been in the polemical mode, using polarizing labels like “postmodernism,” as exemplified by McQuilkin and Mullan. Historically, evangelicalism has been a trans-denominational, trans-institutional tradition that has centered its identity in a shared approach to biblical hermeneutics, but the modernistic version of that approach to biblical hermeneutics is not only no longer philosophically viable but also at odds with the other Evangelical identity markers of unity and mission through the gospel. Metaphorically, Evangelicals have been building castles with defensive ramparts instead of an Ark ready to take multitudes on a journey through the waters of faith, sailing to the future “city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”⁷⁵ Further intensifying this crisis, the lack of a coherent, constructive paradigm of interpretation sends thoughtful Evangelicals either toward a reactionary adherence to modernist interpretation, as an article of blind “faith,” or toward a relativistic, emotive interpretation scheme that is usually labeled “postmodern.”⁷⁶ Even further, Western social disintegration, emotivist attitudes, and the isolation and distraction engendered by our current media ecology have combined to significantly weaken the basic biblical literacy and culture of ecclesial institutional support that supported constructive evangelicalism in the 19th century.⁷⁷ Therefore, the Evangelical hermeneutical crisis is multifaceted, tied to its history, philosophical grounding, social identity, and institutional practices.

Is there still hope to “strengthen that which remains,” recapturing and re-sourcing evangelical identity through a renewed biblical hermeneutics? Since evangelical churches,

educational institutions, and individuals have a fair degree of autonomy and a stated openness to engagement with the culture, it may be possible for a different conception and practice of biblical hermeneutics to work its way through the evangelical network, even, as Noll suggests, from an engagement with the broader tradition of largely secular hermeneutics. This openness to engagement with other Christian traditions and with the “general revelation” in secular culture invites philosophy of communication approaches to Evangelical hermeneutics and rhetoric. A faithful approach to philosophy of communication can provide the Evangelical tradition with appropriate resources for both self-critique of its current philosophical positioning and constructive re-sourcing from the longer Christian tradition.

The Hermeneutic Historical Moment

In the background of this history of Evangelicalism and its biblical hermeneutics is the seismic shift in hermeneutics more generally in the 20th century. In the last fifty years, hermeneutics has shifted from a historical-critical methodology, grounded in modernistic epistemology, to a more responsive act of inviting disclosure within the limited horizons of particular interpreters located within specific relationships to the facticity of the world, a philosophical hermeneutics introduced by Martin Heidegger and adapted by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur to texts.⁷⁸ Reading hermeneutics as an integral aspect of rhetoric is a theoretical move both ancient and recent. For this pairing, I look not only to Augustine’s rhetorical treatise *De Doctrina Christiana*, which spends the first three books on interpretation and the last on speaking, but also to the renewed attention to the interpenetration of rhetoric, philosophy, and hermeneutics after the Heideggerian linguistic turn in philosophy.⁷⁹

Richard Palmer, in his classic *Hermeneutics*, sets this more recent shift within the broader history of hermeneutics, which originated in “rules, methods, or theory” governing the exegesis

of different special forms of text, especially the bible. After the Protestant Reformation, such manuals of interpretational principles proliferated,⁸⁰ though the practical focus was on the right reading of the hidden meaning of the scriptures so as to sustain and strengthen the interpreting faith community. In the 18th century, however, the historical-critical method of philology channeled the classical and historical learning of the Renaissance into the rationalistic paradigm of the Enlightenment, not only leading to scholars interpreting the scriptures as any other book but also shifting the telos of bible interpretation from sustenance of the faith community to the “discovery” and justification of the “universal” truths deduced by Enlightenment rationality. “And at least from the Enlightenment to the present,” Palmer says, “biblical methods of research have been inseparably connected with philology.”⁸¹

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) did provide a critique of philology’s “aggregate of rules” and distortions of the text, seeking to create instead a coherent science of “understanding” that would transcend narrow disciplinary boundaries, a goal that his biographer and disciple Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) furthered in his embedding of hermeneutics as the “core discipline which could serve as the foundation for all the Geisteswissenschaften,” the human arts and sciences.⁸² However, this humanistic counterpoint in the understanding of hermeneutics was still under the shadow of a Cartesian focus on the disinterested study of the objective text from a God-like subject position, using philological principles and laws in the spirit of the Newtonian natural sciences.

This brief history of general hermeneutics before the 20th century leads us to an examination of the shift which birthed philosophical hermeneutics and a discussion of the major metaphors of the work of Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Speech Act Theory that have gained the attention of Evangelical hermeneutical scholars. These themes from philosophical hermeneutics

and philosophy of language have not only crossed over into the Evangelical conversation but they also provide entry points for the theory of Augustine.

Making the turn away from the ground of modernism, Heidegger's phenomenological project in *Being and Time* (1927) returned hermeneutics to an ontological fact of human being—interpretation is what humans are, not just what they do. The world, in Heidegger's thought, is not passively waiting to be interpreted but rather imprints on humans “thrown” into the world the preconditions of their understanding and the facticity of objects and events that demand attention. Like the ancient Greeks, to which Heidegger was looking in his own investigation of Being, interpretation is a matter of *participating* in the world, not an extraction or imposition of meaning from a subject position.⁸³ Gadamer systematized and applied this basic hermeneutic insight to texts, specifically critiquing the modern emphasis on “method” and, in its place, describing a dialectical encounter between text and interpreter that brings together their two “horizons” into a meaning-event that is linguistic to the core.⁸⁴ Paul Ricoeur was even more focused on the details of the text itself, especially religious and literary texts with equivocal symbols that, while holding the symbolic resources of a rich history of thought essential to humane social life, are increasingly undercut and hollowed out by a hermeneutics of suspicion, on the one hand (Marx, Nietzsche, Freud), and a shallow correspondence theory of language on the other.⁸⁵ Philosophical hermeneutics thus redefined and broadened hermeneutics, as Palmer narrates, though he says that if the scope of hermeneutics is broadened to include implicit as well as explicit theories of interpretation, the field is impossibly broad and diverse.⁸⁶ Palmer's investigation provides us the broad sweep of approaches to texts, especially the philological, the human arts focus, and philosophical hermeneutics.

Influenced by the later Wittgenstein, the Speech Act Theory articulated first by J. L. Austin and John Searle has taken the linguisticity of human sociality and the problems of interpretation in another direction. Austin noticed that most language use was not directed toward reference but rather toward action in a social context—that is, language performs certain actions that make public certain social expectations, intentions, and commitments. Examples of such actions are requesting, promising, and declaring.⁸⁷ The point of these performatives is social coordination, not the faithful representation of the world through language. Searle, picking up where Austin left off, noted that even assertions, which purport to describe the world, are performatives, and he added also the analytical questions of direction of fit and “institutional facts.”⁸⁸ As Richard S. Briggs explains, direction of fit asks whether the illocutionary act is one that attempts to fit the word to the world (e.g., assertions), the world to the word (e.g., requests, promises), the word and world to each other at the same time (e.g., “I declare you man and wife”), or neither direction (e.g., phatic or expressive speech). Institutional facts, embedded in what Searle called the “background,” are those socially embedded scripts, prototypes, and background narratives which provide the context for interpreting the “illocutionary force” of any particular utterance. The meaning of such an utterance is not a world-descriptive proposition but an implied social action, understood only against the background of a linguistic community, or in Wittgenstein’s terms, a specific “language game.”⁸⁹ Briggs warns that Speech Act Theory is not meant to be a universal theory of language, but it has proved to be a powerful and fecund description of much that happens in “ordinary language.”⁹⁰ Applied to texts by Michael Goldberg, it adds another layer of complexity to the interpretation of a text, asking not only what the text means in itself but also what social actions the author(s) were performing vis-à-vis their

readers,⁹¹ and thus what social obligations are laid upon the readers through a right reading of the text.

These philosophical strands of hermeneutics function concurrently in this historical moment, challenging Evangelical positions that prefer to practice rules of textual interpretation without examining closely the philosophies underlying those rules. This challenge is especially strong since “philosophy today is already focused on language [and] is then already, in a sense, hermeneutics.”⁹² Given this current state of the field, how might Evangelical hermeneutics meet Palmer’s challenge to find a path that is both faithful and “creatively hermeneutical”?⁹³

This is a question that has been clarified and narrowed for the Evangelical academic community, specifically, by Noll. He profiles two basic types of Evangelical biblical scholar, “critical anti-critics” and “believing critics.” The first group undertakes biblical scholarship purely for the sake of defending the bible from its critics; the second group “find[s] insight as well as error in the larger world of biblical scholarship” and has a broader sense of what questions are allowed in listening to the bible.⁹⁴

Nicholas Wolterstorff—one such “believing critic”—has engaged this challenge of creativity, positioning his theory of divine discourse as speech acts within the context of other hermeneutic theories. Referencing the hermeneutical inroads made by Schleiermacher, Wolterstorff identifies the prominent German tradition of the 19th century as “authorial-intention” hermeneutics, in which the goal was to understand the text by reconstructing the mind of the author who gave expression to his/her thought.⁹⁵ Reacting against the historicism and psychologism of authorial-intention hermeneutics, the New Critics of the early 20th century argued for the centrality of the text itself, whose unity and craftsmanship enabled meaning through close reading of the textual parts in relation to one another, a hermeneutical theory

Wolterstorff calls “textual-sense interpretation.” This approach was not overturned but recast in complex ways by philosophical hermeneutics, which said not only that “the interpreting self is always an anticipating self whose anticipations are formed by tradition” but also that the meaning of the text has “ontological status” as an “ideal entity.”⁹⁶

These “ideal entity” meanings are not subjective mental states or merely sentences, but rather abstract entities that Wolterstorff says “can be believed and asserted” and that are “either true or false.”⁹⁷ Wolterstorff argues that Gadamer operated with this ontology of the text, quoting him as follows: “A text is not to be understood as an expression of life but with respect to what it says. Writing is the abstract ideality of language. Hence the meaning of something written is fundamentally identifiable and repeatable.” Ricoeur also recognizes this ontology of meaning as something identifiable “by different individuals at different times as being one and the same ... I agree with its main presupposition concerning the objectivity of meaning in general.”⁹⁸ While Wolterstorff agrees with Derrida that literary texts might not be as tightly unified as New Critics would claim, he defends meanings as ideal entities, noting that even deconstructive “performance” interpretation is “limited” by the language of the text. Building on the way philosophical hermeneutics has modified the textual-sense tradition, Wolterstorff argues for “that mode of interpretation that ... all of us employ most of the time,” the discernment of the “illocutionary act” embedded in the discourse, regardless of the author’s intended meaning. This “authorial-discourse interpretation” is Wolterstorff’s suggestion for how Speech Act Theory might be woven into the hermeneutical debate, and he applies it further to biblical interpretation.⁹⁹

Toward the interpretation of the scriptures, Wolterstorff argues for what he calls “double-agency discourse,” where an agent delivers a speech act on behalf of someone else, a speech act

phenomenon which “enables us to understand Scripture as the manifestation of God speaking by way of human beings speaking,”¹⁰⁰ “literally” speaking as opposed to other divine acts such as the inspiration of scripture.¹⁰¹ A double hermeneutic is then opened up: “first one interprets these writings so as to discern the human discourse of which they are the trace; then, and only then, does one move on to interpret for what God said by way of this human discourse.”¹⁰² It seems that the first level of interpretation is still focused on the textual sense, using the best historical and grammatical knowledge that comes to hand, but the second level of interpretation is what Wolterstorff calls “dogmatic.” By that, he means that it starts from “distinctly theological convictions,” owned as one’s Gadamarian horizons. But in contradistinction to Gadamer, Wolterstorff says that our horizon is not just a preunderstood meaning but a preunderstood character of the divine Author, and that our understanding of that Author is not gained only from the text or our religious tradition but also from our knowledge of God outside the text.¹⁰³

This perhaps mystical opening for knowledge of God beyond the loop of tradition cracks the closed circuit of Schleiermacher’s hermeneutical circle. Thus, instead of part and whole endlessly informing one another only through texts, traditions, and attention to those artifacts on the temporal plane, a divinely infused cycle of part and whole turns interpretation into an upward spiral in which growth in the knowledge of God and the study of the book of God increasingly clarify one another.¹⁰⁴

By this move, Wolterstorff hopes to explain how biblical hermeneutics constitutes a dialectic between what the text of the bible said to its original recipients *then* and what it says to its readers *now*, with the same author speaking from his self-consistent character. However, what is not clear in Wolterstorff’s answer is whether all scripture at all times is the mode of God “speaking,” or whether the original revelation was divine speech to its original recipient. Like

medieval exegetes, Wolterstorff recognizes that there are possibly more meanings embedded in the text than the ones that might have been the original illocution to the original audience, but where his explanatory language turns theological, he pulls back. Also, his nod toward inherited theological traditions and knowledge of the divine author do nothing to shake the image of the individual Christian reading and interpreting the bible. Further on, we will see how Augustine's hermeneutical theory might interact with this current set of Evangelical hermeneutic metaphors.

Dan Stiver also uses Speech Act Theory, combining it with his reading of Ricoeur to better understand the interaction of the historical world *behind* the text with the literary world *of* the text and the world *in front of* the text, the meaning to which it points its readers. Stiver characterizes the attitude of modernistic biblical interpretation as either/or:

If one cannot attain pure objectivity [modernism says], the only alternative is relativism. ... In biblical studies, the attempt to find an integration between the configuring activity of the imagination and the work of the historian looks impossible and elicits its own kind of religious and scholarly anxiety.¹⁰⁵

Bringing in the work of Ricoeur to try to find such an integrative space, Stiver summarizes Ricoeur's description of engagement with text from primary naïveté to a "postcritical naïveté." We come to texts first with our hidden presuppositions, "not in control of the text," "grasped by the text," intuiting a meaning that is as much a "hunch" as anything else. We proceed to a second level of critical theory, or theology, by which we interact dialectically with our primary experience of the text but, as a boat on an ocean of meaning (his "principle of plenitude"¹⁰⁶), without fully circumscribing the meaning of the text. "Theology and philosophy cannot live by themselves," Stiver summarizes from Ricoeur, "but are given 'food for thought' by primary experiences and the more primary language of symbol, metaphor, and narrative."¹⁰⁷ In this way,

philosophy of communication can be seen to be a dialectic between the conceptual frameworks of philosophers or theologians and its embodied application within a real community of discourse, a description commensurate with Arnett's approach.¹⁰⁸

Applying Ricoeur's work to biblical hermeneutics, Lewis Mudge says that an integrative interpreting community therefore "need[s] the texts of Scripture to activate the questions, to generate the experience," which means not to demystify the scriptures for modern sensibilities but rather, quoting Ricoeur, to "restore this interval of interrogation in which the question can have meaning."¹⁰⁹ This is the turn in interpretation—going further than Gadamer according to Stiver—where Ricoeur locates "postcritical naïveté," the interpreter no longer in control of meaning through a Cartesian cogito but neither without actionable understanding.¹¹⁰

In terms of the scriptures, this might look like a return to a practice of living under the scriptures after engaging in historical-critical-literary dialectic with the scriptures. While the critical dialectic might force readers to see different aspects of the scriptures than they had noticed before, yet a return to a submission to the text is the only way, first, that the scriptures rather than the interpreter is a "guide for faith and practice" and, second, that the interpreter can again be open to challenge from further exposures to the text. To stand in judgment over the text is no longer to be in subjection to the text or its divine author.¹¹¹ After further explaining these three steps in terms of Ricoeur's three steps of mimesis—the third like Gadamer's "fusion of horizons"—Stiver points out that application is an unavoidable return to a (postcritical) naïveté, not a separate and optional step beyond hermeneutics. Quoting Ricoeur, he says, "We are not allowed to exclude the final act of personal commitment from the whole of objective and explanatory procedures which mediate it."¹¹²

Ricoeur's view of mimesis—an Aristotelian disclosive sense rather than a Platonic sense of a poor copy—means that he “conceives of texts as offering to us possible worlds in which we might live.”¹¹³ Though Ricoeur was not opposed to the historicity of the scriptures, seeing them with Hans Frei as “history-like,” he did not limit the transformative power of the scriptures to their reference value to historical or scientific considerations (which, likewise, are texts requiring interpretation). “The debt to the past [such as the “resurrection of Christ”] must be paid off, but the larger debt is to the configuration of a redemptive world in which we are called to live,” in Ricoeur's thought, and this frames his view of the complementarity of literary and historical approaches to the text.¹¹⁴

How does one go about pursuing this dialectical literary understanding of the biblical text, coming out on the other side as a wiser naïf? Mudge takes Ricoeur's thought toward an affirmation of the symbolic function of the language of myth, and the need for a richer and broader encounter with the language of the biblical text itself, lest by paraphrase and clarification we further distance ourselves from the available meanings of the biblical text. Mudge synthesizes Ricoeur's diagnosis of our “linguistic impoverishment” as follows:

It is the message we cannot hear, because our linguistic impoverishment has deprived us of the possibility of articulating such realities as radical evil or grace-empowered hope. Symbolic, metaphorical, mythological language gives us the capacity to bring experiences of a certain kind to awareness, thereby creating the basis for reflective reasoning.¹¹⁵

Complementing Ricoeur's call for richer linguistic encounter with the gospels, Stiver suggests Speech-Act Theory as a related critical tool to relate the historical reference and the transformative call of the text. While historical reference is important in Speech-Act Theory, the

historical conditions function as “representative conditions” within which the illocutionary actions of the text are set. As backdrop, the descriptive historical conditions “arise from the story and are not imposed on the story.” Their purpose is to support our understanding of the challenging and complex speech-act of the text, “provid[ing] a way of placing the figurative and historical aspects of the Gospels in a productive relationship to one another.” Stiver sees Ricoeur’s theory of mimesis and the hermeneutical progression from naïveté to naïveté as “enable[ing] us to see clearly that history and fiction [i.e. literary figuration] can be interwoven in the Gospels,” but Speech-Act Theory “enables us to see much more clearly how they are interwoven.”¹¹⁶ While the connection between Ricoeur’s literary phenomenology and Speech-Act Theory would profit from more clear development, Stiver’s work, like that of Wolterstorff in bringing together Gadamer and Speech-Act Theory, demonstrates some of the directions that some Evangelical scholars are taking in their approach to the Evangelical hermeneutical crisis.

The importance of these Evangelical scholarly engagements with philosophical hermeneutic traditions is that the Evangelical movement tends toward polarization, either claiming modernistic textual science as a fundamental Christian doctrine or pursuing relevance and authenticity through an uncritical “postmodern” approach to social dynamics, hermeneutics, and rhetoric, which slides into sheer emotivism.¹¹⁷ Knowing the needs of their fearful but under-educated Evangelical audiences, Merold Westphal and James K. A. Smith have also made a point of examining “postmodern” philosophies in the light of Christian revelation. Westphal has undertaken his project to ask how postmodern philosophers can edify the church as secular prophetic voices,¹¹⁸ since Evangelicals tend to kill their own prophets, closing ranks against critiques that cast them in a bad light or threaten their control of their institutions.¹¹⁹ Smith has addressed the polarized attitude of Evangelicalism even more directly, titling his books with

questions such as *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida to Church*.¹²⁰

In agreement with these scholars, I argue that the demands of an Evangelically appropriate scriptural hermeneutic reach beyond objectivism or subjectivism in approaching the text of the bible. The question of how best to ground hermeneutics for the Evangelical community, then, demands an investigation into the philosophical resources of communication that would not only be acceptable within the horizon of the Evangelical tradition but also provide a reasonably “good faith” answer to the hermeneutical questions and cautions put forward by the philosophical hermeneutic tradition, the project called for by Noll.¹²¹ “Philosophical ideas, rather like words themselves,” Briggs says, are “best seen as tools to unlock certain problems.”¹²²

This project of seeking philosophical conceptual resources to meet a communication challenge or question facing a real community in the current historical moment, pragmatically and appropriately, fits the interpretive approach of philosophy of communication as articulated by Arnett.¹²³ As will be explained further below, this project utilizes a philosophy of communication framework and grounds the fusion of the two horizons of philosophical hermeneutics and Evangelical missional identity in a reading of Saint Augustine’s scripture-centered hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics and the Problem of Community

Another question that the crisis in Evangelical hermeneutics brings to the fore is one of the inter-relatedness of hermeneutics and community, specifically the importance of the faith-community, both in its particular, local, institutional role in interpreting (and being interpreted by) scripture¹²⁴ and in its historical, textual, liturgical identity that creates a horizon for interpretation in both self-reflexive and habituated ways.¹²⁵ That is, the interpreting community

is always both a local concrete particularity and a trans-historical “social imaginary” set in memories, habits, and texts;¹²⁶ this intersection of the present and the past of the community operates within a hermeneutic “tradition,” in the thought of Alasdair MacIntyre, when it hosts not only “a coherent movement of thought” but also one in which adherents “become aware of it and of its direction and in self-aware fashion attempt to engage in its debates and to carry its enquiries forward.”¹²⁷

The question for Evangelical hermeneutics is whether and how it constitutes a historical tradition that is coherent across the broad scope of its adherents and that is rationally “self-aware” in its internal conflicts over biblical interpretation. More specifically still, the question is to what degree Evangelical communities and their hermeneutic tradition are shot through with the malaise of Western individualism itself, which leans against such MacIntyrian traditionedness. While some Evangelical approaches to biblical interpretation utilize trending philosophical and theological tools without, apparently, any “metarhetorical” structure or any awareness of the tradition(s) that inform their thought in conflicting or incommensurate ways,¹²⁸ other Evangelical scholars approach the hermeneutical crisis from the grand stories of such traditions as told by such philosophers as MacIntyre and Taylor.

MacIntyre’s analysis has been an important voice for several reasons. First, MacIntyre’s language of tradition—of a historically grounded, discursively negotiated narrative constituted in social institutions and pointed towards some telos (a “good,” similar to an Augustinian “peace”)—seems to speak to the felt need in Evangelical ecclesiology for identifying a *shape* to the interpreting church other than a Hobbsian contractual agglomeration of atomized individuals, the shape which the American church has absorbed from the culture of modern democracy. Evangelical theologians such as Jonathan Wilson have sought to appropriate MacIntyre’s

thought for the church,¹²⁹ and philosophically-grounded ecumenical movements such as Radical Orthodoxy have taken MacIntyre's concept of human narrativity as their starting point.¹³⁰

Second, MacIntyre speaks specifically to the stresses, pressures, and wrong turns of an individualistic modernity that has tried to cast off its narrative traditions of communal practical reasoning while retaining the fiction of society. Liberal modern society, modeled on the free market logic of capitalism, locates *rationality* within the decisions of the individual, which are based on individual orderings of "preferences." Thus any "good" toward which modern society drives is not a guiding substantive narrative but an amorphous goal that is itself an ephemeral product of continual "bargaining." Since moral reasoning, MacIntyre says, is reconstituted by its end, modern moral reasoning is configured merely to maintain the procedural structures that promote bargaining from individual preference.¹³¹ This general cultural situation has not left Evangelical identity and hermeneutics untouched, as Bellah, et al., demonstrate in their rearticulation of MacIntyre's philosophical analysis within a more explicitly historical and sociological vein. Their identification of the moral grammar of individualism and its ascendancy over the remaining cultural echoes of community is given particular detail in their portrayal of the religion of the lone individual, the "Sheilaism" of Sheila.¹³² The reduction of scriptural interpretation to the individual free of the constraints of community, tradition, or a shared telos is, I argue, an untenable acquiescence of Evangelicalism to liberal modern culture. However, alternative forms of communal scriptural interpretation, despite the work of John Howard Yoder, Stanley Haurwas, and others,¹³³ have not successfully engaged the dominant Evangelical culture. Also, some alternative forms of community that have fired the imaginations of younger Evangelicals, such as New Monasticism, have not been sufficiently grounded in a constructive Christian philosophy of communication.

Third, MacIntyre's metaphor of narrativity and its inherent critique of the rationality of modernism gets at the heart of the current crisis in hermeneutics, providing a way forward through community that is barred to radically postmodern (radically individualized) approaches to hermeneutics. Similar to Augustine, MacIntyre shows that a community's rationality and its virtues shift depending on the specific narrative and "peace" upon which that community is founded—one's hermeneutics are thus guided by the narrative of one's community, tied up with the history of that community, and partially inscribed in the practices of that community, continually folding the past into the present of the community of memory through rhetoric.¹³⁴ This picture of the community of memory does not plumb the depths of creational memory that, to Augustine, grounds temporal social memory in the eternal Word, but it does describe, similar to Augustine, how communities think and act directionally together on the temporal plane. While MacIntyre's focus on the tradition and the community has been criticized as leading towards relativism,¹³⁵ it is an important counterpoint to a hermeneutics of certainty that glosses over both the particular "horizons" of human interpreters and the limitations on humans' ability to understand even themselves.

MacIntyre's analysis of historically mediated narrativity and (using Taylor's term) the "cross-pressures" exerted by different narrative strands on modern people, who are generally unaware of the source of these internal and social tensions, is also a theme taken up at length by Charles Taylor, though with a difference. Taylor's metaphor of the "social imaginary," the set of socially and historically inherited prototypes, expectations, and "goods"¹³⁶—the world as it is "felt" more than as it is consciously rationally thought¹³⁷—has also been tagged as an important resource for Evangelical hermeneutical practice, specifically by Kent Eilers and James K. A. Smith.¹³⁸

Taylor's Augustine, and his philosophical vision more generally, is more open to correctives from the individual inward vision than is MacIntyre's traditioned rationality, with Taylor's sympathies confessedly with the Romantics, but he still takes the influence of history, language, and culture on hermeneutics very seriously.¹³⁹ In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor traces the evolution of the self through its inward turn in Augustine, its rationalization in Descartes, the beginnings of its focus on the immanent goods of this world through the Protestant expansion of the sacred to all secular domains, the unmooring of this immanent focus through Deism and Enlightenment skepticism, the Romantic recovery of mystery and self-depth through irrational nature, and the current synthesis of instrumental and Romantic expressive elements in the self of "authenticity." Significantly influenced by Hegel,¹⁴⁰ Taylor sees the mental prototypes of the current age as a complex sedimentation of past ideas and debates, now filtered primarily through the individual, but not without the ever-present influence of the language, ideas, and moods of the society. He says, "The self exists only within what I call 'webs of interlocution.'... The full definition of someone's identity thus usually involves not only his stand on moral and spiritual matters but also some reference to a defining community."¹⁴¹

In *A Secular Age*, Taylor covers in even more historical depth the story of the change in the conditions of belief, defining secularity as the age in which, while strong belief is still possible, the default atmosphere is one of uncertainty and an individual quest for meaning. In both of these books, and in his slim volume *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Taylor is interested in drawing attention to the problem of "inarticulacy" which attends the obscuring of the historical and social "background conditions" for our current assumptions, desires, and motivating metaphors. Part of the rationale for his voluminous historical storytelling is to recover language, ideas, and historical moods that are, on the one hand, alien to our current mentality but are, on

the other hand, part of the “webs of interlocution” that tell us who we are, where we come from, and perhaps where we are going. While I disagree with Taylor’s acquiescence to an individualized conception of religious life in this “secular age,”¹⁴² I see his attention to the impact of “falling off of [religious] practice” and the resulting loss of “traditional religious languages” and his portrait of the current individualized religious sensibility as an important backdrop¹⁴³ against which to reimagine communal practices of biblical religious language as an essential aspect of hermeneutics.

This question—explored differently by Taylor and MacIntyre—of *how constrained* one is to the horizons one inherits—culturally, educationally, historically, experientially—is in many ways the central conundrum of philosophical hermeneutics, and the unacknowledged elephant in the corner of modernistic hermeneutics.¹⁴⁴ If hermeneutics is not merely a universal set of rules through which de-contextualized individuals extract the meaning from the biblical text but is rather a shared reading dialogue by always-already traditioned people whose attention to the text is significantly affected by the goals and norms they inherit, as their “social imaginary,” from the several communities and historical matrix of which they are a part, *the nature of the community controls the possibilities of its hermeneutics*.

It is on this question that Augustine’s thought on the interpreting community of the Church is important in two interlocking ways. First, his understanding of the way any community builds habits of thought and habits of interpretation together, sharing a “peace” that reinforces itself through shared confession and action, helps define the basic human social context within which the special social context of the church is set. Second, Augustine provides a complex picture of the nature of the church community, including its promise through the larger spiritual community of the city of God and its remaining constraints as still mixed, socially and

spiritually, with the city of the world. It is in his nuanced description of that promise of a heavenly aspect to community, and thus interpretive grace, that Augustine can provide the Evangelical church the piece of the hermeneutical puzzle that is still missing in MacIntyre, Taylor, and philosophical hermeneutics more generally—that is, the pre-modern Christian vision of the cosmos as “participating” in God, generally, and the church participating in Christ, specifically, through the mediation of the narrative drama of the scriptures.

The felt need for a community with a more robustly shared narrative has provided much of the impetus for the Evangelical “missional” movement. Moreover, the advent of alternative Christian communities with corresponding alternative biblical hermeneutics supports the argument that there is a rhetorical exigence in this historical moment for not only abstractly conceptual but also rhetorically practical solutions, a philosophy of communication approach to the conjoined problem of the Evangelical interpreting community and its hermeneutical practices. How these centripetal forces can make their difficult headway against the centrifugal forces of Protestant individualism—especially as exacerbated by the general social disintegration of community and the abdication of relational communication for technological independence—would be one of the central problematics for any proposal to repair and re-source Evangelical hermeneutics. Again, it is Augustine’s philosophical resources to which this project will turn in order to articulate one particular grounded approach to the intersection of social/community theory and hermeneutics. Augustine’s philosophy of communication offers the conceptual language and models that can offer Evangelical hermeneutics a return to the type of ecumenical, one-another communication in the scriptures that is, I argue, the movement’s birthright.

Hermeneutics and the Problem of Being

A final large-scale issue that is bound up with the problem of Evangelical hermeneutics is the horizon of modernity within which the church finds itself “thrown,” specifically the “flattening” of distinctions and levels of being which reduces the revelation of God to a text on the plane of Being¹⁴⁵ and reduces the sociality of the church to just a *species* of the *genus* of human social communication. This process was begun with the introduction of the concept of immanence by the late medieval scholastics Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, who “conceived of ‘God and His effect which is identical with His Being’ as an immanent activity—an activity that is limited, however, to the activity of understanding.”¹⁴⁶ This new separation and opposition between immanent and transcendent explanations of phenomena was recast by Spinoza into his mystical materialism in which God and Nature are two faces for the same reality, but it was then separated categorically by Kant to establish the limits of speculative reason and focus rationality on practical reason in the immanent sphere. Though the transcendent had a renaissance in the form of Hegel’s ideal Spirit, the progression of scientific and market rationality eventually reduced the scope of transcendence to individual existential experience.¹⁴⁷

The current state of this debate within modernism hovers around the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, who tries to explain the felt phenomenon of transcendence through recourse to the opacity and complexity of layers of immanent experience,¹⁴⁸ but as Taylor points out, people who give themselves over to meaning as an immanent phenomenon eventually find themselves asking, “Is that all there is?,” no longer comfortable with the flatness of even philosophically corrugated immanence.¹⁴⁹ This drift away from immanence can be seen philosophically, if not personally, in the move of neo-Enlightenment philosopher Jürgen Habermas to admit the value of specifically religious influences in the secular public sphere for their “motivational”

resources.¹⁵⁰ The problem with the immanent frame has also recently been elucidated by John Milbank, et al., who also tell the story of the modern age from this turn, when the study of God was brought down to the same level as the study of Being.¹⁵¹

Before, everything on the plane of Being could be studied according to its order, but that order also participated in the revelation and intervention of a higher order, that of the divine being, which could be recognized and joined, but not controlled or fully comprehended. After the advent of modern metaphysics, however, the knowledge of God was to be studied and systematized comprehensively just like any other science,¹⁵² a move which eventually led to the scriptures being less the word of God to be obeyed and more the data to be systematized into an abstract and comprehensive knowledge *about* God. Because living religious communities are always faced with the question of practical reasoning, “What do I do?,” however, there were significant counter-forces to the reduction of scripture to a biblical science. The vernacular use of scripture, both individual and in corporate renewal movements, predominated throughout the low-church varieties of Protestantism, where Evangelicalism spread and flourished most vigorously.¹⁵³ When the sociological forces of urbanization, industrialization, and professionalization eroded the rural and small town ground of American evangelicalism (without a corresponding urban revival movement), the stage was set for a professionalized science of biblical interpretation to dominate Evangelicalism.

The Evangelical church cannot, of course, merely *recognize* and *step out of* the modernist horizon that has served as its hermeneutic and communicative dwelling place especially over the last century, but by pursuing and listening to certain pre-modern philosophical resources in its own broader tradition, both the church’s self-understanding as a different sort of communicative organization and its cosmological framework for understanding the dynamics of God’s

communication through scripture can be gradually shifted away from their unhealthy dominance by modernistic presuppositions.¹⁵⁴ Here, also, Augustine’s philosophy of communication—specifically his ecclesiology and his pre-modern understanding of a participatory cosmos—provides important resources to speak to a current Evangelical hermeneutics that has difficulty disentangling itself constructively from the philosophical groundings that are contrary to most of the traditionally scriptural elements of its identity.

Augustine’s understanding of participation is significantly tied to his view of the interrelationship between temporality and eternity, where the works and words of God on the eternal plane find their expression, moment by moment, on the temporal plane through the participation of the cosmos in its creator.¹⁵⁵ The potential for specifically human participation in God is greatest because “in His image” humans were created, even though by disobedience the grace of participation was lost to “the whole creation, which groans and labors until now.”¹⁵⁶ Reconnecting the eternal and the temporal—and thus opening the way toward a full participation of the creation in God, each part according to its nature—was the Incarnation of Jesus, through whom humans could again participate in God. This participation proceeds through what Evangelicals call “sanctification” and what Augustine called divinization—viz., by taking part in the life of God, humans become “partakers of the divine nature.”¹⁵⁷ It is this shared participation in Christ that shifts the nature of the church’s interpretation of scripture out of philosophical narratives of either transcendence or immanence. Because God can be fully at work within his participating people in a particular historical moment, the eternal and the temporal can co-exist without contradiction, just as Christ could exist as eternal and as a temporal man without contradiction. While the transcendence/immanence debate turns on acceptance or rejection of a conceptual hierarchy,¹⁵⁸ participation turns on the relationship between the course of temporality

and the mysterious mode of eternity, in which the point of contact between the two is normally on a spectrum of participatory grace. A full separation of the eternal and the temporal in a given action would be a nullity, or “evil” as it is conceived by Augustine.¹⁵⁹ Conversely, the path to greater participation, in Augustine, is one shared with other people, including a shared practice of reading the scriptures together with *caritas*.¹⁶⁰ To walk with God, toward God, is to walk in the Church, with the brethren, under the scriptures, which constitute the testimony of the eternal city of God. It is this picture that modern hermeneutics doesn’t have a frame for, this picture of biblical hermeneutics as irrevocably social with both humans and the eternal God who comes down into temporality to speak to us in time instead of assuming or demanding that we step up, out of time, to build our tower of truth.

Therefore, the Evangelical hermeneutical question in the current historical moment is not just one of the right approach to the text but also involves questions of the nature of language and the act of interpretation itself, the relationship of ecclesial organization and habituation to hermeneutics, the right relationship between the church and the “world,” and the theological question of the nature of God’s interaction with the cosmos. How Evangelicals engage their scriptural hermeneutics—not only interpreting but also talking about their approach to interpretation—is intimately tied up with their identity, with their ecclesial communication, and thus also with their embodied communication of the gospel.

Interpretive Approach

This project is framed within philosophy of communication, with the qualification that it applies this approach through the bias of the author’s Charismatic Evangelical perspective as informed by the philosophical resources of Augustine’s own approach. Philosophy of communication, as surveyed and synthesized by Ronald C. Arnett and Annette M. Holba, is a

pragmatic discovery and proffering of philosophical metaphors that not only give form and meaning to existential experience in a historical moment but also move that “meaning into embodied and contextual understanding.”¹⁶¹ That is, philosophy of communication mines the rich conceptual resources of past human responses to past historical exigencies in order to meet current historical exigencies with appropriate linguistic tools for shared thought, shared meaning, and joint action. “Philosophy of communication takes information and turns it into meaningful connections between persons. What unites persons is not simply information, but meaning sculpted between and among them.”¹⁶²

This approach presupposes, with Gadamer, the linguisticity of meaning, the importance of answering the questions of the current historical moment, and the restricted horizon of human interpretation, but it also acknowledges the potential overlapping of historically human experiences and problems, carried down through time by language, met through the language of earlier philosophers and “poets,” and recovered as pragmatic linguistic solutions through a careful reading of the past and the present situations. Pragmatically oriented, philosophy of communication moves from real social questions of real people to real social-linguistic—embodied and/or institutional—courses of action, operating in the realm of rhetorical truth rather than in the presumptive realm of modern social science, which claims *episteme* in the tradition of Plato.¹⁶³

Philosophy of communication fits well with this present Augustinian project in many ways, not least the fundamental importance of language to understanding in Augustine, his emphasis on the limitedness of our interpretive perspective, and his insistence on broad learning in philosophical and religious traditions in order to deal with pressing questions of the moment.¹⁶⁴ However, an Augustinian modification of philosophy of communication would

suggest, first, an ultimate *telos* or narrative within which multiple “pragmatic” goods can be evaluated and ranked—one unabashedly eschatological¹⁶⁵—and, second, a conception of the transmission of philosophical-linguistic resources that goes beyond pragmatism. Rather, an Augustinian philosophy of communication would encompass the phenomena of philosophical concepts either as divine “gifts” or as deceptive spiritual suggestions from carnal or demonic wellsprings. That is, the question of discernment of appropriate philosophy of communication resources (and within those resources of appropriate application to the current historical moment) is both more hopeful, because of Augustinian grace, and more dangerous, because of the spiritual darkness of an Augustinian self and world.

It is the philosophical/theological concept of “participation” that mediates these possibilities, both in the hermeneutics proposed here and in the interpretive “method” that informs that proposal. That is, my interpretive approach, in line with my Charismatic Evangelical bias, presupposes the descriptive validity of some of these ancient philosophical resources for both the Evangelical hermeneutical problem and the current issue of philosophy of communication “methodology.” I understand Augustine’s philosophical resources as divine gifts in addition to their usefulness as pragmatic tools—gifts intended for this historical moment to meet the current need for greater grace and greater linguistic-social coherence in the Evangelical tradition. In this, I seek to practice an Augustinian philosophy of communication for the current Evangelical hermeneutical crisis, using Augustinian philosophical resources.

Therefore, this project pursues those conceptual resources through a dialogue with Augustine’s rhetorical philosophy, listening to his premodern hermeneutic and social thought through primary texts,¹⁶⁶ with the aid of recent literatures of historical, social, and philosophical contextualization,¹⁶⁷ while also listening to the hermeneutics and social theory conversations in

Evangelical scholarship that provide the questions potentially met by Augustine’s philosophical-rhetorical resources.¹⁶⁸ The goal is that the resulting fusion of hermeneutic horizons might be ethically fused into the Evangelical “social imaginary,”¹⁶⁹ impacting the rhetorical praxis of Evangelical scriptural liturgy and corresponding Evangelical identity formation.

How might the Evangelical crisis in biblical hermeneutics be appropriately met by an Augustinian philosophy of communication? The tensions of the Evangelical community evident in their 1982 Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics have only become more pronounced, both in the realm of evangelical scholarship and in the popular alternative Evangelical movements that demonstrate frustration with the social and conceptual integrity of status quo Evangelical hermeneutics. Within the purview of philosophy of communication, this project’s rationale should be “tested by public opinion offered as a . . . road map that details the particulars and temporal suggestions for engaging those particulars.”¹⁷⁰ That is, both the urgency of the hermeneutic question and the suggested approach to answering it would be evaluated with a particular, real public in mind—in this case, the Evangelical “interpreting” public as represented by their scholars, ministerial practitioners, and laypeople.¹⁷¹ The urgency of the question is fairly easily seen on a scholarly level, with Evangelical theologians and philosophers undergoing their tradition’s own permutation of the linguistic turn in hermeneutics—most pronounced in the lack of dialogue between biblical studies and theological interpretation¹⁷²—and engaging in significant dialogue with different philosophies proposed as new grounds for biblical hermeneutics, in the tradition of Bultmann’s famous appropriation of Heidegger, Caputo’s identification with Derrida, Westphal’s positive use of Gadamer, and the eager reception that Speech Act Theory has found among scholars with solid Evangelical credentials, such as Nicholas Wolterstorff, Kevin Vanhoozer, and Anthony Thiselton.¹⁷³

An interesting exemplar of the tensions in the tradition incited by this kind of scholarly engagement are the small scandals provoked by Anthony Thiselton's paper "Understanding God's Word Today" at the National Evangelical Anglican Congress in 1977 and his 1999 inaugural presidential address of the Society for the Study of Theology. While he is a recognized and respected hermeneutic scholar, Thiselton's engagement with philosophical hermeneutics and phenomenology cast a shadow over his evangelical academic orthodoxy, by the same token shrouding his conclusions in language inaccessible to many of his evangelical colleagues.¹⁷⁴ To remedy Evangelical fears of heterodoxy and unfamiliarity with philosophical hermeneutic language, a number of Evangelical and other scholars of hermeneutics gathered in 1998 for the first Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar, a ten year project to rethink the approach to biblical hermeneutics in dialogue with a number of other hermeneutic questions and modes of inquiry.¹⁷⁵

To what degree this hermeneutical question is at the forefront of the minds of a significant number of Evangelical pastors and laypeople is not as clear, though the general growth of branches of the "missional" movement that do not self-consciously claim the scriptures as part of their core identity, such as the Emerging Church movement and the New Monastic movement, hint that some Evangelical communities are disenchanted with their scriptures and seeking a new narrative around which to build their "peace."¹⁷⁶ Also, empirical sociological work suggests that a high percentage of current Evangelicals lean more on general cultural influences than Evangelical scriptural traditions in constructing their "social imaginaries," leading to the phenomenon of the young Evangelical "moralistic therapeutic deism,"¹⁷⁷ where allegiance to a church is more a matter of fitting into a "lifestyle enclave" than keeping covenant with a scripturally and historically grounded tradition.¹⁷⁸ Of course, the historically trans-denominational identity of evangelicalism leaves it open to this temptation of

Western culture. Technically, no one is born an evangelical, only “born again” as one. And thus, the communities of evangelicals have to be continually created and maintained by different criteria than shared ethnicity, shared liturgy, or shared tradition. The centrality of conversion notwithstanding, if the evangelical movement is losing its traditional insistence on formation through the scriptures, it has lost a main pillar of its traditional identity.¹⁷⁹

So, the key philosophy of communication areas of inquiry regarding the renewal of an evangelical hermeneutical identity are how the interpreters and historical situation affect the meaning(s) of the text, and how a unified communal, embodied, and socially engaged life can be built up from a shared foundation in the scriptures. Related to both of these pressures on evangelical hermeneutics is the question of the kind of literacy, and the road to that literacy, that best upholds an evangelical identity in biblical hermeneutical practice. I contend that Augustine’s hermeneutical and social thought can provide conceptual resources to deal with all of these questions, giving Evangelicals an orthodox alternative to both modern and radically postmodern hermeneutics, one that details the communal nature of scriptural interpretation and models a form of biblical literacy that current Evangelical communities could emulate.

In question form, then, this projects asks how an Augustinian understanding of participation, scriptural hermeneutics, and ecclesiology, together, can provide a philosophically grounded rhetorical response to the current crisis in Evangelical hermeneutics (embedded in its ecclesiology), a response acceptable to and effective for ecclesial communication within the missional tradition of the Evangelical community.

Inviting Augustine to the Evangelical Table

The rationale for grounding this project in Augustine is multi-layered. First, as a respected church father, Augustine is a voice that warrants attention across a wide spectrum of

Christian sects, including Evangelicals. Thus, in the ongoing debate over how the tradition should be both maintained and modified, Augustine is a legitimate conversation partner. Second, as a pre-modern theologian and bishop, Augustine provides a perspective that is helpfully “Other,” untainted by the specific ontological and epistemological divisions and reductions of modernity, and thus fits a philosophy of communication approach of welcoming difference as a driver for rhetorical response.¹⁸⁰ Augustine’s use of the ontological metaphor of “participation” and its conceptual parallels in Augustine’s focus on “incarnation” are foundational recoveries for an Evangelical hermeneutics that would be both true to its premodern tradition and faithful to its mission as an unconventional spiritual community in the current historical moment.

Third, Augustine’s foundational work in rhetoric and hermeneutics resists both the narrative of comprehensive certainty and control and the narrative of fundamental indeterminacy and hermeneutical violence.¹⁸¹ His rhetorical philosophy is grounded instead, on the one hand, on a linear narrative—from primordial peace (creation) to eschatological peace—and, on the other hand, on a recursive participatory narrative of present confession that ties together inside and outside, heaven and earth, word and thing through the godly use of language.¹⁸² That this Augustinian rhetorical and hermeneutic theory makes the scriptures its ground, authority, and central point of dramatic focus is a key point of overlapping horizons with Evangelical hermeneutics,¹⁸³ and it thus promises a fruitful fusion toward the goal of current praxis.

Fourth, Augustine offers a deep ecclesiology that is grounded in a rich and scriptural theory of human sociality. This ecclesiology, resonating with but also resisting social constructionist and other immanentist theories of organizations, maintains the sense of the church as an entity connected to eternity while also emphasizing the discursive and rhetorical construction of the church through its shared language, shared discursive practices, and

continued charitable engagements with one another through creative rhetorical venues.¹⁸⁴ That is, the presence of the city of God in heaven and in the plan of God, to Augustine, grounds his assertion that the church-within-time must continue to interpret each particular historical moment together to embody the Word of God to each generation. As Milbank argues, Augustine's restoration of the world's depth by the participation of its temporality in eternity provides the ground for us to engage with and value our embodied materiality.¹⁸⁵

Therefore, this project of philosophy of communication seeks to provide philosophical resources and conceptual models that articulate the Evangelical hermeneutical problem and elucidate the philosophical questions the Evangelical "tradition" would need to engage through its traditional institutions and venues, rethinking and re-habituating its current praxis accordingly. Because the Evangelical tradition, in line with Augustine's picture of the church in general, is a community mixed in its habits and ideas between the earthly and the heavenly city, this proposal is an Augustinian attempt to meet the specific challenges of the earthly city with the charity and truth of the scriptures in every age, finding a way to read the scriptures together so that they can be not only a "comfort" to the Evangelical communities but also a "stumbling block" to "the wisdom of this world" where such is still acting formatively among the same Evangelical communities. Unity and mission, under and through the reading of the scriptures, is a "way" of being that can be recaptured through an Augustinian reinfusion of the Evangelical tradition.¹⁸⁶

NOTES

¹ See Gabriel Fackre, in his "Evangelical Hermeneutics: Commonality and Diversity," *Interpretation* 43, no. 2 (1989): 117-129, p. 118

² For one expression of this question in recent Evangelicalism, see Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House, 1986), 162-163.

³ Robert Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986).

⁴ Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 241, 252, 261; See also Noll, *Between Faith*, 166.

⁵ Seen Noll, *Between Faith*, 11.

- ⁶ Christopher R. Seitz, "Scripture Becomes Religion(s): The Theological Crisis of Serious Biblical Interpretation in the Twentieth Century," in *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, Scripture & Hermeneutics Series, Vol. 1, 40-65 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000).
- ⁷ Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- ⁸ John Bunyan provides an interesting example of both strands. Though an active tract-writer in which he used the bible as a proof-text, Bunyan's own spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding*, portrays his series of responses to scriptures invading his consciousness as voices from God about his own salvation, and he preached to his congregation according to the different stages of revelation God had given him through this *scripture*. See John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding, with Other Spiritual Autobiographies*, ed. John Stachniewski, with Anita Pacheco (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- ⁹ Seitz, "Scripture Becomes Religion(s)," 55.
- ¹⁰ Rick Richardson identifies five streams of recent missional thought: Missional (Newbigin's books), the Emerging church, the Multi-Ethnic movement, the Neo-Monastic movement, and the Church Multiplication movement; see Richardson, "Emerging Missional Movements: An Overview and Assessment of Some Implications for Mission(s)," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 37, no. 3 (2013): 131-136. See also the joint Whitepaper of Evangelical groups 3DM and The Order of Mission, written and edited by J. R. Rozko, "The Missiological Future of Theological Education," accessible at https://www.academia.edu/4148055/The_Missiological_Future_of_Theological_Education; Worthen recognizes this trend in *Apostles of Reason*, 262-264.
- ¹¹ George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991); Noll, *Between Faith*, 154; and Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 250-264. The description by Michael J. Scanlon of the general-culture "common sense" resistance to the rhetorical turn is a fitting description of the same in Evangelical subculture: see his "Augustine and Theology as Rhetoric," *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994): 37-50, p. 38.
- ¹² Brevard S. Childs, Foreword to Bartholomew, Green, and Möller, *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, xv.
- ¹³ Iain Provan, "'How Can I Understand, Unless Someone Explains It to Me?'" (Acts 8:30-31): Evangelicals and Biblical Hermeneutics," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 17, no. 1 (2007): 1-36, p. 3.
- ¹⁴ An attitude of hermeneutic scholars that is identified and checked by Fackre in "Evangelical Hermeneutics."
- ¹⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 260. Though, importantly, it is a modern community that is closer, in its self-understanding, to an aggregate of individuals associating together by rational choice and agreement, aided by a similar culture of literacy. This "traditional" populistic identity is described at length by Noll, *Between Faith*, 151-154. For a premodern analogue, consider the "Greek" identity used and disputed by the early Greek city-states, held together by a similar literature and self-identified strongly enough for joint military action.
- ¹⁶ Fundamentalists, Old Evangelicals, New Evangelicals, Justice and Peace Evangelicals, Charismatic Evangelicals, and Ecumenical Evangelicals; see Facke, "Evangelical Hermeneutics," 118-19.
- ¹⁷ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 2-6.
- ¹⁸ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 4-5.
- ¹⁹ For this historical pedigree, see Noll, *Between Faith*, 151-153; Gerald T. Sheppard, "Biblical Hermeneutics: The Academic Language of Evangelical Identity," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 32, no 2 (1977): 81-94, p. 82; Fackre, "Evangelical Hermeneutics," 118.
- ²⁰ J. Edwin Orr, *Campus Aflame: A History of Evangelical Awakenings in Collegiate Communities*, ed. Richard Owen Roberts, Rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: International Awakening Press, 1994).
- ²¹ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 2; Facke, "Evangelical Hermeneutics," 118.
- ²² Orr, *Campus Aflame*.
- ²³ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 9-16.
- ²⁴ George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); see also Noll, *Between Faith*, 151.
- ²⁵ Daniel Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).
- ²⁶ Marsden, *Soul of the American University*.
- ²⁷ Mark D. Regnerus and Christian Smith. "Selective Deprivatization among American Religious Traditions: The Reversal of the Great Reversal," *Social Forces* 76, no. 4 (1998): 1347-72; Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 60.
- ²⁸ See Noll, *Between Faith*, 60.
- ²⁹ Dan R. Stiver, "Ricoeur, Speech-Act Theory, and the Gospels as History," *After Pentecost: Language & Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, Scripture & Hermeneutics Series, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 52-53.
- ³⁰ Orr, *Campus Aflame*.
- ³¹ Ronald C. Arnett notes this effect of the survivor mentality in his "Existential Homelessness: A Contemporary Case for Dialogue," in *The Reach of Dialogue: Confirmation, Voice, and Community*, ed. R. Anderson, K. N. Cissna & R. C. Arnett, 229-245 (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 1994), 232-33.
- ³² Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 57.
- ³³ For a summary of premillennial dispensationalism and its impact on Evangelical hermeneutics, see Noll, *Between Faith*, 57-60.
- ³⁴ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 77.
- ³⁵ Noll, *Between Faith*, 60.
- ³⁶ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*.

- ³⁷ This group is the primary object of study of Noll's book *Between Faith*, see p. 3.
- ³⁸ See Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, for a detailed history of this marketing campaign.
- ³⁹ Sheppard, "Biblical Hermeneutics," 83; Noll, *Between Faith*, 3-5.
- ⁴⁰ Sheppard, "Biblical Hermeneutics," 83-84.
- ⁴¹ Noll, *Between Faith*, 151.
- ⁴² Stiver, "Ricoeur, Speech-Act Theory," 53.
- ⁴³ See Noll, *Between Faith*, 3-5, 154-161, for a perspective on the range of groups encompassed within his descriptive definition of Evangelical.
- ⁴⁴ Sheppard, "Biblical Hermeneutics," 84.
- ⁴⁵ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*.
- ⁴⁶ Quoted in Noll, *Between Faith*, 143.
- ⁴⁷ I have grown up in a family that idolized (early on) Dallas Theological Seminary, that worked in Child Evangelism Fellowship, that read Vine's bible dictionary and used Strong's Concordance, that read and passed out Jack Chick tracts, that engaged to some degree with Gothard's *Basic Seminar*, that attended Baptist, Bible, and Evangelical Free churches, that attended dispensationalist pre-millennial prophecy conferences and read material from the Institute of Creation Research assiduously, that used evangelical homeschool materials and read books on evangelical apologetics, and that prayed for God to raise up "the next Billy Graham." I was named after Josh McDowell, the evangelical apologist.
- ⁴⁸ See Noll, *Between Faith*, 152-54, on the "strong traditionalism of evangelicals."
- ⁴⁹ See Noll, *Between Faith*, 154, 162-66.
- ⁵⁰ See Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969) for an on-the-ground account of the inroads of this new hermeneutics, including its evident impact through stirring up disagreement, such as E. D. Hirsch's 1967 *Validity in Interpretation*.
- ⁵¹ Craig G. Bartholomew, "Uncharted Waters: Philosophy, Theology and the Crisis in Biblical Interpretation," in Bartholomew, Green, and Möller, *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, 5.
- ⁵² On the internal academic diversity among Evangelicals, see Noll, *Between Faith*, 166.
- ⁵³ "Chicago Statement of Biblical Hermeneutics, with commentary by Norman L. Geisler," in *Bible Research: Internet Resources for Students of Scripture*, created by Michael D. Marlowe, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago2.html>, reproduced from *Explaining Hermeneutics: A Commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (Oakland, California: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1983); and "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy with Exposition," accessed from the same site, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>, reproduced from Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation And Authority*, Vol. 4 (Waco, Tx.: Word Books, 1979), 211-19.
- ⁵⁴ Fackre, "Evangelical Hermeneutics," 117.
- ⁵⁵ On this pressure on American Evangelical Hermeneutics, especially, see Noll, *Between Faith*, 151-153.
- ⁵⁶ Provan, "How Can I Understand," 8n15.
- ⁵⁷ Provan, "How Can I Understand," 15.
- ⁵⁸ Compare Provan's critique in "How Can I Understand," 10.
- ⁵⁹ Compare similar contradictions on the form-meaning questions in Robertson McQuilkin and Bradford Mullan, "The Impact of Postmodern Thinking on Evangelical Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 1 (1997): 69-82, pp. 73-75, 80-81; There is also the implication for some Evangelical defenders of inerrancy that, while the scriptural authors were not omniscient, their words are "omniscient," not unduly impacted by their time and culture of origin—see the discussion in footnote 12 of Provan, "How Can I Understand," 6.
- ⁶⁰ Compare McQuilkin and Mullan, "Impact of Postmodern Thinking," 75-76.
- ⁶¹ "Statement of Biblical Hermeneutics."
- ⁶² McQuilkin and Mullan, "Impact of Postmodern Thinking," 69-71.
- ⁶³ McQuilkin and Mullan, "Impact of Postmodern Thinking," 69.
- ⁶⁴ McQuilkin and Mullan, "Impact of Postmodern Thinking," 71-72.
- ⁶⁵ McQuilkin and Mullan, "Impact of Postmodern Thinking," 74.
- ⁶⁶ McQuilkin and Mullan, "Impact of Postmodern Thinking," 76.
- ⁶⁷ McQuilkin and Mullan, "Impact of Postmodern Thinking," 80-81.
- ⁶⁸ Provan, "How Can I Understand," 10.
- ⁶⁹ Noll, *Between Faith*, 145-47: "Evangelicals have not expended a great deal of concentrated effort in establishing their antimodernism."
- ⁷⁰ Noll, *Between Faith*, 178, 180.
- ⁷¹ Bartholomew, "Uncharted Waters," 4.
- ⁷² See Noll, *Between Faith*, 147, 176-77.
- ⁷³ Ecumenical in the narrow sense of encompassing all Christian denominations that confess the gospel of historic orthodoxy.
- ⁷⁴ See Noll, *Between Faith*, 181-85, for one description of this issue.
- ⁷⁵ Hebrews 11:10, NKJV.
- ⁷⁶ A number also leave Evangelicalism for different faith communities/traditions of interpretation understood as more coherent and defensible, though Evangelical Protestantism still gains more than it loses from denominational switching. See Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape: Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population; Unaffiliated and Other

Faiths Continue to Grow,” Pew Research Center: Religion & Public Life, May 12, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>.

⁷⁷ Traditional denominational communities, by contrast, have the internal institutional support to discuss and work through a number of issues of hermeneutic content and process. The evangelical culture of independent cooperation is partly an inheritance from their past, I would argue, and partly a cultural accommodation to the increasing individualism of Western culture.

⁷⁸ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 41-45.

⁷⁹ Allen Scult even sees Heidegger’s philosophical hermeneutics as a return to something like the hermeneutics of the biblical writers, for whom “the rhetorical and hermeneutical functions of language are intimately connected.” In a way that helps open a rhetorical space for this project, Scult argues that the “Biblical story ‘positions’ human being to experience God by undergoing the experience of language.” Allen Scult, “Hermeneutics and the Rhetoric of Biblical Theology,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 27, no. 4 (1994): 397-409, p. 399; an in-depth exposition of hermeneutic philosophy in its application to theological studies, including a history of the negative reception of hermeneutics in theology, is Randy L. Maddox, “Contemporary Hermeneutic Philosophy and Theological Studies,” *Religious Studies* 21, no. 4 (1985): 517-29. For further discussion of the pairing of rhetoric and hermeneutics after the linguistic turn (“The act of reading itself is increasingly defined as a rhetorical act”), see Richard E. Palmer, “Postmodern Hermeneutics and the Act of Reading,” *Notre Dame English Journal* 15, no. 3 (1983): 55-84; and “Postmodernity and Hermeneutics,” *boundary 2* 5, no. 2 (1977): 363-94; and Jeffery L. Bineham, “The Hermeneutic Medium,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 28, no. 1 (1995): 1-16.

⁸⁰ David S. Sytsma, “A Bibliography of Pre-Critical Protestant Hermeneutics (ca. 1520-1750),” Last updated March 18, 2016, 1-18, https://www.academia.edu/10409759/A_Bibliography_of_Pre-Critical_Protestant_Hermeneutics_ca._1520-1750_updated_March_18_2016_.

⁸¹ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 40.

⁸² Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 33-41.

⁸³ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 124-28.

⁸⁴ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 165-66, 200-201.

⁸⁵ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 43-45.

⁸⁶ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 37.

⁸⁷ Richard Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2004), 38-41.

⁸⁸ Briggs, *Words in Action*, 46-47, 50-51.

⁸⁹ Briggs, *Words in Action*, 58-62.

⁹⁰ Briggs, *Words in Action*, 10.

⁹¹ Stiver, “Ricoeur, Speech-Act Theory,” 64.

⁹² Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 45.

⁹³ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 45.

⁹⁴ Noll, *Between Faith*, 154-161.

⁹⁵ Nicholas Wolterstorff, “The Promise of Speech Act Theory for Biblical Interpretation,” in Bartholomew, Green, and Möller, *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation*, 75.

⁹⁶ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech Act Theory,” 76-77.

⁹⁷ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech Act Theory,” 78.

⁹⁸ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech Act Theory,” 79.

⁹⁹ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech Act Theory,” 80-82. See also Merold Westphal’s book-length treatment, *Whose Community? Which Interpretation? Philosophical Hermeneutics for the Church*, The Church and Postmodern Culture Series, ed. James K. A. Smith (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁰ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech Act Theory,” 83.

¹⁰¹ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech Act Theory,” 84.

¹⁰² Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech Act Theory,” 87.

¹⁰³ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech Act Theory,” 85-86.

¹⁰⁴ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-Act Theory,” 83-89.

¹⁰⁵ Stiver, “Ricoeur, Speech-Act Theory,” 54.

¹⁰⁶ Stiver, “Ricoeur, Speech-Act Theory,” 58.

¹⁰⁷ Stiver, “Ricoeur, Speech-Act Theory,” 56.

¹⁰⁸ Ronald C. Arnett, “Defining Philosophy of Communication: Difference and Identity,” *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* 11, no. 1 (2010): 57-62.

¹⁰⁹ Lewis S. Mudge, “Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation,” in *Paul Ricoeur, Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge, 1-40 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 9.

¹¹⁰ Stiver, “Ricoeur, Speech-Act Theory,” 56-57.

¹¹¹ See James 4:11.

¹¹² Stiver, “Ricoeur, Speech-Act Theory,” 58.

¹¹³ Stiver, “Ricoeur, Speech-Act Theory,” 59.

¹¹⁴ Stiver, “Ricoeur, Speech-Act Theory,” 61.

¹¹⁵ Mudge, “Paul Ricoeur,” 8.

¹¹⁶ Stiver, “Ricoeur, Speech-Act Theory,” 63-68.

¹¹⁷ This can be seen through MacIntyre’s description of emotivism, or the “expressivist self” of Bellah, et al. Rob Bell’s progression from being a soft critic of evangelical fundamentals, motivated by a desire for relevance, to being an agnostic about the communicative potential of language, to being a polarizing figure within Evangelicalism, to taking on a different gig on Oprah Winfrey’s TV network is a case in point. For other examples of the modern/postmodern division in evangelicalism, see James S. Bielo, “Belief, Deconversion, and Authenticity among U.S. Emerging Evangelicals,” *Ethos* 40, no. 3 (2012): 258-76; Ken Stewart, “Discernment, Discernment: Caveats for Evangelicals Flirting with Monasticism,” *Books & Culture* March/April 2011; Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 254-57.

¹¹⁸ For example, Merold Westphal, *Overcoming Ontotheology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).

¹¹⁹ See Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994). The specific phrasing I take from Evangelical pastor and author Tony Evans’s unpublished address to The Navigators’ national conference in the late 1990’s—he told them their problem is that they kill all their prophets.

¹²⁰ James K. A. Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006).

¹²¹ Noll, *Between Faith*, 180.

¹²² Briggs, *Words in Action*, 11.

¹²³ Arnett, “Defining Philosophy of Communication.”

¹²⁴ For one key exemplar of this perspective, see Stephen E. Fowl and L. Gregory Jones, *Reading in Communion* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1998);

¹²⁵ For examples of this perspective, see James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); and *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, Cultural Liturgies 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 2015); Philip Harrold, “The ‘New Monasticism’ as Ancient-Future Belonging,” *Theology Today* 67 (2010): 182-93.

¹²⁶ The idea of a “social imaginary” is borrowed from Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

¹²⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 326.

¹²⁸ Bartholomew, “Before Babel,” in Bartholomew, Green, and Möller, *After Pentecost*, 137-138. For the concept of “metarhetorics,” see James J. Murphy, “The Metarhetorics of Plato, Augustine, and McLuhan: A Pointing Essay,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 4, no. 4 (1971): 201-14.

¹²⁹ Jonathan R. Wilson, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World: Lessons for the Church from MacIntyre’s After Virtue* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997).

¹³⁰ John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006); James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004); James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthius, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

¹³¹ MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 335-42.

¹³² Bellah, *Habits of the Heart*.

¹³³ See James Lawson, “Theological Formation in the Church of ‘the Last Men and Women,’” *Ecclesiology* 9 (2013): 335-46; and David Janzen, *The Intentional Christian Community Handbook: For Idealists, Hypocrites, and Wannabe Disciples of Jesus* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2013), 327-33.

¹³⁴ Nathan Stormer, “Recursivity: A Working Paper on Rhetoric and Mnesis,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 1 (2013): 27-50.

¹³⁵ For MacIntyre’s response to this charge, see the “Postscript to the Second Edition,” *After Virtue*, 272-278. On the one hand, MacIntyre’s thought would imply that only hyper-modernists could be true moral relativists (since moral decisions come from purely individual, “emotivist” selves acting on abstract principles), but MacIntyre’s reluctance to move from the abstractions of “tradition” and “virtue” to a particular tradition or virtue, and the way “narrative” becomes less prominent in his later writing, puts him within the crosshairs of his own criticism. See Craig Hovey, “Putting Truth to Practice: MacIntyre’s Unexpected Rule,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19, no. 2 (2006): 169-186, pp. 173-175. However, to deontologists, and other versions of Enlightenment ethics, MacIntyre’s denial of rationality or virtue outside the context of a specific tradition, and his “pessimistic” picture of incommensurable and fragmented traditions, leads to a picture of unresolvable moral conflict between different traditions and between fragmented (incompletely-traditioned) modern individuals. See Arto Laitinen, “‘Baffling’ Criticism of an ‘Ill-Equipped’ Theory: An Intervention in the Exchange Between MacIntyre and Taylor,” retrieved from Academia.edu, originally published in Emiliós A. Christodoulidis, ed., *Communitarianism and Citizenship* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).; and Bradley J. Thames, “Authentically Virtuous: Heidegger, Taylor, and MacIntyre,” presentation at the International Society for MacIntyrean Enquiry 5th Annual Conference, Providence College, Providence, RI (July 28-31, 2011), on the pessimism of MacIntyrean traditionedness.

¹³⁶ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*.

¹³⁷ For a helpful comparison of MacIntyre and Taylor, and a further explication of Taylor’s affective “social imaginary,” see Laitinen, “‘Baffling’ Criticism.”

- ¹³⁸ Kent Eilers, “New Monastic Social Imagination: Theological Retrieval for Ecclesial Retrieval,” *American Theological Inquiry* 6, no. 2 (2013): 45–57; and James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014).
- ¹³⁹ Laitenen, “Baffling Criticism.”
- ¹⁴⁰ See Matthew Rose, “Tyloring Christianity,” *First Things*, December 2014, 25-30, for a concise and pointed critique of Taylor’s Hegelian defense of the current evolution of Christianity.
- ¹⁴¹ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 36.
- ¹⁴² The strongest statement Taylor can muster about the future of religion is that it primarily depends on “a whole host of such [individual] quests” and secondarily on the “relations” between “modes of quest and centres of traditional religious authority.” That is, the atomized nature of authentic religious life is not seriously questioned. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 533.
- ¹⁴³ See especially Taylor’s Chapter 14, “Religion Today,” in *A Secular Age*.
- ¹⁴⁴ As articulated by Taylor in his “Reply to Commentators,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54, no. 1 (1994): 203-13.
- ¹⁴⁵ Catherine Pickstock, “Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance,” *Modern Theology* 21, no. 4 (2005): 543-74.
- ¹⁴⁶ Marc Rolli, “Immanence and Transcendence,” *Bulletin de la Societe Americaine de Langue Francais* 14, no. 2 (2004): 50-74, p. 51.
- ¹⁴⁷ Rolli, “Immanence and Transcendence,” 52-53.
- ¹⁴⁸ This is the favored position of Rolli in “Immanence and Transcendence.”
- ¹⁴⁹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 507.
- ¹⁵⁰ See Patrick Loobuyck and Stefan Rummens, “Beyond Secularization? Notes on Habermas’s Account of the Postsecular Society,” in *Discursing the Post-Secular: Essays on the Habermasian Post-Secular Turn*, eds. Peter Losonczi and Aakash Singh, 55-74 (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010).
- ¹⁵¹ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*; Smith and Olthius, *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*; Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*.
- ¹⁵² Pickstock, “Duns Scotus.”
- ¹⁵³ See Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (Yale University Press, 1974), 18-28. See also Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 154-55.
- ¹⁵⁴ In this, my project is a continuance of “ancient-future” themes that have gathered force in Evangelicalism since the 1970’s; see Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 160-62.
- ¹⁵⁵ See Calvin L. Troup, *Temporality, Eternity, and Wisdom: The Rhetoric of Augustine’s Confessions* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999) for an extended analysis of Augustine’s metaphors of eternity and temporality; and see, for a parallel portrayal of Augustine’s concept of participation, Matthew Levering, “Linear and Participatory History: Augustine’s City of God,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 5, no. 2 (2011): 175-96; Gerald Bonner, “Augustine’s Conception of Deification,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 37, no. 2 (1986): 369-86; David Vincent Meconi, “St. Augustine’s Early Theory of Participation,” *Augustinian Studies* 27 (1996): 81-98; Patricia Wilson-Kastner, “Grace as Participation in the Divine Life in the Theology of Augustine of Hippo,” *Augustinian Studies* 7 (1976): 135-52.
- ¹⁵⁶ Romans, chap. 8.
- ¹⁵⁷ II Peter 1:4.
- ¹⁵⁸ See Rolli, “Immanence and Transcendence,” especially 55-56, 70-71.
- ¹⁵⁹ Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), XI.9.
- ¹⁶⁰ See Calvin L. Troup’s exposition of this communal interpretation from Augustine’s *Confessions* in “Rhetorical Interpretation in Augustine’s *Confessions*,” *Journal of Communication & Religion* 24, no. 1 (2001): 43-67.
- ¹⁶¹ Ronald C. Arnett and Annette M. Holba, *An Overture to Philosophy of Communication: The Carrier of Meaning* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 3.
- ¹⁶² Arnett and Holba, *Overture*, 8.
- ¹⁶³ This is my summary from Arnett and Holba, *Overture*, chap. 1: “Habits of the Heart”; and from Arnett, “Defining Philosophy of Communication.” The connection with poetics has resonance with the work of Lenore Langsdorf, as noted in *Overture*, 5, but my primary reference is Kenneth Burke, who talks about poets leaning with or against the dominant symbol-system in their time period, responding to the sufficiency of that symbol-system in dealing with current problems and the recalcitrance of being. See *Counter-Statement*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968).
- ¹⁶⁴ Troup, “Rhetorical Interpretation”; Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1995).
- ¹⁶⁵ As seen in the emphasis Augustine places on the endpoint of the Christian story as narrated in the last three books of his *City of God*.
- ¹⁶⁶ Especially Augustine, *Confessions of Saint Augustine*, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Doubleday, 1960); Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. and ed. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997); Augustine, *City of God*; Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle, Works of Saint Augustine 1 (New York: New City Press, 1991); Augustine, *Essential Sermons*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. Boniface Ramsey, intro and notes, Daniel E. Doyle, Works of Saint Augustine 3 (New York:

New City Press, 2007); Augustine, *Revisions*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, Works of Saint Augustine 1, no. 2 (New York: New City Press, 2010); Augustine, *St. Augustine on the Psalms: Two-Volume Set*, trans. Scholastica Hebgin and Felicitas Corrigan (Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2012); Augustine, *The Rule of St. Augustine*, intro and commentary Tarsicius J. Van Bavel, trans. Raymond Canning (New York: Doubleday, 1986).

¹⁶⁷ Such as Giovanni Catapano, “The Development of Augustine’s Metaphilosophy: Col. 2:8 and the ‘Philosophers of this World,’” *Augustinian Studies* 38, no. 1 (2007): 233–54; Richard Enos and Roger Thompson, eds., *The Rhetoric of Saint Augustine of Hippo: De Doctrina Christiana & the Search for a Distinctly Christian Rhetoric* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008); Eugene Kevane, “Christian Philosophy: The Intellectual Side of Augustine’s Conversion,” *Augustinian Studies* 17 (1986): 47–83; R.A. Markus, “St. Augustine on Signs,” in *Sacred and Secular: Studies on Augustine and Latin Christianity* (London: Variorum, 1994): sec. XIV; Dave Tell, “Beyond Mnemotechnics: Confession and Memory in Augustine,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 39.3 (2006) 233-53; Frederick Van Fleteren, Joseph C. Schnaubelt, and Joseph Reino, eds., *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, Collectanea Augustiniana (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994); Robert Dodaro, “Augustine’s Revision of the Heroic Ideal,” *Augustinian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2005): 141–57; Paula Fredriksen, “Secum dum Carnem: History and Israel in the Theology of St. Augustine,” in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus*, ed. William E. Klingshirn and Mark Vessey (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Charles W. Brockwell, Jr., “Augustine’s Ideal of Monastic Community: A Paradigm for His Doctrine of the Church,” *Augustinian Studies* 8 (1977): 91-109.

¹⁶⁸ As exemplified especially by the call for a more philosophically engaged Evangelical hermeneutic by Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 180, and in the extensive debate and discussion in the Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, see note 167 below.

¹⁶⁹ This, following the concept of Charles Taylor, especially as he develops it in terms of the current historical moment in *A Secular Age*.

¹⁷⁰ Arnett, “Defining Philosophy of communication,” 58.

¹⁷¹ Westphal, *Which Community?*

¹⁷² Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*; for a significant history of this split, see Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*; and Legaspi, *Death of Scripture*.

¹⁷³ Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, Landmarks in Christian Scholarship (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For another thorough and systematic examination of Speech Act Theory’s possible use in biblical hermeneutics, see Briggs, *Words in Action*.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Knowles, *Anthony Thiselton and the Grammar of Hermeneutics: The Search for a Unified Theory* (Crownhill, UK: Paternoster Press, 2012), 4-5.

¹⁷⁵ *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, V. 1, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000); *After Pentecost*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Moller, Vol. 2 (2001); *A Royal Priesthood: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Jonathan Chaplin, Robert Song, and Al Wolters, Vol. 3 (2002); “Behind” the Text?: *History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, C. Stephen Evans, Mary Healy, and Murray Rae, Vol. 4 (2003), etc.

¹⁷⁶ Eric C. Carter, “The New Monasticism: A Literary Introduction,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 5, no. 2 (2012): 268-84; Sally K. Gallagher and Chelsea Newton, “Defining Spiritual Growth: Congregations, Community, and Connectedness,” *Sociology of Religion* 70, no. 3 (2009): 232-61; J. B. Watson, Jr., and Walter H. Scalen, Jr., “‘Dining with the Devil’: The Unique Secularization of American Evangelical Churches,” *International Social Science Review* 83, no. 3/4 (2008): 171-80; Bielo, “Belief, Deconversion, and Authenticity.”

¹⁷⁷ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁷⁸ To the degree that some part of the Evangelical public is not asking these questions, or would not welcome the conceptual and behavioral shifts that my thesis might recommend, this project is to that degree a raising of “critical consciousness,” not just philosophy of communication. However, that shared goal—not only providing Augustinian answers to Evangelical hermeneutical questions but also providing Augustinian questions to unsettle the assumptions of compromised Evangelical publics—is appropriate to the bias and horizon of the author.

¹⁷⁹ As Sheppard would argue, losing a shared biblical hermeneutic would be to lose its identity entirely.

¹⁸⁰ Arnett, “Defining Philosophy of Communication”; and Ronald C. Arnett, Janie M. Harden Fritz, and Annette Holba, “The Rhetorical Turn to Otherness: Otherwise than Humanism,” *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 3 (2007): 115–33.

¹⁸¹ The liberal use of the term “postmodernism” in Evangelical scholarly and popular work has worked against its definitional value, especially since it has become in some circles a catch-all epithet, but where I cannot escape using the term, I mean it as the hypermodern variant of hermeneutic theory that tends toward radical indeterminacy and interpretation as always-already violent. See James K. A. Smith for a discussion of this boundary position, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000); and *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation*, Radical Orthodoxy Series, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁸² See Levering, “Linear and Participatory History.”

¹⁸³ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*.

¹⁸⁴ Michael C. McCarthy, "'We Are Your Books': Augustine, the Bible, and the Practice of Authority," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75, no. 2 (2007): 324-52; Frederick H. Russell, "Persuading the Donatists: Augustine's Coercion by Words," in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus*, ed. William E. Klingshirn and Mark Vessey, 115-30 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); F. Edward Cranz, "De Civitate Dei, XV, 2, and Augustine's Idea of the Christian Society," and "The Development of Augustine's Ideas on Society before the Donatist Controversy," in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. A. Markus (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972); James Wetzel, "A Tangle of Two Cities," *Augustinian Studies* 43, no. 1 (2012): 18-19; G. J. P. O'Daly, "Thinking Through History: Augustine's Method in the City of God and Its Ciceronian Dimension," *Augustinian Studies* 30, no. 2 (1999): 45-57; Jaroslav Pelikan, "An Augustinian Dilemma: Augustine's Doctrine of Grace v. Augustine's Doctrine of the Church," *Augustinian Studies* 18 (1987): 1-29; Jane Merdinger, "On the Eve of the Council of Hippo, 393: The Background to Augustine's Program for Church Reform," *Augustinian Studies* 40, no. 1 (2007): 27-36; Paul Burns, "Augustine's Distinctive Use of the Psalms in the Confessions: the Role of Music and Recitation," *Augustinian Studies* 24 (1993): 133-146.

¹⁸⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*.

¹⁸⁶ See Bernd Wannewetsch on this way of being: "Conversing with the Saints as They Converse with Scripture: In Conversation with Brian Brock's *Singing the Ethos of God*," *Evangelical Journal of Theology* 18, no. 2 (2009): 125-35

Chapter 2

Participation: Its History, Return, and Augustinian Form

Therefore He descended that we might ascend, and remaining in His nature was made a partaker of our nature, that we remaining in our nature might be made partakers of His nature. But not simply thus; for his participation in our nature did not make Him worse, while participating in His nature makes us better.

Augustine, Epistle 140.iv.10¹

Introduction

This project argues for the recovery of Augustinian hermeutical and social philosophy to meet the current crisis in Evangelical hermeneutics, but there are many challenges to bridging that gap of time, culture, and intellectual milieu. One of the most prominent challenges is that most of the battles in hermeneutics in the last century have been fought on the field of a modern ontology—that is, either a form of modern foundationalist metaphysics (usually attributed to Descartes) or a postmodernist rejection of foundations which is, by its nature, dependent on modernism for its very identity. Neither of these sparring partners would be consistent with the pre-modern participatory ontology from which Augustine, and the early church generally, operated.

None of Augustine's concepts can be directly translated into modern philosophical categories, but rather require a description of the ontological frame that operated latently as the ground of those concepts. Therefore, a philosophy of communication recovery of Augustine's well-known teachings on interpretation² would suggest that we pay attention to the differences, the "otherness," of the ancient rhetor, instead of using Augustine's words as a mirror for our own familiar thoughts. What is, for example, Augustine's "interior word" to the *modern* mind but a linguistic label by which an observer names, correctly or incorrectly, an objective phenomenon (modernism) *or* a rootless play of signifiers, emerging and continually changing in a cultural

linguistic milieu, in an individual response to a perceived phenomenon (postmodernism, Derridean flavor)? Proponents of neither of these positions can easily make sense of Augustine's rooting of a true interior word in an interior conversation with an ever-present spiritual being, who is not identical with the human speaker nor bound to the speaker's culture or temporality.³ Because Evangelicalism and its hermeneutics have been compromised by modernism, as argued in chapter 1, a philosophy of communication recovery of pre-modern rhetorical and hermeneutic philosophy for Evangelicals also requires a recovery of pre-modern participatory ontology.

However, just as there are many "Augustines," there are many concepts of participation.⁴ In a possibly promising sign for our historical moment, participation has become not merely a term for historians and antiquarians but an actively used and contested philosophical tool, the subject of significant debates in philosophy, theology, and anthropology.⁵ It is also a possibly apt descriptive term for the 20th century renewal movements, in the West, of on-the-ground Christian spirituality, and for the emerging contribution, in the "Global South," of distinctly non-Western Christian theology and practice.⁶ That is, the "otherness" of Augustine's participatory hermeneutics may have found its rhetorical entrée in the openness to spirituality of both academia and the general population, which are both in need of language to explain constructively the questions and experiences that are presenting themselves.

That is, I argue that the resurgence of the concept of participation is in itself a sign that the metaphor represents some fundamental need in the population more broadly, and thus that it is a worthy pursuit of philosophy of communication, which deals in the recovery of conceptual resources to meet felt needs for shared speech, thought, and action. Kenneth Burke argued that though our phenomenal world can only be accessed through our linguistic symbol-systems, which pursue their own intrinsic logic, the other parts of the world to which we are "blind" still

intrude on or obstruct or draw us, alerting us that something is amiss in our current symbol-systems.⁷ This unseen resistance from the non-phenomenal world Burke called “recalcitrance,”⁸ and Charles Taylor, in his story of this *Secular Age*, points to the desire for a spiritual dimension of reality, a “transcendence,” as evidence of Western culture’s inarticulate reaction to (what Burke would call) the recalcitrance of our nature. To Taylor, that nature is ineradicably spiritual, both from its embeddedness in a history of spirituality and on its own terms. When even thoroughly modern humans pause from the pursuit of their symbolic goods, or pause after achieving such goods, they find themselves asking, “Is that all there is?”⁹

It is beyond the scope of this project to trace the full history and decline of participation in the West—a *version* of which Taylor tells through the metaphor of “enchantment” in *A Secular Age*—but this chapter will sketch a definition of participatory ontology, fill it out with a few of its key plot points in the history of philosophy, profile a few of its schools of resurgence in the twentieth century, and finally clarify the specific Augustinian version of participation that will inform subsequent chapters. Later chapters will explore the philosophy of communication implications of reading Augustinian hermeneutics and social theory, together, through the lens of participation.

Definition

Participation is a particular way of understanding the co-constitutive relationship between “representational” appearances and multiple realities, including both material realities and unseen agentic realities (between earthly and heavenly realms).¹⁰ While the “return to the things themselves” in phenomenology can be seen as a methodological and studiously agnostic return to horizontal participatory approaches,¹¹ the original and most widespread understanding of participation is not methodological but relational and ontological. In this perspective, no person

or thing is a mere thing-in-itself but is also a *representation* of some divine person or reality beyond itself—all creation has meaning not merely in the interrelationships of things and persons horizontally but also in that all things and persons have vertical relationships with unseen divine realities. That is, while Gerald Manley Hopkins had to assert that the “world is charged with the grandeur of God,”¹² premodern cultures *presupposed* that a god was behind (or in) every bush. While the standard stereotype asserts that Catholics retained a participatory sacramental mindset while the God of the Protestants was withdrawn from the physical realm, the middle position of Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering is, I argue, more correct: while participation was never fully or finally banished from either side of the split, the Catholic move to a “more strictly linear-historical method” was only “a generation or two behind” the Protestants.¹³ Moreover, religious groups tend to segment their application of participation. Evangelicals, in particular, affirm the importance of God’s participatory activity in the world, but they are more divided on the nature of this interaction and its application to the interpretation of the scriptures.¹⁴

As Owen Barfield points out, the relational ontology of participation affects our relationship with language in fundamental ways. Words are not merely arbitrary labels attached to objects by human wills, nor are they simple mirrors of nature, but are rather indicators of how an object participates in the seen and unseen realities. Words are names that are not completely subject to human will but provide an agentic direction or recalcitrance to human will. For example, in a participatory frame, names are given to children and adults as expressions of cooperation with a destiny that is rooted in an unseen spiritual realm, and the name itself gives power to accomplish that destiny by functioning as a shared site of action by human and divine agents.¹⁵ This is different than the modern psychological study of “self-fulfilling prophecy,” which cycles from the self to the self through the linguistic concept.¹⁶ In participatory language,

no word stands for just an earthly thing, but neither (as in Derrida) does a word just stand for other words; words function relationally as meeting places, “collective representations” where human societies together interact with spiritual realities.¹⁷ These representations have often been regularized into liturgy and ritual but without creating a separation between sacred and secular modes of reality. Such separations became conceivable only in modernity.¹⁸

Thus participation, by presupposing an unseen (“unrepresented”) realm that is interconnected with the representations of the human phenomenal realm, adds a dimension of spiritual depth to every aspect of the world through the connecting medium of these representations, most universally in language but also in artistic representations, icons, totems, and so on. The world is charged with meaning and its representational tokens are given value by their participation in the treasury of the spiritual realm. It is for this reason that mimetic art, according to Barfield, has progressively become less evocative as the progression of modernity overlays nature itself with less and less representational value. In a participatory frame, mimetic art is not merely a representation of an object but is, like its real-life object, a medium through which the living spiritual world affects and demands of those who gaze upon it.¹⁹ Thus, in participatory cultures, art is always a religious activity, just as hunting, farming, weaving, and so on are always religious activities.

A participatory framework thus requires its inhabitants to be constantly interpreting, while it precludes complete comprehension or control. In this midst of this indeterminacy, though, it promises *meaning* from that constant interpretation that is not only practically actionable but that also ties together a community of agents in a powerful communication event. That is, while Plato held out the hope of *episteme* through individual contemplative participation in the Forms, most other versions of participation emphasized the relational and practical

interpretive path of *phronesis* (this tension in the nature of participatory knowledge partially parallels Augustine’s metaphors of wisdom and knowledge, as discussed further on). It might be argued that one of the primary causes of shifts from participatory hermeneutics into epistemic hermeneutics of certainty and control has been societal power struggles, with the prime example being Plato’s attempt to wrest the interpretive reins from the polis and give it to the philosophers in response to Athenian social discord, unwise military decisions, and the unwarranted execution of his teacher, Socrates.²⁰ Looking at the question of this “relationship of truth to power” that has affected Catholic-Protestant relationships, and, I would add, Evangelical-Modernist relationships, Levering says,

An important reason for contemporary critics not wanting to relinquish any of the “objectivity” established by history understood as solely linear is the suspicion that ecclesial tradition and authority lead down a corruptive path ... On this view, biblical interpretation of the traditional historical-critical kind functions as an independent doctrinal corrective.²¹

That is, participatory biblical hermeneutics functions best in an environment of charity, where power struggles do not define the community of identity and insecurity is not the guiding motivational attitude. As we have seen in chapter 1, this description was true for an Evangelicalism on the rise in the early 19th century, but the social and philosophical conditions between the Civil War and the 1950s engendered the type of insecurity and social instability that pushed Evangelical biblical hermeneutics more towards a focus on certainty and power. Though the current historical moment is also a time of “narrative and virtue contention,”²² the very diversity of competing narratives and the lack of a powerful and threatening master narrative

have opened the way for marginalized voices long out-of-fashion, such as philosophies of communication that emphasize participation.

A philosophy of communication project to bring a participatory Augustinian biblical hermeneutic to light is further justified by Augustine's role in his own socially tumultuous historical moment, when despite the pulls within the Church and without to make interpretation a matter of certainty and power, Augustine successfully argued for a participatory hermeneutic of teaching, charity, and patience in pursuit of the long-term telos of the kingdom of God.²³

This synthetic definitional sketch is intended to serve as a conceptual foothold for the following brief historical narrative of participation, which follows the plot from pre-theoretical participation to Plato and his lineage to medieval thought as influenced by Augustine and Aquinas to the long decline of participation that started in the scholastic culture of the Late Middle Ages and was accelerated by the Reformation, and possibly by the growth of the money economy.²⁴ Most of these philosophical resources on participation come from outside or on the periphery of Evangelicalism proper, but they are important supplementary sources for a philosophy of communication approach that would enable Evangelicals to understand more clearly the value of Augustine's participatory framework.

Plotting Participation Historically

This history will follow the basic narrative from naïve participation to ancient Greek theoretical participation to early Christian and medieval participation to the late medieval turn away from participation with Scotus to the religious, political, scientific, and technological revolutions that cemented this turn and set the direction of modernism. In the next section, the beginnings of a return to participation as seen in the aesthetic project of Romanticism and the surprising acceptance of immanent participatory theories such as Freudianism will be narrated.

The history will be interrupted by an excursus on the importance of currently persisting naïve, or original, participation, which does not fit within the erstwhile narrative of historical process.

Original Participation

Barfield, known to most Evangelicals only as a friend of C. S. Lewis, was a significant literary philosopher in his own right, and his 1965 *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry* tells one version of participation, its loss, and its hoped-for future.²⁵ Coming at the topic through the metaphor of phenomena, Barfield portrays “original participation” as a shared experience of meaning among people as they, together, have interaction with spiritual beings and forces in and through their culture’s “collective representations.” That is, first, for anything to come out of the “unrepresented” into public view—for it to become a phenomenon—its observers have to participate in it, and to original participating people, everything is alive through its connection with the spiritual dimension. Unlike in modern consciousness, the participatory “self” is connected in its very being to the exterior world, rather than being an inward self merely observing and theorizing about an exterior world. Describing as best he could (as one cultured in the West) the participatory phenomenal consciousness, Barfield writes:

The background picture then was of man as a microcosm within the macrocosm. It is clear that he did not feel himself isolated by his skin from the world outside him to quite the same extent as we do. He was integrated or mortised into it, each different part of him being united to a different part of it by some invisible thread. . . . rather less like an island, rather more like an embryo, than we are.²⁶

Barfield says this “original participation” was “not theoretical at all, inasmuch as it is given in immediate experience.”²⁷

Therefore, the history of the growth of theoretical thought, what Barfield calls “alpha-thinking,”²⁸ is in his view the history of the decline of participation, which is also a history of the evolution of consciousness. Barfield gives several critiques of modern scholars who attempt to study the human cultures of the past from the paradigm of a modern, non-participatory consciousness.²⁹

Mircea Eliade also describes the approach of “archaic man” to time and history as “participation in the Center,” a dramatic taking part in the archetypal dramas of the cosmos as a way to give meaning to life and its suffering.³⁰ Unlike the attempts of “historical man” to recreate himself in history according to a self-authored (or self-discovered) ideal pattern (as in Marxism and existentialism), “archaic man” is hostile “toward every attempt at autonomous ‘history,’ that is, at history not regulated by archetypes.” In this way, he/she “valorize[es] ... human existence,”³¹ not giving transcendent meaning to human existence by a higher ideal vantage point that he/she has created, but rather listening to the patterns that seem to reveal themselves in the social, temporal, and spiritual worlds, submitting to his/her role in society and in history as it reveals itself, not as it is reified theoretically or self-created.

Here is where an excursus on the ahistoricity of original participation may be important. Though this historical sketch is intended to be generally chronological, it bears mentioning (on pain of offending Hegel-influenced notions of historical progress, those of Barfield and Taylor included) that the “original participation” of “archaic man” is still present to some degree in Western societies and is still the norm in many non-Western societies. This is a lesson learned by philosophical anthropologist Levy-Bruhl, who had to revise his initial sharp distinction between rational Western societies and participatory non-Western societies. His revised work shows

participation still present as a “mode of thought” in cultures worldwide, not only in “primitive” ones but also in cultures dominated by modernistic, scientific modes of thought.³²

That philosophers like Taylor suggest otherwise, asserting that no one in the West can avoid self-reflective doubt,³³ demonstrates perhaps a bias born of Taylor’s superliterate status and environment, a possibility that will become especially important in the practical philosophy of communication implications of this project.³⁴ Suggesting one opening for those practical implications, Barfield denies that original participation is still possible, but he does argue for a reinstating of participation in a more self-reflexive and socially constructed mode.³⁵ In this, Barfield is suggesting a similar type of relationship to participation as Eliade argues for: specifically, that the perspective of primordial ontology should be used to question and relativize our tradition of Western metaphysics embedded in historical time. Eliade writes,

We hold that philosophical anthropology would have something to learn from the valorization that pre-Socratic man (in other words, traditional man) accorded to his situation in the universe. Better yet: that the cardinal problems of metaphysics could be renewed through a knowledge of archaic ontology.³⁶

Grecian Theoretical Turn

Returning to the more “chronological” story of participation in the West, however, we see that this original, “archaic” participation began to shift in Western cultures to theoretical thought, according to Eric Havelock, through the spread of the technology of writing in Greece, which took hypotheses about the world out of the limited context of an oral social event embedded in a particular place and time and set them into “permanent” words that no longer answered to particular social contexts but spoke the same things to all people in all times, not only enabling a further development of self-reflexive consciousness but also strengthening the

idea of eternal truths in unchanging (written) words.³⁷ Peter Murphy tells the story of how this encroachment of theoretical, self-reflexive thought led, first, to a political leveling and the first experiments in democracy³⁸ and, second, to Plato's reaction against the "sophistry" of Athenian politics that had allowed and encouraged the pursuit of individual power rather than participation in the good.³⁹

Though critical of the Sophists' separation of words from their realities (i.e., words no longer used as participatory representations), and though vocal about the dangers of rhetoric, literature, and writing itself,⁴⁰ Plato was still very much a disciple of the new "alpha-thinking" and was impacted by the new genre of linear history. Thus, he could not simply return to a religious participation embedded in archetypal story and ritual, as had characterized earlier Greek life lived through Homer and Hesiod.⁴¹ Instead, he reimagined participation as a much more cerebral religious progression, a discipline of philosophers to gain *sure knowledge* by their dialectical discerning of the eternal forms from the imperfect participation of earthly particulars in those forms.⁴² His move towards textuality in the relatively new specialty of philosophy helped set the course for participatory textual hermeneutics, though he himself was critical of textuality and not narrowly dedicated to the meaning of texts over verbal words or physical signs.

In the *Phaedrus*, for example, Plato portrays participation happening when a particular thing, through the possibilities inherent in its particular being, shares in the qualities of its transcendent form.⁴³ In his final speech of repentance to the gods for his previous impiety in making sophistic speeches about love (a god), Plato's Socrates says, "For a man must have intelligence of universals, and be able to proceed from the many particulars of sense to one conception of reason ... clinging in recollection to those things in which God abides, and in

beholding which He is what He is.”⁴⁴ In the Platonic progression of soul, therefore, one can (re)awaken to the knowledge of the true and the beautiful through recognizing the participation of particular things in the transcendent forms of truth and beauty. However, the particular things remain means to the *end* of the individual’s rising *beyond* all particulars, at least according to the traditional reading of Plato, and they are few who are able to participate in the forms in Plato’s elitist rendering of participation: “For there is no light of justice or temperance or any of the higher ideas which are precious to souls in the earthly copies of them: they are seen through a glass dimly; and there are few who, going to the images, behold in them the realities, and these only with difficulty.”⁴⁵

The way Plato portrays him, Socrates can be seen as a man between two worlds. Like the Sophists and unlike his archaic Athenian forebears, Socrates disdains the possession of traditional knowledge and questions everything, but following the basic openness of his culture and time period to participation in divine things, Socrates cannot merely play with speeches in the *Phaedrus* but must take warning from his daemon’s “sign” and from the religious tradition against blasphemy⁴⁶—that is, his words are still the meeting place for divine realities. However, considering Plato’s later movement from Socratic dialogues to his more politically pragmatic works of *The Republic* and *The Laws*, it can be inferred that Plato was perhaps less interpersonally responsive to his “daemon” than was his teacher. In sum, from an earlier Heroic society in which individual participation in the eternal archetypes expressed itself in public social roles, what Barfield calls “collective representations,” Plato’s vision privatized and to some degree textualized individual participation in the forms, while still acknowledging the need for the world of particular people and things through which (by *use* of which) to ascend in one’s own journey of divine participation.⁴⁷ With the shift in the site of participation from communally

interpreted archetypes to individual contemplation as guided partially by the interpretation of written texts, the tension between communal and textual meaning was set up as a theme that would continue to bedevil the Western tradition, especially in biblical hermeneutics.

Aristotle, more materially minded than his teacher, did “not consider it a serious philosophical theory that paradigmatic Forms are made immanent in the sensible cosmos by participation, but rather that these are empty terms and metaphors of a poetical nature.”⁴⁸ We see here, in the Aristotelian philosophical tradition, the philosophical normalization of the separation of language into a philosophical prose and a poetics emptied of its connection with the divine. This emerging conception is of language serving as a horizontal meeting place between only humans rather than a multi-dimensional meeting place for more cosmic meaning.⁴⁹ Aristotle, however, working on the same philosophical problem of how things “become” through time what they in essence *are*, proposed his parallel conception of *energeia*, or actuality, which he conceived as the inherent *form* of a thing that organized its matter in specific ways through its course of development.⁵⁰ That is, Aristotle subsumed Plato’s semi-religious concept of participation into his more “secular” theory of final cause.⁵¹ Destiny and divinity were on their way to becoming, much later, pre-determinative DNA.

The level of textualization of Greek philosophical thought can be seen in the contrast between Plato’s dialogues and allegories, on the one hand, and Aristotle’s treatises organized as rigorous schemes of classification, on the other. Participation in the Unmoved Mover was a structural necessity for Aristotle’s hierarchical metaphysics, but it had no central part in the pragmatic art of interpreting texts or events, which was a matter of mere semantics and logic.⁵²

Plato’s philosophical participation through contemplation was transfigured again into more mystical and religious tones by Neoplatonism in the socially tumultuous time period of late

antiquity. Torstein Theodore Tollefsen, in his monograph *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought*, summarizes the general idea of participation in this time period as

A central idea in the philosophy of late antiquity—in Neoplatonism as well as in Christian thinking ... the general notion that the lower strata of being depend on higher principles in the way that these same lower levels are constituted by some kind of participation in these higher principles.⁵³

In Plotinus’s Neoplatonism, “participation” was a necessary concept, though not perfectly consistent with his fundamental doctrine of the “double activity” of all “complete entities.”⁵⁴

That is, following Plato’s metaphors of love and sight, Plotinus posited that lower entities are motivated to participate in self-sufficient higher entities by the “longing” inflamed by the “sight” of them,⁵⁵ but since Plotinus’s One is also a creator (in a different sense than the Christian Creator), this “longing” is not just evoked but has been *provided by* the One through the emanation of its divine form of being. Tollefsen develops this process as follows:

The intelligible principle *does not move down*, but things move towards it, and because of this movement from below, into the principle, things receive into their own constitution what they are capable of receiving. Consequently, things somehow come to mirror the intelligible in their own being.⁵⁶

Humans, therefore, participate in the One as they “see” the One through contemplative reflection, though their process of “return” to the One is structurally limited by the capabilities of their level of being, their physicality, and their level of active participation in such contemplation. Again, the elitism of this conception of participation, its tendencies toward individualism (because participation is an individually initiated achievement), and its disdain for

the material world (“Platonists could not possibly see matter as inherently good.”⁵⁷) provide a strong contrast with original participation. Though Iamblichus, a disciple in the Plotinian tradition, provided Neoplatonism with a return to the theurgical nature of the physical world,⁵⁸ it would take a different development of participation to revalue society and the temporal physical world. That would come in the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, which also, by emphasis on the Word, would provide a new way of understanding the interaction of language and spiritual participation.

Christian Participation

The growing Christian community in late antiquity had a different conception of participation than Neoplatonism—one that developed *parallel to* rather than *from* its primary philosophical competitor.⁵⁹ The early Christian conception differed from Neoplatonism in its understanding of the basic relationship between humans and the divine, its concept of creation, and its concept of God.⁶⁰ This parallel development may be easier to understand if one keeps in mind the background atmosphere of “original participation,” from which both Neoplatonism and Christianity drew breath. Following in the steps of the Jewish people, Christians denied that there were metaphysically universal connections to God readily accessible to human will through the collective representations of nature, a rejection most clearly reiterated by recourse to the Mosaic command that no image be made for God. Compared to the widespread practices of participation through idols, the positing of a God who was not connected to the world through an external image was a significant contrast.⁶¹

While taking this divine connection away from idolatrous externalities with one hand, Christians returned participation to creation and the people of God through inward witness of the Spirit, external participation in the activities of God, and adherence to the bounded, written

verbalizations of God—what Barfield calls a “deepening of participation” even in its pre-Christian phase in Judaism.⁶² In fact, while denying the Neoplatonist presumption to know the essence of a largely passive God, St. Basil portrays Christian participation as limited but real knowledge through experience of an *active* God.⁶³

The emphasis on the activity of God, in this early Christian participation, can be seen as essential for two reasons, especially from an Augustinian Christian position: first, God’s radical otherness as being beyond the plane of creation and temporality necessitates His *active downward movement* in the hierarchy if any transaction of knowledge or goodness is to succeed;⁶⁴ second, the alienation of sin multiplies the separations—the blockages to participation—between creation and Creator, human and creation, and human and human, necessitating an activity of God to maintain and re-establish participation not only at every level of the earthly hierarchy but also horizontally between entities in order to maintain some level of cosmic functionality and to accomplish the divine plan.⁶⁵ That is, Christian participation involves perpetual divine works of “grace” and gives value to not only minds or souls but also bodies and matter. The question of how the different levels of participation are repaired or maintained by the activity of God, especially how the *general* participation of the cosmos in God should be differentiated from *believers’* participation in God through Christ, was one of the central theological-philosophical questions of the middle ages, with its most systematic development in Aquinas.⁶⁶

Further differentiating Christianity from Neoplatonic participation, the Christian God was not understood as an absolute monad but as a Trinity, and thus “the one and the many both went back to the heart of who God is.”⁶⁷ Therefore, the process of Christian sanctification through participation, known in the early church as “deification,”⁶⁸ was not a process of merely

individual perfection but was rather an earthly picture of the divine sociality inherent in the nature of God. Becoming like God was a church affair, not an individual affair, and thus any Godward movement of contemplation was also to be a humanward movement of godly activity.⁶⁹ As we will see, this communal process of participation in God is especially relevant to the scriptural hermeneutics of Augustine.

This social movement of the church in which, together, the church “body” participates in God through its internal and external activity was seen as initiated, enabled, and guided by the event of the Incarnation.⁷⁰ While archaic participatory societies saw history as a cycle of dramatic conflicts and heroic returns in which current heroes sought immortality by discerning and enacting their cosmic heroic roles, Christianity grounded that cycle and those figured types in the historical Incarnation of Christ, subordinating the possible roles, possible ethical norms, and cycles of drama to a linear and temporally limited history spoken from the realm of eternity.⁷¹ The Old Testament was, thus, read both as real history in the plane of temporality and as a book of types and shadows of Christ and the church—archetypal prefigurings from the atemporal realm of eternity, where the plan of salvation through Christ always resides.⁷² The Incarnation and life of Christ itself, as the temporal *and* eternal event, was seen as the heroic pattern in which, through perfect participation in the Father by the Spirit, “Christ swallowed up our mortal and corruptible existence.”⁷³ Moreover, Christ’s pattern, as a model both human and divinely graced, became the focal point of the pattern of Christians’ participation in God in their own human bodies, communities, and histories. As the principle *totus Christus*,⁷⁴ this historical-archetypal pattern also became the key to early Christian hermeneutical practice, seeking Christological meaning in the scriptures for the sake of Christological participation of the embodied interpreters in the current moment.

While this picture holds in its general shape for early Christian participation, there were of course differences that surfaced in different theologians and different practices in different parts of emerging Christendom—differences discernible, for example, in the unnamed interlocutors who are the targets of Augustine’s arguments for charitable participation through the discipline of the scriptures,⁷⁵ but also differences in how to understand participation through objects and icons of contemplation. These variations in participation, among both theologies and common lay practices, can be seen especially in the cult of the saints and the significance attributed to the liturgical import of baptism and the Eucharist.⁷⁶ Philosophically, according to Tollefsen, the Greek Fathers of the Eastern church took participation a slightly different way than the Western concept; in the East, God’s essence is forever beyond our knowledge even in eternity, though his attributes can be known as they are manifested in the created realm as a plurality technically separate from the simple divine essence, whereas in the West, a knowledge of God’s nature and his attributes must go together, a knowledge that is possible in part through participation on earth and that will be completed according to the capability of resurrected humanity in the realm of eternity. The Western, more “intellectual,” concept relies on participation through created mediums and on the possibility of true-though-not-comprehensive knowledge. Because “divine transcendence . . . is conceived in a much more radical sense in the Christian East,” the Eastern concept of participation is ultimately more mystical and less tied to the created world.⁷⁷ However, in both East and West, “to be and to be actualized in certain perfections is nothing else than to participate in the divine *energeia*,” which is not a created substance but rather animates, directs, and empowers “the essential [created] content of beings.”⁷⁸

Unfortunately, the separation of languages, practically and then formally at the Great Schism of 1054, and the difference in structuring theological metaphors (Greek philosophy in the East; Roman law in the West⁷⁹) made it difficult to articulate a shared, coherent concept of participation, or deification, though as Meconi points out in his survey of recent work on participatory deification, “the East and the West have much more in common here than usually thought.”⁸⁰ Especially in its manifestation in less-educated laypeople, the separation of scriptural languages between Eastern Greek and the Vulgate of the West made shared participation through the scriptures difficult, similar to how it impacted the shared understanding of the bible as scripture when the Vulgate was joined by Erasmus’s translation in the late Middle Ages, and more recently as the King James English Version lost its cultural hegemony.

Though many Evangelical Christians acknowledge that the specific words themselves are not as important as the unchanging meaning, the words themselves become “collective representations” among the members of religious communities, words through which they participate together in spiritual realities.⁸¹ Augustine is sympathetic to this need for shared, stable wording,⁸² though he also works to undermine the tendency to essentialize language, as we will see. However, because Eastern Orthodox language and theology has preserved more clearly the metaphors of participation and deification, it has been Eastern Christian notions of participation that several recent scholars have brought to bear on interpretation and ecclesial life.⁸³ Studies on Augustinian participation, and its implications for rhetoric and hermeneutics, have gained less scholarly attention, though his participation forms the ground of his other philosophical concepts and, historically, set the foundation for the Augustinian medieval synthesis, whose effects we still feel.

Medieval Participation

In the early Middle Ages, the “Augustinian synthesis” that emphasized both the sacraments and the primacy of “grace” as God’s work in and through sinful human vessels⁸⁴ also included the Augustinian theology of participatory deification (*theosis*). While emphasizing the work of Christ to bring grace through his earthly work, this doctrine also focused on the continuing action of Christ’s grace in the believer, working in mere humans the pattern of Christ’s purity and attributes. Jaroslav Pelikan quotes one of the Medieval definitions of a Christian—“one who imitates and follows Christ in all things”—in his explanation of how Medieval Christianity followed Augustine’s insistence on not just right belief but also right practice with a right heart, which requires the active work of grace in the “inner man.”⁸⁵

Interestingly, this medieval emphasis on participation was most prominent in the writings of those on the frontiers of the great missionary activities of the seventh through the ninth centuries.⁸⁶ The theological idea of *theosis* in the tradition of Augustine has also been shown to be “a central component of standard [medieval] theologies.”⁸⁷ On the frontiers, though, where the church was actively evangelizing barbarian tribes, the questions of mission and theological purpose pressed the theological question of participation into active service, especially to shepherd the shift from pagan *original* participation to participation in Christ.⁸⁸

This provides an interesting conjunction with the importance of recurrent exposure to the “other” in much philosophy of communication. In general, confrontation with the “other” forces a tradition to reinvigorate and reinvent its language so that it can understand what it stands for vis-à-vis the other, to remember its own central themes and realign the lines between center and periphery, and to reassess and repair the internal tensions—between belief and belief and between belief and practice—that confrontation with the other highlights. Further, the other in

some cases may have something new that might be legitimately incorporated into the tradition.⁸⁹ Within an Augustinian framework of participatory *theosis*, the medieval church's encounters with pagan tribes maintained and strengthened the understanding of salvation as a participatory imitation of Christ, a "part of the understanding of salvation since the earliest days of the church."⁹⁰

Also following the lead of Augustine, the medieval church understood both sacraments and the preached word of God as the means of this grace of deification. Again in the seventh through ninth centuries, the emphasis on faith and on missionary work brought heightened attention to the ministry of preaching the scriptures, and "the role of the preaching of the Word of God as a means of grace assumed considerable importance."⁹¹ In this preaching and teaching, it was important not to be restricted to the literal sense of the text, which "brought many down the path to heresy and error." On the other hand, in interpreting scripture through the "four-fold norm" of "historical, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical," it was also advised that one be cautious with fanciful interpretation "lest 'by his allegorizing he desert the explicit faith based on history.'"⁹² The rule of faith was the boundary and the practice of faith the bridge that connected heaven and earth through the interpretation and preaching of the scriptures.

It was widespread practice, though, to combine the preaching of the word with the offering of the elements "to make a sacrament."⁹³ Here, we see the tension between "grace and the means of grace," particularly the tension between the means of the spoken Word and the means of a divinely infused physical action, a tension that would resurface again to devastating effect in the Protestant Reformation. Christianity rejected the pan-totemism of pagan original participation, staying true to its identity in the Judaic tradition, but the Christian tradition was continually having to negotiate the bridge(s) over which creatures should participate in their

Creator and Savior. Doctrinally, the Incarnation provided the lynchpin of participation,⁹⁴ but liturgically, the boundaries had to flex in response to conflicts interior to the tradition and to encounters with the “others” that still surrounded and, to some degree, coexisted within the church in the Middle Ages.⁹⁵

How the material and spiritual worlds coexisted liturgically, especially in contrast to pagan totemism, was a particularly interesting question. In medieval Christianity, “shaped by the imagination (as well as by symbolism and ideology), the body occupies a central place in the ... system of thought. ... Body and soul were inseparable.”⁹⁶ This is not a Marxist grounding of imagination in the materiality of the body, nor a Spinozan pantheism in which materiality and spirituality are two sides of the same equation, but a drawing together of two different levels of being, of temporality and eternity, through representative verbal and physical things which serve as meeting places for overlapping and shared action. The late modern resurgence of interest in the body, ecological intersubjectivity, and their connections to communication,⁹⁷ though not tied to a Christian concept of participation, demonstrates possible convergences of a philosophy of communication that would reintroduce participation into an Evangelical hermeneutics that, with modernism, too easily slips into docetism and quasi-gnosticism.⁹⁸

Again, in discussing the medieval tension between different means of participation, it is important to remember that the philosophy of communication gulf separating the modern mind from the medieval “mentalité” is greater than the brook separating medieval opponents from each other. A “symbol” in the Middle Ages, for example, was not the mere opposite of literal, but rather indicated the higher meaning that corresponded to any physical thing or word. Because physical reality participated in spiritual reality, every earthly thing represented something on a higher plane, and the spiritual thing gave meaning to the earthly thing.⁹⁹ Discussing the same

phenomenon, Barfield says, “*Our* ‘symbolical’ therefore is an approximation to, or a variant of, *their* ‘literal.’ Even when they got down to the bedrock of literal, they still experienced that rock as a representation.”¹⁰⁰ This sacramental approach to reality also molded the ministry of the Word to believers and to pagans, seen in the “common name for creed” which was “symbol.”¹⁰¹ That is, the words of the creed participated in their spiritual realities and were thus, as a symbol, real and powerful. It is for this reason, according to Jacques Le Goff, that the Trivium, and especially the careful distinctions made within Grammar, was so important in the Middle Ages: the right “name ... allowed men, because of the words, to arrive at the hidden meanings of which they were the keys.” Or, translating Isidore of Seville, “to name something was already to have explained it.”¹⁰²

This line between participatory orthodox spirituality and the more pagan “magical thinking” of much of the Medieval population was in continual tension, as Le Goff elaborates:

Amulets, philtres, and magical formulae, widespread in both trade and use, were only the coarsest of these beliefs and these practices. Relics, sacraments, and prayers were the authorized equivalents of these as far as the masses were concerned. It was always a question of finding the keys which would force open the hidden world, the true and eternal world, the one in which men could be saved.¹⁰³

In Le Goff’s analysis of the Medieval problem of the “marvelous,” he delineates three categories—the pagan “marvel,” the more neutral “magic,” and the Christian “miracle”—and he theorizes that the growth of a literature of the “marvelous” among aristocratic classes in the High Middle Ages was a strategy of class identity in an attempt to consolidate power outside the reach of the Church. Whether or not his explanation holds true, Le Goff demonstrates the medieval awareness of participatory possibilities, often mediated through language, as well as awareness

of the self-reflective tools of skepticism used in the High Middle Ages to “rationalize” and “define what may legitimately be considered miraculous.”¹⁰⁴ That is, though medieval culture was still participatory, the conceptual tools (e.g., the discovery of “antiquity,” “perspective,” widespread “literacy,” “individualism”¹⁰⁵) were emerging that could be used to separate the world of things from the world of spiritual meanings.

These conceptual seeds generated by internal social divisions and changes in medieval Christendom sprouted when the relative insulation of the Church from outside challenges came to an end in the 12th century, when “the social, political, and intellectual situation of Latin Christendom altered significantly ... when questions that had been either neglected or left unanswered in the ‘Augustinian synthesis’ ... had to be faced.”¹⁰⁶ These questions included how to mediate the participatory mysticism of “folk piety” with the officially recognized participatory elements of the church¹⁰⁷ and how to respond to the renewed intellectual encounters with “Jews, heretics, and Saracens [Muslims].”¹⁰⁸ There was also, along with the Great Schism, a renewed interest in “the heritage of Eastern Christianity ... partly as a consequence of the intensified contact with the East through the Crusades and other forms of travel and commerce,”¹⁰⁹ but it was the interaction with the powerful “other” of Muslim scholars that was to have an important double effect on the concept of participation.

One important effect, already alluded to, was the recovery of Aristotle’s works through Muslim sources, along with heavily influential Muslim commentators such as Avicenna, and the massive project of the incorporation of this Aristotelian-Islamic thought into orthodox Catholic doctrine by Thomas Aquinas.¹¹⁰ In the midst of a series of Crusades that could have provoked a retrenchment and simplification of the Catholic Church tradition, Aquinas reaffirmed and developed the Augustinian dictum that all truth is God’s truth because God is at work in all the

world, even if not all words and creeds (*symbols*) equally or perfectly reflect God's presence and communication.¹¹¹ Importantly, Aquinas is well known for the centrality of the metaphor of participation in his work; it was so central and uncontroversial to him, he did not bother to define it, though "it occurs almost on every page" of his works.¹¹² Though rearticulated in Aristotelian categories, Aquinas brought forward the Augustinian dual emphases on the right confession of truth and the corresponding right embodiment of that participation in Christ, the Word; that is, "knowledge was defined, not as the defining of hypotheses, but as an act of union with the represented behind the representation."¹¹³ Thus, knowledge of the good confession was both a linguistic pointer for the interior word and a form of spiritual life, according to the medieval mentality as portrayed by Aquinas, in whom "the whole corpus of medieval thought is in a manner recapitulated."¹¹⁴

The Modern/Medieval Turn Away from Participation

However, the other effect of the 12th century encounter with other traditions was to have a more far-reaching effect: "the defense of the faith against heresy and against the truth claims of other faiths inevitably raised the question of how the authority of revelation within the church was related to other ways of knowing."¹¹⁵ This question took two directions in the historical moment: the apologetic direction of using "reason" instead of just "authority" in confuting those who did not recognize the authorities of the Church¹¹⁶ and "the discovery of the imperative that faith must move on to understanding," which Pelikan calls "perhaps the most important aspect of the intellectual changes that took place during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries."¹¹⁷

Though this renewed motivation to explore and understand the truth that one believes had its roots in Augustine¹¹⁸—and helpfully shifted the Church from its earlier allergy to any kind of theological novelty—it would eventually not only strain the traditional warning against

overstepping the bounds of the intellect¹¹⁹ but it would also metaphysically move the knowledge of God into a realm of correlational language and self-directed human intellects, a line crossed not alone but most famously by John Duns Scotus.¹²⁰ This line crossed by Scotus eventually (and paradoxically) divided sacred and secular, giving epistemological weight to what could be represented in terms of the human world, tempting religious communities to straddle the line, reaching into the “secular” realm for the tree of knowledge while keeping the other foot close to the tree of life.

Most times, of course, the story of modernity is told from the genesis point of Descartes, who separated the foundational knowing subject from the world of objects, but James Smith, following Michael Hanby’s history of modernity, says that “Descartes’s father is Stoicism and late medieval scholasticism,” with Scotus leading the way.¹²¹ Though Scotus was a moderate realist, not disconnecting concepts from unseen universal realities in the same sense as Nominalists or Conceptualists like William of Ockham,¹²² his proposed modification of the participatory relationship between knowledge of God and knowledge of the world opened the door for the modern world.¹²³ Ironically, therefore, immediately after its high point in Aquinas, participatory “biblical exegesis lost its appeal and another form became appealing.”¹²⁴

But how did Scotus’s philosophy eviscerate participatory thought and exegesis? Put briefly, Scotus, “when considering the universal science of metaphysics, elevated being (*ens*) to a higher station over God, so that being could be distributed to both God and His creatures.”¹²⁵ While ostensibly defending the theological priority of God’s freedom, human freedom, and the non-determining nature of grace,¹²⁶ Scotus rejected the “analogy of being” that posited participatory “in-flowing” of grace from the unbounded God into creatures,¹²⁷ creatures who are receptive to interior spiritual influence because of their creational potentiality as a microcosm

analogous to higher macrocosms. Scotus saw participation as a fundamental violation of “the law of the excluded middle,” an Aristotelian law of formal logic that had hardened, by the High Middle Ages, to the point that Scotus felt that the dictates of the logical principle should take precedence over the encounter with the world in its “actuality.”¹²⁸

In place of this two-tiered reality of God and being, mediated by the participatory mediums of revelatory language and physical materiality, Scotus argued, first, that the being of God and the being of humans are different only in terms of degree, with the infinitude of God *quantitatively* ensuring his Otherness; second, Scotus argued that all beings on the plane of Being are equal and incommensurable;¹²⁹ and third, he argued that communication between beings (including revelation from God) involves “revelational positivism: that we know in advance that all that God can show us is positive facts and unambiguous information.”¹³⁰ That is, “influence” for Scotus was purely “external,”¹³¹ and the integral connection between divine revelation and human reason through the analogy of being was transformed into the “atomism” of a free human intellect¹³² interpreting the external signs and choosing, freely, to join by “concursum” in “divine-human co-operation” with a God who is similarly free from constraints.¹³³ Eschewing the Aristotelian account of an *entelechia* of human being and final causality,¹³⁴ Scotus portrayed humans as having a sphere of freedom and uniqueness in being that is not given by culture, polis, or (in a determinative sense) God.¹³⁵ That is, while God speaks and exerts influence from the outside, seeking to bestow grace according to his own radically free will, God must cooperate with what his human creatures do and are, acknowledging that they might not be able to read the external signs.

With the “flattening” of the world to one plane of being, in which its beings are not intrinsically mediated by analogy or by the telos of a final cause,¹³⁶ human knowledge is no

longer a matter of “elevation” through confession of and action in the right participatory “collective representations,” but rather a search for words that mirror the world.¹³⁷ Language, including conceptual abstractions used in talking about higher-level truths, was no longer a gateway but a mirror—because there was nowhere to go. The “collective” nature of collective representations was also problematized since the posited freedom and equality of beings emphasized the individual over the telos of or distributive justice of a polis or people.¹³⁸ Because revelation, in Scotus’s system, was a matter of individual interpretation of external divine influence, not accessible through the sensible world but cognitively recreated in the mind according to individual human freedom,¹³⁹ the possibility for a social body to interpret and act together was undercut conceptually by this

Modern misfortune: the loss of an integrally conceptual and mystical path [, a loss of] ... the prevailing theologico-metaphysical discourse of participated-in perfections, [in which] there was a ready continuity between reason and revelation: reason itself was drawn upwards by divine light, while, inversely, revelation involved the conjunction of radiant being and further illuminated mind.¹⁴⁰

Without this possibility of shared illumination through the mystical mediation of conceptual “collective representations,” the whole metaphysical ground of society, language, and hermeneutics shifts, and truth experienced through other realms such as aesthetics and liturgy is, for the moment, relegated to an uneasy seat on the periphery.¹⁴¹ As Matthew Levering articulates:

While participation remains in Scotus, it does so in a deracinated form: representation rather than exemplarity. ... Reality is “desymbolized”: human time is no longer understood as caught up in a participatory relationship with God, and history becomes a

strictly linear, horizontal, intratemporal series of moments. After Scotus, human freedom may submit to the divine will, but thereafter on the grounds of God's obligating power rather than on participatory-teleological grounds.¹⁴²

A philosophy of communication approach looks to discern how the questions of a historical moment interact with the specific philosophical-conceptual responses those questions provoke,¹⁴³ and it seems that Scotus's recasting of the problem of knowledge in an individually discerned flat plane of being is what provided the question that Descartes, the following modern age, and modernistic hermeneutics felt compelled to answer.

The most vocal and thorough critics of Radical Orthodoxy's move to locate modernity's genesis in Scotus do not disagree with the analysis, but rather disagree with Radical Orthodoxy's negative evaluation of the consequences.¹⁴⁴ That is, that it was Scotus who gave articulation and force to a move away from participation, and by the same token planted the philosophical seeds of modernism, is not an embattled position.¹⁴⁵ His "re-orientation of ontology ... was necessary in order to make possible the move from ontology to epistemology,"¹⁴⁶ and after this metaphysical paradigm had started to shift, several things started to happen in rapid sequence that made a return to a participatory medieval synthesis impossible.

Modern Social Revolutions

As is normal in paradigmatic shifts,¹⁴⁷ seeming irregularities and inaptitudes in the former participatory paradigm led to Scotus's imagining of a new paradigm, but after the shift, there happened to be a major convergence of this interparadigmatic dispute and a major breakdown in European society, one that Scotus's new ontology was better equipped for with its emphases on individualism, power, quantification, and the objectivity of the world.

As mentioned above, even before Scotus's paradigm shift, the Church's confrontation with internal heresies and external religions provoked a felt need for a more finely calibrated religious language that would maintain the unity of the church and justify its correctness vis-à-vis its competitors. Participatory language, while meaningful, was not as well suited for apologetics—one's interlocutor might simply refuse to see the spiritual analogy on which your argument rests, or might propose a different, though traditionally viable, spiritual analogy. Also, as Le Goff points out, the cultural markers that are traditionally used to identify the Renaissance—especially increased literacy, the reconnection with Antiquity through document discoveries, and a growing sense of individualism¹⁴⁸—constituted the atmosphere in which Scotus was already working in the 12th century.

Several aspects of the cultural shift contributed to the downfall of participatory thought. As a number of media ecology scholars argue, literacy, by strengthening a self-reflective phenomenology of consciousness, creates a sense of individual freedom, an awareness that *being* could be otherwise.¹⁴⁹ Nascent individualism and the beginnings of rights as located *in individual humans* can also be seen in the shift to individual property ownership in the technical discipline of law, as Thomas Wren points out: “by the middle of the 13th century, canonists and secular legal theorists were regularly using the subjective language of natural rights, even though the moral philosophers and theologians were still wedded to the objective classical notion of natural law.”¹⁵⁰ This property-individual rights connection also began to be connected with the resurgent money economy, meaning that individual worth was tied to property worth, which was expressed quantitatively through money (instead of qualitatively through personal duties and relationships within the hierarchy).¹⁵¹ There is significant resonance between these markers in late medieval culture—active apologetics, increased literacy, legal subjective individualism—and the main

lines of Scotus's replacements for participation. We can also see from these medieval cultural seeds the eventual fruits of high modern literacy, apologetics, and individualism in Evangelical hermeneutics.

Immediately after Scotus's death in the early 14th century, the conceptual resources of these different paradigms (Scotus's and the traditional participatory one) were tested in the fires of several Europe-wide cataclysms. The end of the Medieval Warm period devastated crop yields for over a century,¹⁵² leading to the Great Famine that killed perhaps 10% of Europe in one year, inducing malnutrition that allowed the Black Death to kill off another third-to-half of Europe, and exacerbating the already high political tensions between countries,¹⁵³ political tensions partly due to the chaos still following the recently disputed headship of the Holy Roman Empire (1247-1273). The resulting social anarchy, including a number of popular revolts, might have been kept in good order by a strong vision articulated by a strong Church, as had happened in a parallel historical situation with Augustine in the chaos of Late Antiquity and was renewed in several iterations throughout the Middle Ages,¹⁵⁴ but the Church's vision had become too narrowly political and, partly as a result of this emphasis on ecclesial political power, had fallen into disarray, most famously in the Western Papal Schism (1378-1417).¹⁵⁵ John Henry, in his history of the Scientific Revolution, identifies this among other factors as contributing to the shift away from a holistic and participatory medieval mindset. Specifically, he identifies the following factors:

The increasing failure of the Roman Catholic Church and the so-called Holy Roman Empire to provide the necessary stability for the organization of spiritual and material life, the consequent rise of city-states and regional and national principalities, and the

break-up of local feudal jurisdictions. ... The rise of urban life, the development of commercial enterprise based on private capital, and the origins of the banking system.¹⁵⁶ Facing crisis and social breakdown, people who have the conceptual resources to create meaning and unity—through dynamic leadership, social identity, and/or strong social institutions—can respond constructively and expansively, but without these resources, people tend to fall into a “survival mentality,” narrowing their focus and refusing to think seriously and communally about the future.¹⁵⁷ The lack of clear articulation of participatory philosophy of communication to the medieval masses sent them searching for other conceptual tools of survival.

Since the institutions and communities that undergirded a participatory communal mindset were significantly upended in the 14th century, the way was cleared for the more individualistic and objectivistic metaphysics of the modern world, which found new institutional philosophies and forms in the political atomism of Thomas Hobbes and the new idea of the state that eventually grew from Scotus’s metaphysics.¹⁵⁸ Besides drastically shifting political paradigms, this new metaphysics and its undercutting of received tradition led to revolutions in religion, with Martin Luther, revolutions in the pairing of philosophical mathematics with trade disciplines and real world problems, starting with Descartes,¹⁵⁹ and other revolutions in natural philosophy that followed from the Copernican challenge to the nature of astronomical theory.¹⁶⁰

According to Barfield, the “turning point” for participation in science was when Copernicus and Galileo argued that their hypothesis about the operation of the heavens was not merely a hypothesis—a pragmatic “assumption made for the purpose of a particular argument and by the same token not posited as true”—but was instead something that was actually true.¹⁶¹ That is, in a revision of “theory about theory,” Galileo posited that certain knowledge could be gained not just from philosophical contemplation of divinely infused words and realities¹⁶² (the

heretofore sole route) but also from observations of the external world as a regular and stable object in itself. “To the extent therefore that the phenomena are experienced as machine, they are believed to exist independently of man, not to be participated [in] and therefore not to be in the nature of representations.”¹⁶³ The perceptions of phenomena, that is, were beginning to be taken to be a reality unaffected by human or divine interaction with their representations. In this view, things are what they are equally at all times to all people. The participatory world had rendered phenomena “less predictable and less calculable,”¹⁶⁴ but the modern world could measure its phenomena better and, following Bacon’s focus on knowledge as power through “technology,”¹⁶⁵ could center its agenda of predicting and controlling on the only remaining agents in the cosmos, humankind.

The problem with the withdrawal of a participatory approach to phenomena, on the order of the “mechanical model” that occurred, was that representations no longer pointed to something beyond themselves but were “collectively mistaken for an ultimate,” becoming what Barfield calls “idols.” Having no depth, only a surface, these idols “could only be conceived ... as a series of impacts of idols on other idols,” and having no telos rooted in a larger narrative from beyond the pale of the represented world, the fundamental principle of operation explaining idol-idol interaction became “random chance,” which to the ancients was the very thing that the *hypothesis* of the former participatory world was created to avoid.¹⁶⁶

Reading the heavens and the earth scientifically as objective, flat texts was paralleled by new ways of reading written texts. With the increased rise of individual-oriented literacy through the invention and dissemination of the printing press in 1440 and the beginning of the pedagogical philosophy of simplified schemata with Peter Ramus,¹⁶⁷ the linguistic richness of texts as communal sites of human-divine participation faded (at different speeds in different

communities and classes) to a collection of doctrinal words as things-in-themselves that, as objects, could be traded like commodities, passed on to the young cognitively, and brandished as apologetic weapons against other individuals or groups, in person or through the power of black type on white paper. In this way, there is a connection between the Protestant Reformation, the rise of a middle class economy, the Scientific Revolution, and the textualization of the Bible.¹⁶⁸

Barfield, like Charles Taylor, argues that participation in some form has never ceased, but that we have ceased to be conscious of our participation in the phenomena around us, an unconsciousness bolstered by our practical success in predicting and controlling phenomena.¹⁶⁹ The older and more mystical types of participation never fully quit the scene, but a significant strand of Western social classes and institutions became more and more convinced of the “obvious” rightness of a metaphysics of immanence, equality, and absence.¹⁷⁰ The Evangelical movement, for most of its history, straddled the divide between an enchanted and a disenchanted world through the scriptural text, only stepping more fully into a disenchanted hermeneutics in the shadow of modernism at its most Goliath at the juncture of the 19th and 20th centuries. A philosophy of communication approach to recovering an older form of participation for current hermeneutical questions presupposes the usefulness of that philosophical framework, but what does this strategy gain for us, or, stated differently, what really has been lost if we do not attempt to see biblical hermeneutics through the ancient ground of participation? How can attention to the “other” of an ancient and primitive ontology be important for a 21st century hermeneutic philosophy for educated Evangelical adults?

What is lost with the loss of conscious participation is, first, the “wealth” of all philosophy and literature written under its influence,¹⁷¹ including the wealth of our ancient philosophical forebears such as Augustine,¹⁷² and second, the possibility of regaining in some

form the “union” of word, thing, and world that participation opens to us.¹⁷³ Without that union of word, thing, and invisible represented world, the “world” as a shared conceptual dwelling place of meanings is lost to language, partly because the rationality of language—the rationality of hierarchies of concepts participating in one another—is thinned out. Following non-participatory understandings of language to their logical end, philosophers such as Wittgenstein concluded that “all predication must be either false or tautologous,” disconnected from any reference to a shared world.¹⁷⁴ Without the “unity and coherence of nature” in a participatory framework, science itself fragments, moving more into microdisciplines or technological arms of political power. Barfield says,

There is only an accelerating increase in that pigeon-holed knowledge by individuals of more and more about less and less, which, if persisted in indefinitely, can only lead mankind to a sort of “idiocy” (in the original sense of the word)—a state of affairs, in which fewer and fewer representations will be collective, and more and more will be private, with the result that there will in the end be no means of communication between one intelligence and another.¹⁷⁵

Though this is the logical end of a non-participatory approach to language and science, it is not a world that humans can live in. This led to a series of neo-participatory reactions to modernity, including quests for more humane philosophies of communication, starting with Romanticism.

The Return of Participation

Again, it is beyond the scope of this project to trace the path of non-participatory ontology exhaustively through the history of Western philosophy, so for our purposes, we jump forward to the reaction of the human spirit against the flattened ontology bequeathed to modern man by Scotus and his heirs. This ontological “separation between sound and meaning”¹⁷⁶ that

had been felt more and more through the progression of non-participatory modernism provoked a series of self-critical backlashes that would eventually be classed under the “linguistic turn,” but this felt disenchantment provoked a literary reaction before that, “a growing awareness ... of [the] capacity of man for creative speech.”¹⁷⁷ Noting the “close relation between language as it is used by a participating consciousness and language as it is used, at a later stage, metaphorically or symbolically,”¹⁷⁸ Barfield argues that the Romantic movement followed the human impulse to reinfuse language with representational meaning. He says,

If nature is indeed “dis-godded,” and yet we again begin to experience her, as Wordsworth did—and as millions have done since his time—no longer as dead but as alive; if there is no “represented” on the far side of the appearances, and yet we begin to experience them once more as appearances, as representations—the question arises, of *what* are they representations?¹⁷⁹

This “true impulse” of Romanticism to seek something behind the representations went awry, according to Barfield, but only because the “finite personality” and behind that the “body” of particular artistic people were put in place of the divinity behind the text.¹⁸⁰

The attempt to re-establish participation as a functional metaphor in language, hermeneutics, and social life has followed strange pathways, partly because it is so difficult to discern what this ancient and primitive ontology would look like once transmogrified into the metaphors and patterns of thought that make up our contemporary mind. I would argue that even Barfield, who is so carefully aware of the “other” world of ancient participation, is unduly caught up in the philosophical atmosphere of his historical moment. Similar to what Burke says about all symbol-systems, Barfield says that “idolatry carries in it the seeds of its own destruction,” and he sees an impending change in culture as marked by the wide and rapid acceptance of Freudian

and Jungian psychology¹⁸¹ and by the remarkable interest in still-participatory Oriental philosophy in the West,¹⁸² both of which propose a significant realm of “unrepresented” behind our representations. This positive marker of popular hunger for a resurgence of participation is paired, on the other hand, with the already noted “rapidly increasing ‘fragmentation of the sciences.’”¹⁸³

However, though Barfield’s stated desire is to “smash” the idol of Romantic pseudo-participation and other idols that held sway in his historical moment, he does not propose a return to “original participation,” seeing that as an impossibility. Rather, he argues that we should use the track of aesthetics laid out for us by the Romantic movement to engage in “final participation,” becoming conscious “directional creators” of our phenomenal worlds while acknowledging the further reality of which the human self, itself, is merely the representation. Describing his proposal phenomenologically, he says,

I know that what so stands [as a directional creator] is not my poor temporal personality, but the Divine Name in the unfathomable depths behind it. And if I strive to produce a work of art, I cannot then do otherwise than strive humbly to create more nearly as *that* creates, and not as my idiosyncrasy wills.¹⁸⁴

Therefore, Barfield argues for a final participation in which our directional creation of the phenomenal world is acknowledged as itself a creation of a Being on a higher creational plane altogether. As his friend J. R. R. Tolkien argued, the Creator has created us as subcreators, through which exercise both He and we fulfill the telos of our beings.¹⁸⁵

However, Barfield’s replacing of original participation with his final participation hinges on the irreducibility of self-reflective consciousness in the modern human. Perhaps influenced by his position in the academy and in one of the generations at the height of literacy (and thus, of

“alpha-thinking”), Barfield’s narrative of the evolution of consciousness,¹⁸⁶ and of the irretrievability of original participation, seems to presuppose the onward march of Western culture and literacy. He says we cannot go back,¹⁸⁷ and he posits “great lessons” have been learned through the evolution of consciousness, the work of a divine hand behind history.¹⁸⁸ His call for us to take on the responsibility, and the gratitude, of final participation by engaging in participatory interpretation by an act of the will,¹⁸⁹ following the evolution of our consciousness wherever it will lead, reads at times like a variation of Hegelianism. The critique of Hegelianism has also been made of Taylor’s similar call for a return to spirituality within the framework of historicism and self-consciousness.¹⁹⁰ While both Barfield and Taylor seem to say that we should cautiously go where the evolution in consciousness is taking us, more materialist-minded scholars argue that consciousness is a product of one or another of the shifting material conditions of society. The arguments made within media ecology, for example, such as Neil Postman’s connection of childhood with literacy,¹⁹¹ might attach a culture’s level of participatory consciousness to its level of literacy, which is thought to control the level of personal and cultural self-awareness.

However, if humans were created in the image of the Trinitarian God, as posited in an Augustinian Christian account,¹⁹² then humans have always had available to them, in their potential being at least, both an implicit sense of unity with other persons and an awareness of their separateness as individual persons, and a sense of their connectedness on both the spiritual plane and the earthly plane. In this view, humans have known themselves from the beginning as one with the dust of the earth and as separated from the earth by orders of hierarchy, knowing themselves as lords of the earth.¹⁹³ Therefore, though the level of participatory consciousness might shift on a spectrum from awareness of their separation from the objects around them to

awareness of their participation in those representations,¹⁹⁴ I would argue that that shift is not merely historical, unidirectional, or technological but rather, in conjunction with all those factors, the volitional initiation of participation on the part of a speaking God. In an Augustinian and Evangelical register, this participatory knowledge is not only endemic to human nature but also continually renewed and *renewable* through attention to the voice of God in a Christ-focused reading of the scriptures.

Scholars of Participation

Other attempts to restore participation to a central place at the philosophical table have been undertaken by not only the aforementioned Radical Orthodoxy movement but also L. Roger Owens, Hans Boersma, Matthew Levering, James K. A. Smith, and David Vincent Meconi, S. J.

Radical Orthodoxy. As implied already, the Radical Orthodoxy movement has been the party most responsible for pushing the conversation on participation, as Owens notes in his monograph on participatory practices in the church: “No discussion of participation can ignore the work of John Milbank and the theological movement Radical Orthodoxy inaugurated by his *Theology and Social Theory*.”¹⁹⁵ Owens summarizes Milbank’s position on participations as follows:

Participation ... is a theological ontology that grounds the integrity of creation, human knowing, and human making—materiality as both creation and construction—by showing these to be the good gifts of a transcendent God; their giftedness, their being upheld by grace, constitutes the depth and the excess of their being so that they are fundamentally understood as being just insofar as their being derives from and participates in God’s own.¹⁹⁶

As implied in the title of Milbank's groundbreaking work *Theology and Social Theory*, Radical Orthodoxy's framework is primarily critical.¹⁹⁷ The goods they seek to reestablish are not *programmatically* anthropocentric, but practically they are so. That is, their focus is not so much on human knowledge of God as on human knowledge of the world enabled by participation in God.¹⁹⁸ Specifically targeting the "secular social sciences" with his "radical theological critique," Milbank argues that human being, knowledge, and making (*poesis*) are not only philosophically untenable and invalid without participation in God but are also "heretical accounts of creation," a parody of the biblical narrative.¹⁹⁹ Summarizing the Radical Orthodoxy reasoning about participation's relationship to the validity of all the arts and sciences, Smith says the

shift away from a metaphysics of participation to an ontology predicated on the univocity of being rent the cords of suspension that hooked the immanent to the transcendent, the material to the more than material. The result ... was modernity's "flattened" ontology, which eventually issued in nihilism ... [This] investment of this unhooked nothing-in-itself as something has been the task of modernity and postmodernity. Nihilism, unlike humanism ..., recognizes this ontological nothingness of the immanent order.²⁰⁰

That is, as Barfield articulates above, the fragmented sciences can say less and less about the connections between discrete data (the micronarrative of a hypothesis) or about the guiding meanings for their investigations (social macronarratives). By focusing exclusively on the mere material world, science has lost the material world.

The postmodern/hyper-modern recognition of and reaction to this nihilism has been to emphasize subjective and uncontrollable textual factors in the interpretation of any data, opening the way for the resurgence of rhetoric and hermeneutical approaches, but under the sign of cynicism and through the predominant evolutionary metaphor,²⁰¹ placing all its hope for truth in

a vague mystical future and a present unending process.²⁰² With an increasing focus on rhetoric and hermeneutics, however, has also come the recognition that such an approach must come from a practically viable philosophical ground rooted in a real human community, one of the basic tenets of philosophy of communication and the key insight from the ethical philosophy of Alasdair MacIntyre. Radical Orthodoxy, using Platonic-Augustinian participation as its basic ground, and the Christian tradition as its narrative, thus rereads the disciplines and “the times”²⁰³ through that lens, serving “not [as] a system, method, or formula but ‘a hermeneutic disposition and a style of metaphysical vision.’”²⁰⁴ In this way, the movement seeks to “save modernity” and modernity’s real human goods by reading it hermeneutically against the grain of its problematic foundations.²⁰⁵ Importantly also, this “philosophical life ... [is] hermeneutical because it involves the perpetual discernment of divine mediation through physicality.”²⁰⁶

So, following MacIntyre’s narrativity and the broader cultural turn toward a hermeneutic frame, Radical Orthodoxy puts forward a Christian-Platonic version of participation as the key to recovering truth and hope in reinvented interpretive communities of the arts and sciences, modeled after the church. Agreeing with several sympathetic critics of the Radical Orthodoxy project, I want both to acknowledge the debt owed to their work in bringing participation to bear on modernit(ies) *and* to suggest ways that a more thoroughly Augustinian and biblical approach to participation would take slightly different directions than the paths of Milbank and company. The participation of Radical Orthodoxy, as we will see, is more abstract, less Christological, more enamored with postmodern ontologies, and less grounded in the materiality of the Incarnation than an Augustinianism responsive to scripture in an Evangelical horizon.²⁰⁷

L. Roger Owens. Owens is one of those sympathetic critics, and his primary issue with Milbank’s participation is how it remains in the abstract, despite the talk about participation

grounding materiality and about its embodiment in particular social groups. Owens specifically argues that participation should be Christocentric and ecclesiocentric:

[Milbank] does not adequately show how an account of participation must begin with Christ and his church and how the church as Christ's body embodies its participation in the world. How we understand the rest of creation's participation in God will take its bearing from the particularity of the church's own participation in God's life as Christ's body drawing the world into God's life through its practices of participation.²⁰⁸

Thus Owens critiques Milbank's participation as too conceptual, not embodied physically or socially. He asks, rhetorically, "Is Milbank's Jesus embodied and particular enough ... or does it tend toward docetism?"²⁰⁹ Possibly suffering from the same biases as Barfield's proposal of participation through "directional creation" in an aesthetic frame, Milbank's participatory "universalized grace" is portrayed "as openness and receptivity to the poetic act of another prior to any christological specification."²¹⁰ Owens is leery of this participation that ignores distinctions between church and world by rooting its primary definition in creation, not Christ. He further quotes Milbank as saying that "humanity as poetic being can have no bounds set to his nature" except the "unimaginable" nature of the God in whose image humanity is created.²¹¹ This focus on the ideal and the figure that is free from the constrictions of nature cannot help but undercut the directional social embodiment offered by any particular church and its tradition, which *does* set boundaries within which participatory *poesis* is truly bound. Quoting another similar critique, Owens writes,

When Milbank engages the biblical text, he constantly translates the particular sense into a conceptual or speculative process. The Gospel stories are for him allegories of a

participatory metaphysics ... a tendency to think theologically in terms of higher, purified, and unattained forms.²¹²

Thus, Jesus ends up more a metaphor than a human being, and His body, the church, similarly ends up dis-embodied in the historical world, leaving participation as an idea without a time, place, or social group in which to take on flesh.²¹³

Hans Boersma. Boersma also critiques some aspects of Radical Orthodoxy while agreeing fully with the need for a reintroduction to participation, specifically for Evangelical theology and practice. Following his scholarly book on the coordinates and possible appropriation of Catholic *nouvelle théologie*, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery*, he wrote *Heavenly Participation* as a parallel work directed at a more popular and Evangelical audience.²¹⁴ Reading the signs of the times, he intends his work to help evangelicals navigate the crumbling of modernism and the temptations of postmodernism by giving them a *ressourcement* from premodernism, “look[ing] to the history of the church for resources to give theological direction to people in the twenty-first century.”²¹⁵ In that, his project is parallel with my own and in line with the interpretive method of philosophy of communication.

Boersma’s critiques of Radical Orthodoxy generally echo those of Owens, and Boersma similarly calls for a participatory path that is biblical and ecclesiological:

A Christian ontology must be centered on Christ. ... It dare not avoid the particularity of the visible church, and ... it needs to take seriously the church’s engagement with divine revelation in Scripture. ... There is no such thing as a universally accessible, neutral “ontology” separate from the very particular convictions of the Christian faith²¹⁶

The focus on scripture is an important distinction to make with the participatory hermeneutics of Radical Orthodoxy, especially for a project directed towards Evangelicals, because while Evangelicals have common ground with the premodern church in its love of the scriptures, “one of the most significant differences between Radical Orthodoxy and premodern theology is the former’s lack of engagement with the biblical text.”²¹⁷ Another helpful distinction Boersma develops at length is the difference between Radical Orthodoxy’s Augustine and a more “orthodox,” less postmodern Augustine. That is, just as Radical Orthodoxy deals with Jesus and the church as primarily metaphors, their Augustine is more a conceptual tool filtered through postmodern attitudes of skepticism and unlimited personal freedom from traditional ethical boundaries.²¹⁸

Boersma’s project addresses explicitly the aspect of Evangelical identity that privileges openness to truth from other sources²¹⁹—a broad call to ecumenism around the gospel—and he sees the articulation of the nature of sacramentality—the relationship between heaven and earth—as foundational to any Christian theology that would successfully navigate the ravages of modernity/postmodernity in the current historical moment.²²⁰ He recognizes and critiques the current Evangelical trends of emphasizing this-worldly concerns and generally exuding overly positive attitudes towards philosophies of immanence. While acknowledging, with Augustine, that the goods of this life are real goods,²²¹ he argues for the role of the theologian as one who serves as “a guide leading people to heavenly participation.”²²² To repurpose the cliché, Boersma argues that the ecclesial practice of biblical and participatory theology should be used to lead people to be heavenly minded, and by the same token, to be of earthly good. That is, a participatory biblical hermeneutics is the path to the good of the whole person and community.

Matthew Levering. Levering brings us closest to a specific examination of how participation affects hermeneutics in an ecclesial context, though more in dialogue with N. T. Wright and former Cardinal Ratzinger than with Radical Orthodoxy. While certainly familiar with Augustine,²²³ Levering's lens for participation is primarily Thomistic and set within the context of Roman Catholic ecclesiology. After telling a similar story of the philosophical sundering of participation in the Middle Ages, Levering presents a three-part argument: that a historical-critical exegesis based in linear history must be paired with a participatory exegesis based in eternity for "literal" exegesis to succeed; that "biblical exegesis" is "an ecclesial participation in God the Teacher"; and that ecclesial authority mediates and safeguards this process not through static exegetical rules or arbitrary official decisions but rather through the Church's accretion of historical "wisdom-practices."²²⁴ His analysis of the participatory interrelationship of linear and eternal-Christological history, and its implications for ecclesial biblical hermeneutics, is especially helpful for an Evangelical hermeneutics that has often been at a loss for how to understand history as both material and spiritual.²²⁵ In one summary statement, Levering says that

the saints can see more deeply into even the "historical" dimension of Scripture, once "history" is properly understood, than can interpreters possessed solely of historical-critical tools. Thus Christians need not reject patristic-medieval exegesis for "reading into" the biblical texts the realities known in faith by the later Church. On the contrary, it is just such participatory reading that apprehends the true nature of the history of God's salvific engagement with human beings.²²⁶

Showing his Augustinian influence, Levering rightly notes that instead of a modern focus on "biblical texts," we should learn from the church fathers to look to the "divine teacher" in a

participatory attitude that unites “hermeneutical discipline” with “spiritual discipline.”²²⁷ The goal of interpreting the scriptures for Augustine, Levering says, was primarily “gaining a transformative participation in the divine Persons.”²²⁸ That is, participation through interpretation of scripture is not primarily about individual knowledge or utility, but a relational move toward God, with others, that results in the transformation of our character.²²⁹

Where Boersma and Levering do not fully help us is in the practical shape of this type of participation in the church, though as a theological project of *ressourcement*, Boersma’s book would not necessarily be expected to produce a blueprint. Levering, to his credit, does more than just offer the historical Roman Catholic church as an ecclesial answer, noting that though ecclesial participatory hermeneutics requires a level of “obedient receptivity,”²³⁰ it must not be “consumerist” or “authoritarian,” and it must be “catholic” [speaking to Christians universally] and “ecumenically responsive to the divisions among Christians” for “their healing.”²³¹ While conceding the value of these points, especially Levering’s critique of the endemic attitude of suspicion in Protestant hermeneutics,²³² an Evangelical participatory hermeneutics would have to develop a different approach to ecclesial authority, one more in tune with its coalitional ecumenism and mission-orientation. Owens, more within the Evangelical camp, does offer some pictures of what ecclesial participation might look like, though not as fully attuned to the revolutionary possibilities of participation as might be possible. He prioritizes the role of the interpreter-preacher instead of asking how a participatory ecclesial approach to the scriptures might more fundamentally change the shape of the church, as hinted at in his introductory profile of early Methodist experience-meetings.²³³ This question of the ecclesial shape of a participatory biblical hermeneutic will have its own return in the last chapter, but before taking a more specifically Augustinian turn in participation, we need also to mention two key themes from

James K. A. Smith, another recent advocate, that should color an Evangelical appropriation of participation.

James K. A. Smith. Smith, though a fellow-traveler with Radical Orthodoxy, maintains a broader scholarly identity by his championing of a Reformed emphasis on the Incarnation and by his forays into philosophy from a Pentecostal perspective. Like Owens and Boersma, Smith criticizes his colleagues in the Radical Orthodoxy movement for not taking the incarnation sufficiently seriously,²³⁴ a theme that will be more fully explored when Augustine's incarnational participation is explained below. Interestingly, it is Smith's Pentecostalism that does not make much of an appearance in his discussion of participation, though it is germane philosophically (to Smith²³⁵) and practically, as can be seen in Pentecostalism's widespread and significant experiential contradiction to modernist ontology, as Boersma notes but does not pursue.²³⁶

From a philosophy of communication perspective, participation is an important theme to develop and give language to in the current historical moment because it describes the experiences of so many people in the broader population, and especially in the Christian population.²³⁷ These experiences are, of course, given language according to local communities and individuals, or ad hoc according to specific situations, but a more careful exposition of the traditional and deeper language of participation would help unify such Christian experiences across cultural boundaries (e.g., the West and the Global South) and would help such experiences become visible and communicable within the broad scope of Evangelical ecumenism.

Margaret Poloma's and Matthew Lee's data from the Godly Love National Survey is a case in point for how a significant communication phenomenon had gone undetected for lack of theoretical attention and language. While much study of prayer had just measured prayer

frequency, or, going the next step, had classified prayer as “devotional” (person speaking to God) or “mystical” (God giving person an incommunicable experience), Poloma and Lee found that Baesler’s concept of “dialogic prayer” was a powerful descriptor of many people’s experience. They define “prophetic prayer” as “a two-way interaction between God and the pray-er in which the pray-er hears from God and responds to the divine initiative.”²³⁸ Following a 1989 Gallup Poll in which more than half the respondents had “heard God direct them to do something very specific during prayer,” Poloma and Lee found the same basic data in 2009, with a strong correlation between people who engage in prophetic prayer and those who have experiences of God’s love and presence.²³⁹ That is, a significant percentage of Western-educated people are having participatory encounters with the spiritual realm through the medium of language, events leading to actions co-owned with the divine being. This is not only a startling bit of data but the examples reported in Poloma and Lee also highlight the dearth of language available to the subjects, even the professing Christians, as to how to understand and talk about their experience.

This project in philosophy of communication finds value in both Smith’s “incarnational” participation and his less loud Pentecostal leanings, both the giving of the Son and the giving of the Spirit. As one of the most visible and voluble scholars in the Evangelical community, Smith is uniquely placed to influence the direction of Evangelical hermeneutics for good, if his version of Pentecostal participation can incorporate the sense of Godly love and presence reported by Poloma and Lee, or if he can incorporate the renewal of the doctrine of deification that has even made its way into the flagship journal of the Evangelical Theological Society.²⁴⁰ Such a deifying participatory hermeneutics would have to acknowledge in the contours of its theorizing the real experiences and practices of Christians in the scriptures. Interestingly, this hermeneutical

connection was not lost on Poloma and Lee, who offer their observations of the Christian experience on-the-ground by noting that “many Christians approach the Bible in prayer as a ‘living word’ that speaks to their circumstances rather than a literal and fixed word that is the making of doctrine.”²⁴¹

David Vincent Meconi, S. J. Meconi also helps us start to understand participation as it is developed by Augustine, which is the endpoint to which this chapter has been driving. Of the several articles he has published on the subject, it is important to point out first his 2006 survey of recent studies of deification, a topic coextensive with participation.²⁴² Noting the recent resurgence in attention to deification, including its explicit return in the Roman Catholic catechism, Meconi profiles and briefly reviews several recent academic works on deification, organizing his review through the categories of broad surveys, specialized studies, and works of theological application of deification. His article, covering both Latin and Greek fathers and historical and contemporary applications, illustrates that “both academy and ecclesia are reawakening to the richness of the doctrine of deification.”²⁴³ His description of the early church doctrine of deification helps demonstrate its relationship with participation, which is the more general term to deification’s specific doctrine and process:

The early church saw discipleship not so much as a matter of fulfilling various ethical prescriptions but more as the faithful’s taking on properly divine attributes: a blissful immortality, a fiery love, an unquenchable joy. It happens whenever two persons in love spend time together: they slowly become like the other—perhaps even becoming in some ways indistinguishable.²⁴⁴

This discipleship process of “spend[ing] time together” presupposes a participatory ontology that provides, metaphysically, the meeting places for divine and human. In an Evangelical register,

the primary meeting place for this participatory spending time with God has been the individual devotional time reading the scriptures, but largely divorced from official or communal scriptural interpretation.

As Meconi's survey shows, there were no studies of Augustinian or Catholic deification, so he wrote his own: *The One Christ: St. Augustine's Theology of Deification*, published in 2013, and with Carl E. Olson, MTS, *Called to be the Children of God: The Catholic Theology of Human Deification*, published in 2016. More to the purposes of this project, though, are his two articles examining participation in Augustine, focusing especially on the shift in Augustine from a Platonic version of participation to a more thoroughly Christian one²⁴⁵ and on the place Augustine gives the Incarnation in this shift, as recorded in the *Confessions*.²⁴⁶

Participation in Augustine

The story of participation in Augustine's thought can be summarized as a shift from the hubris of Plato's upward contemplation to the humiliation of God's downward movement, from the individual pursuit of recollected knowledge to the shared purification of the will through faith and love. What these coordinates of the radical shift from Platonic and Neoplatonic participation mean will be unpacked, with help from Meconi and others, from several of Augustine's works. Much of the interior dynamics of Augustinian participation will be developed from a synthesis of his *De Trinitate* and his *City of God* since these two works overlap significantly in content, but differ in audience orientation and thus differ in how much Augustine develops different aspects of participation explicitly.²⁴⁷ This is an overview rather than an exhaustive analysis of participation in Augustine because the basic contours of Augustine's participation are all that are needed to bring into focus how participation helps orient Augustine's hermeneutic theory.²⁴⁸

That participation is a central concept in Augustine, though, is not a disputed issue, as Meconi points out, following Agostino Trapé:

Participation is one of three principles “which enters into the essential nucleus of Augustine's philosophy.” Its role is so central ... that in order to understand creation, illumination and beatitude in Augustine one must view them as “three modes of expressing the one doctrine of participation.”²⁴⁹

In general, Augustine's Trinitarian participation not only grounds the possibility of knowing truth from scripture but also broadens the scope and purpose for such knowledge, at least to those whose wills are being purified through participation in the love of Christ.

Early Augustinian Participation

Participation enters Augustine's polemic work as early as 388 with his *De Moribus Manichaeorum*, a work disputing with the Manichaean sect that had held him enthralled from 373 to 382.²⁵⁰ Contrary to the Manichaean dualism of warring good and evil beings, Augustine asserts that evil is not a “substance” or a being but rather a “privation,” a lack introduced through disconnection from God, who is the source of all being and all goodness. The goodness of God is therefore self-subsisting, as his own being, while the goodness of creatures (to the degree they have it) is their participation in the goodness of God. This basic outline of the participation of creation in its Creator follows at first the basic theory of Plato, which Meconi explains from the *Phaedo*.²⁵¹ God does not diminish or weaken himself through the participatory dependence of his creatures, while apart from that dependence the creatures weaken to the point of non-being. This participation, paradoxically, “simultaneously relates and makes distant creatures and Creator”²⁵² by emphasizing both their absolute difference in essential being and their irreducible

connectedness through shared being. Here, also, we see one part of Augustine's basis for analogical reasoning from the goodness of existents to the vision of the goodness of God.

Meeting the Manichaean rejoinder that a single Creator-being would then be the author of evil, Augustine introduces his understanding of the will as "not an efficient cause but a 'deficient cause,'"²⁵³ an ability to turn away from and restrict participation in one's ground of being. This emphasis on will, and the "love" which directs the attention of the will, is a key shared coordinate between participation and Augustinian hermeneutics, as we will see in the next chapter.

As Meconi demonstrates from a close reading of participation in the *Confessions*, Augustine's answer to the Manicheans was not a nice bit of apologetics but a proffering of the ladder he used in his own conversion, climbing out of Mani's sect, through Platonism, to the radical participation of the Incarnation. In book VII, Augustine explains how, though the arguments of the Manicheans had been confounded in him by Nebridius, the problem of how to understand the evil in the world, even though it was created by an immutable perfect God, was still troubling Augustine:

Up to this time, although I affirmed and firmly believed that you, our Lord, the true God, who made not only our souls but also our bodies, and not only our souls and bodies, but all men and all things, are inviolable and inalterable and in no way mutable, I still had no explicit and orderly knowledge of the cause of evil.²⁵⁴

The three explicit uses of participation as a philosophical term in the *Confessions* appear in book VII as Augustine wrestles with this question.²⁵⁵

In the first of these stages that he reports, Augustine had become convinced through the Neoplatonist books that the one God had an only-begotten, co-eternal Son who was the express

Wisdom of God, through whom humans ascend in Wisdom to the knowledge of God. However, this Neoplatonic Wisdom was not yet understood as the really incarnated Jesus of provincial Nazareth.²⁵⁶ “Unmistakably Platonic,” this faith in the cosmic Christ was conceptually similar to the vertical participation of creature in Creator that became his main weapon against the Manicheans.²⁵⁷ Even at this early point, this was not merely a handy polemic for argument’s sake, though Augustine was just beginning to understand the depths of Christian participation. “Participation is not a metaphor for Augustine, but expresses the real dependence of the creature on the Trinity itself,” as Patricia Wilson-Kastner argues in her article on the participatory ground of Augustine’s key metaphor of “grace.”²⁵⁸ As Augustine would demonstrate in *Confessions*, book VII, there was more to Christian participation than a Platonic ascent to goodness through the Wisdom of the spiritual Son.

Augustine confesses his equal and opposite Christological error in the third appearance of participation in *Confessions* book VII,²⁵⁹ in which he replaced the cosmic Christ idea with the hypothesis that Jesus was “just a man,” but was special because of his degree of participation in the Wisdom of God. In this error, “it is [Christ’s] participation in [God’s] absolute nature, not his [own] divinity, that sets Christ apart as the preferred guide or teacher.”²⁶⁰ While this was certainly not the error of the Manicheans, it was not yet the identity of the Christ that could ground Christian participation, no matter how inspiring the model.

It is in *Confessions* VII.xviii.24 that, as Meconi says, “a significant change within Augustine’s theory of participation has taken place.”²⁶¹ Here Augustine chronicles the shift in his thought where not only do creatures participate upward in the perfections of the Creator but the Creator also, for our necessity, not his own, participates “downward” in the imperfections of his creatures. Augustine writes that we “see the Godhead, weak because of its participation in our

‘coats of skin,’ and in their weariness they may cast themselves upon it, while it arises and lifts them up.”²⁶² This is radically different from the participation of Platonism, as it makes our upward participation dependent on both the “downward participation” of Christ and our humility in receiving that gift.²⁶³ Thus, while the Platonists get close enough to look over into the promised land, they refuse the alien virtue of humility and the pattern of the humiliation of God that would take them over the Jordan.²⁶⁴ As Meconi says, “Downward participation thus saves prideful humanity from continuing in its own self-affirmation. The chasm opened by the pride of Adam is bridged by the humility of Christ. This is a chasm nowhere found in Neoplatonism.”²⁶⁵ Thus, the Incarnation forms the foundation for Augustine’s new Christian understanding of participation, and as he progressed more and more in the submission of his philosophy to the scriptures—a process given steam by several intra-confessional controversies—the concept of participation became not less central but more central to his thought, along with becoming more scripturally grounded.²⁶⁶

Shared Illumination and Deification

Having seen this shift away from a Platonic ground, we can now examine the other coordinate of Augustinian participation, the interplay of the individual pursuit of recollected knowledge (illumination) and the shared purification of the will through faith and love (deification). That is, coming to *know* the truth and coming to *become like* the Truth are conjoined participatory processes that are social-linguistic, practiced through right obedience to the scriptures, and powered by an active faith that manifests partly in power and partly in eschatological hope. The rest of this chapter will be an attempt to explain these conjunctions of Augustine’s theological metaphors, especially as a preview of how these are pertinent to a scriptural hermeneutic that fits the current situation in Evangelicalism.

By “recollected knowledge,” of course, Plato’s participatory epistemology is being referenced. Knowledge of the forms, to Plato, was available in the mind through an arduous process of dialectical archaeology in the ground of one’s memory, a memory that the soul has from its pre-incarnate existence in the heavenly realms, as we have seen earlier in the chapter. Participation in the forms through their imperfect copies on earth, to Plato, helps purify the mind and recover knowledge of the forms of truth, a practice of contemplation that leads to epistemic knowledge. Augustine, thoroughly grounded in creation and a linear history, in which human eternal souls have a discrete beginning but no end,²⁶⁷ developed a different participatory theory of knowledge that, while it also emphasized the importance of memory, laid more stress on creation and on the moral orientation of the prospective knower. In what follows here, I restrict my discussion of participation to the themes of language and of knowledge of God, especially as they are relevant to scriptural hermeneutics. Augustine’s extensive discussions of the participation of the angels in Him and the participation at work in *all* the creation are mostly beyond the scope of the present project.²⁶⁸

In a way that resonates with recent theological scriptural hermeneutics, Augustine argues that knowledge of the meaning of a whole is what gives meanings to its constitutive parts, but knowledge of the whole—the whole of a passage, of an event, of a historical moment, of the history of salvation—cannot be known comprehensively or at a glance.²⁶⁹ Instead, it is glimpsed in part and taken by faith in part.²⁷⁰ The largest of these wholes is God Himself, “in whom we live and move and have our being,” one of the key texts from the scriptures that grounds Augustine’s understanding of participation.²⁷¹ As Martin Westerholm argues from Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, the pursuit of the knowledge of any creational good or truth, if done with a “good will,” can lead to a knowledge of God because, as Augustine says, “God *is* truth.”²⁷² Westerholm

argues that Augustine's doctrine of the memory of God is rooted in his belief in our fundamental and continual dependence on God, who created and sustains all goods, including our good mind.

Westerholm summarizes this understanding of recollection as follows:

It is foundational, for Augustine, that creation is upheld by God, and that its continued existence is a visible sign of God's sustaining presence in all that is. In a similar way, in *De Trinitate* 4, Augustine writes that the mind retains some capacity for true thought because the light of truth "was not removed far from any one of us, for in it we live and move and are." ... [I]t cannot leave a kind of memory of God behind, for its memory of him is its awareness of his presence even now as the source of all that it is and does.²⁷³

That is, though it is clear that God is not *contained* in memory,²⁷⁴ our continual pursuit of a knowledge of God is activated *through* an inward turn to memory that corresponds to an outward turn to God. To Augustine, we were all created to remember God. As Westerholm points out from Augustine's argument in *De Trinitate*, this knowledge of God by way of turning our attention to memory is not a direct knowledge of God, but a knowledge of God as mediated through the goods that are also impressed upon our memory.²⁷⁵ However, the knowledge of those goods in memory cannot be accessed objectively, as the modern imagination would have it, but is always subject to the ethical framework of our loves, which are ordered,²⁷⁶ well or poorly, into some *whole*.

Thus, full participation in the knowledge of God that is implicitly available in the memory of all humans (through the participation of all created nature, including minds, in God) is derailed through idolatrous attention to the good objects of the world, attention without taking the "natural" step past the good objects of sense to the goods behind them, to the good God who is their remembered source. According to Westerholm, the overall structure of *De Trinitate*

oscillates around this key problem—how to use language which is rooted in sensible objects and in the abstractions of the philosophers to speak of the Trinitarian God without tempting the readers to attach their picture of God to the idols of these lower, good things.²⁷⁷ How do we use language to awaken the knowledge of God in our minds without growing overly attached to that language, as if the language itself was part of God instead of just a help on the ascent to that wisdom?

We can hear, here, connections to Barfield's discussion of linguistic representations as gateways joining the visible and invisible realms, and the resulting tension between animistic and Jewish traditions of thinking about the nature of such language, as either semi-divine and powerful or as a legitimate pointer to a God who is fundamentally holy, separate from the words that describe him. We also see foreshadowings of a critique of Evangelicalism's modernistic approach to language. Augustine finds it worthwhile to labor throughout most of *De Trinitate* in order to find the right words for describing the Trinitarian God, but he also clearly frames his whole linguistic endeavor to push his readers to work past the language to the realities, approaching those realities through the memory of God already part of them, through the purification of the will, through the use of scriptural knowledge to reorder their loves aright. That is, in Augustine's participatory approach to the scriptures and theology, close attention to the details of the language itself, while an important first step, is not sufficient as an endpoint or as a method for gaining Christian truth. Augustine describes the hermeneutic approach to the knowledge of God that is beset with disordered loves, and thus detrimental to both truth and the Church body, as follows:

The soul, loving its own power, slides away from the whole which is common to all into the part which is its own private property. By following God's directions and being

perfectly governed by his laws it could enjoy the whole universe of creation; but by the apostasy of pride which is called the beginning of sin it strives to grab something more than the whole and to govern it by its own laws; and because there is nothing more than the whole it is thrust back into anxiety over a part, and so by being greedy for more it gets less. ... it finds delight in bodily shapes and movements [and] wraps itself in their images which it has fixed in the memory ... to one or other of the following ends: curiosity, searching for bodily and temporal experience through the senses; swollen conceit, affecting to be above other souls which are given over to their senses; or carnal pleasure.²⁷⁸

Moving away from the “whole” which gives meaning and is “common to all” is, by the same token, moving away from the God in whom the “whole” participates. In a prideful grab for private power and ownership, the would-be religious expert’s motives can no longer be humility or charity but rather “curiosity,”²⁷⁹ one-upmanship, and pleasures that have nothing to do with God. The endpoint of this process of falling away from the true knowledge of God “little by little” through novel, carnal, and individually-derived knowledge of God is that the would-be wise man “cannot even think of anything divine except as being such”—that is, as corresponding exactly with the representations of earthly things, whether of body or mind. Augustine warns that this moral slide, seeking “to be like God under nobody,” can reverse the progress attained by even the “half-way level” of the pagan philosophers, and he says that this approach is antithetical to the purpose of divine knowledge, which, following St. Paul, is the building up of the whole church through love instead of the prideful puffing up of individual expert interpreters.²⁸⁰

However, Augustine does not merely warn about the dire consequences of withdrawing from participation through memory in God but he also explains the resources and structures in

place to renew our participation in God—participation both as a path and as the ultimate goal.²⁸¹ Famously, Augustine develops the concept of the “Inner Teacher,”²⁸² but he also explains the social, creational, moral, and scriptural factors that give this participatory metaphor meaning. Augustine does speculate about the original participation in God that unfallen Adam and Eve enjoyed,²⁸³ but most of his attention is understandably pastoral: how do fallen humans *rejoin* the upward spiral of participation, and how do believing humans *proceed* on that upward spiral?

The social, moral, and creational factors in participation are linked in important ways, not only from the beginning of the initial good creation but also in the new creation of the community of saints, the city of God. “God created man as one individual,” Augustine says, so that “the unity of human society and the bonds of human sympathy be more emphatically brought home to man ... bound together not merely by likeness in nature but also by the feeling of kinship.”²⁸⁴ That is, in the most intimate physical and social-cultural ways, humans are created to participate in one another, and together, to participate in their common Creator. However, how this shared *social* participation in the knowledge of God works with Augustine’s focus on the inward turn of the *individual* bears investigation, especially in the light of the label given to Augustine as the father of Western individualism.²⁸⁵

Augustine does portray the initial potential for knowledge of God in an individual register, a divine communion without the “medium of any material created thing” in which “God speaks ... by the direct impact of the truth, to anyone who is capable of hearing with the mind instead of with the ears of the body,” an inner word to “the highest of man’s constituent elements,” present in him because by creation he is “made ‘in the image of God.’”²⁸⁶ That is, the true divine word, a communication of the eternal realm, is higher than any human language and thus beyond earthly linguistic sociality.²⁸⁷ This highest of human constitutive elements

Augustine says is to be pursued through contemplation of the Trinitarian “image of God” in our human selves,²⁸⁸ which leads to wisdom as it leads to gazing on God himself. But it is also to be sought through a lower trinity,²⁸⁹ the process of temporal thought in which, by the inward witness of “eternity, truth, and love,” we each individually pursue the knowledge of God through the goods inherent in the creation:

Therefore let us run over all these things which he created in such wonderful stability, to collect the scattered traces of his being, more distinct in some places than in others. And let us gaze at his image in ourselves, and, “returning to ourselves,” like the younger son in the Gospel story, let us rise up and go back to him from whom we have departed in our sinning. There our existence will have no death, our knowledge no error, our love no obstacle.²⁹⁰

This intensely individual pursuit of the knowledge of God, though, cannot be like that of the angels before God’s throne, but requires the corrective and comforting instruments of experiential trials,²⁹¹ the witnesses of other humans, the discipline of the scriptures, and above all the mediation of Christ. We humans need these mediating factors to uphold and guide our individual capacities to participate in God because of both our fallenness and the difficulty of knowing eternity within temporality.

Regarding our fallenness, Augustine points to the effect of sin, both ancestral and personal,²⁹² on our ability to ascend to the knowledge of God by ourselves, which is the foolish fantasy of the Platonists. He says,

[T]he mind of man ... is itself weakened by long-standing faults which darken it ... it is too weak even to endure that light. It must first be renewed and healed day after day so as to become capable of such felicity. And so the mind had to be trained and purified by

faith, [so] God the Son of God, who is himself the Truth, took manhood without abandoning his godhead, and thus established and founded this faith, so that man might have a path to man's God through the man who was God.²⁹³

To be restored to the participatory "path to man's God," we must see by "faith" in the mind's eye the things that we have never seen actualized in sensible or conceptual realities of the earth, and for that, the mediatorship of a truly divine and truly human Christ is essential.

Of all human witnesses to the truth, Christ is the one we most needed and need. However, he is not the only one. As we return to the knowledge of God through Christ, our individual glimpses of God through the inner witness of the goods of this world are true, Augustine says. These are individual glimpses of truth, not dependent "on the witness of others," but these glimpses are fleeting, not directed to a clear end, and easy to misapply. Therefore, "we search for other witnesses or we have them already to hand."²⁹⁴ That is, we need the earthly stability of the community of the saints, those who also seek to participate in the life of God, to give temporal shape to the memory, purpose, action, and (which follows) language of our knowledge of God.

While our knowledge is gained individually, and no one really teaches the other, we share in this knowledge as common property by how we share it together in memory through language, how we act on it together, and, above all, how we undertake this sharing with charity towards one another. This shared witness, leading to charity, is Augustine's main rationale for writing his treatise on Christian teaching, *De Doctrina Christiana*. Though Augustine maintains there also that true teaching happens through the inner word, he argues that "the human condition would be wretched indeed if God appeared unwilling to minister his word to human beings through human agency," a ministry which produces both a truth common to all and "love, which ties people together in the bonds of unity."²⁹⁵

This constructive side of Augustine's warning against purely individualistic, non-participatory knowledge can also be seen in *De Trinitate*, where he states that "what it comes to then is that if the soul consults its own interest or those of others of good will, it aims at obtaining those inner and higher things that are not possessed privately but in common by all who love them, possessed in a chaste embrace without any limitations or envy."²⁹⁶ With the right shared goal, the right shared love, people of "good will" can share in a common inheritance of truth, even if, as he says later, "it goes wrong through ignorance of temporal matters." That is, the community that seeks God charitably together will be blessed even if they get some of their "facts" wrong. "It is a great thing," Augustine says, "to lead this life, which we are traveling along like a road on our return journey."²⁹⁷ Because participation in God is primarily about manifesting his character, this expression of harmonious "unity in plurality" is a not only a human analog of the Trinitarian God's real unity and real plurality but it also pleases God by copying the humble love of which he is the perfection.²⁹⁸

So, while the primary moral duty of the individual is to "love the Lord thy God" through the creational potentiality of his/her memory of the good as a human made in the image of God, the secondary moral duty is to "love one's neighbor" in a shared journey toward the truth, prioritizing unity through charity and common truth over the preeminence of select experts. Christ's life, participating downward in the creational constraints of temporality and temptation, exemplified the first duty toward God the Father, and Christ's death and continued ministry to the church through the baptism of the Holy Spirit exemplify the second duty,²⁹⁹ enabling and modeling the social and moral orientation of any Christian hermeneutics. As Christ's life implies, and Augustine's theory articulates in Raymond Canning's meticulous reading, these two

moral duties are practically inseparable.³⁰⁰ An interpretive orientation that truly pursues the love of God will also, necessarily, pursue and guide the love of the neighbor, and vice versa.

Augustine develops this vision of charitable participation through the metaphors of “knowledge” and “wisdom,” articulating each as a different “trinity.” The moral and creational “trinities” of the knowledge process and of the wisdom ascension through the created “image of God” within every person constitute what Augustine calls the “Inner Teacher.” The trinity of *knowledge* leads to “anything that breeds, feeds, defends, and strengthens the saving faith which leads to true happiness,” and the trinity of *wisdom* leads to the contemplation of the “greatest nature” (God), which makes it “capable of the greatest nature and can share [participate] in it,” even through the distortions of sin.³⁰¹ Augustine summarizes this co-owned process, initiated and sustained by Christ as the Inner Teacher, as follows:

Our knowledge therefore is Christ, and our wisdom is Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with the truth about eternal things. Through him we go straight toward him, through knowledge toward wisdom, without ever turning aside from one and the same Christ, *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*³⁰²

Unlike the realm of Platonic forms, the image of God as the Inner Teacher is not just a passive ground of being but an active potential communicant with every person, the site of God’s downward participation through the grace of multiple reminders, multiple attempts to draw people’s attention to the God they already know in the hidden recesses of memory.

This light of Christ, as the Truth, can introduce and verify inwardly the necessary temporal truths that arise from the sensible and sign data of the physical world, that arise through the testimony of others, and that arise especially through the scriptures.³⁰³ As Augustine is at

pains to clarify,³⁰⁴ the availability and validity of the divine Inner Teacher does not make world, language, scriptures, or historical fact irrelevant. Our faith, though not fully actualized into comprehensive knowledge of the eternal God, “has been given actual definite content in Christ, who rose in the flesh from the dead to die no more,”³⁰⁵ and our belief in and love of the true things that we do know enable us to believe for the further things that are still technically unknown to us, such as the unmediated vision of God.³⁰⁶

Therefore, the Christian interpreter’s first duty is to pursue this inward revelation of the truth through persistent and strategic attention to the scriptures, in the social context of the leaders of the church and the rule of faith, and his second duty is to teach this received truth in a humble way, always pointing beyond his words to the truth that is available through the Inner Teacher residing in the memory of every human.³⁰⁷ The structural potential of this shared attention to the truth through the scriptures is that the individual faiths of the several believers can be practically united in “one soul” and “one faith.”³⁰⁸ Levering picks up this theme well for the application of participation to hermeneutics, arguing through one of his central metaphors of “God the Teacher” that the “literal sense” of scriptures as discerned through historical-critical scholarship is not rejected but rather expanded because the Inner Teacher teaches us “in faith [the] other realities operating in history.”³⁰⁹

Though Augustine does appeal to the “memory” of his readers through the direct appeal to reason,³¹⁰ the scriptures and other reminders given by the grace of God occupy a central place in his framework because of the different levels of amnesia humans suffer from through minds darkened by sin. Commenting again on the key text from Acts 17:27 that “in him we live and move and are,” Augustine says,

What, after all, is not in God, of whom it is divinely written, for *from him and through him and in him are all things*? So of course if all things are in him, what can things that live live in and things that move move in but in him in whom they are? And yet not all men are with him in the way meant ... It is man's great misfortune not to be with him without whom he cannot be.³¹¹

He moves from this statement to a hypothetical situation in which someone comes up to a person who does not recognize him and says "you know me," offering proof after proof. Though "you have forgotten him so completely that all that awareness has been totally rubbed out of your consciousness," your rational cognizance of his proofs and his manifest trustworthiness induce you to have faith in his word, and as you continue your renewed relationship with him by faith, you progressively find in memory "what had not been totally erased by forgetfulness."³¹² This progression from faith—which is divinely enabled by the trinity of knowledge as it is fed the witness of the scriptures—to the realities of God—which is enabled by the trinity of wisdom that is found to be always already within the created memory of the image of God—is necessary for participation in God because one cannot truly love what one does not know.³¹³ That is, if God were only believed but not, in any part, known, then according to Augustine, he could not be loved. And if God is not loved, we can have no part in him.³¹⁴

Westerholm helps us understand this participatory relationship between knowledge, love, and faith. First, though all people through their very existence participate in God to some degree, "God cannot be known through his sustaining presence alone, for we must love God if the awareness of his presence in memory is to lead to knowledge of him." Once we have knowledge of God from memory, this knowledge begets love, and our love turns our attention more to him, which begets more knowledge,³¹⁵ and thus we are on the upward participatory spiral of

deification.³¹⁶ How does one get on that spiral, though, when sin has scrubbed memory of God, weakened the will toward God, and vitiated our love for God? Westerholm explains from his study of *De Trinitate*:

Sinful human beings stand outside of the circle formed by this happy reciprocity. It is in response to humanity's exclusion from the knowledge and love of God that Augustine introduces faith into the discussion. He writes that the unknown may be loved provided that it is believed. Here faith comes to the fore as that which founds knowledge of God, for it brings an end to our exclusion from the reciprocity of love and knowledge of God by giving an object to our love. In enabling us to love God, and thus to come to know him, faith brings us into the circle of mutual intensification formed by the work of the Father and the Spirit.³¹⁷

Faith is a divine entryway from the temporal world of words and things to the eternal realm of eternal realities. The knowledge of faith enables the love which leads to inward knowledge of the truth. For beings that remain temporal throughout their sojourning, faith is also a continual necessity for participation until the eschaton, opening people to the higher participation in the divine realities embedded in our created memories, memories constantly strengthened by the reminding powers of the Christ-centric scriptures and Holy Spirit.³¹⁸

For Evangelical hermeneutics, the essential idea here is that Augustinian participation insists on two levels of real knowledge. The ultimate knowledge-target at which Augustine aims is the wisdom of the contemplation of God and the charity, from God, poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,³¹⁹ given as a divine concomitant of this real knowledge. The knowledge of temporal things, such as historical and linguistic data, is also important, but as a reminder and

help in the progression to the higher wisdom. This temporal knowledge is what we can use to say “You know this, but you do not know that you know it; I will remind you,” as Augustine says:

Literature performs precisely this function, when it is about things that the reader discovers under the guidance of reason to be true, not simply believing the writer that they are true as when he reads history, but himself discovering with the writer that they are true, and discovering it either in himself or in truth itself guiding the mind. But anyone who is unable to see these things even when he is reminded of them and has his attention drawn to them, is suffering from great blindness of heart and ... needs very special aid from God to be able to attain true wisdom.³²⁰

Although Augustine’s reference to literature would include a broad range, including Cicero’s Hortensius and the books of the Platonists in his own experience, he clearly reserves a place apart for the scriptures,³²¹ making them the focus of his Christianized rhetorical treatise and arguing in *Confessions* for the retraining of our minds through submission to the scriptures.

Conclusion

Pursuing a philosophy of communication retrieval of the ontological concept of participation, this chapter has leaned on Barfield’s philosophical description to provide a basic understanding of the term, but I have asserted that the relevance of participation goes beyond the scope of Barfield’s vision of the “evolution of consciousness.” Though participation is a concept with a real history and a real evolution—as the survey of this chapter has demonstrated—the idea of the history of concepts to which this project subscribes is an Augustinian version of philosophy of communication. Articulated well by Levering in the realm of biblical exegesis, this philosophy of communication understands that the history of philosophical resources is both linear and cyclical-participatory, with the recurrence of certain ideas built into the “graced”

structures of the good world, which includes the graced structures of human being. Participation, I argue, is one of those concepts that eternally returns, under many names, because of the ontological structure of human being to receive and respond to the presence of its creator, and by analogy to receive and respond to communication from other particular human beings. Augustine helps give us some specific vocabularies with which to develop an understanding of hermeneutics, specifically in his trinity of temporal knowledge and his trinity of eternal wisdom administered by the mediating presence of the Inner Teacher, whose structural ubiquity is broadened and deepened in particular people through the eternal-historical mediating death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Augustine's emphasis on the possibilities of participation and its application for real human knowledge and joint action is all the more impressive when the difficulties of translation from eternity to temporality and the moral difficulties of bad wills and disordered loves are taken into consideration. Structurally and morally, there is a great gap between our earthly knowledge and the true heavenly knowledge. Available to all humans to bridge that gap through participation are the vestiges of the created "image of God" in all people, the "representations" of the real goods of the world intended to point to God, but because of the inherent moral failings of humankind, these structural rungs on the upward ladder were supplemented, according to the eternal plan, with the foundational mediatorship of Christ, the mediatorship of the Church as the socially constituted body of Christ on earth, and the perpetual recurrence of the words of God through the reading and proclamation of the scriptures within that church. It is through these scriptures, within this church, coextensive with this divine mediator that Augustinian participation works to connect the two levels of heaven and earth, eternity and temporality, for actionable and socially sharable glimpses of truth. The two levels are not collapsed together (the

fantasy of modernity) or completely disconnected (the thanatos-wish of postmodernity) or relocated purely within the individual (the basic assumption of popular Western individualism). How this Augustinian concept of ecclesial scriptural participation works in conjunction with Augustine's more explicit hermeneutic theories and social theories will be the focus of the next chapters.

By way of an ending picture, I would like to bring forward the metaphors used earlier for the shift in linguistic "representations," which moved from participatory *gateways* that opened between the seen and unseen realms to presumed *mirrors* of the objective world that show no more and no less than what *is*. Augustine also uses the "mirror" metaphor in his own articulation of participation, but as a radically creational notion that corrects both the undifferentiated ecology of "original participation" and the subjectivism of modernistic epistemology that makes words and concepts the exact "mirror" of nature.³²² Because the "image of God" is present in us, according to Augustine, we can get a glimpse of truth by looking within ourselves, but by "inference" and, as it were, by the angle at which we hold the mirror. Augustine warns that by not using the mirror of our selves also to look upward and behind us at the God whose image we are, we fall prey to a sinful subjectivism, fascinated with the self but unaware of its participation in the higher Self that is the creator of all. Looking at our individual selves only, without any higher Self for comparison, we are easily deluded and have no checks against the "whirlpool" of carnal desires or the social pulls of sin.³²³ However, as we gaze into the remedial scriptures, to see reflections of both what sort of people we are and what we should be,³²⁴ we are continually led to our need for participation in the grace of Christ, and as we gaze through that upturned and scriptural mirror at Christ himself, we are "with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory

of the Lord, ... being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”³²⁵

NOTES

¹ Gerald Bonner, “Augustine’s Conception of Deification.” *Journal of Theological Studies* 37.2 (1986): 369-86, p. 380.

² Though Augustine’s interpretive theory is well-known and the subject of a large (and contested at points) literature, James Andrews provides a fair summary in his *Hermeneutics and the Church: In Dialogue with Augustine* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2012).

³ See Owen C. Thomas, “Interiority and Christian Spirituality,” *The Journal of Religion* 80, no. 1 (2000): 41-60, for a broad ranging discussion of this interiority, especially pages 45-46, 54; See also Charles T. Mathewes, “Augustinian Anthropology: Interior intimo meo,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 27, no. 2 (1999): 195-221.

⁴ This “participation,” to clarify at the outset, is *not* the one communication scholars focus on in organizational and political contexts, in which they seek to actualize egalitarian principles in social communicational venues.

⁵ For a brief history of this in anthropology, see S. A. Mousalimas, “The Concept of Participation in Levy-Bruhl’s ‘Primitive Mentality,’” *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 21, no. 1 (1990): 33-46; John Milbank and company have brought the question of participation to the boundary zone between philosophy and theology, especially in his *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006); and this theme has been picked up more and more in “practical theology,” as seen for example in Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2011); Justin S. Holcomb, “Being Bound in God: Participation and Covenant Revisited,” in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*, ed. James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthuis, 243-62 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005); and L. Roger Owens, *The Shape of Participation: A Theology of Church Practices* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010).

⁶ For example, the renewal of an emphasis on “imagination” and theological “play” in global Pentecostalism, as explored by Wolfgang Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010).

⁷ Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 48-49, 162.

⁸ Burke, *Permanence and Change*, 256; See also Richard Thames, “Nature’s Physician: The Metabiology of Kenneth Burke,” in *Kenneth Burke and the 21st century*, ed. B. L. Brock, 19-34 (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999).

⁹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 507.

¹⁰ As will be explained more later on, this use of “representational” is a different concept that the representations of a modern correspondence theory of meaning. The term is Owen Barfield’s, from *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry*, 2nd ed. (Wesleyan University Press, 1965/1988).

¹¹ That is, Husserl wanted to repair Descartes’ project by methodologically reducing the subjective interpretation of an object so that the “thing itself” could exert its qualities and more fully influence the epistemological event, creating a truth that has input from both subject and object instead of being rooted in the Cartesian rational mind. See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999). Heidegger took this basic intuition still further, re-sourcing his phenomenology in the pre-Socratic (an implicitly participatory) Greek philosophers, but specifically leaving behind the spiritual cosmos in which that philosophy grew and lived (see James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation* [Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000], 108). The tendency of phenomenology to attract or move towards religiously inflected readings, such as in Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Marion, demonstrates, I believe, the draw towards unseen spiritual realms implicit in participatory philosophical metaphors.

¹² Gerald Manley Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur,” accessed at *The Poetry Foundation*, 11 February 2016, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173660>.

¹³ Matthew Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2008), 55; Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 12-16.

¹⁴ Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House, 1986), 164, 179.

¹⁵ The scriptural examples of this that are hidden in plain sight are many, including the prophetic change of Jacob’s name to Israel and Abram’s name change to Abraham, and of course the angelic directive to name Jesus for the sake of his mission. For more recent examples in animistic/participatory cultures, see Bruce Olsen, *Bruchko* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 1973/2006) for the Motilone people, and Mark Andrew Ritchie, *Spirit of the Rainforest: A Yanamamö Shaman’s Story*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Island Lake Press, 2000).

¹⁶ See Daniel J. Canary, Michael J. Cody, and Valerie L. Manusov, “Four Important Cognitive Processes,” in *Interpersonal Communication*, 2nd ed., 25-39 (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2000); Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin Bavelas, and Don D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Organizational Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1967).

- ¹⁷ Barfield, *Saving*, 32-33.
- ¹⁸ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 14.
- ¹⁹ Barfield, *Saving*, 128-29.
- ²⁰ Peter Murphy, *Civic Justice: From Greek Antiquity to the Modern World* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2001), 66-71.
- ²¹ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 15.
- ²² Ronald C. Arnett, Janie M. Harden Fritz, and Leeanne M. Bell, *Communication Ethics Literacy: Dialogue and Difference* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), xiii.
- ²³ Peter Brown's biography provides a good feel for Augustine's reactions to the significant social pressures of his historical situation—see especially his addition in the revised edition, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, rev. ed. (University of California Press, 2000); Jean Bethke Elshtain also profiles well Augustine's nuanced political Christianity in her *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1995); see also Averil Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); of the many sources that point out Augustine's push for charity and dialogue, which became the de facto medieval synthesis, against the stereotype of Augustine's Donatist controversy being a forerunner of the Inquisition, see R. A. Markus, "Refusing to Bless the State: prophetic church and secular state," in *Sacred and Secular: Studies on Augustine and Latin Christianity* (London: Variorum, 1994); Jennifer V. Ebbler, *Disciplining Christians: Correction and Community in Augustine's Letters* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Frederick H. Russell, "Persuading the Donatists: Augustine's Coercion by Words," in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus*, ed. William E. Klingshirn and Mark Vessey, 115-130 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).
- ²⁴ See Peter Murphy for a discussion of the tension between the new medieval urbanization and commerce, on the one hand, and the family and "landed hierarchy" on the other. "In the city contractual reliability, rather than loyal service, was in demand." Murphy, *Civic Justice*, 130-31.
- ²⁵ Barfield, *Saving*.
- ²⁶ Barfield, *Saving*, 78.
- ²⁷ Barfield, *Saving*, 40.
- ²⁸ Barfield, *Saving*, 41.
- ²⁹ See, for one example, Barfield, *Saving*, 66.
- ³⁰ Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959).
- ³¹ Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, xi.
- ³² Mousalimas, "Concept of Participation."
- ³³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 531-35.
- ³⁴ See last chapter. Though without commenting on any explicit spiritual dimension, the communicative categories that Robert Bellah develops to describe traditional, given patterns of communication and explicit, subjective patterns, with the given being more foundational, connects on a sociological level to the general split between participating "traditional" humans and more educated self-reflective humans. See Robert Bellah, "Habit and History," *Ethical Perspectives* 8, no. 3 (2001): 156-167.
- ³⁵ Barfield, *Saving*, 45, 137-38.
- ³⁶ Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, xii.
- ³⁷ Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1967), 283, 303-305; for background to this cultural shift, see J. K. Davies, *Democracy and Classical Greece*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 94, 158-161, 175.
- ³⁸ Individual freedom and political wisdom in original participatory Greek society meant freedom for fulfilling certain roles and wisdom to discern the recurring pattern of potential roles and actions, by which one might rise to fame through participating in the heroic tradition, but the new idea of completely original action, though still within the constraints of the polis, led to the need for new forms of deciding what would be appropriate. Instead of being pointed toward certain traditional ends, rhetoric was expanded for the purpose of persuading the polis to follow radically new courses of action. As Murphy notes, there was a middle period of experimentation with isonomia, civic agonism within structured equality, but the experimentation period between a traditional society and an "expansionist" democracy was brief and relatively unsuccessful. See *Civic Justice*, ch. 2-3.
- ³⁹ Peter Murphy, *Civic Justice*, 69-73.
- ⁴⁰ E.g., Plato's argument against rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, (trans. Walter Hamilton, rev. ed. [New York: Penguin Books, 2004.]) his demolition of poetry in the last book of the *Republic* (trans. and intro. Desmond Lee, 2nd ed. [New York: Penguin Books, 2003.]), and his warning against writing embedded in the "myth of Theuth" in *Phaedrus and Letters VII and VIII* (trans. and intro. Walter Hamilton [New York: Penguin Books, 1973.]), 274-275.
- ⁴¹ Oswyn Murray, *Early Greece*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 65-67.
- ⁴² Torstein Theodore Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 13-14.
- ⁴³ Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Walter Hamilton (New York: Penguin Classics, 1973), sec. 255, pp. 63-64: "The beauty of the beloved ... enters in at his eyes, the natural channel of communication with the soul, and reaching and arousing the soul it moistens the passages from which the feathers shoot [of the winged horse leading higher to the eternal forms] ... he is seeing himself in his lover as in a glass."
- ⁴⁴ Translation by Benjamin Jowett, accessed on MIT Classics, 19 Feb. 2016, at <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedrus.html>; In the Hamilton translation, see sec. 249, p. 55.

- ⁴⁵ Plato, Jowett translation; for the Hamilton translation, see sec. 250, p. 56.
- ⁴⁶ Plato, *Phaedrus*, Hamilton translation, sec. 242-243, pp. 45-46.
- ⁴⁷ That Plato prioritized dialogue of people present and distrusted purely textual interpretation, at least early on, can be seen in his anti-hermeneutic polemic in Protagoras, in Socrates's dismissal of the interpretation of a poetic text because it cannot be interrogated for its meaning, intention, or truth value. See Francisco Gonzales, "Hermeneutics in Greek Philosophy," *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. Jeff Malpas and Hans-Helmuth Gander, 13-22 (New York: Routledge, 2015), 20-21.
- ⁴⁸ Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 16.
- ⁴⁹ This separation may also overlap with the separation of poetic epideictic rhetoric, which was traditionally connected with the shared activity of the gods, from practical rhetoric and truth-seeking dialectic. See Jeffrey Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- ⁵⁰ Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 16-17.
- ⁵¹ A materialistic transformation that, itself, has been rejected in late modernity because of its essentialist and mystical overtones.
- ⁵² Gonzales, "Hermeneutics in Greek Philosophy," 21.
- ⁵³ Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 1.
- ⁵⁴ For this tension, see Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 27-29. The double activity, mirroring the double activity of the One from whom everything emanates, is the "activity that belongs to the essence (ousia) and the activity that goes out from the essence," possibly corresponding to active thought (focused externally) and thought about that thought (focused internally). See Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 22.
- ⁵⁵ Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 24.
- ⁵⁶ Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 29. Italics added. This will be an essential difference with Augustine's participation.
- ⁵⁷ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 34.
- ⁵⁸ Eyjólfur Emilsson, "Porphyry," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/porphyry/>>, sec. 3.1.
- ⁵⁹ Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 33. On the competitive atmosphere, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*.
- ⁶⁰ Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 29, 31; Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 33-37.
- ⁶¹ Barfield, *Saving*, 109.
- ⁶² Barfield, *Saving*, 114.
- ⁶³ See Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 37: "We know God from His activities and these come down to us, while His essence remains unapproachable. We must distinguish, consequently, between what God is in Himself and His activities ad extra."
- ⁶⁴ See, for just one example, Augustine, *De Trinitate* (The Trinity), 2nd ed., ed. and trans. Edmund Hill, O.P., The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, series ed. John E. Rotelle, O.S.A (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), XIII.v.22, p. 364. In my notation from Edmund Hill's translation, I have used the second (the larger) of the two numbers he uses for paragraphs or sections.
- ⁶⁵ Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), XII.14.
- ⁶⁶ Barfield, *Saving*, 89-90.
- ⁶⁷ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 35.
- ⁶⁸ David Vincent Meconi, S. J., "The Consummation of the Christian Promise: Recent Studies on Deification," *New Blackfriars* 87, no. 1007 (2006): 3-12.
- ⁶⁹ Compare what Augustine says about the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa* in *City of God*, XIX.19; also see Raymond F. Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbor in St. Augustine* (Haverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993).
- ⁷⁰ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 43. See also Kimberly Baker, "Augustine's Doctrine of the *Totus Christus*: Reflecting on the Church as Sacrament of Unity," *Horizons* 37 (2010): 7-24.
- ⁷¹ See Augustine, *City of God*, XII.14.
- ⁷² Paula Fredriksen, "Secundum Carnem: History and Israel in the Theology of St. Augustine," in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus*, ed. William E. Klingshirn and Mark Vessey (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).
- ⁷³ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 43.
- ⁷⁴ Baker, "Augustine's Doctrine of the *Totus Christus*."
- ⁷⁵ See Augustine's Preface to *On Christian Teaching*, trans. and ed. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997); and Augustine, *Confessions of Saint Augustine*, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Doubleday, 1960), XII.25.
- ⁷⁶ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); *Augustine of Hippo*.
- ⁷⁷ Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 100-101.
- ⁷⁸ Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation*, 101.
- ⁷⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Schism of 1054", accessed February 15, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/event/Schism-of-1054>.
- ⁸⁰ Meconi, "Consummation," 4.
- ⁸¹ For discussion on this, see Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland, eds., *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), especially the chapter by Steve Strauss, "Creeds, Confessions, and Global Theologizing: A Case Study in Comparative Christologies," 156.
- ⁸² See Augustine, *De Doctrina* II.xiv-xv, pp. 41-42.

- ⁸³ Meconi, "Consummation"; for one example, see Owens, *The Shape of Participation*.
- ⁸⁴ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol. 3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 16, 23-31. "The term 'grace' could be used either for the gift of God, which was received by faith, or for the effects of that gift in man, which were expressed by works" (28).
- ⁸⁵ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 23, 26. "For the daily way of life of Christians—the way of faith, of hope, and of love toward God and the neighbor—the grace of the Holy Spirit was always present" (26).
- ⁸⁶ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 24.
- ⁸⁷ Meconi, "Consummation," 9.
- ⁸⁸ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 24.
- ⁸⁹ Ronald C. Arnett, "Walking the Humanities into the Marketplace: A Communicative Call," Proceedings of 6th International Conference on Social Values (Oxford and Lanham: Oxford Philosophy Trust/University Press of America, 2003).
- ⁹⁰ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 23.
- ⁹¹ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 29.
- ⁹² Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 39-40, citing Isidore of Seville.
- ⁹³ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 29.
- ⁹⁴ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 22-23, 147-48.
- ⁹⁵ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 43; Istvan Bejczy, "Tolerantia: A Medieval Concept," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58, no. 3 (1997): 365-384.
- ⁹⁶ Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 14. See also James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 77-78.
- ⁹⁷ See Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication*; and Amardo Rodriguez, "Social justice and the challenge of communication studies," in *Social Justice and Communication Scholarship*, ed. Omar Swartz, 21-34 (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Pub., 2006).
- ⁹⁸ Noll, *Between Faith & Criticism*.
- ⁹⁹ Jacques Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization*, trans. Julia Barrow (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), 330-31. Symbol "meant a sign of recognition, represented by the two halves of an object shared between two persons ... a reference to a lost unity; it brought to mind or summoned up a superior, hidden reality" (330).
- ¹⁰⁰ Barfield, *Saving*, 87.
- ¹⁰¹ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 11.
- ¹⁰² Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization*, 331.
- ¹⁰³ Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization*, 330-31.
- ¹⁰⁴ Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination*, 30-31.
- ¹⁰⁵ Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination*, 9.
- ¹⁰⁶ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 158.
- ¹⁰⁷ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 160.
- ¹⁰⁸ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 242.
- ¹⁰⁹ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 230.
- ¹¹⁰ Catherine Pickstock, "Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance," *Modern Theology* 21, no. 4 (2005): 543-574; David B. Burrell, C.S.C., "Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, 60-84 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 60.
- ¹¹¹ See Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*:
- ¹¹² Barfield, *Saving*, 89.
- ¹¹³ Barfield, *Saving*, 87.
- ¹¹⁴ Barfield, *Saving*, 91.
- ¹¹⁵ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 255.
- ¹¹⁶ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 261-63.
- ¹¹⁷ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 258.
- ¹¹⁸ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 259.
- ¹¹⁹ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 259: "Seek not what is too difficult for you, nor investigate what is beyond your power. Reflect upon what has been assigned to you, for you do not need what is hidden."
- ¹²⁰ Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, 256; Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 96: Scotus "is one figure among many—although a crucial one—in a general shift away from a focus upon the metaphysics of participation"; See also Pickstock, "Duns Scotus."
- ¹²¹ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 94. See also Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 545.
- ¹²² Maurice De Wulf, "Nominalism, Realism, Conceptualism," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), 16 Feb. 2016, <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11090c.htm>>.
- ¹²³ This is the basic position of the Radical Orthodoxy movement, though Barfield reads the beginning of the scientific revolution and modernism from the Nominalists; see *Saving*, 91.
- ¹²⁴ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 18.
- ¹²⁵ Phillip Blond's summation, quoted in Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 97.
- ¹²⁶ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 19.

- ¹²⁷ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 551.
- ¹²⁸ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 554, 556.
- ¹²⁹ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 546-47.
- ¹³⁰ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 554; Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 19.
- ¹³¹ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 551.
- ¹³² Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 552-53.
- ¹³³ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 551.
- ¹³⁴ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 19.
- ¹³⁵ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 552.
- ¹³⁶ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 97; Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 19.
- ¹³⁷ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 546, though "collective representations" is Barfield's metaphor.
- ¹³⁸ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 552; See also Thomas E. Wren's observation of this shift in the nature of rights as seen in the legal approach to property, starting in the High Middle Ages: "From Rightness to Rights: A Case Study of Moral Discourse," *Listening: Journal of Communication Ethics, Religion, and Culture* 49, no. 3 (2014): 181-208, p. 202.
- ¹³⁹ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 549, 555. A position that puts Scotus in a complex, but ultimately contradicting, position towards Augustine.
- ¹⁴⁰ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 548.
- ¹⁴¹ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 556.
- ¹⁴² Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 19. A disambiguation between Barfield's term "representation" and "representation" as it is used here and in Pickstock may be helpful: for Barfield, representations are the signs through which a person or collective group sees the world, while the modern philosophical turn to representation is an attempt to find a sign that corresponds truly to some thing, and thus be a mirror of and label for it, with an implicit assumption of stability borrowed from the technology of writing.
- ¹⁴³ Ronald C. Arnett and Annette M. Holba, *An Overture to Philosophy of Communication: The Carrier of Meaning* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 47; Levering also draws attention to this interpretive need, asking, with Charles Taylor, "What drew people to [univocal biblical exegesis]? ... Why [did] one form of biblical exegesis [lose] its appeal and another form [become] appealing," *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 17-18.
- ¹⁴⁴ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 100; Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 20; See Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 549-53, especially for a thorough and generous treatment of these critics.
- ¹⁴⁵ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 19.
- ¹⁴⁶ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus," 545-546.
- ¹⁴⁷ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- ¹⁴⁸ Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination*, 9.
- ¹⁴⁹ For example, Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1982); Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).
- ¹⁵⁰ Wren, "From Rightness to Rights," 202.
- ¹⁵¹ Murphy, *Civic Justice*, 130-34; see also Wren, "From Rightness to Rights."
- ¹⁵² Brian Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History, 1300-1850* (New York: Basic Books, 2000). See also *Little Ice Age: Big Chill*, History Channel, DVD released 2008.
- ¹⁵³ J. M. Bennett and C. W. Hollister, *Medieval Europe: A Short History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 326.
- ¹⁵⁴ E.g., Wren, "From Rightness to Rights," 196-97.
- ¹⁵⁵ Louis Salembier, "Western Schism," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 13 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), accessed 18 Feb. 2016, <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13539a.htm>>.
- ¹⁵⁶ John Henry, *The Scientific Revolution and the Origins of Modern Science*, 3rd ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 12-13.
- ¹⁵⁷ Ronald C. Arnett, "Existential homelessness: A contemporary case for dialogue," in *The reach of dialogue: Confirmation, voice, and community*, ed. R. Anderson, K. N. Cissna & R. C. Arnett, 229-245 (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc., 1994), 232-33.
- ¹⁵⁸ Pickstock, "Duns Scotus."
- ¹⁵⁹ Henry, *Scientific Revolution*, 5, 18.
- ¹⁶⁰ Henry, *Scientific Revolution*, 21-23.
- ¹⁶¹ Barfield, *Saving*, 49-50.
- ¹⁶² Barfield, *Saving*, 55.
- ¹⁶³ Barfield, *Saving*, 51.
- ¹⁶⁴ Barfield, *Saving*, 43.
- ¹⁶⁵ Barfield, *Saving*, 55-57.
- ¹⁶⁶ Barfield, *Saving*, 62-64.
- ¹⁶⁷ Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
- ¹⁶⁸ Though not through the mechanism of working for evidence of one's salvation, as Max Weber's influential thesis would have it; see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge Classics, 2001).

- ¹⁶⁹ Barfield, *Saving*, 81. See Charles Taylor, *Secular Age*, 374-75, 744-45.
- ¹⁷⁰ By the term “absence,” I am in agreement with Radical Orthodoxy thinkers who see post-modernists such as Derrida, and their godfather Nietzsche, as hyper-moderns who finally throw off the remaining rags of participatory and telos-focused thought. See Pickstock, “Duns Scotus,” 545-48, for an explicit connection between Scotus and the postmodern project.
- ¹⁷¹ Barfield, *Saving*, 85.
- ¹⁷² See David Vincent Meconi, S.J., “St. Augustine’s Early Theory of Participation,” *Augustinian Studies* 27 (1996): 81-98; and “The Incarnation and the Role of Participation in St. Augustine’s Confessions,” *Augustinian Studies* 29.2 (1998): 61-75.
- ¹⁷³ Barfield, *Saving*, 87.
- ¹⁷⁴ Barfield, *Saving*, 98.
- ¹⁷⁵ Barfield, *Saving*, 145.
- ¹⁷⁶ Barfield, *Saving*, 123.
- ¹⁷⁷ Barfield, *Saving*, 127.
- ¹⁷⁸ Barfield, *Saving*, 126.
- ¹⁷⁹ Barfield, *Saving*, 130.
- ¹⁸⁰ Barfield, *Saving*, 131.
- ¹⁸¹ Barfield, *Saving*, 133-135.
- ¹⁸² Barfield, *Saving*, 148.
- ¹⁸³ Barfield, *Saving*, 145.
- ¹⁸⁴ Barfield, *Saving*, 132.
- ¹⁸⁵ J. R. R. Tolkien, “On Fairy Stories,” in *The Tolkien Reader*, 33-99 (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966), 60, 73.
- ¹⁸⁶ Despite his critique of the willy-nilly adoption of evolutionary thinking in science and philosophy.
- ¹⁸⁷ Barfield, *Saving*, 148, 159.
- ¹⁸⁸ Barfield, *Saving*, 131, 160.
- ¹⁸⁹ Barfield, *Saving*, 147.
- ¹⁹⁰ Matthew Rose, “Tayloring Christianity,” *First Things*, December 2014, 25-30.
- ¹⁹¹ Postman, *Disappearance of Childhood*.
- ¹⁹² E.g., Augustine, *City of God*, XI.28.
- ¹⁹³ See, for example, Psalm 8.
- ¹⁹⁴ A thoroughgoing materialist might also make the case that this spectrum is the biological spectrum of autism, assuming of course that none of these social, technological, or spiritual forces are significant factors in that biological spectrum, but a discussion of the potential interactions of participation in neuropathology and in broader human studies is far beyond the scope of this project.
- ¹⁹⁵ Owens, *Shape of Participation*, 133.
- ¹⁹⁶ Owens, *Shape of Participation*, 137.
- ¹⁹⁷ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 69, 90.
- ¹⁹⁸ Holcomb, “Being Bound in God,” 250-51.
- ¹⁹⁹ Owens, *Shape of Participation*, 133. See also Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 127-32.
- ²⁰⁰ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 93, 102.
- ²⁰¹ Barfield, *Saving*.
- ²⁰² Evangelicals are not immune to this attitude, as Boersma recognizes: “younger evangelicals ... run the danger of confusing postmodern skepticism with mystery,” in *Heavenly Participation*, 27.
- ²⁰³ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 90.
- ²⁰⁴ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 66.
- ²⁰⁵ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 126; Smith Quotes Milbank: “Radical Orthodoxy, although it opposes the modern, also seeks to save it. It espouses, not the pre-modern, but an alternative vision of modernity.”
- ²⁰⁶ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 107, quoting Pickstock.
- ²⁰⁷ For some of these critiques, see Smith and Olthius, *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*; Hans Boersma, “On the Rejection of Boundaries: Radical Orthodoxy’s Appropriation of St. Augustine,” *Pro Ecclesia* 15, no. 4 (2006): 418-47; Owens, *Shape of Participation*.
- ²⁰⁸ Owens, *Shape of Participation*, 133.
- ²⁰⁹ Owens, *Shape of Participation*, 137.
- ²¹⁰ Owens, *Shape of Participation*, 137.
- ²¹¹ Owens, *Shape of Participation*, 141.
- ²¹² Owens, *Shape of Participation*, 142-43, note 29.
- ²¹³ Owens, *Shape of Participation*, 144.
- ²¹⁴ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, xi.
- ²¹⁵ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 9.
- ²¹⁶ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 21.
- ²¹⁷ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 21n4.
- ²¹⁸ Hans Boersma, “On the Rejection of Boundaries: Radical Orthodoxy’s Appropriation of St. Augustine,” *Pro Ecclesia* 15 (2006): 418-47; see also Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 109n73: in contrast to Graham Ward, of Radical Orthodoxy,

who loves only Augustine's questioning, "I think the questions do get answered, and I think the answers make Augustine 'Augustine.'"

²¹⁹ An identity in evidence also by such works as Wheaton professor of philosophy Arthur Holmes's book *All Truth is God's Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977).

²²⁰ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 189-190.

²²¹ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 3-9.

²²² Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 179.

²²³ See, for example, Matthew Levering, "Linear and Participatory History: Augustine's City of God," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 5, no. 2 (2011): 175-196; and his *The Theology of Augustine: An Introductory Guide to His Most Important Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013).

²²⁴ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 148.

²²⁵ See, for discussion, "*Behind* the Text?: *History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, C. Stephen Evans, Mary Healy, and Murray Rae, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

²²⁶ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 147.

²²⁷ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 63.

²²⁸ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 70.

²²⁹ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 69-70.

²³⁰ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 126.

²³¹ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 124.

²³² Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 130-31.

²³³ Owens, *Shape of Participation*, 5-10.

²³⁴ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 197-99.

²³⁵ See, for example, Smith's book *Thinking in Tongues* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010).

²³⁶ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 11: "Nor is it clear to me that Protestants—especially those of the Pentecostal and charismatic persuasion—do not know what to do with God's presence in the world."

²³⁷ See, for example, April Chatham-Carpenter, "Internal Self-Esteem: God as Symbolic Interactionism's 'Significant Other'?" *Journal of Communication and Religion* 29, no. 1 (2006); Margaret M. Poloma and Matthew T. Lee, "Prophetic Prayer and Two-Way Communication with the Divine," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 35, no. 3 (2012): 271-94; and J. E. Sigler, "First 'What is knowing?' then 'How'd they know?': Epistemological and phenomenological considerations in the study of direct divine communication (DDC)," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 37, no.1 (2014): 145-170.

²³⁸ Poloma and Lee, "Prophetic Prayer," 274.

²³⁹ Poloma and Lee, "Prophetic Prayer," 272, 275-76.

²⁴⁰ Robert V. Rakestraw, "Becoming Like God: An Evangelical Doctrine of Theosis," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 2 (1997): 257-269.

²⁴¹ Poloma and Lee, "Prophetic Prayer," 282.

²⁴² Meconi, "The Consummation of the Christian Promise."

²⁴³ Meconi, "Consummation," 4.

²⁴⁴ Meconi, "Consummation," 3.

²⁴⁵ Meconi, "St. Augustine's Early Theory of Participation."

²⁴⁶ Meconi, "The Incarnation and the Role of Participation."

²⁴⁷ See John C. Cavadini, "Trinity and Apologetics in the Theology of St. Augustine," *Modern Theology* 29, no. 1 (2013): 48-82, pp. 48-49.

²⁴⁸ In passing, let it be noted that there is much to do here with participation in Augustine studies, especially considering the renewed emphasis in the term from several purportedly Augustinian positions.

²⁴⁹ Meconi, "St. Augustine's Early," 79.

²⁵⁰ See Meconi, "St. Augustine's Early," 88n23, n25.

²⁵¹ See Meconi, "St. Augustine's Early," 89-91.

²⁵² Meconi, "St. Augustine's Early," 93.

²⁵³ Meconi, "St. Augustine's Early," 94.

²⁵⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, VII.iii.4, p. 160.

²⁵⁵ Meconi, "Participation in *Confessions*." Meconi identifies and comments on *Confessions* VII.ix.14, VII.xviii.24, and VII.xix.25.

²⁵⁶ Meconi, "Participation in *Confessions*," 63.

²⁵⁷ Meconi, "Participation in *Confessions*," 64, 67.

²⁵⁸ Patricia Wilson-Kastner, "Grace as Participation in the Divine Life in the Theology of Augustine of Hippo," *Augustinian Studies* 7 (1976), 146.

²⁵⁹ Augustine, *Confessions* VII.xix.25

²⁶⁰ Meconi, "Participation in *Confessions*," 73.

²⁶¹ Meconi, "Participation in *Confessions*," 70.

²⁶² Augustine, *Confessions*, VII.xviii.24; see discussion in Meconi, "Participation in *Confessions*," 68.

²⁶³ Meconi, "Participation in *Confessions*," 69.

- ²⁶⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, VII.xxi.27.
- ²⁶⁵ Meconi, "Participation in *Confessions*," 69.
- ²⁶⁶ Meconi, "Participation in *Confessions*," 70.
- ²⁶⁷ Augustine, *City of God*, XI.4.
- ²⁶⁸ E. g., *City of God*, XI.10-11, 14-15, 17, 23-24; XII.26. For one description of participation, shared by original creation and the city of God, see XI.24: "If we ask whence it arises, God founded it; if whence comes its wisdom, it receives light from God; if whence comes its bliss; it rejoices in God. It receives its mode of being by subsisting in God, its enlightenment by beholding him, its joy from cleaving to him. It exists; it sees; it loves."
- ²⁶⁹ Augustine, *City of God*, XI.18, 22-23.
- ²⁷⁰ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIII.i.3, p. 343-44.
- ²⁷¹ Martin Westerholm, "The Work of the Trinity and the Knowledge of God in Augustine's *De Trinitate*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15, no. 1 (2013): 5-24, p. 14.
- ²⁷² Westerholm, "The Work of the Trinity," 13, italics added.
- ²⁷³ Westerholm, "The Work of the Trinity," 14.
- ²⁷⁴ Dave Tell, "Beyond Mnemotechnics: Confession and Memory in Augustine," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 39.3 (2006).
- ²⁷⁵ Westerholm, "The Work of the Trinity," 17.
- ²⁷⁶ Westerholm, "The Work of the Trinity," 17.
- ²⁷⁷ That is, between "predication" of the Trinity and "perception" of the Trinity. Westerholm, "The Work of the Trinity," 7-8.
- ²⁷⁸ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XII.iii,14, p. 333.
- ²⁷⁹ For a beginning exposition of Augustine's understanding of curiositas, see N. Joseph Torchia, "Curiositas in the Early Philosophical Writings of Saint Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 19 (1988): 111-120; see also Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits*.
- ²⁸⁰ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XII.iii,15-16, p. 333-34. He cites I Corinthians 8:1.
- ²⁸¹ Augustine, *City of God*, XI.2.
- ²⁸² Calvin L. Troup, "Augustine: Bishop of Intellectuals," *Listening: Journal of Communication Ethics, Religion, and Culture* 46.2 (Spring 2011).
- ²⁸³ E.g., Augustine, *City of God*, XI.12.
- ²⁸⁴ Augustine, *City of God*, XII.22.
- ²⁸⁵ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 131.
- ²⁸⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, XI.2.
- ²⁸⁷ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XV.vi.40, p. 431: "But there are more hidden depths in memory ... where the innermost word is born that does not belong to any language—born as knowledge from knowledge and sight from sight, and as understanding which is manifested in thought from understanding which was already lurking, but hidden, in memory." See also Augustine's portrayal of a-linguistic communion of angels with God in the presence of God. *City of God*, XI.29.
- ²⁸⁸ See below and *City of God*, XI.26.
- ²⁸⁹ In *City of God*, but even more in *De Trinitate*, Augustine's investigation of how to articulate and perceive God as a Trinity led him to posit many different triadic processes. The main ones at work here are his trinity of temporal knowledge, which is memory, attention, and the will/love that joins them, and the trinity of eternal wisdom, which is the "deeper" memory of the image of God, understanding, and the love that joins them. Faith pertains to the temporal order, but also partly to the eternal image of God in our current sojourn because we perceive in a mirror dimly. The trinity of wisdom is the image of the Triune God, Augustine says, because it is self-contained, not eternally self-same like God, but self-same in its created structures. Both knowledge and wisdom are of God and are meant to lead to God. See *De Trinitate* XIII.vi.24 and XIV.ii, pp. 366-67, 374-75.
- ²⁹⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, XI.28.
- ²⁹¹ See Augustine, *City of God*, XI.18, 22; XIII.5; *De Trinitate* XIII.v.20, p. 362. I cite these here partly because this is a theme I cannot follow up on in the current project, though it should be noted for completeness.
- ²⁹² Augustine, *City of God*, XIII.3.
- ²⁹³ Augustine, *City of God*, XI.2.
- ²⁹⁴ Augustine, *City of God*, XI.28.
- ²⁹⁵ Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, Preface, sec. 13-14, 17.
- ²⁹⁶ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XII.x,15, p. 333.
- ²⁹⁷ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XII.x,15, p. 333.
- ²⁹⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, XII.23, though the statement about the Trinitarian analog is my own inference (though see *De Trinitate* XV.46, p. 436).
- ²⁹⁹ *De Trinitate* XV.46, p. 436.
- ³⁰⁰ Canning, *Unity of Love for God and Neighbor*.
- ³⁰¹ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV.i.3 and XIV.ii.6.
- ³⁰² Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIII.vi.19,24, p. 367.
- ³⁰³ Augustine, *City of God*, VII.32, IX.15, XI.21, 24, 27.
- ³⁰⁴ For example, in the Preface to *De Doctrina Christiana*.
- ³⁰⁵ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIII.vi.20,25, p. 368.
- ³⁰⁶ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIII.vi.26, p. 369.

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- ³⁰⁷ Augustine, *City of God*, I.9, XI.3, XII.26.
- ³⁰⁸ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIII.i.5, p. 346.
- ³⁰⁹ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 144.
- ³¹⁰ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XV.prologue.1, p. 395.
- ³¹¹ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV.iv.16, p. 385.
- ³¹² Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV.iv.17, p. 385.
- ³¹³ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV.iv.18, p. 385.
- ³¹⁴ Westerholm, 19
- ³¹⁵ Westerholm, 19
- ³¹⁶ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV.v.24.
- ³¹⁷ Westerholm, 19
- ³¹⁸ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XV.vi.46.
- ³¹⁹ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIII.iv.14, p. 355; see also Westerholm, 18
- ³²⁰ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV.ii.9, p. 377-78.
- ³²¹ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV.iv.21, p. 388.
- ³²² This is also different than the perspective of pragmatic social constructionism (e.g. Richard Rorty) that claims an arbitrary and constructed, functional connection—temporary reflections—between words and things rooted in current communal needs. Augustine’s understanding of language’s connection to truth here is one of the ways an Augustinian philosophy of communication would need to be distinguished from its more contemporary pragmatic cousins.
- ³²³ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.vi.44, p. 434.
- ³²⁴ James 1:23-25, New King James Version: “For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this one will be blessed in what he does.”
- ³²⁵ II Corinthians 3:18, New King James Version.

Chapter 3

Augustine's Participatory Hermeneutics in the Context of his Rhetorical Theory

As Ronald C. Arnett argues, philosophy of communication is especially attuned to the communication problems and questions of populations and communities, not merely an interpretive process that deals in abstractions for the few.¹ It seeks communicational philosophical concepts that give tongues and hands to broad communities of laypeople. As explained in Chapter 1, an Augustinian philosophy of communication attends to the manifold revelations of God (in scriptures, interior created self, and exterior philosophical resources) in order to discern conceptual resources divinely given for the historical moment and thus consistent with charity, the whole of the salvific narrative, and the potential for shared ecclesial action. Like secular philosophy of communication, Augustine's draws from a broad humanistic array of resources and is directed at a praxis that protects and promotes the goods of a broad empirical community in the historical moment. In this way, as Michael Scanlon articulates, Augustine's approach to rhetoric and hermeneutics "seems to anticipate our contemporary understanding that truth is disclosed within the nexus of the communicative praxis of discourse and action."²

Augustinian philosophy of communication is quite apt for renewing Evangelical hermeneutics, whose practice is radically populist, "spiritual," and action-oriented despite its scholastic scaffolding.³ That is, as discussed in Chapter 1, Evangelicals maintain theoretically and socially a commitment to the "priesthood of every believer." However, some Evangelicals have been calling attention to the need for a theory of hermeneutics more faithful to the interpretational experiences and practices of such an Evangelical "priesthood." That is, there is a hermeneutic "crisis" both outside and inside the Evangelical fold. Timothy Gabrielson has recently profiled Evangelical responses to the movement's growing awareness of the unbiblical

nature of modernist hermeneutics, and he notes that though “there is some precedent within conservative Protestantism for contemporizing hermeneutics,” it is still a “minority position” in the academy.⁴ At back of the academic discussions, though, is the persistent gravitational pull of the general Evangelical population, and “no one in the pews reads the canon” in a modernist objective way.⁵ Issuing a warning to Evangelical academics who ignore both the hermeneutic practice of its people and the hermeneutics embedded in the bible itself, Gabrielson says:

Academic study is beneficial, but we who have had the privilege of it must not deprecate how the Spirit speaks to all Christians through his holy Word. There is sacredness to all thoughtful, earnest reading of Scripture. Only fools rush in where angels fear to tread.⁶

He caps his 2015 review of the literature by saying that “we need a hermeneutic that emphasizes Scripture’s presence.”⁷ It is the contention of this chapter that Augustine’s charitable and participatory hermeneutics can provide the philosophy of communication resources to reconnect academic hermeneutics with devotional hermeneutics in a healthy scriptural praxis. This praxis can bring the presence of the Word back to the bible.

After reviewing the progress of the argument from the first two chapters, this chapter will develop the basic coordinates of Augustine’s participatory hermeneutics. Plotting interpretation as a contingent participatory activity of both the vertical and horizontal axes, these coordinates include the nature of language—even scriptural language—as a pointer to truth and not its essence, the importance of *caritas* (charity/love) at every level of the hermeneutic event, and the essential mediating role of narrative “wholes”—especially ecclesial social bodies—in the interpretation of and action on scriptural “parts.” This last coordinate draws heavily on Augustine’s participatory triangulation of intersubjectivity—how shared interpretation with other humans is co-informed by our and their shared interpretations with God, the Word—as will be

explained below. After developing these positive coordinates, the two main obstacles to right interpretation that Augustine posits—implicit throughout the earlier discussion—will be foregrounded and explained.

In Chapter 1, the crisis in Evangelical hermeneutics was framed as a misguided addition of modernistic epistemology to the ecumenical, gospel-centered, and scripture-centered Evangelical tradition.⁸ This addition, proposed as a defense of the gospel in a modernistic culture, became such an integral part of Evangelical identity that even when Evangelical traditions such as gospel-centered ecumenism and its engagement with the “world” were recovered from Fundamentalism, the modernistic biblical interpretation remained close to the core of the tradition’s identity. Evangelical hermeneutics was pushed into a crisis, however, when the literary and linguistic turns made their way from general hermeneutic disciplines into the general culture and into the world of biblical hermeneutics. The general cultural retreat of confidence in modernistic assumptions left modernist-leaning Evangelicals alienated from the culture and without a clear ground from which to communicate the scriptures that constitute the core of their identity.

This external-facing crisis was accompanied by an internal crisis as generations of younger Evangelicals have not only drifted with Western society generally toward what Ricoeur calls “linguistic impoverishment”⁹ but often have also joined Evangelical subgroups that prioritize community and embodied action but leave out the traditional emphasis on the scriptures.¹⁰ That is, despite the success of Evangelical leaders in embedding statements on biblical inerrancy in the identity and mission statements of core institutions, the general population of the Evangelical movement has been atrophying in its biblical literacy, practical institutional focus, and framing attitude towards the scriptures. This is a crisis of practice and of

the Evangelical “social imaginary” that, I argue, calls for a renewed practical attention to the scriptures through a renewed hermeneutical frame, which I argue should be pursued through an Augustinian philosophy of communication.

In Chapter 2, I developed the premodern philosophical resource of “participation,” arguing that a renewed Evangelical hermeneutical frame needs a return to this communication resource of the longer and broader Christian tradition. I traced the roots of the philosophy that undergirds modernistic hermeneutics to the move *away from* participation and *toward* “univocity” that began with Duns Scotus in the middle ages, became embedded in Western culture through the social and technological events of that historical moment, and pursued its *entelechia* to and through the period of high modernism (1940s-early 1960s), despite the significant reactionary movement of Romanticism.¹¹

In its specifically Christian scriptural aspect, participation entails the connection of heaven and earth through the communicational medium of scriptural language, in which language and the divine being are not consubstantial but, by the hearing of faith, coextensive in action. That is, the Word spoken by God in the realm of eternity is incarnated, again and again, into scriptural words that are faithfully read by a believing community in the plane of temporality, moving from eternal Word to scriptural narrative to the further incarnation in an obedient community. This effective connection of God’s eternal action with human temporal action was grounded, in the Christian tradition, in the Incarnation, who is the Word of God speaking the words of God, the action of God performing the actions of God, both eternal God and temporal man. While establishing that participation was the ontological metaphor that undergirded the theology and practice of both extant branches of the Christian church (Catholic and Orthodox) until the high middle ages, Chapter 2 also developed Augustine’s Trinitarian

theology of participation in particular. It is Augustine's version of participation that will be used as the ontological ground by which to read his hermeneutical theory in this chapter. Indeed, I would argue that Augustinian hermeneutics would not make sense apart from its participatory ground.

Providing a renewed frame for Evangelical hermeneutics demands, foundationally, these hermeneutic resources from *within* the Christian tradition, a corrective philosophy of communication that represents the "wisdom of God" rather than the "wisdom of the world."¹² However, a renewed hermeneutical frame must also speak in the language and to the questions of the historical moment, the task of philosophy of communication. In this historical moment, a renewed hermeneutical frame must speak to the complex cross-section of modern and postmodern hermeneutical questions that talk past one another in the Evangelical public sphere. I use "Evangelical public sphere" in a similar sense as Gerard Hauser's "reticulated public sphere,"¹³ but with a slight difference. While a secular reticulated public sphere may naturally buzz dialogically with different goals, value narratives, and conceptual languages—operating through a plethora of social institutions—the Evangelical public sphere should theoretically be more grounded in a type of social institution (the church), a shared overarching value narrative, and a largely shared conceptual language through the scriptures. Dialogue, shared concepts, conflict, and mutual correction are also part of the Evangelical public sphere, but from a shared ground. Currently, this is not what we find in the Evangelical public sphere. Rather, there is wide disparity in the level of shared scriptural language, too little use of the ecclesial institution for dialogic formation in those scriptures, and competing visions of the appropriate value narrative—with competing visions coming both from modernistic, "conservative" narratives and from "postmodern" narratives informed to various degrees by secular philosophical currents.

Therefore, a philosophy of communication perspective would direct a conceptual recovery from Augustine to interact also in good faith with the philosophical languages in which current hermeneutics questions and problems are being articulated in the Evangelical public sphere. In its mediation between the commitments of the Evangelical tradition, on the one hand, and current legitimate philosophical questions from philosophical hermeneutics, on the other, my project is a hermeneutically focused answer to the call of Evangelical historian Mark Noll for just such an engagement with hermeneutic philosophy in this historical moment.¹⁴ Because these questions are manifested in not only language in the abstract but also language in real interpreting communities, a renewed hermeneutics for the Evangelical movement must also provide more than an abstract explanation of how eternal truth can be manifested in temporality through scripture. It must supply both a philosophical and a practical frame to guide interpreters in how to live in submission to the scriptures, open to correction from God through them. This would constitute a faithful frame of praxis in which we read the scriptures and the scriptures, though our obedient shared action to them, read us. It must show a way that its motivational resources and practices can create and infuse real communities and reverse the atrophy of Evangelical scriptural identity.

These are the needs that an Augustinian hermeneutics can meet, I argue, if its philosophy of communication resources are clearly applied to Evangelical hermeneutical problems in a participatory frame. This chapter will focus on explicating Augustine's participatory hermeneutics. The next chapter will attempt to put Augustine's participatory hermeneutics into modern philosophical context, and the last chapter will translate it into the modern institutional context of the Evangelical public sphere.

Augustine: Participating in the Truth

To meet the needs of the Evangelical community for a renewed Augustinian hermeneutic, we need to talk about truth—or as Evangelicals like to call it, “Truth with a capital T.” Rightly wary of the pressures of a pluralistic culture toward a relativistic hermeneutics, modernist-leaning Evangelicals advocate for not only a stable ground of absolute Truth but also predictable, controllable, and universal access to that Truth through the sciences of language, history, and institutional organization and communication.

The relationship between Augustine’s conception of truth and scriptural hermeneutics is more nuanced than that of Evangelical modernists. In its broadest summary, Augustine could be said to argue for absolute truth as well, but more limited and contingent access to that truth by human actors. In participatory terms, truth is not the object of our study, under our control, but is a divine reality in which we participate with God, requiring both our action in faithful interpretation and God’s action in faithful illumination.

As befits this complex reality, Augustine’s conjoined rhetoric and hermeneutics is multifaceted and demands that we do interpretive labor in several of his texts. To understand Augustine’s complex revision of Ciceronian rhetoric, we must, as James Farrell says, read at least *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Confessions* together.¹⁵ Together, these two works explain and model the praxis of Augustine’s scriptural rhetoric and hermeneutics, demonstrating the discovery of scriptural truth not merely through language but also through creational knowledge, *caritas*, action, and the grace of the Interior Teacher. Augustine also covers some of the same ground in its historical depth in *City of God*, and he applies and discusses his hermeneutical theory in his sermons, which brings those texts to bear on the question of his hermeneutic philosophy of communication as well.

Augustine shifts the coordinates of Ciceronian classical rhetoric in many ways, not least in its relationship to truth, truth which Augustine identifies with wisdom in *De Trinitate*.¹⁶ Labeled as both a Ciceronian and Platonist, Augustine transforms his inheritance from both.¹⁷ The wisdom to which Augustine points his readers is different from the wisdom of both Cicero's ideal orator and Plato's ideal philosopher, and thus the eloquence paired with wisdom is also transformed. It follows that the interpretation of that eloquence, especially when it is found in the scriptures, is transformed as well.

In the Ciceronian tradition, "plausibility" is the goal of invention, a standard of truth which supports the instrumental goal of that strand of rhetoric.¹⁸ That is, the rhetor stands over both his material and his audience, manipulating both expertly so as to persuade the audience. While the ideal orator would have in mind the good of the polis, that end goal still would allow him to play fast and loose with his means, even lying if necessary.¹⁹ In this political ethics, the rhetor might be checked by other combatants in the public arena, but he would not check himself by submitting to the truth of the artifacts he was working with. Victory, not "confession," would be the metaphor a Ciceronian rhetor would want associated with himself.²⁰ Contemplative truth was also important in Cicero's writings, but this truth lived in a different, more private world and was disconnected from the public sphere of rhetorical action.²¹ Augustine, pursuing public truth, "moves towards a self that is no longer dominated by a need to dominate" and away from the Ciceronian victory-centered rhetor.²² He targets transformation of himself and his hearers through shared submission to the truth through the rhetorical artifact of the scriptures.²³

Though Augustine is often labeled a Platonist also, he parts company with Plato's ideal of truth as well, as developed partly in Chapter 2 concerning their radically different conceptions of memory's connection to knowledge and wisdom. Though Plato also sought after eternal,

unchanging truth, his vision of our participation in that truth was elitist, graceless, and rhetorically manipulative. Because the onus for moving toward truth was on each individual, with no help or grace from the eternal realm itself, the few lovers of wisdom who made gains in wisdom could see themselves as an elite, morally and intellectually worthy enough to rule over the still-blind masses through rhetorically structured deceptions and obscuring myths, the structure of government Plato recommends in *The Republic*.²⁴ Ernest Fortin points out the two faces of Platonic philosophy, neither one acceptable to Augustine's picture of truth. On the one hand, the Platonic philosopher (a "lover of wisdom," not a possessor of it) "suspend[s] his judgment" about the truth, leading to "an endless and hence unfulfilled quest." This, to Augustine, is a "heartless doctrine."²⁵ However, the other face of Platonic wisdom is elitist pride: Socrates's "would-be ignorance is merely the obverse of a deep-seated pride which causes him to place himself above the rest of society."²⁶ Though technically available to all through contemplation, Plato's eternal truth was, *de facto*, not available for common ownership, not communicable, and alien to Christian interpersonal caritas.

Augustine did not merely inhabit some kind of philosophical mean between the epistemic relativism of Ciceronian rhetoric and the elitism (*and* relativism) of Platonic philosophy, though he had spent time in both camps in his pre-Christian life. Instead, Augustine's understanding of the truth was transformed by his experience with the Word, and he in turn transformed both rhetoric and philosophy by rebuilding them on that more solid foundation of the Incarnation and the scriptures.²⁷

Augustine pairs the *inward witness* of Christian contemplation of truth with the shared *social witness* of truth through the scriptures, making scriptural hermeneutics central to both individually and socially established truth. As we have seen in Chapter 2, in Augustine's

philosophy of communication, Platonic dialectic becomes an individual inner dialogue with the Inner Teacher who operates through our creational memory of God, but this inner ground of truth is held together throughout the stretching experience of time by the shared witness of others.²⁸ Wisdom comes to the one, but in dealing with the strains of temporality, two are stronger than one and a three-fold cord is not easily broken.²⁹ These individually and socially manifested dialogues undergird whatever knowledge we have of the created world, visible or invisible, all of which can lead to wisdom, the true knowledge of God. But the central site of knowledge that leads to wisdom is the narrative of salvation, grounded in Christ, amplified and developed by the scriptures.³⁰

The scriptures are the pinnacle of this shared witness, flexible but stable and true through time, “the words of men sent by God, the creator of all minds.” These scriptures are “poured from the divine mind with both wisdom and eloquence,”³¹ and the transformed goal of the *Christian* rhetor is to interpret these scriptures charitably, make their meaning clear, persuade the listeners this knowledge is true, and move them to action. Action, as the end of scriptural hermeneutics, might sometimes be moral and embodied practice, but it would *always also* be the worshipful enjoyment of God,³² which is the turn inward and upward to wisdom. In this way, Augustine’s rhetoric is centered on discovery of the truth, and that truth in the public sphere of the church is discovered and proclaimed from the scriptures. “The wisdom of what a person says,” Augustine tells us, “is in direct proportion to his progress in learning the holy scriptures ... [this wise person is] the person who not only quotes scripture when he chooses but also understands it as he should.”³³ Augustine’s centering of truth on the narrative of salvation as jointly discovered and shared through the scriptures meets the philosophy of communication

need of the Evangelical community for a renewed hermeneutical frame that joins salvation, the scriptures, and a confidence in the truth.

However, Augustine's understanding of truth is also more complex than the current Evangelical standard, and thus his scriptural hermeneutics, especially in its participatory frame, is more complex. If Evangelicals are willing to be taught by Augustine's "pastoral" hermeneutical perspective,³⁴ they will be both comforted and challenged, both confirmed and changed. Evangelicals will be confirmed in the importance that Augustine gives to language, but challenged by Augustine's denial of a simple, perspicuous correspondence of language to truth. They will be confirmed by Augustine's affirmation of history and the factual knowledge of the world, but possibly scandalized by his readiness to recognize multiple true spiritual interpretations alongside the literal, historical one. They will be confirmed by Augustine's use of hermeneutics to defend the faith from heresies, but mystified by his overarching hermeneutical principle of charity, through which he subsumes any single propositional meaning of scripture under the larger narrative context of salvation, deification, and charitable community. Finally, they will understand Augustine's call to communal identity and action on the basis of truth, but be less sure about the hermeneutics of understanding that scriptural truth *through* obedient action within a communal narrative. In general, Augustine's famous dictum "I believe so that I may understand"³⁵ has often been a stumbling block to Evangelical hermeneutics, but one that points towards a needed change of mind.

Language and Truth

The relationship of language to meaning is a core question for communication. When that meaning is the revelation of God in scripture, with our understanding of God and salvation in the balance—the relationship of scriptural language to that divine "truth" takes on even more

importance. For this reason, it is no wonder that Evangelical defenders of modernist hermeneutical principles speak in such strident accents. To quote McQuilkin and Mullan again by way of a representative example of a modernistic Evangelical position:

To deny the possibility of words corresponding to reality is ultimately an attack on the nature and activity of God. ... the correspondence between words (language meaning) and reality is essential to the nature of God and of human beings made in his image. This connection between revelation in understandable words and the nature of God and of humankind is a major theme.³⁶

As shown in Chapter 1, these sincere Evangelical scholars were not able to maintain consistently their position in this paragraph, falling back instead to a position that brings Kantian concepts to mind: scriptural words correspond exactly to the truth of the noumenal realm, but our fallibility as interpreters limits the actual meanings we obtain to the phenomenal realm. As one of the fathers of modern philosophy of communication, Kant's conceptual work to save the appearances of absolute truth by moving it outside the phenomenal realm is not an unexpected ingredient in modernistic Evangelical hermeneutics.³⁷ However, for all practical purposes, this move still separates language from shared meaning, leaving the concept of stable revelatory truth emptied of content.

In a participatory frame, however, the two realms are not merely conceptual but are a real eternal realm and a real earthly realm, and language can function as a real meeting place between the two, where not only do "understandable" words communicate conceptual meaning about "the nature of God ... and of humankind" but they also communicate the mind and presence of God himself. That is, a participatory hermeneutic is not limited to knowing *about* God as an object of study but is, rather, focused on *knowing* God through intersubjective communion and action.

This is the scriptural figure exemplified by Christ, who said to others only what He heard from God.³⁸ Also, moving from Christ's figural example to his promise and commission, the community of those who would follow Christ were promised "the mind of Christ" and commanded "if anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God."³⁹ Speaking about the scriptural stories of Jesus raising people from the dead, Augustine explicitly discusses how we should participate in both the materiality and the meaning of these stories, how to understand the eternal Word and the temporal word together:

It is not without point that three [resurrections] were recorded [of the many that happened]. Our Lord Jesus Christ, you see, wanted the things he did materially to be also understood spiritually. I mean, he wasn't just performing miracles for the sake of miracles; he did them so that what he did should be marvelous to those who saw them, true to those who understood them.

Those who saw Christ's miracles, and didn't understand what they meant ... were only astonished that such things could happen. But others were both astonished at the things that happened and enriched by understanding what they meant. That's the group we should belong to in the school of Christ.⁴⁰

Augustine compares the uncomprehending interpreters to those who appreciate the workmanship of "a beautifully written codex" but who cannot read the words. This hermeneutical preamble Augustine gives before he preaches the main text seems intended to "persuade" his hearers that preaching the resurrection narratives figuratively (not just factually) is not just permitted but meets the purpose of participating spiritually in God through understanding the scriptures.⁴¹

The concept of joining together the eternal mind of Christ with the temporal mind of the participating human through specific instantiations of language—in time, space, and history—

does two things for scriptural hermeneutics. First, it provides a solid connection between the eternal realm of truth and our temporal understanding, producing confidence enough to ground faith and action. This is good news for Evangelicalism. Second, though, it moves the “correspondence between words ... and reality” from the historical-linguistic frame to a realm of spiritual discernment. In Paul’s distinction, the scriptures are “spiritually discerned” and thus only available to the wisdom of worldly scholarship in a veiled way.⁴² This is an apostolic hermeneutic practice that Paul himself followed, causing no little discomfort to modernist Evangelical hermeneutics scholars.⁴³

It is, of course, Augustine’s specific version of participatory scriptural hermeneutics—and specifically how he sees language mediating the eternal and temporal realms—that we seek to understand here. Augustine is an especially appropriate conversation partner for Evangelical moderns and postmoderns because his theory of language is not only Christian but has also been recognized as a philosophy of communication ahead of its time, anticipating and going beyond modern linguistics.⁴⁴ According to R. A. Markus, Augustine was one of the first to make signification the core of a theory of language⁴⁵ and the first to envision signification as a triadic process, in which a sign “stands for something to somebody.”⁴⁶ That is, before Augustine, no one had made it a point to identify words as signs (and therefore language as a series of signs). Before Augustine, Stoic and Epicurean philosophers generally saw signs as only dyadic connections of sign and signified, whereas Augustine noted the third element, the “*subject* to whom the *sign* stands for the *object signified*.”⁴⁷

To move through this triadic semiotic system to understanding, however, requires the work of another triadic process, an overlapping one of learning/interpreting: “from realities and verbal prompts, through personal recollection and reminders, to internal dialogue with Wisdom

[the Interior Teacher] that confirms personal knowledge.”⁴⁸ Synthesizing these two triads, we move from the sign (“realities and verbal prompts”) through the subject (the “personal recollection and reminders” [i.e., *memoria*] in “dialogue with Wisdom”) to “personal knowledge” of the real object signified. These triads produce knowledge, which then can be used in a further triad of contemplation to gain the end of wisdom,⁴⁹ the enjoyment of God himself, which then (in temporality) returns to language in the form of worship. Language, as a phenomenon of temporality, does not “correspond” to eternal reality in an airtight structural way, but it does direct us to that eternal reality through individual and then shared interaction with the indwelling Inner Teacher.

Thus, Augustine grounds the hope for true human knowledge and wisdom in participatory dialogue with the Interior Teacher who enables, at a foundational level, the connection between language and “brute givenness.” Markus makes this point in the following memorable language:

Human teachers, on the one hand, can only teach us the meanings of words and signs, and experience, on the other hand, only furnishes us with brute givenness. Only the Interior Teacher, which is Christ dwelling in the mind, can teach by at once displaying to the mind the reality to be known and providing the language for its understanding. . . .

This is the teacher whose activity is presupposed by all learning.⁵⁰

This Christo-centric semiotic theory anticipates and goes beyond modern hermeneutic theories,⁵¹ transposing them, one might say, into the key of participation. On the one hand, Augustine shows that there is no natural, given, or unmistakable connection between sign and signifier, between words and raw experience.⁵² Although “nothing,” Augustine says, “can be learnt without the use of signs,”⁵³ the use of signs by teachers does not, by itself, create learning. Thus

“rhetors do not persuade . . . [and] teachers do not teach.”⁵⁴ The modernistic Evangelical desire for control over the teaching and interpretation process through an exact science of language is stymied, but communication can continue in the framework of participatory humility.⁵⁵

Even more seemingly tenuous in its communicability than verbal interpersonal communication, the scriptures also come under this framework because of their spiritual, temporal, cultural, and linguistic distance. Though the scriptures are not the only way to the wisdom of God, they are the language God has given to the church, the “signs” by which God intends his people to learn. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,” Paul says, “and is profitable for doctrine, for rebuke, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the [person] of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”⁵⁶ “May your Scriptures be my chaste delights!” Augustine prays,⁵⁷ identifying them as the most important of the ways we follow Christ as the Way. Christ, the Word, is He “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” Augustine says, while “these same treasures I seek in your books.”⁵⁸

However, per Augustine, the scriptures cannot in their mere linguisticity teach anyone anything. The text of the scriptures is interpreted through not one, but two subjects, with meaning emerging from the dialogue between them. Recall Augustine’s introduction of the third element in the first triad, the “*subject* to whom the *sign* stands for the *object signified*.”⁵⁹ Further, Augustine identifies Interior Teacher as the essential third element of the second triad. *Both* the human subject and his/her relationship to the Interior Teacher necessarily empower or constrain the interpretive process. “Not for nothing have you willed that these dark secrets be written on so many pages” of the scriptures, Augustine says to God, simultaneously affirming their accessibility and the need for the grace of participation to understand them: “Lord, perfect me, and open those pages to me. Behold, your voice is my joy.”⁶⁰ What this entails is that the

language of the scriptures is only connected to true knowledge and true wisdom when the subjects interpreting it are allowing their “subjective” reception of scriptural words to be inspired and constrained by the creational and spiritual presence of God within them. In a word, scriptural interpretation has to be enacted according to a participatory frame that, in human-divine dialogue, structures the array of linguistic and historical interpretive choices that lead to a charitable meaning.

Augustine gives this theory in its basic outlines in *De Magistro*.⁶¹ Ironically, though, one of Augustine’s more clear descriptions of this participatory interpretive process involves intersubjective communion with evil spirits. Markus has pointed out that one of the understudied aspects of Augustine’s semiotics is what Augustine says about communication with demons, and one of the key observations Markus makes is the importance of *attention* in human-spirit interaction.⁶² In *City of God* VIII.24, Augustine describes the connection between worship (which I am connecting with “attention”), fellowship, and shared meaning, saying, “[B]y worshipping [pagan gods] he was drawn into fellowship with them, and I do not mean fellowship with senseless idols, but with crafty demons.” By people giving attention to demonic signs, Augustine says, the path is open for demons to cooperate in bringing more of those expected signs about, establishing a reinforcing cycle of communication and fellowship around some ungodly common ground, around some linguistic signs as participatory mediums.

The relationship between attention and meaning is, of course, a major theme also in Augustine’s description of his relationship with God throughout the *Confessions*. For example, when he feels himself under the gaze of God, Augustine famously tries to stop paying attention to himself, putting himself “behind my own back, where I had placed myself because I did not wish to look upon myself,” but is forced to pay attention to himself under the watchful attention

of God.⁶³ That is, God exerted himself as Truth on Augustine by making Augustine look honestly at himself and understand his own inner world. After conversion and after being freed of his teaching position, Augustine turned his attention fully to God through the given participatory medium of the scriptures, and the result was a “sweet” time of intersubjective interpretation with God, when “by ... inward goads you mastered me, and how you leveled me down by making low the mountains and the hills of my thoughts...”⁶⁴ First the language of Ambrose, then the language of a spiritual biography, then the language of the scriptures directed Augustine’s attention to God, whose presence was thereby actualized inwardly through the creational potential of the image of God. This interpretive communion with God was initiated by the language of others, and it progressed to his interpretive communion with others. As Augustine preaches, the goal and possibility of this interpretive communion in the church is “one soul and one heart in God,” symbolized by the bread and the wine of the Eucharist. The Eucharist was not a sacrament of individual salvation, but a picture of the body, a “sacrament of unity, ... bread ... not made from one grain but from many.”⁶⁵

There are constraints inherent to the interpreting subject and its interpretive communion with both God and others, which will be developed later in this chapter; however, a brief explanation of some of the factors of this inner dialogue at work in the interpretation of scripture as a participatory medium would be appropriate here. The Interior Teacher, ever-present in all people regardless of religion, interacts with each person as a “dialogue” partner,⁶⁶ relative to the “belief and will” of the person.⁶⁷ That is, from scriptural language, a specific meaning can be validly impressed upon the interpreter by the Interior Teacher, but that interpreter can either accept that offered connection or reject and ignore it because of perverseness in belief or will.

Among many other places Augustine explains this dynamic, he deals with it in several passages in the *Confessions*:

Thus in the gospel he speaks through the flesh, and this word sounded outwardly in the ears of men, so that it might be believed, and sought inwardly, and found in the eternal Truth where the sole good Master teaches all his disciples. There, O Lord, I hear your voice speaking to me, since he who teaches us speaks to us. But a man who does not teach us, even though he speaks, does not speak to us. Who teaches us now, unless it be stable Truth? Even when we are admonished by a changeable creature, we are led to stable Truth, where we truly learn “while we stand and hear him” and “rejoice with joy because of the bridegroom’s voice” restoring us to him from whom we are.⁶⁸

This truth of the gospel proclaimed through “changeable creature[s]” draws up in memory, through the voice of “stable Truth,” the eternal Truth. As we saw in *De Trinitate*, all true things are in memory by creation, but not all things are thereby (immediately or always) remembered. Those whose loves are focused inordinately on other things are, by that pull, turned away from remembering the truth.

Why are they unhappy? It is because they are more strongly taken up with other things, which have more power to make them wretched, than has that which they *remember so faintly* to make them happy. ... Because they do not wish to be deceived but wish to deceive, they love it when it shows itself to them, and they hate it when it shows them to themselves.⁶⁹

To the degree that our loves are “taken up with other things,” our will and belief turn our attention away from the voice of the Inner Teacher and what could be known from our deep memory. When that truth does “show itself to them” so that they are not “deceived,” they have

no complaints until the truth shows itself not as a controlled objective perspective on the world but rather a personal confrontation in which the Inner Teacher “shows them to themselves.” This, of course, is the same metaphor Augustine used to describe how he was exposed before his conversion by Ponticianus’s conversation about St. Anthony, the Egyptian monk, as mentioned earlier.⁷⁰ Here, also, we see Augustine’s emphasis on true participatory interpretation going beyond objective knowledge to transformation. We read the scriptures so that the scriptures, through the Inner Teacher, can read us.

What we learn, or remember, in dialogue with the Inner Teacher, then, we can either store in individual and communal memory by confessing it—turning it back into external signs—or allow it to slip away from conscious memory down the always flowing stream of time. As is well-known, Augustine does not offer a cheery picture of the purity of humans’ belief and will. Therefore, the true learning and true communication that could take place in reading the scriptures in dialogue with the Inner Teacher is often instead mistaken, misunderstood, perverted, or simply forgotten. Augustine warns that even Christians who do not listen to the Interior Teacher have “mind[s] whose insight is weakened by [their] habit of living in the shadows cast by the flesh.”⁷¹ Augustine acknowledged about even himself that though he knew “partly” what he was at that time, “what I may be tomorrow I don’t know.”⁷² According to this reasoning, most people most of the time demonstrate the brokenness of the semiotic system, a conclusion that resonates with many postmodern philosophers but provokes strong reactions from many Evangelical scholars.⁷³

However, Augustine’s insistence on the presence of this Interior Teacher in all people not as just a creational potentiality but also as an active and personal communicative agent⁷⁴ can undercut any philosophy of communication that dismisses communication and meaning as

theoretical impossibilities or improbabilities. That is, wherever people turn to the voice of the Interior Teacher in a semiotic event and, in dialog with Him, submit to His connection of sign and signified, they thereby achieve by general grace a unit of true knowledge, which is then stored in conscious *memoria* to be recalled by its linguistic sign, confessed, acted upon, and thus incorporated as part of the person's self and the community's narrative identity. This moment of grace and its bit of truth may be infinitesimally small—it is not a totality⁷⁵—but to Augustine it is nevertheless true and is therefore a ground for further belief, further logical investigation, rhetoric, praise, and/or action.⁷⁶ If a person, by the grace of God, makes a habit of listening to the Interior Teacher, he or she will become truly wise. Among unconverted seekers after truth, the potential for limited but true wisdom can lead to the further event of actual conversion, and within conversion, this wisdom can lead up the seven stages of deification to Wisdom Himself.⁷⁷

How does this grounding in eternal truth differ from modernistic foundationalism? A comprehensive answer to this question cannot be attempted here, but a partial answer is important for especially a philosophy of communication that would fit Evangelicals. Modernistic Evangelical hermeneutics, I have argued, is grounded in a foundation imposed wrongly on the tradition from modernistic natural sciences. Augustine offers, in place of *that* foundation, a hermeneutic foundation that is less concerned about the accretion of a more and more rigid doctrinal structure through time and more concerned about being responsive to the current doctrinal needs for the furthering of the gospel, the deification of the saints, and the protection of the church from schism and heresy. That is, modernistic hermeneutics wants to have its fully formed eternal truth *now*, within the realm of time, encased in language that is not subject to the fluctuations of time and social history. Augustinian hermeneutics wants to listen to the part of the eternal truth that the Inner Teacher wants to give *now*, seeking the inner word from the Inner

Teacher that fuses eternal truth with temporal language, an inner word that pursues the divine narrative with charity and draws along with it the language and style that fits the historical moment. Modernistic hermeneutics trusts itself with the controls in hermeneutics;⁷⁸ Augustine trusts God.⁷⁹

Augustine's analogy of a Psalm being sung as a picture of eternity and temporality is helpful here. The Psalm, fully formed, is in the memory of the singer, but it can only enter temporality one syllable at a time, each sound in its proper place and never all present at the same time. The eternal truth, similarly, is fully formed in the mind of God in the realm of eternity. It is not inaccessible to us in the realm of temporality, but it can only come syllable by syllable as appropriate for the sequence and situation. Augustine portrays this unviolated whole coming into being by temporal parts as a relationship that "holds for a man's entire life, the parts of which are all the man's actions. The same thing holds throughout the whole age of the sons of men, the parts of which are the lives of all men."⁸⁰ As we have heard from Augustine's *City of God* in Chapter 2, the "whole" truth is not given to us in temporality *as a whole* except in the broad outlines of the narrative of salvific history and in the person of Jesus Christ, the perfect Word of God. As Ayers notes, Augustine's use of the church "rule of faith" was more broad and flexible than textually dogmatic,⁸¹ a conclusion that makes sense if it is an ever-present "whole" whose details fade in and out according to our participation and the doctrinal question of the moment.

We will see in the next section how this moment-by-moment grounding of eternal truth requires both linear and participatory concepts of history in Augustine's understanding, but Augustine's "participatory foundationalism" has a few other philosophy of communication coordinates that recommend it to Evangelicals. First, Augustine argues for the ineradicability of

creational memory—a concept familiar to Evangelicals through their familiarity with Paul’s opening salvo in Romans: humans “suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them . . . For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”⁸² Though Augustine is rightly identified with the doctrine of depravity that portrays humans as unable to rightly read the truth that is right there within them,⁸³ he also insists on the general grace of God’s participatory maintenance of truth in the inward parts of all people. Not by education, skill, or cultural training, but by grace, everyone can recognize the truth within them as truth. In Augustine’s discourse on memory, this is what he holds out as the perpetual hope of salvation: “If it had been completely wiped out of the mind, we would not remember it even when reminded of it. . . . what we have completely forgotten we cannot even look for if it is lost.” But no created being can completely forget its God.⁸⁴

Another linguistic coordinate that recommends itself to Evangelicals from Augustine’s participatory foundationalism is the priority he puts on the gift of the scriptures. As we have argued in Chapter 1 and earlier in this chapter, the scriptures are at the core of Evangelical identity, and the current Evangelical crisis involves how to maintain that center in an intellectually and socially responsible way. Paradoxically, Augustine both insists on the centrality of the scriptures to Christian life and identity *and* acknowledges that, because of our creational participation in God, the scriptures are not *technically* necessary.⁸⁵ Where some Evangelicals insist that our knowledge of God is built up solely from our systematic study of the scriptures—and that apart from the right interpretation of scripture there is no true knowledge of God—they will find themselves at odds with Augustine. But where Evangelicals pursue the scriptures as God’s gift of a perpetual witness to his creational and salvific work—an especially

providential witness that recapitulates the narratives of eternal truth and keeps them grounded throughout the flux of temporal history—they can find common cause with Augustine, and find again a reason and a way to be centered on the scriptures. Of the different ways that humans might seek for a shared witness to the inward truth to guard them against forgetting again what they know, the scriptures hold a privileged place in Augustine’s theory and practice.⁸⁶

Finally, as we will investigate more later in this chapter, Augustine’s understanding of how eternal truth manifests in language has its ultimate fruition in social and ecclesial action. Language is what enables people to share thoughts and experience communion with one another. Language does not merely enable a shared memory of individually discerned truths, but it enables both the confirmation of jointly discovered truths and the shared labor of correcting and disciplining the understanding of eternal truth that is currently at work in the church. As Christians share action through shared language, they create the social witness of the proclaiming church through the grace of God.⁸⁷ Thus, the eternal truth that makes its way through many people’s “memories” into linguistically shared concepts and then into physically shared actions becomes a foundation in the best possible sense. This participation in truth through shared social language and social action is not restricted, in Augustine, to the society of just a local church of living members, but is rather also extended to the broader city of God, primarily (again) through the scriptures but also through respectful dialogue with the longer and broader church tradition.⁸⁸

This correspondence of language to understandable truth that Augustine offers is broader than the one current in Evangelicalism. It is one that is grounded not merely in a rational academic mastery of language, languages, history, culture studies, textual studies, and discourse analysis (all of which, in their 4th century versions, Augustine advocated in *De Doctrina*). In addition to these, Augustine exhorts us to interpret rightly by dealing with the complex problems

of the interpreting subject and by participating with the indwelling Christ Himself in the interpretation process. He exhorts us to bolster the witness of our creational participatory selves with scripture as an old “wellspring” of continually new water,⁸⁹ and to bolster our individual participatory interpretation with a shared labor in hermeneutics that alone can reincarnate the hidden truth in public language and action.

To use an analogy that would resonate with most Evangelicals: just as it is impossible to enter into and continue in the salvation of Christ through fleshly means, but instead one must be born “in the Spirit” and made perfect “by the Spirit,”⁹⁰ so also is it impossible to interpret the scriptures through merely fleshly means, but instead the interpreter’s spirit must be aligned with the Spirit and by continual dialogue with the Interior Teacher his interpretation must be made perfect. As the sections below will develop further, though, what a “perfect” interpretation is to Augustine is a bit different than mere conceptual uniqueness and stability.

Linear and Participatory Historical Truth

One of the key questions in current biblical hermeneutics is how to relate biblical exegesis and history, and behind that, how to understand history itself in a Christian way. The larger struggles of modern historiography in biblical hermeneutics are beyond the scope of this project. However, some of these struggles impinge on my appropriation of a participatory Augustinian hermeneutics. Thus, some general exposition of the different hermeneutical perspectives on history will be necessary to provide a contrast to the participatory hermeneutics that is otherwise difficult to make clear in a modern social imaginary.

The relevant lineup of perspectives, many of which have introduced misreadings of Augustine’s own historical hermeneutics, are Platonic cyclical history, modern linear historical science, and humanistic/rhetorical dialectical historicism. The key importance of these

perspectives on history is that each one of them opens and precludes different hermeneutical possibilities for the scriptures, as we will see. After developing positively Augustine's linear-and-participatory perspective on history and noting some of its hermeneutical implications, I will clarify its lines by contrast with these other perspectives with which it has been implicitly in dialogue in various ways.

My view of the historical aspect of Augustine's hermeneutical theory follows the basic lines of Levering's work,⁹¹ to clarify my underlying bias at the outset. In light of my investigation of participation in Augustine and his time's social imaginary (Chapter 2), Levering's perspective seems most sensitive to the historical context and Augustine's primary sources. In this reading, Augustine valued both literal, linear history and the eternal meanings in which linear history participated, and he practiced a historiography in which the sacred history of the scriptures, culminating in the first and second comings of Christ, served as the "figural" lens through which to read past and present history.⁹² To clarify the point for Evangelical hermeneutic practice, Augustine argued that the tropes and figures of "past" scripture could be faithfully interpreted to disclose charitable meanings and courses of action for "present" history, not as the single epistemic application of a scriptural antitype but as a spiritually discerned instance of rhetorical participation. In a hermeneutical move that resonates with the work of Gadamer,⁹³ Augustine asserts and explains how application *is* interpretation, how past history and present history fuse through participation in the divine Word.

This expression of Augustine's historical-hermeneutical thought represents the position he came to in his later work, especially in *City of God*.⁹⁴ While he had recognized the need for some focused education in history in his educational program in *De Doctrina*,⁹⁵ it was only after the traumatic events of the barbarian sack of Rome that Augustine recognized the "need for a

new kind of Christian historical apologetic.”⁹⁶ Before then, as Markus elaborates, pagan and Christian histories had functioned as separate genres with separate subject matters and different ends.⁹⁷ As Augustine grew in biblical literacy and in his awareness of the importance of the Incarnation—tying together eternal Word and temporal history—he became more insistent on the distinction between ahistorical Platonic philosophical narratives and the real historical events through which God spoke/speaks his truths. As human authors speak through words, God can speak through events.⁹⁸ Thus, all history, in a hidden sense, participates in God, and the salvific history recorded in the scriptures, in a more specific sense, is a public revelation of the core plot of linear history. As Markus puts it, “universal history is articulated in a meaningful structure in so far as its course is projected on to a map defined by the co-ordinates of the sacred history.”⁹⁹

This use of the biblical frame to read and judge “secular” history, as opposed to secular history standing in judgment over scriptural history, is also the core thesis for a renewed “figural” hermeneutics put forward in Stephen Wright’s essay capping the Scripture and Hermeneutics Series volume on “history and biblical interpretation.”¹⁰⁰ The seminar’s reversal of hermeneutical authority—from secular authority to revelational authority—demonstrates that Augustine’s framework still has contemporary resonance.¹⁰¹ That these coordinates come to us from the Augustinian tradition is argued by Paula Fredericksen, who says that Augustine’s synthesis of sacred and secular history, of Old and New Testaments, was a departure from the previous Christian historical apologetics that had insisted on reading the Old Testament as a purely spiritual revelation and its Jewish reception as a completely carnal failure. Instead, Augustine saw God at work, and the Jews being faithful, through the literal, carnal commands of the law in their season.¹⁰²

This re-valuing of literal history, philosophically called for by the Incarnation, was given structure and language by the Donatist bishop Tyconius, who helped Augustine reorient himself, around the time he wrote his *Confessions*, in how to read the bible.¹⁰³ Augustine's contribution as "the first Christian philosopher of history," though, was only to make explicit the historiography implicit in the New Testament, which was neither a Gnostic rejection of history nor a "Constantinian" politicization of history.¹⁰⁴ The bible was to be neither allegorized away nor hardened into a coercive political and interpretational scheme.

Instead of reading the bible only allegorically, Augustine could now see how the tying together of the eternal and temporal realms could be expressed "typologically—and thus historically."¹⁰⁵ That is, though Christianity had always emphasized both the historicity and the spirituality of the scriptures, expressed most famously in the four-fold interpretational schema of Origen,¹⁰⁶ it fell to Augustine, following Tyconius, to explain *how* the interpretation of the eternal-spiritual and the temporal-literal worked together in the scriptures.

Levering does two things to help us understand *how* and *why* these linear and participatory histories need to have a reintegration in hermeneutics through Augustinian philosophy of communication. First, and briefly since this territory was covered in part in Chapter 2, Levering points us to the problem that in current biblical hermeneutics "there seems to be no exegetical bridge between past and present. This gap, much more than questions about inerrancy or inspiration, is the heart of the current crisis of scriptural authority."¹⁰⁷ That is, how can we explain how scriptural events from the different world of the past have real and important connections to our lived history today? Because of the Christian "faith in other [spiritual] realities operating in history," Levering says, an authentically historical reading of the scriptures *must* include both the linear historical-linguistic data *and* the theological, ecclesial, spiritual

framework. Together, historical-critical data and spiritual framework help us discern what was really going on in that past scriptural history and what is really going on in our current spiritual history.¹⁰⁸ In his book *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, Levering argues from Augustine and Aquinas that eternal scripture given in the past is reappropriated faithfully in the present through participatory interaction with the inward-dwelling divine Teacher, with the shared human conversations around the scriptures, and with the tradition of ecclesial authorities. In sum, linear history needs these participatory coordinates to be historical at all.¹⁰⁹

Second, Levering demonstrates for us that this tying together of linear, temporal history and eternal, participatory history was Augustine's intentional and explicit aim in his *City of God*. Resonating with Levering's historical-hermeneutic frame, Augustine says early on in the *City of God* that he has no wish to write like a pagan historian, "just another chronicler" of battles, events, and leaders.¹¹⁰ As discussed in Chapter 2, Augustine saw the meaning of history as the *whole* of which individual events are just parts. Citing several instances in the Augustinian corpus, Markus summarizes Augustine's philosophy of history well:

He was certainly never without a deep sense of God's ever-present activity in each and every moment of time, as in every part of space [*Confessions* VII.xv.21]. He often thought of the whole vast fabric of human history as a majestically ordered whole, an extended song or symphony [Epistle 138.5; *City of God* XI.18], in which each moment has its unique, if impenetrably mysterious significance [*City of God* VI.17; Epistle 197.2].¹¹¹

Following Augustine's own five part breakdown of *City of God*, as described in an Epistle to Firmus, Levering argues that books 1-5 critique pagan history as focused on "attainment of solely linear-historical ends"; that books 6-10 approve a basic Platonic participatory frame to

history but find it inadequate through its hubris and its denigration of temporal life;¹¹² that books 11-14 defend a linear participatory Christian account of history that avoids the difficulties of cyclic Platonic history; that books 15-18 use this participatory framework to integrate scriptural history and standard world history; and that books 19-22 “describe ... the participatory consummation of linear history.”¹¹³ That is, in its overall structure and in many of its specific parts, *City of God* is, according to Levering, an argument for how to read the bible and history as a narratively patterned confluence of human and divine actions. “On biblical grounds,” Levering says, “Augustine argues that every event in linear history has a participatory dimension, so that human words and deeds cannot be understood solely in terms of temporal causality and progression.”¹¹⁴

This participatory reading of history works to open up scriptural meaning in several directions: the scriptures might be used to interpret the participatory meaning of events of past history (as Augustine does in *City of God*), or one event in scripture might open up further meaning for another scriptural event (as in New Testament fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies), or scriptural themes from past history might overlay present and future historical events with possible charitable meanings. All these moves are grounded in the Incarnation as the historical event that reconnected the temporal realm to the eternal,¹¹⁵ and all look forward to the eschaton as the future historical event that will consummate and end the temporal mode of being.¹¹⁶

Of the several passages from *City of God*, from Levering’s reading and my own, that help develop this vision of hermeneutics as grounded in both linear and participatory history, only a few will be necessary to establish the tenor of the argument. First, Levering draws our attention to Augustine’s treatment of the biblical narrative of Cain and Abel, which Augustine uses as an

origin paradigm of sorts for his “two cities” metaphor. Augustine’s primary interest in Cain’s story is how it functions figuratively to foreshadow the murderous envy of those who killed Christ, which of course continues to be instantiated in the murderous envy of carnal Roman authorities who in Augustine’s day had continued to kill Christians.¹¹⁷

Abel, by offering a right sacrifice and suffering righteously for it, participates in the eternal plan of salvation before it is actualized in time. Christian martyrs, by offering a right sacrifice of the good confession and suffering for it, participate in the eternal plan of salvation as it has already been actualized. Christ was of course the eternal prototype whose perfect confession and perfect suffering serve as the way, the model, and the end for this scripture-wide theme of participation, ensuring that faithful communities facing persecution have a historical, not merely a literary, example and ground.¹¹⁸ In David Lyle Jeffrey’s words, the historical and typological example of Christ gives us, through hope in its guarantee of a real end to history, a “journey ... [of] radical *mimesis* coming to obedience through suffering as he did and as he has called us to do.”¹¹⁹ However, as Levering points out, it is not just the story of Christ but also that of the “lesser” biblical character of Cain that “Augustine is also concerned to defend ... as linear history.”¹²⁰

For hermeneutics, we see that Augustine sees spiritual and literal interpretations co-informing each other in large part through the externalized memory of the scriptural text. “Cain’s story has ramifications that cannot be adduced through the causal chain of linear history alone,” Levering tells us,¹²¹ so the spiritual import of the story needs to be brought out to give meaning to the linear history,¹²² securing it in memory and thus preserving it as history. Understood humanistically, history is not a catalogue of facts but the pattern of the past that tells us who we are. Jeffrey attributes this understanding of history to Augustine in the statement “We are what

we remember.”¹²³ However, it is the basic factuality of the Cain narrative that ensures us that God’s participatory providence can speak through events, not merely words. As Augustine the rhetorician knows, well-structured narratives with beautiful words can be cheap and can be cheats.¹²⁴ A divinely spoken rhetoric might be less uniform and less stylistically elegant, but it comes through actions that manifest God’s power (e.g., His manipulation of a historical Pharaoh¹²⁵) and His commitment (e.g., his delivering His Son to incarnation and death¹²⁶). Spiritual meaning is important for the *meaning* of our history, but factual embodiment is important for the *ethos* of our history.¹²⁷

Another example from *City of God*, one that Levering also notes,¹²⁸ is Augustine’s disquisition on the hermeneutical approach to the story of Noah’s Ark. Augustine argues for an approach to the biblical narrative that is both historically factual and figuratively fruitful, defending the narrative explicitly against mere historians and mere symbolists. Referencing the transmission of the story through the faithful tradition for so many years, Augustine finds it “twisted” that anyone would “consult [the books] simply for historical facts,” but he also speaks against “those who maintain that the account of the Flood is not historical, but is simply a collection of symbols and allegories.”¹²⁹ Augustine spends several paragraphs answering objections to the factual nature of the story, using the science, history, and mathematics available to him in his historical moment, but he concludes the section by bringing together again the importance of both fact and symbol, linear and participatory history:

It could not plausibly be said that the events, though historical, have no symbolic meaning, or that the account is not factual, but merely symbolical, or that the symbolism has nothing to do with the Church. No, we must believe that the writing of this historical

record had a wise purpose, that the events are historical, that they have a symbolic meaning, and that this meaning gives a prophetic picture of the Church.¹³⁰

Though all history is connected in hidden ways to God's action in the world and can sometimes be read through the private interpretation given to prophetic individuals,¹³¹ the scriptures are a *public* revelation given for the good of a *public* community.¹³² This public community is both the public church, which interprets its specific history through the figurative key of its Christological salvation, and the larger public sphere, for whose sake the confessing community interprets and embodies the scriptures. This confessing community is a current lived history participating in a past written history, both of which are participating temporally in the eternal Word who manifests "stable truth"¹³³ in events and words, in facts and meanings.

Perhaps because of its alien participatory frame, this confluence of history and scriptural hermeneutics has not been well understood.¹³⁴ Even erudite and thorough scholars of Augustine seem to have been unduly affected by historiographical philosophies alien to Augustine himself, a problem perhaps to be expected if our inherited preunderstandings of history are as hidden and basic to identity and interpretation as they seem to be.¹³⁵ That is, any approach to history is embedded in and takes its coordinates from what MacIntyre calls "narratives" and what Taylor calls "social imaginaries."¹³⁶ Jeffrey explains this connection between what we "remember" as history and our implicit systems of meaning:

The hermeneutical underpinnings of specific acts of interpretation are not often reducible to matters of method, or even of ideology more or less philosophically conceived. There is a deeper structure to world-views, almost invariably referred to as "history" [for the ancients] ... and it is invariably narratively encoded in forms or genres that that are conventionally regarded as literary rather than historical.¹³⁷

Though “primitive” or ancient Platonic cyclical history would be participatory, few if any modern hermeneutical scholars would advocate for those forms of participatory history with all their hermeneutic entailments, especially members of the Evangelical community of scholars and practitioners. Augustine himself, though he has been consistently mischaracterized as a Platonist, subverts and replaces Platonic cyclical and participatory theories of history and of interpretation in *City of God*, noting in their favor mainly that they listened to the inward truth about the One God in whom we participate.¹³⁸ But even Augustine’s compliment to the Platonists is backhanded since he affirms some of their conclusions by placing their discovery of spiritual truths under the scriptural paradigms of Romans 1 and Acts 17.¹³⁹ In non-Western contexts, Evangelical missionaries and biblical translators face hermeneutical problems that arise from a variety of participatory cosmologies—often in helpful ways—but this project speaks mainly to Evangelical interpreting communities in a Western context.¹⁴⁰

A more likely challenge to Augustinian participatory historical hermeneutics comes from modern “linear” historical science, on the one hand, and humanistic/rhetorical dialectical history, on the other. Historical science is, of course, the dominant strand of history that followed from the modern “flattening” of being, resulting in “a laundry list of evidentially corroborated facts.”¹⁴¹ This “scientific” biblical interpretation, whether “to subvert or to uphold [the bible’s] veridical relation to history[,] can be [understood] to engage *ipso facto* in a rejection of the meaning of history as the bible’s authors themselves understood it.”¹⁴² This is the background understanding of history of much of Evangelical scholarship and apologetics. However, as Jeffrey implies and Radical Orthodoxy scholars argue, this form of history untethered from a higher spiritual realm loses not only its Christian meaning, but *any* possibility of *any* meaning.

Augustine, while defending the historicity of the biblical narrative, presupposed that factuality was just one aspect of a larger *sensus plenior* of meaning, one of many testimonial functions of the scriptures. While he could argue, as we have seen, for the scientific and historical probability of the Noah's Ark narrative, this was just a preliminary and not technically necessary step toward proving the validity of the scriptures through its ecclesial interpretation and application. The point of the scriptures is to provoke the wisdom of faith and love through spiritually discerned knowledge. Of the two, the wisdom of God was more *real* to Augustine than knowledge.¹⁴³ However, Augustinian participation denies the usual either/or between worldly knowledge and spiritual wisdom that separates fact and meaning in an epistemologically fragmented modernity.

Dialectically oriented perspectives of history and interpretation, while more humanistically inclined, make it even more difficult to "see" Augustinian participatory hermeneutics. Enabled in its self-reflexivity by print culture,¹⁴⁴ dialectical history's watchword could be said to be, as Barfield says, "evolutionism,"¹⁴⁵ the metaphor of incremental change of past ideas into the present through conscious or unconscious participation through language. While Hegel may have been the last and greatest exponent of a directed meaning of history through dialectical growth, this perspective in a muted, more immanent form seems to underlie most of the Romantic and post-Romantic turn towards historicism.¹⁴⁶ As I have already mentioned in my reservations about Barfield and Taylor, their perspectives seem to emphasize the need to go with the change of the times and to seek ever-more conscious and articulate choices through which we can direct the evolution of our linguistic traditions. In biblical hermeneutics, this perspective can be subtly invasive, as I would argue it is in the work of Stephen Fowl and L. Gregory Jones, and of Stephen Wright. In Fowl and Jones, as will be

explored more in the fifth chapter, the Hegelian move of their otherwise very Augustinian biblical hermeneutics is to take at face value, as neutrally valenced, many changing social mores. They implicitly believe the *progress* narrative of humane values,¹⁴⁷ and they read the bible accordingly.

Wright's misstep is more directly at the intersection of history and hermeneutics. He argues for a historical "inhabiting" of "the story" by comparing past and present events through figuration. Wright takes his beginning cue from Auerbach, who says that "the two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life."¹⁴⁸ The goal of Wright's figural interpretation is to allow scripture "to be an endlessly new source of interpreting power."¹⁴⁹ Wright's bringing together of historical events through figuration corresponds with Augustine's philosophy of communication, but his emphasis on novelty and the transient pragmatic telos of interpretation does not fit within an Augustinian perspective. In Wright's exposition, the figures operate historically and linguistically within linear historical time, and the interpretive principles given by Wright leave little room for a participatory interpretation to tie together eternity and "the stream of historical life." Neither does he recognize that his (otherwise healthy) emphasis on "provisionality" of interpretation operates mainly as an accommodation to the preunderstandings of the modern subjective individual, nor that such an accommodation is not helpful for communities seeking a shared basis for action, nor for institutions seeking to build healthy long-term praxis.¹⁵⁰ Wright even denies individuals a scriptural interpretation that can last throughout their lifetimes, but rather insists that individual, communal, and institutional interpretations progress and evolve by "parabolic ... juxtapositions" that engage "imagination" to produce ever new scriptural syntheses of novel meanings.¹⁵¹ The novel interpretation is here more valued than the enduring one.

To elaborate my critique by way of example, Wright calls to mind the “pietistic” interpretation of scripture by which a person becomes convinced that a command or example from past (scriptural) history is a figure for his/her current obedience or self-understanding in the present time. Wright gives the example of God’s call to Abraham (“get out of your country ... go to a country I will show you”¹⁵²) being interpreted as God’s command for missionary service. However, Wright offers a caution:

It would be a faith in a perpetual state of immaturity that tied that verse perpetually to that experience. ... [The interpreter would be] deprived of seeing the many ways in which that verse might continue to address him or her throughout their personal history ... a grasp of symbol as symbol, of figure as figure, is central to growth.¹⁵³

What Wright overlooks here is the whole biblical history of exhortations to remember the promises of God—whether directly or figuratively delivered—and to *hold on* to those events of past communication in past history through the vicissitudes of a present where such “words” might be distinctly awkward, impractical, or dangerous. For example, when the Israelites were told to make a pile of rocks from the bottom of the Jordan River, which had been miraculously stopped, and to use the rock pile as a memory object for teaching throughout their generations,¹⁵⁴ it was clearly intended as an anchoring meaning that ties story, command, and history together in successive Jewish generations. To address Wright’s example specifically, if the Abrahamic call does come to a person who is seeking direction from God through the scriptures, his/her interpretation of the personal missiological meaning of that text does not have to be merely a “symbol,” just an “imaginative” comparison of the two poles of a figure in historical time. In the participatory frame, he/she could instead interpret the scripture rightly as a very real command, a past historical event that is being figurally applied to his/her current historical life *now* and is

thus solid enough for both present action and the perpetual labor of memory to keep “that verse ... tied ... perpetually to that experience.”¹⁵⁵ It is not that the verse could not also take on other meanings, but if it was tied to that experience by the Word, its meaning should not be untied for the sake of some modernistic metaphor of “maturity.”

The basic temptation of dialectically oriented historical perspectives, that is, is to see the participation between historical narratives in the horizontal plane only, with the potential for correctional perspectives inherent in the language of a tradition rather than in the God who commissions prophetic corrections. Transcendence becomes a linguistic phenomenon only. Along with that, dialectically oriented perspectives systemically exclude the strong ties between past historical figures and present historical interpretations that enable individual and communal obedience and individual and communal memory. Augustine’s participatory hermeneutics gives us a stronger connection between past and present history through figural interpretation because both those historical moments can be tied, in a participatory triangulation, with the eternal Word of God.

In a participatory frame, then, an Augustinian “figure” (or trope, or allegory, or type, or analogy, or anagogy¹⁵⁶) is not as rigidly categorized as a purely literary device might be since the latter is dependent on textual rules to ensure correct transmission of meaning down through historical time through language. Augustine had little regard for such narrow grammaticisms.¹⁵⁷ “Someone who attends to and worships a thing which is meaningful,” such as a figure, “but remains unaware of its meaning is a slave to a sign,” Augustine says, but access to the “things” beyond the signs raises faithful interpreters to “Christian freedom.”¹⁵⁸ Rather than purely linguistic tools, historical figures can be understood in light of the thing (*res*) of the “masterplot” of the story,¹⁵⁹ which we know from its historical details, from our inward witness, and from the

ecclesial commitments we have entered into, commitments to meanings that are to be maintained in our memory of past events and re-memorialized in their recurrence in present and future events. When we read scriptures within those commitments and in a faithful and charitable way, God's work in past history and his work in present history are connected in eternal meaning for us by the scriptural figure.

Caritas: The Telos of Hermeneutics

Though I have argued that Wright's vision of "inhabiting the story" is insufficiently participatory to enable strong ties of meaning between ancient scripture and present individual and communal commitments, his advocacy of the "provisionality" of meaning addresses a real problem in the history of totalizing Christian hermeneutics. Jeffrey, also, cautions that the moral implications of scriptural hermeneutics will depend on whether the "promised land" of the scriptural narrative is believed to be fully realizable here and now, through currently available means, or whether it is believed to be an eschaton (history-ending event) only prefigured here, not realizable except by the special work of Christ at his second coming. The first storyline leads to Christian empire, and it demands a hermeneutics that can justify systemic coercion. The second storyline puts the church on continual pilgrimage in the world, and while its hermeneutics demand specific commitments and actions in the church, those demands are more relational and partial, hoping in a perfection at the eschaton that cannot be fully realized now. Augustine consistently cast the Christian, and thus also the scriptural interpreter, as a *peregrinato*, a pilgrim or sojourner in the world.¹⁶⁰ Scriptural interpretation was a journey that got the church where it needed to go, but each place it stopped was one more place to "dwell in tents with Isaac and Jacob, ... heirs with [them] of the same promise ... wait[ing] on the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."¹⁶¹

In his scriptural hermeneutics that is neither entirely provisional nor supportive of a totalizing Christian empire,¹⁶² Augustine enshrines *caritas* as the hermeneutical principle that faithfully covers for what lack we have of knowledge, wisdom, and intersubjective communion. However, because exhibiting *caritas* is also our greatest form of participating in God himself—who “is Love”¹⁶³—*caritas* is not just a provisional measure to cope with a broken world but also the right telos of all interpretation. This telos of *caritas*, some argue,¹⁶⁴ even moves hermeneutics beyond the realm of the fallenness of human interpreters or language; it is argued that since God is fundamentally other than even his sinless creatures, our interpretation of God will never be totalized, though our love for Him will necessarily be consummated. Thus, even in eternity love is always ahead of knowledge, though not ultimately separable from it.¹⁶⁵

This picture of *caritas* perpetually bridging otherness is thrown into even sharper relief when we consider hermeneutics in the temporal realm: a redeemed but fallible people in the midst of a fallen, temporal world interpreting a compilation of ancient historical scriptures through the slippery medium of language. Thus, given these constraints on ideal formal interpretation in Augustine’s philosophy of communication, he who interprets the scriptures in love interprets rightly, even when he interprets them wrongly.

Caritas in Rhetoric. Understanding the place of *caritas* in Augustine’s broader rhetorical theory is relevant here since rhetoric is the whole of which his hermeneutics is a constitutive part. Augustine’s articulation of the process and purpose of rhetoric makes *caritas* the central metaphor (rather than self-interest, or power, for example¹⁶⁶). Because of the interior grounding of words with the Incarnate Word, it is the orientation of the hearer’s will to that Inner Teacher that is paramount, as we have seen. The hearer must listen to the inward truth for himself. Though words rhetorically employed are powerful sacramental signs, they “work” only to open a

space for the person's will to have conversation with the inward Christ.¹⁶⁷ Thus, when Augustine follows Cicero in *De Doctrina Christiana* in formulating the purposes of rhetoric as to "instruct, delight, and move,"¹⁶⁸ the content of the *instruction* has shifted to the scriptures, the *delighting* is only to get still-carnal ears to hear this instruction, and the *moving* is always to move people to love God and their neighbor, and thus be moved to seek to be found in Christ on the day of redemption.¹⁶⁹

In contrast to Cicero, it is not the good of the state or the attainment of optimal circumstances in *this* world that Augustine has in his sights, but rather the future heavenly city and whatever earthly goods that can be "used" toward that ultimate Good.¹⁷⁰ The one who is far along in pursuing this good has "wisdom," and because truth is common, not proprietary,¹⁷¹ this wise man will necessarily endeavor to help others along the same path. Thus, the goal of Christian rhetoric is to deal gently and realistically (i.e., charitably) with the hearers' wills to move them towards both interior love of God and neighbor and exterior loving action towards God and neighbor. The goal of Christian social life is to direct one's love toward God in the presence of others, and by this to cohere socially as a body in the shared love of God, using everything toward that end. In Augustine's anthropology, this is how humans' loves form society through implicit and explicit confession of those loves: "Notice that that's how you love yourself, and that you are drawing [the other] to yourself, and inviting him to what you love. Loving him as you love yourself, you are bound to draw him there to what you also love."¹⁷² By *means of caritas towards caritas*. Interpreting the scriptures with love for God and neighbor is an eternal good that is also fitted to serve an earthly, temporal good.

For Augustine, *caritas* guides every aspect of the rhetorical process. In his *arrangement*, *caritas* means that he watches his audience for understanding and conviction, adding examples

and development until the goal is reached, but no further, lest he become “a bore.”¹⁷³ In *style*, caritas chooses the style most necessary for the spiritual edification of his hearers.¹⁷⁴ Caritas chooses lively *delivery* that invites no audience members to sleep. Above all, caritas means that the rhetor *prays* for good communication, knowing that only God can make the wills of the people well-disposed to truth and the minds attentive to right inward meanings.¹⁷⁵

Caritas in Scriptural Interpretation. This principle of rhetoric writ large also holds for the hermeneutical aspect of rhetoric. Caritas moves the student of scripture to diligent study and gives him the undergirding narrative and purpose through which to read the scriptures. This is summed up for us by Augustine at the end of book one of *De Doctrina*:

The chief purpose of all that we have been saying in our discussion of things is to make it understood that the fulfillment and end of the law and all the divine scriptures is to love the thing which must be enjoyed [God] and the thing which together with us can enjoy that thing [i.e., other humans] ... To enlighten and enable us, the whole temporal dispensation was set up by divine providence for our salvation. We must make use of this, not with a permanent love and enjoyment of it, but with a transient love and enjoyment of our journey, or of our conveyances, so to speak, ... so that we love the means of transport only because of our destination.

So anyone who thinks that he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up this double love of God and neighbour, has not yet succeeded in understanding them.¹⁷⁶

Augustine clarifies here the “chief purpose” of his hermeneutical teachings: that the interpretation of the “divine scriptures” should provide a social platform (“together with us”) for the love and enjoyment of God.

The scriptures are one of the “conveyances” within temporality that get us to our ultimate destination, which is God Himself. As such, the “temporal dispensation” of the scriptures should be loved and used with a “transient love” as aids on our “journey,” but not as the endpoint. Further on in this section, Augustine even says that “anyone who derives from [the scriptures] an idea which is useful for supporting this love but fails to say what the writer demonstrably meant in the passage” is “misled in the same way as a walker who leaves his path by mistake but reaches the destination.” Augustine does advocate “put[ting] right” the textual practices of this type of person, but more to guard against potentially harmful habits in the person than to guard against truth being lost.¹⁷⁷ Because the truth is inward and outward, secured by the will of God, it cannot be lost by our occasional misreadings of scripture, especially if those misreadings achieve the point of that truth, the love of God and neighbor.

It must be pointed out that this process of charitably teaching one another in the truth is stable because of our participation through the Holy Spirit, not merely because of textual rules of interpretation. In Sermon 28A, Augustine tells us that the natural response of inward faith is how we speak outwardly to our neighbors, like water pouring from a jug,

But it must be poured out for others in such a way that you are not left empty yourself.

That’s why the Lord, when promising believers an abundance of his Holy Spirit, said, *It will become in him a fountain of water leaping up to eternal life*. It’s in the nature of fountains, you see, to pour out their water without getting empty.¹⁷⁸

Because we are connected inwardly with the Word of God, which is Christ, and because the scriptures likewise are inexhaustible treasures spoken by the Word of God,¹⁷⁹ the truth is not a limited resource. Limited resources are part of the social imaginary of modernism, but not of an Augustinian philosophy of communication. As we use the scriptures to participate together in the

love of God as we travel this “journey” through temporality, the same scriptures continue to show us new ways to love God and neighbor.

While entailing flexibility and openness in interpretation, *caritas* also submits to that larger narrative of the scriptures in that it operates under the scriptures and under the rule of faith.¹⁸⁰ If someone holds on to a private interpretation even when it is shown to be incorrect or uncharitable, that person is raising his/her own authority above the authority of the scriptures. “Faith will falter if the authority of holy scripture is shaken,” Augustine says, “and if faith falters, love itself decays. For if someone lapses in his faith, he inevitably lapses in his love as well, since he cannot love what he does not believe to be true.”¹⁸¹ Holy scripture is the temporal ground of truth through faith, read through the rule of faith, pointed toward love, co-owned with the rest of the city of God. As a *temporal* ground, it has to be read charitably within the church, but as a temporal *ground*, it can be the basis for shared action and even legitimate conflict.¹⁸² This sometimes means, in the larger public sphere, that one should choose to participate in the scriptural narrative of the city of God rather than to avoid controversy by dropping that narrative when it contradicts the secular pieties of a given age.¹⁸³

In Augustine’s scriptural *inventio*, *caritas* is the determining factor both in which interpretation one is *able* to choose and in which interpretation one *should* choose.¹⁸⁴ *Caritas* shapes hermeneutical division of the scriptures and the selection of the meaning most in line with the eternal happiness of the community. The “key to a true interpretation is *caritas*: the transformation of our *eros* by God’s *agape* of grace. This alone frees us to discover both the true wisdom of all our inexorable desires and strivings for wisdom and happiness.”¹⁸⁵ Since in Augustine’s theology, humans’ attention, and thus their interpretation, is driven by their desires, or loves, any redeemed interpretation of scripture must start with redeemed loves, but this is a

process that takes a lifetime and is never fully complete. Redeemed loves are rightly ordered loves in a “just and holy life,” which Augustine develops at length as follows:

He is also a person who has ordered his love, so that he does not love what it is wrong to love, or fail to love what should be loved, or love too much what should be loved less (or love too little what should be loved more), or love two things equally if one of them should be loved either less or more than the other, or love things either more or less if they should be loved equally.¹⁸⁶

Though it is clear, to Augustine, that every temporal thing should be loved with a transient love in service to love for God as an end in Himself, the exact path of how to follow the right order of loves is fraught with interpretive difficulty. Augustine gives us a famous picture of this interpretive difficulty in his portrayal of the judge who has to deliver the accused to torture to obtain a testimony to clear him.¹⁸⁷ “Thus the ignorance of the judge frequently involves an innocent person in suffering,” and though the judge might know *that* he is to love God by loving this accused man before him, his judgment as to *how* to love the accused man is a “darkness [that] shrouds social life.”¹⁸⁸

If this is the case with a person who lives a “just and holy life,” what further difficulty will there be in an ecclesial context where not everyone is necessarily similarly pure or focused in their love of God and neighbor? Augustine was quite upfront with his congregation about the need for them to change the focus of their loves:

God hates you as you are but loves you as he wants you to be, and that is why he urges you to change. Come to an agreement with him, and begin by having a good will and hating yourself as you are. Let this be the first clause of your agreement with the word of

God ... When you too have begun to hate yourself as you are, just as God hates that version of you, then you are already beginning to love God himself as he is.¹⁸⁹

Augustine compares people's obedience to God to carrying a harp. Obeying because of fear of God is merely carrying the harp, but "if you do it out of love, you are singing the new song."¹⁹⁰ However, he says, "But go on being afraid, all the same, so that this dread may keep guard over you, may lead you to love."¹⁹¹ This progression from servile fear to the "chaste fear" of the love of God is a continual learning, or healing, process of learning to love our own souls by directing them toward the love of God, replacing carnal loves with godly loves, or just putting them in their proper places.¹⁹² "So let us learn, then, brothers and sister, how to love our own souls. ... and in this way love your neighbor as yourself; because if you don't know how to love yourself, how will you be able to love your neighbor in truth?"¹⁹³ To the degree we are still disordered in our loves, our own interpretation of the truth of scripture will be compromised, and to the degree that Christians' reading of the scriptures differs because of different lenses of different loves, our shared interpretation of the scriptures will be fractured. Therefore, long before this problematic of desire, perception, and interpretation was noticed in later hermeneutical theory,¹⁹⁴ it was central for Augustine. However, Augustine has reason to hope because God has "given us so much of his spirit to support us on our journey," has "bestowed individual gifts for the consolidation of his church," and has "tie[d] together his own body, with its many members performing different tasks, in a bond of unity and love like a healing bandage," treating it medically by "various disagreeable medicines."¹⁹⁵

Even if the "just and holy" person interprets the scriptures according to a rightly ordered love for God and his narrative of salvation, he or she has to consider the possible impact of different interpretations on the others with whom he/she is committed in the church, knowing

that some legitimate textual interpretations might tear down other Christians in their current state of understanding and love. Augustine himself had to put aside his reading of the book of Isaiah, when he was a young convert, because he could not understand the “Lord’s mode of speech,”¹⁹⁶ and with this in mind, he was sensitive to what his own readers and hearers could handle. As a bishop who had to deal regularly with questions that were both doctrinal and practical/moral, Augustine’s hermeneutical theory was not insulated from the practical need for charitable interpretation, as Evangelical hermeneutical theory is when it is not closely paired with mission.

Augustine showed his familiarity with Paul’s famous exposition of charitable hermeneutic relativity, citing Romans 14 in his discourse on the temptation of gluttony in the *Confessions*:

You have taught me, good Father, that “all things are clean to the clean,” “but it is evil for the man who eats with offense,” and that “every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected that is received with thanksgiving,” and that “meat does not commend us to God,” and that “no man should judge” us “in food or drink” and that “he who eats should not despise him who does not eat, and he who does not eat should not judge him who eats.”¹⁹⁷

In a verse that does not fit well with the outlines of modernistic Evangelical hermeneutics, Paul states baldly that in the interpretation of scriptural dietary and ceremonial laws “let each [Christian] be fully convinced in his own mind,”¹⁹⁸ as long as he holds this interpretation with charity toward his brothers and sisters in the church. The wrong interpretation, as Augustine seconds, leads a person to “eat with offense,” to “despise him who does not eat” or “judge him who eats.” As Calvin Troup argues, Augustine posits a hermeneutic that does not haggle over words but “pursu[es] charity,” seeking not to “violate ... the community.”¹⁹⁹ Therefore, not only

does hermeneutic charity constrain what interpretations of scripture can be approved privately before God but also which ones can be held publicly as a shared standard within the church.

Finally, *caritas* entails a dialogic approach to interpretation, as we have seen,²⁰⁰ locating the truth of the scriptures in the intersection of text, faithful interpreters, and the Teacher in whom they participate—rather than just in the text itself. It is this explicit relocating of the text of scripture into the context of spiritual participation, the rule of faith, and dialogue that contrasts most sharply with the modernist hermeneutic strand of Evangelicalism. Evangelicals agree that love of God and neighbor is a goal for Christian theology and practice, but Augustine’s explicit use of *caritas* as a hermeneutical principle might be received by Evangelicals as an error, the uncleanness of subjective interpretation soiling the objectivity of textual truth. However, if we Evangelicals would exchange our certainties grounded in modernist optimism in rational control of textual meaning for the certainties grounded in humble participation in God’s revelation, we would have to do so by looking steadily at this law of love as the hermeneutic that does not puff us up, but builds us up.²⁰¹

Caritas in the Narrative Whole. There is a further sense in which *caritas* should guide our interpretation. So far, I have explained that *caritas* guides our perception of the text of scripture and its divisions, that *caritas* motivates our study and application of the scripture, that *caritas* functions as a principle of selection among valid possible interpretations, and that, in proclamation, *caritas* shapes how those love-centered interpretations are delivered. However, within this version of the “hermeneutic circle,” Augustine also recognized a frame or narrative ground, a whole within which exegetical parts could function charitably. This further component of Augustine’s hermeneutical theory—the public and explicit owning of a preexisting bias in interpretation—is quite different from the presumably objective hermeneutics of modernist

Evangelicals, whose hermeneutical presuppositions are the more dangerous for being treated as if they did not exist.²⁰² Augustine's emphasis on this narrative whole has resonance with Alasdair MacIntyre's concept of a tradition, though Augustine's interpretive whole lives in the participatory dialogue between the Creed (or "Symbol") and the comprehensive story of redemption in the mind of God, the story that we only ever know in parts and dimly.²⁰³

This narrative whole that is essential for scriptural interpretation has two parts, which one might label a *synchronic* part and a *diachronic* part. The diachronic part of the narrative whole is the "rule of faith," the "faith once for all delivered to the saints," that weaves together the whole canon of scripture into a grand narrative of God's salvation through Christ, reaching from its exigence and promise in the first chapters of Genesis to its resolution and fulfillment in the last chapters of Revelation. This is the faith that we must maintain in discursive memory through time. This longer and deeper narrative encapsulated in the rule of faith and developed at length throughout history was the structure through which Augustine read the scriptures,²⁰⁴ as seen, for example, in his *City of God*. The narrative through which we interpret what "charity" itself means,²⁰⁵ and thus what a charitable interpretation of a passage would be, is not our own story, nor just the story of our particular sect or generation. Rather, it is the longer and deeper story into which God has gracefully thrown us, a story to which we owe respect because it is a God-given tradition.

However, there is also a synchronic aspect to this narrative, as there is with any tradition in the plane of temporality and history, and that synchronic aspect is the way the narrative is continually reinstated through discursive practices that constitute institutions through both normal and special dialogue.²⁰⁶ Normal dialogue is the way in which institutional members attempt to maintain and pass along the diachronic ecclesial narrative through the perduring

mediums of material resources, mini-narratives, and what Francois Cooren calls “agentic texts,”²⁰⁷ which would include scriptures, liturgies, and the organizational and governing documents of a church. As more recently examined through Structuration Theory and Constitutive Communication of Organizations (CCO), even when members attempt to maintain a diachronic narrative in its purity through time, the dialogic nature of interpreting and reinterpreting the diachronic narrative and its artifacts introduces slippage.²⁰⁸ Since no tradition can be transferred in its chemical purity but is subject to language and the interpretive fusion of different historical horizons, it is best to approach the *normal dialogue* of faithful transmission with charity, with an eye toward the basic shape of the narrative, social cohesion, and willingness to do the labor together of the interpretive process. Just faithfully passing along the diachronic tradition requires caritas.

Caritas is even more essential for the shared synchronic interpretation of the Christian narrative when the situation demands something more than faithful transmission of the narrative, such as reformation, change, or dialogic response to contingent historical exigencies. *Special dialogue* in ecclesial situations involves the adaptation of the diachronic narrative to significantly different cultures or historical moments, and it may involve significant conflict,²⁰⁹ as modeled by Augustine’s dialogic encounters, through treatise, letter, and public debate, with several different heresies of his time.²¹⁰ Thus, even conflict in the synchronic interpretation of the narrative of the faith involved dialogue. At Augustine’s time, and up through Christian history until the aftermath of the Reformation, heresy was treated fundamentally differently than schism. Heretics were considered wrong enough to exclude them from positions of authority or teaching, but the general approach to them was persuasion, not force. Schismatics, on the other hand, were those who had removed themselves from the sphere of discourse and thus were doing irrevocable harm

to those trapped within their separate discourse communities.²¹¹ Augustine's consistent emphasis in his rhetorical theory was on the primacy of moral persuasion, the importance of coming to agreement through dialogue, emphasizing the charity of arguing for the faith narrative through dialogue wherever possible.²¹²

Frederick Russell, studying Augustine's thought process on coercion in the context of the schismatic sect of the Donatists, summarizes the situation as follows:

Most of the modes of coercion that Augustine advocates consist of words—words in bishops' sermons, words in the texts of imperial edicts. We may see these words as shoddy euphemisms for brute force, but they need not be. They can be seen as conversion through coercion by words. The emphasis is on persuasion, not on punishment.²¹³

This emphasis on persuasion in a charitable frame is borne out as well by Augustine's admonitions to his congregation concerning the Donatists. He rebukes his zealous congregation for driving Donatist seekers away (suspecting their motives for asking to be rebaptized), and he argues that because even insincere re-converts are coming within the hearing of the word of God, bringing them back into dialogue with the truth is the only charitable thing to do.²¹⁴ Jennifer Ebbler concurs in her book-length study of Augustine's pioneering use of epistles as mediums for public correction and conversion. She notes that "the Donatists resisted Augustine's invitations to participate in mutually corrective letter exchanges. Their persistent intransigence led Augustine [eventually] to abandon the corrective correspondence and the possibility of friendly correction." These exchanges were "mutually corrective" in that Augustine explicitly invited Donatist bishops to correct him in the epistolary dialogue and explicitly framed the discourse as a semi-public event. Since some of the earlier letters of correction were from Augustine as priest to officials higher than he in authority, it seems clear that they were not an

expression of institutional power.²¹⁵ Rather, because there was a significant difference in the interpretation of the larger Christian narrative to which both Catholics and Donatists belonged, Augustine's theory and practice pointed toward dialogue through the "agentic text" of the scriptures as the necessary expression of *caritas* in that historical moment.

Shared Action for Shared Understanding

A final aspect to Augustine's hermeneutics which is not often pulled out of the background is the intended fruition of scriptural interpretation in shared action, and the corresponding new understanding of those scriptures through the embodied lens of that action. That is, the narrative whole—passed down through time and rhetorically interpreted in the present—is not a merely mental or linguistic construct (an individual "worldview"²¹⁶) but rather a social-material site of action. This picture is important for understanding, as well, the Augustinian philosophy of communication through which this project is carried out.

In the philosophy of communication of Arnett and Holba, philosophical resources are appropriated in order to provide language, and thus thought, and thus a shared social perspective, and thus shared action to a question or problem in the historical moment.²¹⁷ In Augustine, the philosophical and scriptural language available functions similarly, but within the guiding narrative of the rule of faith, which provides a general structure for identifying perennial questions and problems—through scriptural figures—and for discerning between philosophical gifts from God and philosophical deceptions from lying spirits. In Augustine also, the unity of action is *through* communication, but is not ultimately linguistic. Shared faith still comes by the hearing of truth in language,²¹⁸ but the faith is not located in the linguistic-conceptual "idea of God" that helps a community deal pragmatically with current questions and problems. Rather, the linguistic resources serve as participatory mediums through which individuals "remember"

truth through the scriptures, move toward wisdom, and take right action. God is not the right pragmatic idea in their individual minds or shared tradition; rather, God is the being in whom they intersubjectively participate, through language and through action. The language interpreted within the broader narrative, in consultation with the Inner Teacher, spurs shared action, and the completed action *in God and with God* (i.e., participation) then adds further meaning retroactively to the language by which the ecclesial body had acted. In this way, philosophical resources—and preeminently the scriptures—provide pointers and pathways for triangulated interpretation and action, participation in both the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of the city of God.

The key corrective to modernistic Evangelical hermeneutics is that, in contrast to the well-traveled Evangelical injunction against interpreting scripture through “experience,” Augustine says that we choose either literal or figurative interpretation of a passage through “the advantage of experience fortified by the exercise of holiness.”²¹⁹ I argue that this “experience” and “holiness,” in an Augustinian context, is not primarily an individual phenomenon, but requires a social body for shared action and shared understanding in the complex public sphere of the city of God. Augustine lived in the long shadow of the Roman concept of the public sphere, where the good of the *res publica* was ostensibly the ground of all legitimate interpretation and the warrant behind all patriotic rhetoric.²²⁰ While Augustine devastatingly critiqued that Roman ground of interpretation in *City of God*,²²¹ he did not reject the importance of the unified social body in interpretation, but rather shifted its identity in a participatory direction.

Modern Evangelicals—especially veterans of recent culture wars—might assume that Augustine shifted the authoritative interpreting body from the political polis to the church, which

has as its ground the “perspicuous” scriptures. This modernist Evangelical viewpoint would give as the explanation for why our political public is so mixed-up the political public’s lack of authoritative scriptural ground, but modernistic Evangelicals would then posit a simplistic solution: that the scriptural text provides clear and equal access to all personal, social, and political questions, and that the main problem of ecclesial institutions is overcoming the recalcitrant wills in the public sphere to enact those scripturally clear answers. In this simplistic picture, interpretation is a problem of mainly the secular public sphere, while application is the chief activity of the (Evangelical) ecclesial public—because its interpretation is unproblematic. However, this is not the direction Augustine took, and for good scriptural reasons.

First, in Augustine’s philosophy of communication, shared action, and thus shared interpretation, is made difficult because of the mixed nature of the church. In discussing Tyconius’s rules of interpretation, Augustine re-titles one of them as “On the mixed church,” and in his discussion, he problematizes the church itself as a unified interpreting body. To interpret scripture correctly, we must understand that it may be “actually speaking to another set of people,” and he cautions against assuming the church is a completely coherent interpreting body, “as if both kinds formed a single body by virtue of their temporary unity and their participation in the sacraments.”²²² Referencing Augustine’s earlier discussion, those in the church who actually participate in God through Christ have the “Christian freedom” of some real “inner” knowledge of God and the whole of his gospel narrative, and thus they have the key ingredients to a charitable and spiritual interpretation. Those in the church who only participate socially, linguistically, and liturgically are still “slaves of a sign,”²²³ unable to join in public action with the indwelling Christ and with other participating Christians.

This point is underscored in the final hermeneutic rule from Tyconius, “On the devil and his body,” which enjoins us to recognize two social bodies that affect scriptural interpretation: not only the spiritual body of the city of God but also the opposite spiritual body of those participating in their head, the devil, “a body which consists not only of those who are quite clearly outside but also those who although they belong to [the devil] are nevertheless part of the church for the time being.”²²⁴ Recall that a right love is necessary in order to “remember” and understand eternal truth, as well as to practice the wisdom of charitable interpretation. If the church is a mixed population between those who participate in Christ’s body and those who participate in the devil’s body, the church itself will be the site of necessarily conflicting interpretations, requiring the *caritas* of stubborn insistence on the rule of faith, dialogic persuasion, and gentle care of the doctrinally sick, in whatever ways that needs to be manifested. “The Church is [Christ’s] body, and ... in his body, as its very health, is to be found the unity of its members and the framework of love. ... Whatever ... remains in the body need not despair of being restored to health; but any part that has been amputated can be neither treated nor healed.”²²⁵

Moreover, even given a participatory social fellowship of those in the city of God, hermeneutics is not easy and univocal. Rather, participation in the broader public of the city of God means that the community extends through time and beyond time,²²⁶ that different temporal exigencies give legitimate rise to new interpretations,²²⁷ and that interpretation is a jointly owned endeavor that is enacted together by different individuals with different levels of gifting and grace.²²⁸ Again, this is not merely a horizontal, human hermeneutic endeavor. Because “the whole Christ [totus Christus] is both head and body[,] ... he is already in heaven, and he is struggling here as long as the Church is struggling here.”²²⁹

Thus profiled, Augustine's ecclesial interpreting body makes its way slowly and dialogically—participating with Christ—through the progression of understanding, then delight, then assent, which flowers into action. It is because of the mixed nature of the ecclesial body that Augustine's rhetoric for the church enjoins a diverse set of goals and tactics, as he says,

How do those ... things benefit a person who admits the truth and praises the style but does not give his assent—which is the whole point of the speaker's tireless concentration on the subject-matter of his address when advocating a particular course of action? ... When one is giving instruction about something that must be acted on, and one's aim is to produce this action, it is futile to persuade people of the truth of what is being said, and futile to give delight by the style one uses, if the learning process does not result in action.²³⁰

This action on the basis of faith, as we have seen from *De Trinitate*, then imparts divine “wisdom,” which is according to truth. Wisdom is not immediate, purely intellectual, or comprehensive, in the *distentionem animi* (i.e., our stretched-out-in-time being) of the church or the self.²³¹ Even knowledge about the self is “for the most part hidden away unless brought to light by some experience,”²³² and what is true for the self is a synecdoche for what is true of the larger ecclesial body.²³³ Wisdom is individually discerned, but socially confirmed and owned, tying together the faithful with cords of shared experience in the truth. Augustine articulates how this individual love of the truth becomes a co-owned truth: “because [an interpretation] is true, it is by that very fact not theirs. Therefore, if they love it because it is true, then it is both theirs and mine, since it is the common property of all lovers of the truth.”²³⁴ Augustine divides this experience in the truth into contemplative experience and action experience, inward action and outward action, and he argues that both should constitute the Christian's life:

As to these three modes of life, the contemplative, the active, and the composite, although, so long as a man's faith is preserved, he may choose any of them without detriment to his eternal interests, yet he must never overlook the claims of truth and duty. No man has a right to lead such a life of contemplation as to forget in his own ease the service due to his neighbor; nor has any man a right to be so immersed in active life as to neglect the contemplation of God.²³⁵

If individual believers never moved between contemplation and action, their faith would never become wisdom and would never move from a mere opinion of faith to a testimony of wisdom. This movement back and forth between contemplation and action, though, is the province of the church.

In some cases, understanding can become action, and thus wisdom, with the goal of testimony to raise the faith of another, provoking similar individual action. Augustine gives an example of this in *Confessions* when recounting the conversion of the prominent pagan Victorinus. Victorinus had attempted to claim a Christian identity through private understanding rather than the public action of confession and baptism, but was rightly turned away. "Through reading [the scriptures] and longing, he drank in strength," though, and let his understanding and delight bear fruit in baptism and public confession of the faith.²³⁶ The testimony of such attainment of wisdom has an important social impact in leading others to new or further contemplation of God, and joy, as Augustine says: "For when many men rejoice together, there is a richer joy in each individual, since they enkindle themselves and they inflame one another. ... they exercise authority towards salvation for many others, and they lead the way on which many others follow."²³⁷

Augustine's conversion itself can be seen in this paradigm of individual understanding flowering into action, and from there into testimony which creates a community founded on wisdom, ready for good works. His conversion was alone and in silence, but he immediately shared conversion testimonies with Alypius, joined the fellowship of his mother,²³⁸ and soon began speaking of the Christian life in the plural: "your love pierced *our* heart like an arrow, and *we* bore within *us* your words, transfixing *our* inmost parts. . . . So strong a fire did they enkindle in *us* that all the hostile blasts from deceitful tongues would only inflame *us* more fiercely and not put out that fire."²³⁹ That pronominal "our" and "us" then grows a charity and wisdom that renews its ecclesial community's interpretive framework and readings of the scriptures.

In other cases, for understanding to become action, it requires more than one human participant: either two together sharing the action or a faithful giver acting towards a faithful receiver. Again, though each person is accountable for his own seeking of inward wisdom, Augustine insisted that such seeds must flower into "bear[ing] one another's burdens," which "fulfill[s] the law of Christ." He memorably applies this principle to rich and poor: "You haven't got poverty as a burden, but you have riches as a burden. . . . [The poor man has] got one burden, you another. Carry his with him, and let him carry yours with you, so that you end up by carrying your burdens for each other."²⁴⁰ Augustine saw his own writing career as a provocation not to mere understanding but to action, saying, "If those by whom these books are read and praised do not actually take action and do these things, of what good are the books?"²⁴¹ Augustine thus saw his own labor in the scriptures, and that of the church itself, as potential gifts that could be actualized by their reception. These charitable interpretive actions then feed back into the church's reading of scripture, and thus inform and perfect its wisdom, and thus blossom into praise, the "new song" of loving obedience.²⁴²

As explained above, this model illustrates an Augustinian philosophy of communication. The scriptures, while on a higher level than Augustine's own writing,²⁴³ are similarly dependent on the inward and upward turn of receptive hearers. These different gifts of language to the ecclesial interpreting body, like the biblical metaphor of the seed, may have different levels of effect, but the target is "he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."²⁴⁴ And the effect that such scriptural language produces cannot or should not remain within the individual mind as personal meaning, Augustine says, but, as the truth of God, should be treated as common property. This move from individual meaning to communication and shared action to a shared meaning through the embodiment of truth to a now-deeper shared language explains why Augustine's hermeneutic philosophy requires for its full functioning a participating ecclesial body.

Augustine's Participatory Social Thought

Because Evangelicals are embedded within the individualism of modern culture and thus have a hard time seeing the participatory sociality of the scriptures, it might be difficult for them to follow my argument that scriptural interpretation is necessarily co-owned. Their hope in the stability of the text and the incorruptibility of hermeneutic methodology is an understandable defensive reaction to the modern quandary of intersubjectivity and the further fragmentation of the Christian narrative. That is, modernity undercuts intersubjectivity, even as intersubjectivity continues as a felt need and a human practice.

As Samuel Moyn explains, modern philosophers have for some time been trying to resolve the question of how intersubjective meaning is (or is not) possible, and this tension has been a goad for much of the philosophy of communication in modernity. For the most part, Moyn says that philosophers have started with meaning as arising within the individual knower.

The potential incommensurability of different knowers, though, leads to the further problem of communication since interpreting the communication of another person demands some level of shared preunderstandings. When the communicator is absent, is from an alien culture, and is separated from the other by layers of textuality, the problem of intersubjective interpretation is exacerbated. This tradition of thought culminated in the work of Edmund Husserl, who acknowledged that he never solved the problem of intersubjectivity. His student Martin Heidegger then shifted the ground of the problem by *presupposing* intersubjectivity, but this neither answered the question nor provided resources by which to diagnose successful or ethical communication.²⁴⁵

Augustine himself acknowledged the real division between person and person. He rested on the charity of his readers to understand and believe his words in the *Confessions*,²⁴⁶ and he also wrote in *Confessions* extensively of the intersubjective gulf that bears on scriptural interpretation, citing Moses as a representative scriptural other. Moses is absent, speaking within a different historical moment, immersed in a different language, and available only through text, not conversation. However, even if Moses were present in conversation speaking the same language, Augustine asks, “how would I know whether he spoke the truth?”²⁴⁷ Further on, Augustine puts the exact content of Moses’s communication in the same place as its veracity: “Can I say with the same confidence that Moses meant nothing else than this when he wrote, ‘In the beginning, God made heaven and earth?’ I do not see him thinking this within his mind as he wrote those words.”²⁴⁸ However, as we will see, Augustine’s confidence in the participatory work of the Inner Teacher²⁴⁹ and his clear priority on charity in mutual understanding²⁵⁰ give him a distinctly non-modern grounding for confidence in intersubjective interpretation.

Without a healthy participatory sociality passed down from this longer Christian tradition, Evangelical hermeneutics has had difficulty dealing with the problems of scriptural interpretation and shared social meaning, as narrated in Chapter 1. To Evangelicals, the text itself, rightly interpreted, is supposed to be the authority that is clear enough to each individual that each individual priest in the priesthood of all believers can come quickly to the one interpretation that was meant by the author, an interpretation clear enough that each individual interpreter would express it in similar language. This is how scholarly Evangelical interpreters have, in the last century at least, tried theoretically to put together the inwardness of the interpreting process and the outward objectivity of the truth. In general practice, Evangelical hermeneutics has never functioned this way, though scholars and practitioners were not for a long time forced to come to grips with the gap between theory and practice.²⁵¹ The linguistic turn has exposed the social and contextual nature of interpretation—that it is never purely individual nor purely objective with the text. But part of what philosophy of communication needs to explain is the nature of humankind that allows its interpretive faculties to be always already mutually influenced. And in an Evangelical narrative where right and wrong interpretation of the scriptures might have eternal consequences, not just sociological consequences, how can the dangers of an intersubjective hermeneutics be mitigated?

This also is where Augustine can help us: his philosophy of communication gives us an intersubjective anthropology that not only points us toward the charitable hermeneutics made possible by the created sociality of our nature but also warns us about the equal and opposite dangers of interpretive division and false interpretive “peaces.” This is the nexus in which scriptural interpretation operates: enabling shared interpretation through spiritual participation

and charity and refuting interpretations that undercut the faith and the charity of the ecclesial social body.

According to James K. A. Smith's reading of Augustine, "finitude and intersubjectivity ... are the conditions for hermeneutics."²⁵² Intersubjectivity makes interpretation possible, while differences and human finitude make it necessary. Articulating the problem of intersubjective hermeneutics after the linguistic turn, Smith says,

We never have (nor ever will have) access to the thoughts of another as immediately present ... Every act of reading or listening is an act of translation: a negotiation between two (or more) universes of discourse, two (or more) traditionalities, two (or more) ways of understanding the world.²⁵³

Helpful as it is, Smith's reading of Augustine is indebted overmuch to modern individualism, especially Kierkegaard's "leap of faith" between one individual's and another's understanding. He does identify for us Augustine's "primordial hermeneutics of trust," but he sets it in the context of mere language more than in the participatory possibilities of God's "presence" to multiple people.²⁵⁴

The participatory nature of intersubjectivity, and thus of hermeneutics, can be seen, though, in Augustine's complex pairing of love for God (which draws us into intersubjective communion with God) and love for our neighbor (which draws us into intersubjective communion with him/her). As Raymond Canning argues exhaustively in his 1993 opus *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbor in St. Augustine*,²⁵⁵ these two loves are inseparable in Augustine. We are by nature fitted to have fellowship with God, and we are by nature fitted to have fellowship with one another, and these two types of types of intersubjective communion are—as part of one created nature—complementary and not contradictory. This is, of course, a

nature that was created good and continues to be good, though partially de-natured and marred by sin. In *City of God* XIX, Augustine says,

How much more strongly [than an animal] is a human being drawn by the laws of his nature, so to speak, to enter upon a fellowship with all his fellow-men and to keep peace with them, as far as lies in him. ... [I]t cannot help loving peace of some kind or other.

For no creature's perversion is so contrary to nature as to destroy the very last vestiges of its nature.²⁵⁶

That this peace is not merely political²⁵⁷ is shown by the ensuing metaphors in *City of God* XIX.12 of an embalmed body as one that is kept at peace with its original form and the decaying body as one that becomes at peace with the earth, all according to the natural laws of God. That is, the desire for peace through intersubjective sociality operates on every level, from the microbes to the human body to the circle of friends to the body politic. In fact, Augustine says that we can see the operation of this natural desire for intersubjectivity in even our relationships with the "irrational creatures" of the world: "It almost seems as if they long to be known, just because they cannot know themselves."²⁵⁸ So, the desire to be known is part of human nature, and the desire to *meet* this desire to be known is its matching characteristic. Importantly, the directionality of this desire for intersubjectivity is not just toward other humans or irrational creatures but also toward God, for "our heart is restless until it rests in [God]."²⁵⁹

Augustine also underscores the naturalness of intersubjectivity in the plan of God by emphasizing our common human genesis in Adam. He also says in *City of God*:

God created man as one individual; but that did not mean that he was to remain alone, bereft of human society. God's intention was that in this way the unity of human society and the bonds of human sympathy be more emphatically brought home to man, if men

were bound together not merely by likeness in nature but also by the feeling of kinship.

... God started the human race from one man to show to mankind how pleasing to him is unity in plurality.²⁶⁰

Thus, natural human intersubjectivity involves “unity” and “sympathy” that flow not just from “likeness in nature” but also from “the feeling of kinship.” Besides being natural from creation, kinship is given here as a rhetorical argument for our belief in and action in service of intersubjectivity—that is, that our intersubjectivity “be more emphatically brought home” to us. Intersubjectivity, then, though natural, is not just descriptive but also hortatory. Also, because God’s object is not mere “unity,” but “unity in plurality,” it is obvious that even pure intersubjectivity (prelapsarian) involves difference as well as similarity. Hermeneutics, as a social intersubjective phenomenon, would involve both unity and plurality, made possible by the participation of all in one body with one head, Christ.

That is, Augustine grounds in God what Derrida (quoted approvingly by Smith) grounds in human communication: the “dissymmetry of an affirmation, of a yes before all opposition of yes and no ... Language always, before any question, and in the very question, comes down to the promise.” Smith connects this primordial “yes,” or positive attention, with Augustine’s presupposition that “goodness is more primordial than evil,”²⁶¹ but it may be more accurate to Augustine to say that God is a more primordial ground than evil, that the primordial “yes” is rooted more in the participatory engagement of God with his creation than in mere language.

To Augustine, language is important in the realm of temporality, but it is a means and not the ultimate ground of intersubjectivity and right interpretation. In the Preface to *De Doctrina*, Augustine defends the importance of human-to-human intercommunication:

All this could certainly have been done through an angel, but the human condition would be wretched indeed if God appeared unwilling to minister his word to human beings through human agency ... Moreover, there would be no way for love, which ties people together in the bonds of unity, to make souls overflow and as it were intermingle with each other, if human beings learned nothing from other humans.²⁶²

Here, we see again the return to our natural “unity” through “love.” Moreover, the description of the result—“souls overflow and ... intermingle with each other”—certainly describes a presence to one another beyond a “leap of faith” and beyond a mediated textual science.

Augustine also recognizes the “power of the tongue” in the peace of even the earthly city in his retelling of the unity of Babel against God.²⁶³ However, we notice in the above quotation from *De Doctrina Christiana* that it is God doing the ministering. In another place, Augustine warns “that no man ... may attribute it to his own powers, when some other man, whom he wishes to correct, is corrected by his words.”²⁶⁴ In fact, as we have seen, Augustine calls into question any simplistic understanding of communication that would posit immediacy and transparency through language *alone*.²⁶⁵ While he acknowledges and develops the limits to knowing one another inwardly, Augustine says that the only happy life is “social,”²⁶⁶ and, crucially, he posits a way that the turn inward to Christ is also a turn outward to the neighbor. In both of these turns, communication through language is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for intersubjective hermeneutics.

In *City of God* XI, for example, he says that the angels around the throne of God *know themselves* and the *world* not by “spoken words, but by the actual presence of the unchanging Truth,” and that their knowledge without words is better than our knowledge with words.²⁶⁷ He never downplays the scriptures, sign of a sign though they be, and he does trace part of his

salvation journey back to the infiltration of his mind with Ambrose's faithful *words*.²⁶⁸ However, Augustine believed that temporal words had to be grounded in the eternal speech of God for communication, and thus for intersubjectivity, to occur. The scriptures are the participatory site in which to connect eternal and temporal speech, together, through their figures, thus grounding our own worship and action.

As we have seen already, the keystone of this grounding, for Augustine, was the Incarnation. The Incarnation joined Christ in his identity as the Eternal Word with Christ in his human identity as the mediator, the one who removes the sin that blocks full and free intersubjectivity with God: "For as man, [Christ] is mediator, but as the Word, he is in no middle place, since he is equal to God, and God with God, and together one God."²⁶⁹ As the Word, Christ brought everything into existence from before time began; he does not stand between a real eternal realm and a discrete real temporal realm and carry messages back and forth between them, but as "no middle place" is the ground of both. Every explanation of this in language is insufficient, but it may help to set it in contrast to the presumed separation between the Cartesian subject and his known object. While Christ is by his divine nature separate from his creation, his identity as the eternally speaking/spoken Word also *collapses* that separation, creating a ground of meaning shared between himself and his creation that can then manifest its participation in various ways in human beings—in the inner word primarily and in communal language secondarily. Messages are not transmitted to create meaning, but meaning that has always already been spoken is manifested in messages that can be recognized and shared through participatory attention to the Word (and then labeled as communication or interpretation). The mistake of modernity is to assume a univocal temporal realm in which communication and action

must be initiated in time and carried out through the effective mediation of the right language, implemented through the right rhetorical or hermeneutical technique.

But Christ, as the Word *outside* of time who is embodied in manifold ways *inside* time, is, as Paul said to pagan Athenians, “not far from each one of us,” to the point that he is “within our very hearts.”²⁷⁰ Quoting John, Augustine insists that Christ “is the true light that gives light to every man who comes into the world.”²⁷¹ Therefore, even for unbelievers, Christ as the Word opens up the possibility of communication with God through attention to the Interior Teacher. And to the degree that unbelievers can seek wisdom through the inward turn to their creator, they can to the same degree have fellowship with one another on those shared goods from their shared creator. In this way, traditions that are centered on shared goals and values that are truly good can share, by general grace, interpretive competence.

For believers, though, Christ as mediator opens the possibility of an intersubjectivity that goes further than that experienced by secular society. This intersubjectivity could be said to be based on a new underlying “yes” to God that grows from God’s primordial “yes” to us through the redemption of the cross, carrying with it a persistence in attention that evokes a positive cycle of communication (like that with demons, but in an opposite direction) centered on a new love. This new intersubjectivity with God is not portrayed by Augustine as having a distancing effect from other humans, as we have seen in how Augustine’s pronouns show that the depth of divine-human understanding and agreement was shared among other human believers as well.²⁷²

Augustine did not believe that even faithful Christians could achieve unclouded interpretive communion, except perhaps occasionally through mystical events such as the vision at Ostia he experienced together with his mother.²⁷³ Augustine says in *Confessions*,

Whoever thinks that in this mortal life a man may so disperse the mists of bodily and carnal imaginings as to possess the unclouded light of changeless truth, and cleave to it with the unswerving constancy of a spirit wholly estranged from the common ways of life—he understands neither what he seeks, nor who he is who seeks it.²⁷⁴

Augustine nevertheless worked tirelessly for interpretive communion and unity in the church, and he even maintained a limited hope that a low-level cooperation on basic issues might enable something like a Ciceronian commonwealth, a political community that is grounded more in real common agreement than on domination.²⁷⁵ In the church, the primary language through which intersubjectivity with God and humans might be achieved was, to Augustine, the language of the scriptures. And the way those scriptures themselves were interpreted was undertaken dialogically, in pursuit of both inward and outward actions of charity, within the broad framework of the Christological rule of faith—while also taking into account the linguistic, philosophical, historical, and scientific knowledge current at our disposal. That is, participatory communion would provide a secure venue for interpretive deliberation, and even conflict,²⁷⁶ by setting knowledge and limited personal interpretations within the larger context of the scriptural narrative of the church and its order of loves.

Because of the introduction of sin, discussed more below, this triangulated interpretation was interrupted at every juncture, but the work of Christ to forgive sin and deify humans enables the healing of broken intersubjectivity between human and human and between human and God. These two directions of relational healing are not separate but are intimately connected in a participatory reassembling of a godly and godward community, which is necessary for a right practice of scriptural hermeneutics. Though some excoriate Augustine for making God *alone* the ultimate focus of enjoyment, they do so without understanding (or agreeing with) the

participatory ecology of *caritas* in which the enjoyment of God is the only ground for true human community, full human love and joy, responsible human action, and thus true human interpretation. Augustine made clear through his insistent preaching and writing on the conjoined Christian responsibilities of loving God and neighbor through communal action that only interpretations and actions that demonstrate charity to one's neighbor are the ones that demonstrate charitable enjoyment of God, participating both upward in God and across to one's fellow human.²⁷⁷ This triangulated social theory provided Augustine an interpretational paradigm for the scriptures that provoked the action of praise upward and the action of service outward—often both through the same scripturally-figured good deed.

Two-fold Challenge to Living under the Scriptures

As implied already in the discussion of the coordinates of an Augustinian hermeneutics, the problems addressed by those coordinates are not primarily problems of textual science or historical knowledge, which has been the preoccupation of Evangelical hermeneutics over the past century. Because the nature of the core problem, or question, is so central to understanding any rhetorical problem in philosophy of communication, an explicit explanation of the two-fold challenge to hermeneutics in Augustine's philosophy is important. Though Augustine upheld the importance of grammatical and historical knowledge for especially those charged with teaching and preaching, the chief problems that beset scriptural interpretation he saw as human moral failings and human temporal finitude.

Moral Barriers to Hermeneutics

The goodness of nature and its concomitant diversity, according to Augustine, is strained to the breaking point through sin, which infests, as it were, the natural labor of intersubjectivity with the curse of communicative thorns and briars. Our nature is our common "breath of life,"

but sin is not according to nature, and is thus a strike against our commonality.²⁷⁸ In our natural diversity, we were still to be equal with one another,²⁷⁹ but sin introduced a lust for domination that complicates intersubjectivity through unnatural hierarchy. Augustine says, “Pride is a perverted imitation of God. For pride hates a fellowship of equality under God, and seeks to impose its own dominion on fellow men, in place of God’s rule. This means that it hates the just peace of God, and loves its own peace of injustice.”²⁸⁰ That is, the goodness in human nature still seeks peace, but it is the situation now that our nature seeks peace through either domination or a shared love other than the love of God. People still have interpretive communion, but centered on areas of temporal knowledge and loves other than God. Even commendable earthly loves such as provision for material needs or seeking the peace of the family, if not rightly ordered vis-à-vis an appropriate love for God, can create interpretive communities that distort their members’ reading of the world and the word. This is a moral problem that leads to systematic interpretive problems.

Moreover, these skewed interpretive narratives often function in a way that enacts not only identification and consubstantiation but also, by the same token, division and disconnection.²⁸¹ In Augustine’s reading, the Roman love of the glory of its empire became the basis for emotionally moving examples of intersubjectivity between Roman citizens and their shared interpretation of the world, but, at the same time, it became the impetus for the extreme opposite of communion and shared interpretation with their human enemies, specifically through wholesale slaughter and pillage. Since the thing that binds people together in harmony is some common love, the prevalence of *differing loves* and *interpersonal lovelessness* means that some people can effectively have “nothing in common,” and thus have no shared basis for interpretation. This principle is appropriated for political thought from *City of God* XIX—“A

people is the association of a multitude of rational beings united by a common agreement on the objects of their love”²⁸²—but “objects of their love” is a prepolitical social principle that divides as much as it creates a people. Sin, then, limits intersubjectivity to a more shallow human connection, centered on lesser loves, and opens the doors for those bonds of fellowship to become a sword instead of a plowshare. Commenting on the same phenomenon on an interpersonal level, C. S. Lewis says that “friendship makes good men better and bad men worse.”²⁸³ By the same token, it can make people better or worse interpreters by creating better or worse interpretive communities.

Even fellowship with good angels, Augustine says, is blocked not because of the “conditions of fleshly existence” but because of the “impurity of our heart.”²⁸⁴ Though these spiritual beings are decidedly “other” than us, not sharing our history, our social influences, our language, our bodies, or our nature, they would be prime candidates for true fellowship if not for the effect of sin on our loves and on the foci of our attention. For Augustine, though, an even more shattering effect of sin is the loss of connection with God. “He is within our very hearts, but our hearts have strayed from him,” Augustine says of God in the *Confessions*.²⁸⁵ Though the Inner Teacher is still present from creation in all people and available, by general grace, for those who turn inward to Him, “our hearts have strayed from him,” and thus all people to some degree have strayed from the only stable ground of interpretation available to them. The content of the scriptures may be available in several ways to those who do not turn to the Inner Teacher—who turn instead to personal, cultural, or disciplinary narratives—but without that inward and upward turn, what remains unavailable to those interpreters is the Truth Himself.

Thus, the one-another morality of an interpreting community will move its hermeneutics in a better or worse direction—a hermeneutic coordinate that Evangelical congregations would

do well to pay heed to as much as or more than the congregation's textual savvy. This is an Augustinian move that Fowl and Jones helpfully bring to the forefront in their influential 1998 book *Reading in Communion*. They say,

The discontinuities that arise from historical divergences are not nearly as important for faithful interpretation as are the discontinuities that arise from our contemporary failure to embody faithful living in ongoing Christian communities. That is, the discontinuities are not so much historical as moral and theological.²⁸⁶

We will look more closely at their proposal—and their own moral and theological lens—in Chapter 5, but their point here is well taken. An Augustinian hermeneutic is necessarily one that puts diverse Christian readers, together, under the moral scrutiny of the scriptures. Only by being searched by the participatory God through the medium of His scriptures can ecclesial groups be spiritually healthy by becoming better readers themselves of those scriptures.

Temporal Hermeneutical Challenges

Smith's *The Fall of Interpretation* details how most hermeneutic traditions see interpretation as a necessary response to some sort of fall, whether a theological fall from grace or a naturalistic fall into language itself, language which is always already violent. Smith argues that Augustine's perspective redeems hermeneutics, identifying it as a prelapsarian and post-eschaton reality that continues to enable love by continuing to deny "immediacy."²⁸⁷ My reservations about his argument stem primarily from Augustine's own words, such as Augustine's description of the wordless communion of the angels,²⁸⁸ but there is an important insight that I think can be recovered from Smith's argument. While Smith is correct that humans were created in a materiality and temporality that required hermeneutics as a creational good, not a fall, he does not take into sufficient account the way that Augustine points towards the

eschaton as an eternal “re-creational” good that transcends hermeneutics as we know it. That is, temporal hermeneutics is good; eternal hermeneutics will be better, and quite different.

However, along with sin, temporality itself provides hermeneutical challenges. For one, temporality *problematizes the individual self*. Augustine’s “self” is famously complex,²⁸⁹ and the root of his understanding of this problematic was how it is stretched out in time.²⁹⁰ Each person contains a “multiplicity,”²⁹¹ and Augustine spends all of Book X of the *Confessions* explicating all the ways he is a “question to himself.”²⁹² We are not sufficient to understand even ourselves because our being, and the being of the other, is embedded in a *temporality* that allows us to see only a part of the whole that is being/has been spoken by God outside of time.²⁹³ To engage oneself is to engage a person as he is at *this point* in his history, tenuously connected through memory to his past and his expected future, a self-in-narrative unfinished and only vaguely aware of himself as a narrative. The other that we seek to interpret, in person or through a text, is likewise in flux.

These personal narratives themselves can tie people together in a shared interpretive frame through language, but it is itself subject to temporality. The meaning of the “whole” of a sentence, of a discourse, of a book can only reach its hearers or readers one part at a time, moment by moment, on the temporal plane. Augustine says in many places that we cannot know the inner depths of our fellow humans unless they enlighten us, to what degree possible, through the means of language. He says, “We have only a hearsay acquaintance with any man’s conscience; we do not claim to judge the secrets of the heart. ‘No one knows what goes on inside a man except the man’s spirit which is in him.’”²⁹⁴ Even this basis of interpretation is undercut when people speak mutually incomprehensible languages. Augustine infamously says that it is easier to have fellowship with a dog than with a human who speaks a different language.²⁹⁵ Thus,

if people share the same language, they can utter syllables stretched out in time that, to some degree, stick in memory and might let the communicating people share some momentary common perspective that they happen to have, and that they happen to remember, at that point in their longer life narrative. In this way, temporality enjoins continual labor in the interpretation of scripture,²⁹⁶ a continual confession of the truth, a continual dialogue with one another over the scriptures, a continual obedience to charitable duties so as to understand and remember what we confess.²⁹⁷

When the indeterminacy and polyvocality of the self and the slipperiness of language in temporality is complicated with the turning away from memory of inward sinfulness and the discord in the loves of society, hermeneutics does seem to be a treacherous endeavor. It is no wonder that a society disconnected from a participatory trust in its creator God would seek some other solid ground, such as modernistic textual science, on which to build a hermeneutical house, sand though it may be. However, the Evangelical tradition would do well to remember that its solid hermeneutical foundation can still stand, as Augustine's philosophy of communication can remind them. "Those who hear these words of mine and do them," Jesus says, have the secure foundation.²⁹⁸ Augustine tells us that because of the Incarnation, individuals and communities can truly hear those words of the Word, participating together through the scriptures in not just earthly knowledge but also the eternal wisdom by which not only do they know *about* God but also hear from, speak with, act with, and *know* God. It is this Augustinian redirected frame for scriptural hermeneutics that I argue can provide a constructive philosophy of communication solution to the current crisis in Evangelical hermeneutics.

NOTES

¹ Ronald C. Arnett, "Defining Philosophy of communication: Difference and Identity," *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* 11, no. 1 (2010): 57-62.

² Michael J. Scanlon, "Augustine and Theology as Rhetoric," *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994): 37-50, p. 42.

- ³ Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House, 1986).
- ⁴ Timothy A. Gabrielson, "Along the Grain of Salvation History: A Suggestion for Evangelical Hermeneutics," *Trinity Journal* 36 (2015): 71-90, p. 85.
- ⁵ Gabrielson, "Along the Grain," 86.
- ⁶ Gabrielson, "Along the Grain," 90.
- ⁷ Gabrielson, "Along the Grain," 86.
- ⁸ See also Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 177-185.
- ⁹ Lewis S. Mudge, "Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation," in *Paul Ricoeur, Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge, 1-40 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 8.
- ¹⁰ Such as New Monasticism, which leaves out any mention of the Bible in the "Marks" of its self-defining manifesto, published in *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism*, ed. The Rutba House (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2005)
- ¹¹ For the interaction of hermeneutics and Romanticism, see also Rhyne R. Putman, "Historical Consciousness, Development, and Hermeneutics," in *In Defense of Doctrine: Evangelicalism, Development, and Scripture*, 59-121 (Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2015), 70.
- ¹² See Augustine, *Faith, Hope and Love*, trans. J. F. Shaw, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, Vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.), revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1302.htm>, chapter 1; 1 Corinthians 1:20-24.
- ¹³ Gerard Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).
- ¹⁴ Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 180.
- ¹⁵ James Farrell, "The Rhetoric(s) of St. Augustine's *Confessions*," *Augustinian Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 265-91, p. 277. As Farrell notes, the *Confessions* was written a year after the first three books of *De Doctrina* were written, and Augustine's critique of his rhetorical training in *Confessions* has to be understood in light of the Christian hermeneutical and rhetorical treatise he had just written. The importance of the *Confessions* as a rhetorical text is also the thesis of Calvin L. Troup, *Temporality, Eternity, and Wisdom: The Rhetoric of Augustine's Confessions* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).
- ¹⁶ See, for example, Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV.ii.9, p. 377-78.
- ¹⁷ See David W. Tracy, "Charity, Obscurity, Clarity: Augustine's Search for a True Rhetoric," in *The Rhetoric of St. Augustine of Hippo*, ed. Richard Leo Enos and Roger Thompson, et al., 267-287 (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 276.
- ¹⁸ Ernest L. Fortin, "Augustine and the Problem of Christian Rhetoric," in *The Rhetoric of St. Augustine of Hippo*, ed. Richard Leo Enos and Roger Thompson, et al., 219-233 (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 223, 226.
- ¹⁹ Fortin, "Augustine and the Problem," 225.
- ²⁰ Fortin, "Augustine and the Problem," 221.
- ²¹ See Anthony Everitt, *Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician* (New York: Random House, 2003), 233ff.
- ²² Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 11.
- ²³ Cf. 1 Timothy 4:16: "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."
- ²⁴ See Edwin Black, "Plato's View of Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 44, no. 4 (1958): 361-374, p. 373.
- ²⁵ Fortin, "Augustine and the Problem," 227-28.
- ²⁶ Fortin, "Augustine and the Problem," 229.
- ²⁷ R. A. Markus, among others, narrates Augustine's progressive evolution of thought through his deepening interaction with the scriptures—see Markus, "Refusing to Bless the State: Prophetic Church and Secular State," in *Sacred and Secular: Studies on Augustine and Latin Christianity* (London: Variorum, 1994): sec. IV, 372-379.
- ²⁸ Especially through the scriptures. Among other places in *De Trinitate*, see XIV.ii.9, p. 377-78.
- ²⁹ Cf. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.
- ³⁰ See Lewis Ayers, "Augustine on the Rule of Faith: Rhetoric, Christology, and the Foundation of Christian Thinking," *Augustinian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2005): 33-49, p. 36; See also Sermon 215 ("At the giving back of the Creed"), in *Essential Sermons*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Edmund Hill, O. P., intro and notes Daniel E. Doyle, O. S. A. (New York: New City Press, 2007), 272: "The Symbol of the most sacred mystery ... contains the words in which the faith of mother Church is solidly based on the firm foundation which is Christ the Lord. For no other foundation can anyone lay, besides the one that has been laid, which is Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 3:11). So you have received and given back what you must always retain in mind and heart, what you should recite in bed, think about in the streets, and not forget over your meals; in which even when your bodies are asleep your hearts should be awake."
- ³¹ Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* [De Doctrina Christiana], trans. and ed. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), IV.vii, p. 114.
- ³² Augustine, *De Doctrina* I.xxvii-xxxiii, pp. 21-25.
- ³³ Augustine, *De Doctrina* IV.v, pp. 104-105.
- ³⁴ See Farrell, "Rhetoric(s)," 287.
- ³⁵ His consistent statement in many texts, including Sermon 43.4; for this quotation and discussion of Augustine's priority on belief, see Troup, *Temporality*, 160.

- ³⁶ Robertson McQuilkin and Bradford Mullan, "The Impact of Postmodern Thinking on Evangelical Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 1 (1997), 74.
- ³⁷ Though the nature of Kant's transcendental idealism is unclear and contested, this is my understanding of its practical (philosophy of communication) impact on our social imaginary. See Nicholas F. Stang, "Kant's Transcendental Idealism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/kant-transcendental-idealism/>.
- ³⁸ John 12:49-50.
- ³⁹ I Corinthians 2:16; and I Peter 4:11, respectively.
- ⁴⁰ Sermon 98.3, p. 148.
- ⁴¹ Sermon 98.3, p. 148.
- ⁴² I Corinthians 2:13-14.
- ⁴³ See Gabrielson, "Along the Grain," for a key example of Paul's hermeneutical practice and for a catalogue of Evangelical attempts to reframe Paul's hermeneutical method to make it more palatable.
- ⁴⁴ Troup, *Temporality*, 152.
- ⁴⁵ R. A. Markus, "Augustine on Signs," in *Signs and meanings: World and text in Ancient Christianity*, 71-104 (Liverpool, U.K.: Liverpool University Press, 1996), 78.
- ⁴⁶ Markus, *Signs and meanings*, 87.
- ⁴⁷ Markus, *Signs and meanings*, 87, italics added; Markus notes that the Stoics did insert a third element, the "concept signified," but this triad was untenable because it cut out the interpreting subject, in whom any such concepts would reside.
- ⁴⁸ Calvin L. Troup, "Augustine: Bishop of Intellectuals," *Listening: Journal of Communication Ethics, Religion, and Culture* 46.2 (Spring 2011), 72.
- ⁴⁹ To clarify, Wisdom as the Inner Teacher/Christ is the "way" to all true knowledge, for believers and unbelievers, but wisdom as the true knowledge of the Godhead itself is also the end, the goal towards which all knowledge, action, and language is to be pointed.
- ⁵⁰ Markus, *Signs and Meanings*, 84.
- ⁵¹ Troup, *Temporality*, 171.
- ⁵² Troup, *Temporality*, 108.
- ⁵³ Augustine, *De magistro* III.6, as quoted in Markus, *Signs and Meanings*, 80.
- ⁵⁴ James J. Murphy, as quoted in Troup, "Augustine: Bishop of Intellectuals," 70.
- ⁵⁵ E.g., Augustine, *Confessions* XI.xiv.17.
- ⁵⁶ II Timothy 3:16-17
- ⁵⁷ Augustine, *Confessions* XI.ii.3.
- ⁵⁸ Augustine, *Confessions* XI.ii.4.
- ⁵⁹ Markus, *Signs and Meanings*, 80, italics added; Markus notes that the Stoics did insert a third element, the "concept signified," but this triad was untenable because it cut out the interpreting subject, in whom any such concepts would reside.
- ⁶⁰ Augustine, *Confessions* XI.ii.3.
- ⁶¹ See the discussion of attention to the walking and pointing in Augustine, *The Teacher* [de Magistro], in *The Teacher, The Free Choice of the Will, Grace and Free Will*, trans. Robert P. Russell, The Fathers of the Church 59 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1968) III, pp. 12-13, and the conclusion that words just focus our attention inward to discern the realities from the Inner Teacher, from XIV, p. 60.
- ⁶² R. A. Markus, "Augustine on Magic: A Neglected Semiotic Theory," in *Signs and Meanings: World and Text in Ancient Christianity*, 125-146 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), 136-137.
- ⁶³ Augustine, *Confessions* VIII.vii.16.
- ⁶⁴ Augustine, *Confessions* IX.iv.7.
- ⁶⁵ Sermon 272, p. 318.
- ⁶⁶ Troup, "Augustine: Bishop of Intellectuals," 72.
- ⁶⁷ Troup, "Augustine: Bishop of Intellectuals," 71.
- ⁶⁸ Augustine, *Confessions* XI.viii.10.
- ⁶⁹ Augustine, *Confessions* X, xxiii.33-34; Italics added.
- ⁷⁰ Augustine, *Confessions* VIII.vii.
- ⁷¹ Augustine, *De Doctrina* I.ix, p. 12.
- ⁷² Augustine, Sermon 179.10, p. 241.
- ⁷³ See James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000).
- ⁷⁴ Troup, *Temporality*, 113.
- ⁷⁵ Troup, *Temporality*, 121.
- ⁷⁶ With the caveat that "true" here does not mean strictly informationally accurate, but within the broad limits of informational truth and on target with love towards God and neighbor. See Troup, *Temporality*, 174-175.
- ⁷⁷ Augustine, *De Doctrina* II.vii, 34-35.
- ⁷⁸ Matthew Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 15.

⁷⁹ See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, Rev. Ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 506-510, for how Augustine's doctrine of predestination served as a ground of hope and trust in God's control during what, to humans, seemed like a dark and chaotic historical moment.

⁸⁰ Augustine, *Confessions* XI.xxviii.38.

⁸¹ Ayers, "Augustine on the Rule of Faith."

⁸² Romans 1:18-20. This and similar verses have been used as well to propose various types of evidence which, in Josh McDowell's famous book title, "demands a verdict." That is, it is argued in some strains of apologetics that the external world (and the internal phenomena of human psychology) can operate as data quite apart from the inward witness of creational memory or the illuminating presence of the Holy Spirit enabling participation in "knowledge" and "wisdom." This perspective is, I argue, the influence of modern univocity from which an Augustinian perspective can help us escape.

⁸³ Elshstain, *Augustine and the Limits*, 37.

⁸⁴ Augustine, *Confessions* X.xix.28.

⁸⁵ Augustine, *De Doctrina* I.xxxix, p. 28.

⁸⁶ See, again, Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* IV.vii, p.114; and IV.v, pp. 104-105.

⁸⁷ See Jaroslav Pelikan, "An Augustinian Dilemma: Augustine's Doctrine of Grace v. Augustine's Doctrine of the Church," *Augustinian Studies* 18 (1987): 1-29, p. 21

⁸⁸ This happens in a number of ways, including through the "Rule of Faith." See Ayers, "Augustine on the Rule of Faith," 36.

⁸⁹ See Sermon 179.1, p. 235.

⁹⁰ See Galatians 3:3: "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

⁹¹ Specifically, Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*; and "Linear and Participatory History: Augustine's City of God," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 5, no. 2 (2011): 175-196.

⁹² "Figural" is in quotation marks because of the blurring between terms such as figural, typological, allegorical, analogical, and even anagogical. Which particular flavor of "figural" interpretation I am drawing from Augustine will be clarified later in this section.

⁹³ See Tracy, "Charity, Obscurity, Clarity," 285; Stephen I. Wright, "Inhabiting the Story: The Use of the Bible in the Interpretation of History," in *"Behind" the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, C. Stephen Evans, Mary Healy, and Murray Rae, Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, Vol. 4, 492-517 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 494n5.

⁹⁴ See David Lyle Jeffrey, "(Pre)Figuration: Masterplot and Meaning in Biblical History," in *"Behind" the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, C. Stephen Evans, Mary Healy, and Murray Rae, Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, Vol. 4, 363-93 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 382.

⁹⁵ R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 5.

⁹⁶ Markus, *Saeculum*, 4; see also William H. C. Frend, "Augustine and Orosius: On the End of the Ancient World," *Augustinian Studies* 20 (1989): 1-39.

⁹⁷ Markus, *Saeculum*, 2-7.

⁹⁸ Markus, *Saeculum*, 9-12.

⁹⁹ Markus, *Saeculum*, 17.

¹⁰⁰ The Scripture and Hermeneutics Series is the 8-volume product of the Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar, an annual gathers started in 1998. It "aims to re-assess the discipline of biblical studies from the foundation up and forge creative new ways for re-opening the Bible in our cultures," from the dust jacket inside cover, Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Moller, eds., *Renewing Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000).

¹⁰¹ See Wright, "Inhabiting the Story."

¹⁰² Paula Fredericksen, "*Secundem Carnem*: History and Israel in the Theology of St. Augustine," in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus*, 26-41 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

¹⁰³ Fredericksen, "*Secundem Carnem*."

¹⁰⁴ Jeffrey, "(Pre)Figuration," 382-83.

¹⁰⁵ Fredericksen, "*Secundem Carnem*," 33.

¹⁰⁶ Joseph S. Flipper explains de Lubac's argument that the basic work of developing a Christian approach to history and hermeneutics belonged to Origen, and that Origen's allegorization actually subverted Hellenistic allegorization. That is a topic we cannot take up here, but he does quote a medieval rhyme that encapsulates Origen's four-fold interpretation scheme: "Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria/Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia. (The letter teaches what took place, allegory what to believe/The moral what to do, anagogy what goal to strive for.);" and, as Flipper says was true for even Origen, "the foundational meaning, upon which the others were based, was the literal sense"; see his chapter "Scripture and the Structure of History," in his *Between Apocalypse and Eschaton: History and Eternity in Henri de Lubac*, 91-127 (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2015), 93.

¹⁰⁷ Levering quoting George Lindbeck, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 25n39.

¹⁰⁸ See Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 144.

¹⁰⁹ In Levering, "Linear and Participatory History," 178, he connects his earlier book to the explicit Augustinianism of the article, arguing that "Augustine recognizes that our understanding of what history is will have consequences for what we hope to attain

in biblical exegesis and theology. Equally, he recognizes that biblical exegesis and theology can and should instruct us about the nature of history.”

¹¹⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, III.18.

¹¹¹ Markus, *Saeculum*, 16. I have included in square brackets Markus’s footnoted citations of Augustine.

¹¹² Levering, “Linear and Participatory History,” 176.

¹¹³ Levering, “Linear and Participatory History,” 177. The importance for hermeneutics of the specific endpoint, or resolution, of plot of world history is also emphasized by Jeffrey, “(Pre)Figuration,” 387.

¹¹⁴ Levering, “Linear and Participatory History,” 177.

¹¹⁵ Troup, *Temporality*, 4-5.

¹¹⁶ See Jeffrey, “(Pre)Figuration,” 379.

¹¹⁷ Levering, “Linear and Participatory History,” 187-88; Augustine, *City of God* XV.5-8.

¹¹⁸ Levering, “Linear and Participatory History,” 187-88.

¹¹⁹ Jeffrey, “(Pre)Figuration,” 381.

¹²⁰ Levering, “Linear and Participatory History,” 187-88.

¹²¹ Levering, “Linear and Participatory History,” 187.

¹²² As we have seen Augustine argue already about the spiritual meaning behind the scriptural resurrections in Sermon 98.

¹²³ Jeffrey, “(Pre)figuration, 370; See Augustine, *Confessions* X.viii.14-15 for a text that supports this pseudo-Augustinian maxim, though with the proviso that “what we remember” in Augustine is never merely individual or material but also connected through creation and God’s spirit to larger realities.

¹²⁴ See Troup, *Temporality*, 11-12.

¹²⁵ Augustine, *Enchiridion: On Faith, Hope, and Love*, ed. and trans. Albert C. Outler, accessed at Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Calvin College, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/augustine/enchiridion.html>, XXV.99, pp. 41-42.

¹²⁶ Augustine, *Enchiridion*, XIV.53, pp. 23-24; *City of God* XXII.6.

¹²⁷ Augustine, Sermon 98.3.

¹²⁸ See Levering, “Linear and Participatory History,” 188.

¹²⁹ Augustine, *City of God* XV.27, p. 645.

¹³⁰ Augustine, *City of God* XV.27, p. 648.

¹³¹ Markus, *Saeculum*, 17.

¹³² Troup, “Rhetorical Interpretation,” 53.

¹³³ Augustine, *Confessions* XI.viii.10.

¹³⁴ Levering, “Linear and Participatory History,” 176: “This aspect of the City of God has been overlooked by Augustine scholars, and so its significance for how Christians today—especially biblical exegetes and theologians—should approach ‘history’ has not been grasped.”

¹³⁵ As Gadamer argues; see Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 165-166, 200-201.

¹³⁶ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

¹³⁷ Jeffrey, “(Pre)Figuration,” 372.

¹³⁸ Augustine, *City of God* VIII.3-5, XII.11-13.

¹³⁹ Levering, “Linear and Participatory History,” 183.

¹⁴⁰ Without developing the point at length, I believe that an Augustinian participatory hermeneutic would provide a foundation for this species of practical missiological and translation problems, bridging the Evangelical concerns for biblical hermeneutics and foreign missions in a better way than the hermeneutic defended by McQuilkin and Mullan.

¹⁴¹ Jeffrey, “(Pre)Figuration,” 371.

¹⁴² Jeffrey, “(Pre)Figuration,” 371.

¹⁴³ See, again, Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV.i.3 and XIV.ii.6.

¹⁴⁴ See Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁴⁵ Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry*, 2nd ed. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 66.

¹⁴⁶ Dwight E. Lee and Robert N. Beck, “The Meaning of ‘Historicism,’” *The American Historical Review* 59, no. 3 (1954): 568-77. See also Jeffrey’s note on the way Hegelianism imposes a historical “masterplot” alien to the biblical one, in “(Pre)Figuration,” 389.

¹⁴⁷ See Thomas E. Wren, “From Rightness to Rights: A Case Study of Moral Discourse,” in *Listening: Journal of Communication Ethics, Religion, and Culture* 49, no. 3 (2014): 181-208, for a narrative of the social construction of human rights discourse.

¹⁴⁸ Wright, “Inhabiting the Story,” 506.

¹⁴⁹ Wright, “Inhabiting the Story,” 513.

¹⁵⁰ For evidence that the Evangelical movement is beginning to recognize the importance of institutions, we can look to the impact of James Davidson Hunter’s *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁵¹ Wright, “Inhabiting the Story,” 512-514.

- ¹⁵² Genesis 12:1.
- ¹⁵³ Wright, "Inhabiting the Story," 513.
- ¹⁵⁴ See Deuteronomy, chapter 27.
- ¹⁵⁵ Wright, "Inhabiting the Story," 513.
- ¹⁵⁶ See Gabrielson, "Along the Grain," 79n33, for discussion on how the different types of "figural" interpretation did not maintain rigid boundary-lines.
- ¹⁵⁷ As is clear from his impatience with pedantic correctness of speech in *De Doctrina* III-IV, p. 71.
- ¹⁵⁸ Augustine, *De Doctrina* III.ix, p. 74.
- ¹⁵⁹ Jeffrey, "(Pre)Figuration."
- ¹⁶⁰ M. A. Claussen, "'Peregrinatio' and 'Peregrini' in Augustine's *City of God*," *Traditio* 46 (1991): 33-75.
- ¹⁶¹ Hebrews 11:9-10
- ¹⁶² Markus, "Refusing to Bless," 372-73.
- ¹⁶³ I John 4:8
- ¹⁶⁴ See Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*.
- ¹⁶⁵ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIII.vi.26, p. 369; see also *Enchiridion*, XXXII.121, pp. 50-51.
- ¹⁶⁶ Troup, "Rhetorical Interpretation," 44.
- ¹⁶⁷ Augustine, *City of God* XIII.5, XI.2.
- ¹⁶⁸ *On Christian Teaching* IV.74, p. 117.
- ¹⁶⁹ Tracy, "Charity, Obscurity, Clarity."
- ¹⁷⁰ *City of God* XV.4.
- ¹⁷¹ See *City of God* XVIII.41; for an analysis of the same point in the *Confessions*, see Troup, "Rhetorical Interpretation," 53-54.
- ¹⁷² Augustine, Sermon 399.5, p. 419.
- ¹⁷³ See *On Christian Teaching* IV.67-69, p. 116.
- ¹⁷⁴ Whether to just instruct them with the restrained style or to engage their emotions with the grand style to provoke them to act on what they already know, choosing appropriate words, whether or not they are "good Latin," to facilitate true communication. See *On Christian Teaching* IV.14, p. 104; IV.64-66, p. 115-116.
- ¹⁷⁵ *On Christian Teaching* IV.87, p. 121: "...any ability he has and however much he has derives more from his devotion to prayer than his dedication to oratory."
- ¹⁷⁶ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* I.xxxv, pp. 26-27.
- ¹⁷⁷ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* I.xxxvi, p. 27.
- ¹⁷⁸ Augustine, Sermon 28A, p. 433.
- ¹⁷⁹ Augustine, Sermon 339.4, p. 392; See also Troup, *Temporality*, 174.
- ¹⁸⁰ See Ayers, "Augustine on the Rule of Faith."
- ¹⁸¹ Augustine, *De Doctrina* I.xxxvii, p. 28.
- ¹⁸² See also Troup, *Temporality*, 137; Brown, *Augustine*, 492-93.
- ¹⁸³ Augustine connects standing for the truth with martyrdom (even if not leading to death) in Sermon 94A.2, p. 138. "Pieties" is, of course, the terminology of Kenneth Burke in *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
- ¹⁸⁴ See *De Doctrina* I.lxxxvi-lxxxviii, p. 27: scriptural misinterpretation that still "builds up love" is acceptable.
- ¹⁸⁵ David Tracy, "Charity, Obscurity, Clarity,"
- ¹⁸⁶ Augustine, *De Doctrina* I.xxvii, p. 21.
- ¹⁸⁷ Under Roman law, the testimony of non-citizens and slaves was inadmissible in court unless taken under torture, the idea being that without the honor of citizenship to defend, people's testimony could not be trusted unless coerced.
- ¹⁸⁸ Augustine, *City of God* XIX.6.
- ¹⁸⁹ Augustine, Sermon 9.9, p. 33-34.
- ¹⁹⁰ Augustine, Sermon 9.8, p. 32.
- ¹⁹¹ Augustine, Sermon 161.8, p. 221.
- ¹⁹² Augustine, Sermon 368.3, p. 414.
- ¹⁹³ Augustine, Sermon 368.3,5, p. 414, 415
- ¹⁹⁴ See Calvin L. Troup's Preface to *Augustine for the Philosophers: The Rhetor of Hippo, the Confessions, and the Continentals* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014).
- ¹⁹⁵ Augustine, *De Doctrina* I.xvi, p. 15.
- ¹⁹⁶ Augustine, *Confessions* IX.v.13.
- ¹⁹⁷ Augustine, *Confessions* X.xxxi.46. This collage of quotations from Paul brings together material from several of his letters, though beginning and ending with Romans 14.
- ¹⁹⁸ Romans 14:5
- ¹⁹⁹ Calvin L. Troup, "Rhetorical Interpretation in the Confessions," *Journal of Communication & Religion* 24, no. 1 (2001): 43-67.
- ²⁰⁰ See Troup, *Temporality*, 172, on how Augustine works from questions, dialogically; also, see Russell, "Persuading the Donatists."
- ²⁰¹ See I Corinthians 8:1.

- ²⁰² See J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010); and James K. A. Smith, Forward to Merold Westphal, *Whose Community? Which Interpretation? Philosophical Hermeneutics for the Church*, The Church and Postmodern Culture, ed. James K. A. Smith (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press, 2009).
- ²⁰³ Augustine, *City of God* XII.29. Again, as Ayers explains in “Augustine and the Rule of Faith,” 36, Augustine’s conception of the Rule of Faith was not rigid but was responsive to the challenges of the historical moment, especially as the Rule of Faith might need to be articulated more fully in response to new heresies or new questions. The truth didn’t change, but the Rule of Faith—as a temporal articulation of the narrative whole—might need to be adjusted between the basics of the Creed and our participation in the mind of Christ through the scriptures. See also *De Doctrina* III.xxxiii, p. 92; and *City of God* XVIII.51.
- ²⁰⁴ Ayers, “Augustine on the Rule of Faith,” 36; see also Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol. 3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
- ²⁰⁵ See Augustine, Sermon 368, pp. 412-16.
- ²⁰⁶ Robert Bellah discusses this in terms of “condensed codes” as the more basic operative discourse of traditional hierarchical society (“blue collar”) and “elaborated codes” as the reflexive and person-focused discourse that has characterized Western culture, especially through its questioning, literate tradition. See Robert Bellah, “Habit and History,” *Ethical Perspectives* 8, no. 3 (2001):156-67, 157-58. I am not quite satisfied with these terms, though, for what I am trying to discuss here.
- ²⁰⁷ Francois Cooren, “Textual Agency: How Texts Do Things in Organizational Settings,” *Organization* 11, no. 3 (2004): 373-393.
- ²⁰⁸ Francois Cooren, Frederik Matte, Chantal Benoit-Barné and Boris H. J. M. Brummans, “Communication as Ventriloquism: A Grounded-in-Action Approach to the Study of Organizational Tensions,” *Communication Monographs* 80, no. 3 (2013): 255-277.
- ²⁰⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 326.
- ²¹⁰ See Jennifer V. Ebbler, *Disciplining Christians: Correction and Community in Augustine’s Letters* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012); Jane Merdinger, “On the Eve of the Council of Hippo, 393: The Background to Augustine’s Program for Church Reform,” *Augustinian Studies* 40, no. 1 (2009): 27-36; Carl P. E. Springer, “The Artistry of Augustine’s *Psalmus Contra Partem Donati*,” *Augustinian Studies* 16 (1984): 66-74; Rafal Toczko, “Heretic as Bad Rhetorician: How Augustine Discredited Pelagius,” *Augustinian Studies* 42, no. 2 (2011): 211-231.
- ²¹¹ Gerald Bonner, “*Dic Christi Veritas Ubi Nunc Habitas*: Ideas of Schism and Heresy in the Post-Nicene Age,” in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus*, 63-79 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); see also Augustine, Sermon 267.4, in *Essential Sermons*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Edmund Hill, O. P., intro and notes Daniel E. Doyle, O. S. A. (New York: New City Press, 2007), 317.
- ²¹² Russell, “Persuading the Donatists,” 124.
- ²¹³ Russell, “Persuading the Donatists,” 124.
- ²¹⁴ See Augustine, Sermon 296.14, pp. 349-50.
- ²¹⁵ Ebbler, *Disciplining Christians*, 155, 70-71.
- ²¹⁶ It is the Evangelical focus on “worldview” as an individual mental construct that James K. A. Smith critiques in his arguments for Evangelicals to think more in terms of “cultural liturgies.” See his *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, Cultural Liturgies, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013).
- ²¹⁷ Ronald C. Arnett and Annette M. Holba, *An Overture to Philosophy of Communication: The Carrier of Meaning* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012); Arnett, “Defining Philosophy of Communication.”
- ²¹⁸ Cf. Romans 10:17: “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
- ²¹⁹ Augustine, *De Doctrina*, III.xxiv, p. 85.
- ²²⁰ G. J. P. O’Daly, “Thinking through History: Augustine’s Method in the City of God and Its Ciceronian Dimension,” *Augustinian Studies* 30, no. 2 (1999): 45-57, pp. 47-48.
- ²²¹ See Levering, “Linear and Participatory History.”
- ²²² Augustine, *De Doctrina*, III.xxxii, p. 90-91.
- ²²³ Augustine, *De Doctrina* III.ix, p. 74.
- ²²⁴ Augustine, *De Doctrina*, III.xxxvii, pp. 98-99.
- ²²⁵ See, among many other locations for this metaphor, Sermon 137.1, pp. 206-207.
- ²²⁶ As Augustine describes it in *City of God*, the heavenly city includes the Triune God, the angels, and all the faithful throughout world history (including the ones to come). In *De Doctrina* III.xxxvii, p. 99, Augustine notes the importance of the “assistance” of the Triune God in interpretation, just one instance of his continual acknowledgment of the shared action of interpretation between God and his people reading the scriptures within the plane of temporality.
- ²²⁷ See Augustine’s explanation of the exigence for interpretation given through new heresies in *De Doctrina* III.xxxiii, p. 92.
- ²²⁸ *De Doctrina* III.xxxvii, p. 99.
- ²²⁹ Sermon 137.1-2, pp. 206-207. *Totus Christus*, or the “whole Christ,” was an important doctrine to Augustine and an expression of his participatory viewpoint. As man, Christ was the head of all redeemed humanity and thus, in a real sense, organically connected to all Christians as part of the same body. See Kimberly Baker, “Augustine’s Doctrine of the *Totus Christus*: Reflecting on the Church as Sacrament of Unity,” *Horizons* 37, no. 1 (2010): 7-24.
- ²³⁰ Augustine, *De Doctrina* IV.xiii, p. 119.

- ²³¹ The *distentionem animi* expresses Augustine's concept of the soul, one's life being stretched out in time. John Arthos, in "'A Limit that Resides in the Word': Hermeneutic Appropriations of Augustine," in *Augustine for the Philosophers*, ed. Calvin Troup (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 96, says that "the distention animi comes to stand for the conflicted nature of the human soul, threatening always to fall apart but salvaged by a tentative hold on some kind of coherence." I argue that this concept and this language applies to the "soul" of the church as well, always threatening to fall apart or lose its self-identity, and yet maintained through the active participatory work of God and humans through the scriptures—all a work of God's merciful providence. "One hope, one trust, one firm promise—your mercy!," rather than our will, intellect, or acumen with the text. Augustine, *Confessions* X.xxxii.48.
- ²³² Augustine, *Confessions* X.xxxii.48.
- ²³³ Augustine, *City of God* X.14, I.15; Sermon 267.4, 317: "All doing their own thing, but living the same life together. In fact, what the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the body of Christ, which is the Church. The Holy Spirit does in the whole church what the soul does in all the parts of one body."
- ²³⁴ Augustine, *Confessions* XII.xxv.34.
- ²³⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, XIX.xix.
- ²³⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII.ii.3-5.
- ²³⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII.iv.9.
- ²³⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII.xii.28-30.
- ²³⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, IX.ii.3, italics added.
- ²⁴⁰ Augustine, Sermon 164.9, 229.
- ²⁴¹ Augustine's letter to Firmus referencing specifically his *City of God*, as quoted in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 472.
- ²⁴² Augustine, Sermon 9.8, p. 32.
- ²⁴³ As quoted in Brown, *Augustine*, 451: "We who preach and write books, write in a manner altogether different from the manner in which the canon of Scripture has been written. We write while we make progress. We learn something new every day. We dictate at the same time as we explore. We speak as we still knock for understanding."
- ²⁴⁴ Matthew 13: 23b.
- ²⁴⁵ Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas Between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).
- ²⁴⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, X.iii.3: "When they hear me speak about myself, how do they know if I speak the truth, since none among men knows 'what goes on within a man but the spirit o man which is in him?'"
- ²⁴⁷ Augustine, *Confessions* XI.iii.5.
- ²⁴⁸ Augustine, *Confessions* XII.xxiv.33.
- ²⁴⁹ Augustine, *Confessions* XI.iii.5.
- ²⁵⁰ Augustine, *Confessions* XII.xxv.35.
- ²⁵¹ Gabrielson, "Along the Grain."
- ²⁵² Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*, 150.
- ²⁵³ Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*, 150.
- ²⁵⁴ Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*, 157, 163, 169, 174.
- ²⁵⁵ Raymond F. Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbor in St. Augustine* (Heverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993).
- ²⁵⁶ Augustine, *City of God* XIX.12.
- ²⁵⁷ Elshtain's take on Augustine's theory here is that we are not "political by nature, although we are by nature social." See *Augustine and the Limits*, 26.
- ²⁵⁸ Augustine, *City of God* XI.27.
- ²⁵⁹ Augustine, *Confessions* I.i.1.
- ²⁶⁰ Augustine, *City of God* XII.22, 23.
- ²⁶¹ Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*, 179-180.
- ²⁶² Augustine, *De Doctrina*, Preface vi, p. 5.
- ²⁶³ Augustine, *City of God* XIX.7, XVI.4 for this with Babel; see *Confessions* XI.iii.5 for the optimal condition of shared human language and the clear divine language of truth behind human communication.
- ²⁶⁴ Augustine, *Confessions* IX.viii.18.
- ²⁶⁵ See Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits*, 15, 32-33; Troup, *Temporality*, 105-109.
- ²⁶⁶ Augustine, *City of God* XIX.3.
- ²⁶⁷ Augustine, *City of God* XI.29.
- ²⁶⁸ *Confessions* V.xiv.24.
- ²⁶⁹ *Confessions* X.xliii.68.
- ²⁷⁰ Both the quotation from Paul and its implications are from *Confessions* IV.xii.18.
- ²⁷¹ *Confessions* IV.xv.25.
- ²⁷² Though Augustine describes how friends can so interact as to "make one out of many" (*Confessions* IV.viii.13), he reserves the highest level of intersubjectivity for Christian friendship, "solder[ed] ... together among those who cleave to one another by the charity 'poured forth in our heart by the Holy Spirit.'" (*Confessions* IV.iv.7).
- ²⁷³ See Augustine, *Confessions* IX.x.23-25.

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- ²⁷⁴ Quoted in Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits*, 12.
- ²⁷⁵ See Rex Martin, "The Two Cities in Augustine's Political Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33, no. 2 (1972): 195-216.
- ²⁷⁶ See Brown, *Augustine*, 492-93.
- ²⁷⁷ See Canning, *Unity of Love for God and Neighbor*: Augustine's favorite preaching text was the "parable of the sheep and the goats" of Matthew 25, which explicitly ties together loving service of God with loving service of one's neighbor.
- ²⁷⁸ Augustine, *City of God* V.9
- ²⁷⁹ Augustine, *City of God* XIX.15.
- ²⁸⁰ Augustine, *City of God* XIX.12.
- ²⁸¹ The terms in this sentence indicate where I think Kenneth Burke's analysis is useful vis-à-vis Augustine's more comprehensive vision.
- ²⁸² Augustine, *City of God* XIX.24.
- ²⁸³ C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1988), 80.
- ²⁸⁴ Augustine, *City of God* VIII.25.
- ²⁸⁵ Augustine, *Confessions* IV.xii.18.
- ²⁸⁶ Stephen E. Fowl and L. Gregory Jones, *Reading in Communion* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 57.
- ²⁸⁷ Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*.
- ²⁸⁸ Augustine, *City of God* VII.25.
- ²⁸⁹ See Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits*, 4-12; and, also on the difference between Augustine's view of the self from the modern, reified version, see John C. Cavadini, "The Darkest Enigma: Reconsidering the Self in Augustine's Thought," *Augustinian Studies* 38, no. 1 (2007): 119-132, p. 123.
- ²⁹⁰ See Arthos, "A Limit that Resides in the Word," 96.
- ²⁹¹ Augustine, *City of God* VII.24.
- ²⁹² See Augustine's many descriptions of intersubjectivity with himself: *Confessions* X.xxxiii.50; VIII.vii.16; X.viii.14. Also, "neither do I judge myself," *Confessions* X.iv.6.
- ²⁹³ Augustine, *Confessions* IV.xi; *City of God* V.9.
- ²⁹⁴ Augustine, *City of God* I.26; see also *Confessions* III.ix and X.3.
- ²⁹⁵ Augustine, *City of God* XIX.7: "For their common nature is no help to friendliness when they are prevented by diversity of language from conveying their sentiments to one another; so that a man would more readily hold intercourse with his dog than with a foreigner."
- ²⁹⁶ On this, see Augustine's recurring statement about his fear of teaching the scriptures publicly, but his greater fear of refusing to keep that commission he received from God. "But to preach, to refute, to rebuke, to build up, to manage for everybody, that's a great burden, a great weight, a great labor. Who wouldn't run away from this labor? But the gospel terrifies me." Sermon 339.4, p. 392.
- ²⁹⁷ See Augustine, Sermon 212.2, pp. 263-64: "The God who has called you to his kingdom and his glory will ensure that [the creed] is also written on your hearts by the Holy Spirit, ... but which has to be confessed and practiced and made progress in by you as baptized believers."
- ²⁹⁸ See Matthew 7:24-27.

Chapter 4

Locating Augustine's Hermeneutics in the Evangelical Philosophical Conversation

After this examination of Augustine's multi-faceted hermeneutic theory, the temptation might emerge to apply it immediately to the Evangelical hermeneutic crisis in the current historical moment. However, a philosophy of communication approach constrains us to do the further work of bringing the horizon of Augustine's philosophy into a meaningful interaction with the language of current hermeneutical theory. By way of developing and justifying this philosophy of communication approach at the outset of this chapter, I address two equal and opposite questions: On the one hand, some hermeneutics scholars (including some Evangelical ones) might ask why Augustine needs to make an appearance at all if the conceptual resources of philosophical hermeneutics are already present, up-to-date, and sufficient to meet the needs of Evangelical hermeneutics. On the other hand, other scholars and theologians might ask why "secular" philosophical hermeneutics needs to make an appearance at all if Augustine's hermeneutic philosophy is comprehensive and Christian enough to fit the Evangelical bill. Addressing these hypothetical poles in turn, I will further develop the specifically Augustinian version of philosophy of communication that frames this project.

After thus clarifying the frame and goals of this approach, this chapter will explore possible fusions of Augustinian and philosophical hermeneutics horizons. For the latter, this project uses a reading of Gadamer and Ricoeur partially mediated through the Evangelical reception of their work. Because it is the Evangelical reception of these philosophers' hermeneutic theories that is most relevant to a philosophy of communication approach to the hermeneutical crisis in Evangelicalism, it is the mediated versions of these theorists that will be the main focus.

Why Add Philosophical Hermeneutics to Augustine?

To address first the Evangelical suspicion of philosophical hermeneutics,¹ we need to answer the question about why these seemingly secular voices might have value for scriptural hermeneutics. Here is where Tertullian's old protest against pagan philosophy—What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?—makes its influence felt in the Evangelical social imaginary, a fear felt especially keenly after a century of bewilderingly diverse attacks from a series of new philosophies and new versions of “Athens.”² There are three philosophy of communication arguments that I propose by which to justify serious conversation between philosophical hermeneutics and Evangelical scriptural hermeneutics: the providential availability of truth, the way language enables thought and dialogue, and the necessary bridge with pre-critical participation.

First, following Augustine's lead and the confession of many current Evangelical scholars, there is general Evangelical agreement that all truth is God's truth.³ Therefore, though Evangelicals have to do, together, the hard work of discerning what of secular scholarship might be true and helpful, they cannot reject it out of hand as untrue just because it does not come from a confessing source. As characteristic of an Augustinian philosophy of communication, an Evangelical belief in divine providence would even suggest that, like other sorts of mysterious provision through unbelieving and oblivious people, philosophical concepts and language can be gifts of truth even from theorists who do not personally know the Truth. In agreement with Merold Westphal, I argue that Evangelical hermeneutical philosophy can gain helpful “truths” from the secular critical tradition in how to excise Evangelicalism's adopted modernistic leanings, especially truths from philosophical hermeneutics. These secular “prophets” have helpfully exposed the problematic assumptions and implications of modernistic hermeneutics

and have provided philosophical language to suggest an alternate, constructive way forward,⁴ often themselves drawing on the language of Augustine,⁵ though without Augustine's participatory frame.

Second, philosophy of communication rightly emphasizes that the language available to us strongly affects what ideas are possible among current communicating populations. Individual thought is affected by what vocabulary is present to make distinctions and categories (though individuals can also lean into the language as innovative "poets"⁶), and shared social thought, in particular, requires a shared vocabulary for shared thought and action. Neil B. MacDonald warns that

Theologians and biblical scholars are sometimes unaware of the linguistic distinctions that philosophers deem essential to an understanding of philosophical and especially metaphysical questions, questions of truth. ... The "linguistic turn" ... has sought to show that such distinctions matter a great deal as regards extending the limits of rational thought, and that to ignore or neglect them is precisely to limit oneself in the arena of critical argument.⁷

Because all areas of the humanities, including hermeneutics and theology, have been affected by the linguistic turn, the vocabularies of philosophical hermeneutics can be considered basic tools by which to think about and discuss scriptural hermeneutics, a common conceptual ground to enable internal discussions among Evangelical academics and external discussion with the wider academic world. Owning philosophical hermeneutics for its value as a conceptual common ground does not obligate the Evangelical community to stop there as an endpoint for its own philosophy of communication, but it rather lays out some of the ground rules by which to discover and communicate more clearly Evangelical hermeneutical distinctions.

Third, Evangelicals should engage philosophical hermeneutics because of its potential as a linguistic and conceptual bridge to one of those distinctions of the longer and broader Evangelical tradition: the participatory nature of God's relationship to his people through the medium of figural scriptural hermeneutics. As we saw from Barfield's exposition of the theme of participation in Chapter 2, the concept of participation continues to return, phoenix-like, in different metaphors of different philosophical eras, and the emphasis on the contingency and "thrownness" of being in post-Heideggerian hermeneutics is, in particular, structurally analogous in many ways to pre-modern and pre-critical theological hermeneutics.⁸ Some theorists in the philosophical hermeneutical tradition, such as Jean-Luc Marion and Paul Ricoeur, move explicitly toward the religious implications of philosophical hermeneutics.⁹ If, as I have argued, modernist hermeneutics is a suspect interloper in the longer Evangelical tradition, Evangelicals should be seeking some such conceptual bridge to return responsibly to their roots. Because philosophical hermeneutics has structural and genealogical connections to premodern and precritical hermeneutics, especially through its connections with Augustine, it is well-positioned to help us actually understand Augustine's philosophy of communication in a current hermeneutical idiom.

Why Add Augustine to Philosophical Hermeneutics?

However, the opposite question now comes to the fore in this dialectical preamble: if philosophical hermeneutics provides linguistic resources, in a genealogical line from Augustine, to meet the current crisis in Evangelical hermeneutics, why would the voice of Augustine even be needed? The basic answer is, of course, that philosophical hermeneutics does *not* provide a sufficient philosophy of communication response to repair Evangelical scriptural hermeneutics. Its replundered Egyptian gold from its Augustinian genealogy is separated from the social and

ontological context of Augustine's thought, its philosophical tools are insufficient apart from Augustine's theological narrative, and its persistent emphasis on linguistic immanence fundamentally misses the Augustinian call to participation.

First, we will look at why Augustinian echoes in philosophical hermeneutics are not sufficient for the Evangelical tradition. It has been demonstrated that most of the circle of twentieth century hermeneutic philosophers were influenced by and inspired by the writings of Augustine in their influential work, including Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Hannah Arendt,¹⁰ and the wellspring of ordinary language philosophy (and thus Speech Act Theory), Wittgenstein.¹¹ In fact, we could trace still more genealogical and proximal connections, examining Augustine's anticipation of post-structural hermeneutics,¹² or comparing his understanding of the constraints of habit with the *habitus* of Pierre Bourdieu,¹³ or tracing the lines of his similar perspective on the irreducible otherness of human beings with Levinas.¹⁴ However, Augustine's philosophy of communication was in many ways an applied discipline whose concepts sprang *from* and were bound *for* rhetorical situations in an institutionally embedded set of social relationships.¹⁵ Ever since he was forcibly pulled from his short history of Christian philosophical contemplation to be a priest, then bishop, then controversialist and Roman magistrate,¹⁶ his philosophical ideas were never free to have a life of their own, not even for his own private contemplation,¹⁷ but were instead theoretically and practically embedded in social praxis. Augustine was more encyclopedic than systematic (in the modern sense) in his thinking,¹⁸ but his ideas travel in packs and are not separated from one another and from their social context without some violence to their meaning. That he intended his philosophical corpus to be self-consistent can be inferred from his *Revisions*, his late-in-life commentary on and corrections to all his extant works.¹⁹ Therefore, the conceptual and selective borrowings from

Augustine by his admirers in philosophical hermeneutics neither do justice to Augustine's fully-rounded concepts (i.e., socially embedded) nor are as applicable to real ecclesial hermeneutical questions—in real Evangelical congregations—as is Augustine's ecclesiastically bent philosophy of communication.

Second, though, even if a philosophical hermeneutics solution to the Evangelical crisis were examined in the realm of mere ideas (rather than praxis), Augustine's "whole" of the divine theological narrative is a necessary structure within which to know how to use different conceptual tools for hermeneutics. What this "whole" is and how it relates to different hermeneutical conceptual tools is where Augustine helps us avoid errors on the right hand and on the left. That is, an Augustinian narrative of the participatory city of God helps us avoid the metanarratives of modernity while providing a "meganarrative" within which to turn the postmodern moves toward "finitude" and "suspicion" to constructive and worshipful ends. This characterization of the lines of contention and possibility in Christian use of philosophical hermeneutics comes from Westphal, who says:

My argument for a Christian appropriation of [hermeneutical philosophy] is theological.

The hermeneutics of finitude is a meditation on the meaning of human createdness, and the hermeneutics of suspicion is a meditation on the meaning of human fallenness.²⁰

Westphal's position is that Augustine's theology is needed to provide a three-fold critique, questioning modernity, postmodernity, and the Christian tradition where that faith tradition has absorbed unbiblical conceptual apparatus from both secular orientations.²¹ Westphal "suggest[s] that the God who comes after postmodernism is the God of Augustine, especially as presented in the *Confessions*."²²

Because it is a key point in my argument for the importance of Augustine's philosophical corrective to modernity and postmodernity, we need to look more closely at how his theological narrative empowers hermeneutic conceptual tools in a better way than the alternatives.

Westphal's distinction between Lyotard's "metanarratives" and the Christian "meganarrative" is a good place to start. According to Westphal, a *meta*-narrative is a second order philosophical explanation and legitimation of a first order narrative. In Evangelical theological parlance, this would translate to "apologetics,"²³ which is not Christian life and practice but rather an intentional philosophical structure intended to eliminate different areas of uncertainty deemed discomfiting to the faith.

As MacIntyre also tells us, everyone and every community structures its life and practice within the bounds of a first-order narrative, which is always partly in and partly outside of consciousness.²⁴ In earlier participatory frameworks, any attempt to step above the first-order narrative and create philosophical scaffolding for a "view from nowhere" was held in check by the reality of a realm outside of human prediction, control, or knowledge. Thus, first order experiential narratives were primary, and second-order theoretical narratives did not suffer under the presumption of being "true" in a comprehensive sense. However, after Scotus's turn to the "univocity" of the world and the concomitant revolution in epistemology, philosophical metanarratives became possible, whose object according to Westphal has not been mere meaning but also the legitimation of political and social institutions such as Hegel's modern state and Marx's revolutionary movement. Legitimized by these metanarratives, "believing" social institutions seek an "essentially homogenized humanity,"²⁵ and in their epistemology seek an essentially homogenized hermeneutical process. In a modernity characterized by this type of metanarrative, then, the goal of scriptural hermeneutics is to establish conceptual tools and

methods that are self-consistent, unchanging, and infallible. In this way, a modernistic metanarrative avoids Augustine's confessed ignorance and perpetual need for divine help.²⁶

Thus, hermeneutically educated modern people can interpret the Bible without interacting with God.

This kind of meta-narrative, then, enables independence from hermeneutical participation in God, functioning as a modern hermeneutical Tower of Babel. Evangelical hermeneutics, I argue, needs the corrective "whole" of Augustine's theological *meganarrative*, which demands dependence on and participation in God. Westphal sees Christianity's "meganarrative" as "a philosophy of history, a [first order] big story in which we place the little stories of our lives as individuals and communities," with its origins in "revelation" instead of human philosophy and its business as "kerygma" rather than "legitimation."²⁷ However, neither is Augustine's hermeneutic meganarrative a set of postmodern critical tools whose goal is perpetual movement (e.g., Derrida's deferral) through the new, the now, and the contingent. In Westphal's terms, when the hermeneutic moves of finitude and suspicion—of "creation and fall"—are moved from their "atheistic" context to the constructive context of the Christian faith, they are not merely useful but actually home, back where they belong.²⁸

That is, while postmodern moves to decenter the interpreting subject and emphasize his finite thrownness (and thus the contingency of his interpretations) do so largely in response to the arrogance and human destructiveness of metanarratives—Christian and otherwise—the Augustinian Christian move to decenter the interpreting subject does so in humble submission to the basic lines of the Christian story, specifically that we are creatures to whom existence, knowledge, and direction come as gifts, not as our own proper possessions. We are in a story that is not primarily about us; it is about God. Also, while postmodern hermeneutical suspicion

functions as a cynical mistrust of every stable “truth,” Augustinian Christian suspicion comes under the Christian narrative of fallenness that makes us a “question to ourselves” at the very core of our being, the will.²⁹ Augustine’s suspicion is less radical, though, than the postmodern one because his fallenness is a normal condition only within the confines of a segment of earthly history, a darkness between the creational “it is good” and the eschatological new heavens and new earth, a darkness ameliorated by the work of the Christological promise “it is finished” that distributes light in the meantime. Locating Augustinian finitude and fallenness within its narrative, Westphal says, “Yes, in a certain sense Christians know how the story ends. But in an equally important sense we do not. And it’s important to keep clear about what we know and what we don’t.”³⁰ Augustine’s theological narrative is an important guide and corrective to philosophical hermeneutical concepts because it says yes to some of that postmodern school’s important critiques of modernity while giving them a constructive narrative origin and end, together with a participatory place of refuge and rest in a relationship with the Narrator.

Third, and perhaps most telling, philosophical hermeneutics needs Augustine’s participatory framework for philosophy of communication in order to open up its own limiting framework of linguistic immanence. Immanence (i.e., univocity) is a philosophical shared ground for both modernism and postmodernism.³¹ Modernist biblical interpretation, of course, disallows divine causation in history, making it “largely ... immanentist in its explanations and incapable of appreciating the category of revelation,”³² though such biblical criticism puts its own metanarratives in the place of revelation. Where these metanarratives provide the warrant for different analytical philosophies of language, its “presuppositions about univocal meaning ... prevent it from developing a relevant analysis of ... metaphoric language.”³³ Thus, the modernistic immanent approach to the world and the scriptures as perspicuous, predictable, and

controllable—using language as a stable and unproblematic tool—fails both in presenting a justified hermeneutic “whole” and in dealing with language’s metaphorical “parts.”

“Postmodern” philosophical hermeneutics, for its part, critiques modernism’s confident univocality and its mechanistic approach to language, showing how there is more to the world and the text than meets the eye and that language is an ever-moving target, flying on the powerful wings of metaphor. However, philosophical hermeneutics lacks two things that Augustine can provide: it misses the creational ground of truth that can be expressed in language (the counterpoint to creational finitude), and it misses the further participatory dimension of grace (the counterpoint to fallenness), two participatory dimensions which continue to connect the real eternal realm to particular moments in the temporal realm through divine communication. Both of these Augustinian additions are participatory concepts that enable an Augustinian philosophy of communication not only to say *yes* to the critiques of philosophical hermeneutics but also to transcend them.

Without Augustine’s participatory frame, philosophical hermeneutics cannot refer to a real eternal realm—and thus the communicational value of scripture remains within the horizontal realm of mere language and the social interactional patterns of present ecclesial communities and their traditions. While Gadamer and Ricoeur both defend the constraining power of the textual work to set a range of acceptable receptions in the different horizons of different times and cultures,³⁴ the guiding factor to set that range is still at the level of human language, human traditions, and human wills. The thrown subject position of the interpreter cannot help but loom over the hermeneutic process, with no grounded hope that the resulting interpretation is anything other than a reflection of himself and his language, or more to the point for Augustine, with no grounded hope that his interpretation of the scriptures is current

participation in the Word of God. Moreover, in the Gadamerian picture of hermeneutics, the exigencies of the present and of the earthly realm also loom over the interpretive process,³⁵ which I argue makes it difficult to obey Gadamer's injunction to listen with an open attitude to the text.³⁶ That is, when the text has no actual, active voice behind it to correct or rebuke an interpreter's unwittingly distorting frame (or to offer a positive affirmation), I argue that the recalcitrance of the text is too passive to in the face of the horizons of presentism or of an "evolved" tradition. This is a question that we will take up more specifically when considering the insistence of Gadamer and Ricoeur on the being of the text itself.

The foregoing defense of the appropriation of both Augustine and philosophical hermeneutical thought for Evangelical hermeneutics has been pursued with an Augustinian philosophy of communication as its background. Augustine tells us that nothing can be learned without the pointing value of signs (words) but that signs themselves do not teach—language is necessary but not substantive.³⁷ An Augustinian philosophy of communication, then, would encourage Evangelical hermeneutics to trust God's provision of truth by seeking all available conceptual resources that can help get its people to participate in God through the scriptures. This concept of looking for divinely provided conceptual bridges to Christian truth in otherwise radically "other" cultures has become a basic Evangelical missiological principle,³⁸ and Augustine articulates for us the reasons to approach similarly cross-cultural scriptural interpretation (across time and cultures) with not just humility (because of human finitude and fallenness) but also hope (because of creational memory and participatory grace). The language of philosophical hermeneutics, I argue, may be a divine gift in its power to remind us of the necessary humility of interpretation, while the language and broader narrative of Augustine can also remind us of the direction and hope for interpretation. Perhaps most important in an

Augustinian philosophy of communication is the participatory frame that corrects both modernistic and postmodern hermeneutical theories, reminding us that the “kingdom of God is not in word but in power.”³⁹

Augustinian and Philosophical Hermeneutic Horizons (Re)fused

In an Augustinian philosophy of communication, the mutual impact of scriptural and philosophical concepts—an idea Gadamer made famous as the “fusion of horizons”—would not be an equally weighted affair, nor would it be merely an evolving linguistic tradition without a ground in unchanging eternal truth. Therefore, a fusion of horizons of Augustinian hermeneutics and selected concepts in Gadamer and Ricoeur will come across as a comparison and contrast, with the criteria of judgment being weighted towards Augustine’s scripture-informed hermeneutics. Because one horizon of this endeavor is a scriptural hermeneutics mediated through Augustine and the other horizon is a limited survey of some aspects of the hermeneutical thought of Gadamer and Ricoeur, partly mediated through a handful of important Evangelical hermeneutical philosophers, this is a *highly* mediated inquiry that cannot claim general or comprehensive validity. But I hope to suggest from this inquiry some of the possibilities and pitfalls of Evangelicals using current philosophical hermeneutics language to carry out an Augustinian scriptural hermeneutic. This mediated fusion of horizons will be organized around the core figures of Gadamer, Ricoeur, and the extant Evangelical fusions of Westphal, Wolterstorff, and Smith.

Gadamer’s Horizon

Westphal points out that Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* is “the most influential twentieth-century work in philosophical hermeneutics,”⁴⁰ and its importance as a conversation partner for Evangelical hermeneutics cannot be ignored. Gadamer was not seeking a foolproof method for

explicating texts but, following and clarifying the hermeneutical philosophy of Heidegger, offered a philosophical description of how “understanding” is actually possible.⁴¹ His analysis was shaped by his reaction to the modern subjectivization of aesthetics, rejection of tradition, and instrumental separation of word and world. While the question of the unity and consistency of Gadamer’s work—not to mention its complexity—make it unwieldy to summarize,⁴² what follows is a synopsis of Gadamer’s key themes and an exploration of the questions that put the hermeneutics of Gadamer and Augustine into productive conversation.

As a central starting place, we will look at the paired themes that Gadamer’s hermeneutics holds in dialectical tension: the prejudiced horizon of the interpreter and the disclosive being of the work itself.⁴³ The first of these themes will take us into the historicity and traditionedness of the interpreting subject. The second of these themes will take us into Gadamer’s understanding of the linguisticity of being. The event of understanding, then, is described by the “fusion” of the horizons of the interpreter and the work, both *reproducing* and *producing* meaning in the current historical moment.⁴⁴ Though horizons are always being fused, this event of understanding is to some degree dependent on an interpreter’s openness and interaction characterized by appropriate “questions,”⁴⁵ the practice of “a hermeneutically trained mind” ideally embedded in a hermeneutically sensitive community.⁴⁶ This fusion (which Gadamer also describes as “translation”⁴⁷) between the interpreter and the work is bilateral and is never complete, creating areas of overlapping (fused) horizons where the interpreter and the work share a legitimate “understanding” but also leaving areas of “what remains unsaid” that maintain the otherness and inexhaustibility of the two parties.⁴⁸ Interpretation, then, proceeds through time, history, and circumstance as the way we practice our being as both faithful guardians of the past and vanguards responsive to our projection of the future.

Historical Horizon of Interpreters. “Understanding is,” Gadamer asserts, “a historically effected event.”⁴⁹ And this is because every interpreter and every community is positioned in a certain time, a certain culture, a specific historical instantiation of a language, and a unique set of questions that direct the interpreter’s attention as she reads the text. Even our understanding of history is a historically conditioned phenomenon, not an “object” that constitutes objective criteria for interpretation.⁵⁰ In this, Gadamer was indebted to Husserl’s metaphors of “intentionality,” “horizon,” and the “lifeworld,” especially as transferred from Husserl’s transcendental subjectivity to Heidegger’s focus on Being.⁵¹ “The concept of the *life-world* is the antithesis of all objectivism,” Gadamer says. “It is an essentially historical concept ... something quite different from what the natural sciences could even ideally achieve. [It is] the whole in which we live as historical creatures.”⁵² Gadamer’s central metaphor for describing this limiting and enabling positionality in time and history is the “horizon,” which he explains as follows:

Every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of “situation” by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of “horizon.” The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. ... [W]orking out the hermeneutical situation means acquiring the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition.⁵³

This historicity of the horizons of both an author and an interpreter is the basis of Gadamer’s critique of and rejection of the psychological school of hermeneutical science that conceptualizes interpretation as a reconstruction of the original thought and intention of the author through the text by means of a set hermeneutic methodology.⁵⁴ Gadamer agreed with the attempt at *universality* of the general hermeneutics attempted by Schliermacher and Dilthey,⁵⁵ but he

argued it was neither possible nor desirable to return to the horizon of the original author. It is not possible because every attempt that we make to reinsert ourselves into the linguistic and historical situation of the author's time (let alone the personal history of that author him/herself) will always be done from the ground of our own horizon informed by our own current linguistic and historical exigencies.⁵⁶ It is not desirable, as we will see more below, because such misplaced objectivity forgoes the truth claims of the text on the present.⁵⁷

As implied above, the interpreter in Gadamer's thought is not alone with history but is "thrown" into traditions of interpretation, and since interpretation itself always seeks out a language to fit the facticity of its object, hermeneutics is ontologically a way of being that develops linguistic *traditions* (i.e., vocabularies of theory and practice). However, because tradition had become a dirty word in the history of interpretation stemming from the Enlightenment, Gadamer takes pains to defend tradition. Negatively, he critiques the Enlightenment's prejudice against prejudice and its negative evaluation of tradition as the antithesis of reason.⁵⁸ Thiselton summarizes this aspect of Gadamer's thought thus:

Prejudice, or pre-judgment, influences the individual through tradition, and often through his acceptance of certain values, attitudes, or institutions, as authoritative. [Against] the Enlightenment outlook, ... the acceptance of authority ... may be based on the thoroughly rational insight that as an individual of a particular historical generation I have my own built-in limitations, and may stand in need of learning from a source which has a better understanding of something than I do.⁵⁹

That is, tradition is both inescapable and helpful because of the historicity of our being, and is thus not in principle opposed to reason, though Gadamer acknowledges that people can use tradition in ways that are not hermeneutically well-informed or fruitful.⁶⁰ Positively, Gadamer

argues also from the historicity of being that tradition is the essential “horizon within which we do our thinking.”⁶¹ Our traditions give us the opening set of questions by which we can open ourselves to the experience of a text. Though traditions do both open and hide hermeneutical openings to a text or situation and are constrained also by the recalcitrance of the text being interpreted, traditions are communal dialogical conversations that enable interpretation. This communal dialogue with other interpreters in a particular moment in a tradition opens the text beyond individual subjectivity and shapes the tradition itself through time. Gadamer argues that “temporal distance” within a tradition helps “distinguish between fruitful and unfruitful pre-judgments,” allowing inapt and unhelpful prejudices to drop out of a tradition.⁶²

The Being of the Text. Therefore, because we “belong” to a tradition and language in history, we are enabled to understand a text by the horizon of that tradition and language. However, Gadamer also argues that since the text itself discloses not the subjectivity of the author but rather, through the author’s horizon, some aspect of the world itself, the text itself demands a hearing and is not fundamentally plastic. Having passed through the interpretive gauntlet of “temporal distance”—a history of being read and interpreted—the text is a thick artifact that brings a language, a history of interpretation, and a cultural weight.⁶³ That is, Gadamer says that the “temporal distance” between our present and the composition of the text is “a positive and productive condition enabling understanding.” It is “filled with the continuity of custom and tradition, in the light of which everything handed down presents itself to us.”⁶⁴ This traditioned “presentation” of the text “addresses us” as an Other. Because it speaks to us something that is not already part of our own “prejudices,” we must “suspend” those prejudices, even though as historically situated beings our suspension of such can never be total or complete.⁶⁵

Gadamer says that the suspension of our prejudices that enables us to listen to the text addressing us manifests as “the logical structure of a question,” whose “essence ... is to open up possibilities and keep them open,” even to the extent of putting ourselves at “risk.”⁶⁶ Without this putting ourselves in question in the face of such a text addressing us, there can be no understanding of the text. And without the doubling back of a historical understanding, through questioning, on the interpreting self, there can be no thick self-understanding.⁶⁷ That is, following and modifying Heidegger’s hermeneutical ontology, Gadamer affirms that ideal human “being” is openness to the alterity of texts that disclose the world in ways otherwise than our current prejudices, engaging in an interminable dialectic that enriches self-knowledge and world-knowledge in the same historical process.⁶⁸

Gadamer “mixes epistemological and ontological language” (language of knowing and of being), because he believed that “it belongs to the very being of things ... to show or manifest themselves.” Thus the “truth” that is “beyond method” is “this event of uncovering, of showing, of manifestation, of revelation.”⁶⁹ Gadamer takes as exemplars in *Truth and Method* the classical texts of artistic and religious traditions that, though born in very particular historical circumstances, nevertheless continue to inform the horizons of people in other historical and cultural circumstances.⁷⁰ These classical texts’ groundings in particular historical traditions and their universal (though not uniform) appeal are connected through the shared contexts of their linguisticity and their human world that continually speaks to its interpreters, interpreters who belong to different lifeworlds otherwise. Gadamer focuses a significant part of *Truth and Method* on how the interpretation of these kinds of texts should be understood otherwise than in the “univocity” of the “naive objectivism” of the sciences.⁷¹ Gadamer argues that a return to the original historical horizon of a work is not desirable because 1) there are more possible truths in

a textual work than can be seen from the “epistemologically restricted” perspective of the original author⁷² and 2) such a restricted perspective “loses sight of the primary aspect of the work, namely that it addresses us, that it makes a claim on us that deserves to be called a truth claim.”⁷³ That is, an objectivist hermeneutics, by restricting the interpretation to the original horizon of the textual work, eliminates the text’s truth value for the current reader. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer says,

The text that is understood historically is forced to abandon its claim to be saying something true. We think we understand when we see the past from a historical standpoint—i.e., transpose ourselves into the historical situation and try to reconstruct the historical horizon. In fact, however, we have given up the claim to find in the past any truth that is valid and intelligible for ourselves. Acknowledging the otherness of the other in this way, making him the object of objective knowledge, involves the fundamental suspension of his claim to truth.⁷⁴

In contrast, Gadamer’s truth beyond method owns its positionality within a “formative” horizon (*Bildung*), which, while limiting its possibilities, also fundamentally enables interpretation and thus opens those formative horizons to real change. “This knowledge ... is born by practices as well as by propositions, attitudes as well as articulations.”⁷⁵ Gadamer’s view of hermeneutic truth entails opening the doors of interpretation to application, and application to interpretation.⁷⁶ Bringing this Gadamerian point more into the realm of biblical interpretation, Thiselton, agreeing with Fuchs, says that “only on the basis of this broader understanding of hermeneutics can the New Testament ‘strike home,’ so that the interpreter is confronted with reality rather than with ‘concepts.’”⁷⁷

Though Gadamer makes this radical connection between hermeneutics and action, he points to language as the irreducible entry point for the process of understanding, a move made possible by his broadening of language to a linguisticity of all experience.⁷⁸ In contrast to the idea that primary meaning arises in the mind and then chooses words as a “secondary” aspect of the thought, Gadamer claims “that words serve a disclosive rather than referential function.”⁷⁹ As David Vessey summarizes, also quoting Gadamer,

We don’t bring words to wordless experience. Instead, “experience of itself seeks and finds words that express it. We seek the right word—i.e. the word that really belongs to the thing—so that in it the thing comes to language.” The world becomes intelligibly disclosed to us through words.⁸⁰

This linguisticity of being separates Gadamer from his teacher Heidegger, who saw the primordial interpretation that underlies propositional language as a-linguistic.⁸¹ In contrast, Gadamer “points to modes of pre-understanding that already have the form of judgment (assertion, constative speech act).”⁸² Gadamer puts this in the apothegm, “being that can be understood is language.”⁸³ According to John Arthos, it is this placing of “language . . . at the exact center of the mystery of human identity” that is the “central borrowing of Gadamer’s hermeneutics from the Augustinian corpus.”⁸⁴ In a way followed by Gadamer, according to Arthos, Augustine insists that “[an interior] word . . . is absolutely the same kind of thing as the knowledge it is born from,”⁸⁵ a picture of human speaking and interpretation modeled on the model of the Trinity, where the Word of God both represents the Father and is Himself God. Westphal points out that, in this respect, Gadamer is arguing for a hermeneutic that recognizes and values difference without falling into dualism.⁸⁶

This relationship between an inner interpretive “word” that discloses the world and the language it finds that “really belongs to the thing” shows Gadamer’s debt to medieval theories of language, as Vessey also shows,⁸⁷ but its relationship to Augustine, and to the medieval participatory frame of language, will be a matter of further discussion below. Because Gadamer himself was possibly midreading Augustine on this point, conflating Augustine’s inner word with its later medieval version, especially in Aquinas,⁸⁸ the issue bears looking into. How Gadamer’s hermeneutics and Augustine’s can share a language and practice will depend partly on this core relation between fundamental interpretation and language. For now, it is important to note Gadamer’s linguisticity of primordial interpretation for its connection to the being of the text. A text as a linguistic artifact is a legitimate, if limited, disclosure of the world—it is *being* incarnated into language—and as such it is ontologically on equal terms with the person interpreting it.

The fundamental authority of a text, to Gadamer, comes from, then, its ontological disclosure of a world, but Gadamer also acknowledges the importance of learning as much about the original historical and cultural horizon of the text as possible (“what it meant then”) to help guide our understanding of how the text elucidates and articulates our understanding of our historical moment (“what it means now”). These can be seen, respectively, as the “reproductive” understanding of the text and the “productive” aspect, but “while Gadamer grants that the reproductive aspects of interpretation can be distinguished from the productive, past meaning from present meaning, he rejects the notion that they can be separated.”⁸⁹ Texts disclose the world in ways relative to the historicity of their production, but interpreters can only read reproductively (interpreting past meaning) in a productive way (the text’s meaning now) because of their own historical positionality. Thus, reproductive and productive interpretations inter-

penetrate, with the being of the linguistic text standing as a perpetual conversation partner with the interpreter's present horizon, which is enabled by interpretive tradition.⁹⁰

Fusion of Horizons. Gadamer thus restores to current hermeneutic theory the "function of interpretation in relating the meaning of the text to the present"⁹¹ while also locating the rationality of the text (for the most part) within interpretive tradition.⁹² Denying modernistic pretensions to comprehensive and once-for-all readings through his focus on the limitedness and historicity of interpreters, Gadamer instead describes a dialogic process of the living text continuing to speak and shape language through its position "in between" the alterity of its historically unique articulation of being and the familiarity of our experience of being, through our shared inheritance of language.⁹³ This is Gadamer's well-known metaphor of the "fusion of horizons," and we will briefly examine what he says about this interaction between the being of the text and the being of the interpreter.

The dialogic interactions between interpreter(s) and text depend on the traditions that belong to the language of the text and of the interpreter(s), but these dialogic interactions also create in that event of interpretation a new instantiation of the tradition of those languages, not just reproducing but also producing meaning. Thus, though there is a horizon of meaning that *belongs* to the text and that good interpreters/listeners should wrestle with, such wrestling always ultimately produces a fusion of horizons within the linguistic tradition, a fusion of horizons that responds to the questions of the interpreter's historical moment. Thus, an interpreter's wrestlings with a text is productive of "new" meanings that can be seen as consistent with, though different from, previous meanings. In Gadamer's view, this new meaning is a legitimate interpretation *because it also is a disclosure of the world*, whose possible linguistic descriptions are limitless. Authors and interpreters are finite, describing the world from finite historical perspectives, but

the world and its possible linguistic descriptions is infinite. For these reasons, as mentioned above, the “productive” results of the “fusion of horizons” are both unavoidable and desirable.⁹⁴

But Gadamer also gives us language to explain how he sees a “fusion of horizons” unfolding, and his key metaphors are translation and play/performance. Though these are given as two different ways to understand how a text is interpreted, Westphal points out that Gadamer “assimilates” performance and translation:

To perform—either in the narrower sense in which an actor performs a play or a musician performs a sonata or in the broader sense in which to read a novel is to perform it—is to translate. It is to (try to) make it understandable in a semantic context different from that of the author or composer. This is true even for the first “performers,” who more nearly than later “performers” belong to the author’s world.⁹⁵

These metaphors are helpful in discussing how this fusion of horizons is neither an exact correspondence to the intention of the original author nor an “anything goes” anarchy of an interpreter’s subjectivity. To “interpret” music or any other performance piece is, of course, one of the definitional types of interpretation,⁹⁶ but Gadamer suggests that *all* interpretation, even the silent reading of a text, is an interpretive performance that brings the interpreter into the text’s game and transforms the text through the interpreter’s performance.⁹⁷ In this light, a good interpretation of the scriptures would be judged for both its adherence to the text and for its aptness to the horizon of the interpreter and his/her tradition in the historical moment. An interpretation that refuses to “perform” the text for the questions implicit in the congregation’s horizon might be technically correct, but not to the purpose of the text. An interpretation that pays insufficient attention to the horizon of the text itself fails to disclose any fresh aspect of the

world to the congregation, showing them instead only their own horizon of prejudices, leaving their horizon unedified, untransformed.

Gadamer develops this vision of hermeneutics through the metaphor of “play,” which he discusses in relation to the work of art.⁹⁸ Even though “for the player play is not serious,” Gadamer also says that “seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play.” The difference in “seriousnesses” here is between the subjective reflective attitude toward the game (“it’s just a game”) and the “purpose” of the game to have the player “lose ... himself” in it.⁹⁹ On the Little League baseball field, the parent-spectators should not yell as if the baseball game were “serious,” but the players within the game should lose themselves in the play by taking their in-game responsibilities and execution seriously. And players who take the game too seriously in the first sense (stepping outside the game through reflection) often find that it interferes with their ability to lose themselves seriously in their performance in the second sense. Further, Gadamer emphasizes that play is responsive back and forth activity with “no goal that brings it to an end,”¹⁰⁰ that it temporarily blurs the line between “being and playing,”¹⁰¹ and that it is fundamentally interactive, a “being played,” even when the other is a game, imaginary opponent, or text.¹⁰² On this point, Gadamer says,

Play is not to be understood as something a person does. ... The actual subject of play is obviously not the subjectivity of an individual who, among other activities, also plays but is instead the play itself. ...

The structure of play absorbs the player into itself, and thus frees him from the burden of taking the initiative, which constitutes the actual strain of existence.¹⁰³

For anyone who has lost him/herself “in the zone” in a game, this is a clear example of the ontological power of the game not only to call for standard roles and responses but also to lay out criteria for legitimate creative interpretations of such responses within the game.

That is, there is for the player “a freedom of decision which at the same time is endangered and irrevocably limited.”¹⁰⁴ Play is a “process that takes place ‘in between’”¹⁰⁵ the player’s interpretations of the possible choices within the “irrevocable limit[atations]” of the game, a process of “self presentation”¹⁰⁶ which involves a player being absorbed in the game’s “reality that surpasses him.”¹⁰⁷ Gadamer insists that the “self presentation” of the play itself cannot be reduced to “life function and biological purpose” (i.e., an evolutionary adaptation),¹⁰⁸ and neither can it be reduced to individual subjectivity, even in its “true consummation in being art, [a] *transformation into structure*.”¹⁰⁹ Instead, it is social in the humanistically meaningful way of a tradition. Because of the nature of human being as always already interpreting and linguistic, human play “is always presentation,” which is always “potentially a representation for someone,” which is “all the more the case where the game is itself ‘intended’ as [a representation of] a reality.”¹¹⁰ That is, interpretation is a social game that discloses a real world. In this light, the scriptural text can be seen, like other artistic texts, as a realm of serious play that invites participation in its representation of reality.

In the interpretation of a work of art (this game that represents reality by its own particular rules), the play of the interpreter both *reproduces* meaning through recognition of the world and *produces* meaning by a new “interpretation” of that recognized world. As Gadamer says, on the one hand, “we experience in a work of art and what invites our attention is how true it is—i.e., to what extent one knows and recognizes something and oneself.” But on the other hand, the “profoundest nature” of that “recognition” comes in the “joy of knowing more than is

already familiar.” This disclosure of truth that is both recognizable *and* new is the text’s “task” in the “game” of “representation,”¹¹¹ and the corresponding interpreter’s task is to “participate” in the work, by reading to perform “passiv[ely]” the text already performed actively by an author (and sometimes mediated by a performer), reading hermeneutically in the sense of being “totally involved in and carried away by what one sees.”¹¹²

This is how the play of the interpretation of a work is a fusion of horizons, reproducing and producing meaning through the game that the being of the text calls its interpreters into. It is important to remember, here, that in Gadamer’s perspective, the interaction between the interpreter and the text is *necessarily* performative because of the nature of text and of historical temporality. The being of the work of art exists only in its re/presentation, its interpretive performance in which its “reality is disclosed *afresh*.”¹¹³ Thus, as Thiselton says, “the concert or the dramatic presentation which overwhelms and transforms a man today may be more faithful to the score or to the script by adopting a form not identical with that of two hundred years earlier.”¹¹⁴ While a “hermeneutic that regarded understanding as reconstructing the original would be no more than handing on a dead meaning” because of the “historicity of our being,”¹¹⁵ Gadamer’s performative hermeneutic, disclosing reality “afresh” by fusing its past (representational) meaning with the current interpreters’ horizon, produces a *living* meaning, one that respects the authority of an interpretive tradition by continually retranslating it through time and successive generations. It “acquires its proper being in being mediated,”¹¹⁶ Gadamer tells us, giving us a picture of mutual mediation: the text is the medium through which the interpreter reads the world, but no less importantly, the interpreter is the medium through which the text represents the world to the current time and generation.

Gadamer's complex description of what "understanding" is, how it is possible, and how a "hermeneutically trained consciousness" can smooth the way for the natural process of understanding provides some intriguing possibilities for how to understand the interpretation of the scriptures across different cultures and times. However, those explicit and implicit possible applications to Evangelical hermeneutics need to be read within the horizon of Augustine's specifically Christian hermeneutics, which is the philosophy of communication game being played in this project.

Gadamer in Augustine's Court

In part, the question of how Gadamer's hermeneutics fits Evangelical Christian hermeneutics is a subset of the larger question of how Evangelicals should relate to postmodernism. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Evangelical hermeneutics might profit from the emphasis on finitude and fallenness that secular philosophical hermeneutics has brought to the fore in the postmodern era. This is Westphal's specific thesis and project, and he argues that such an emphasis belongs naturally in the Christian theistic context, which reminds us that we are neither as comprehensive nor as pure in our interpretational motives as God: "Taken together, the hermeneutics of finitude and of suspicion tell us: We cannot attain to the Truth, and if we could, we would [sinfully] edit (that is, revise) it to suit our current agenda."¹¹⁷ While similarly arguing for interpretive finitude (though less for fallenness), Gadamer is generally characterized as the "glass half-full" hermeneutic philosopher, optimistic about the possibilities of interpretation (unlike late Heidegger and Derrida) through the performative possibilities of tradition, especially as seen in the arts and humanities (including religious traditions and liturgies).¹¹⁸ He has characterized his whole project of description as focused on "transcendence," and he argued more insistently in his later years for the ontological importance

of religious experience as a hermeneutical ground.¹¹⁹ This makes him, *prima facie*, a more attractive conversation partner for Evangelicals than some other hermeneutical philosophers.

However, in this conversation, Evangelicals would do well to heed Augustine's philosophy of communication modifications of Gadamer. Compared with Augustine, Gadamer's understanding of human finitude seems to be similarly tied to temporality, but Gadamer's description of human linguisticity lacks the creational ground of Augustine's inner word. Also, Gadamer's understanding of hermeneutical fallenness seems to miss both the real possibility of evil in Augustine's philosophy of communication and the real possibility of grace through participation. Gadamer appropriates Augustine's Trinitarian thought to express how a text can be "incarnated" in its performance by an interpreter, a fusion of horizons that produces a new reality as a source of blessing for his historical moment. However, Gadamer seems to limit this appropriation to an aesthetic transcendence that remains agnostic about any participatory connection between a real eternity and a real temporality. Nonetheless, Gadamer's description of the performative re-vivification of the work of art—if the *world* it describes can be broadened to the spiritual and eternal, not merely the carnal and temporal—might be a helpful way to describe Augustine's reproductive/productive performance of the scriptures, which brings together different textual horizons through figuration to focus on a participatory response to current historical exigencies.

Historicality and Temporality. Since Gadamer's theoretical touchstone is historicality, it will be important to examine how this metaphor compares with Augustine's similar focus on eternity and temporality. To rehabilitate tradition, Gadamer develops a critique of "historicism," against which we can better see his "historicality":

The recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutical problem its real thrust. In light of this insight it appears that *historicism, despite its critique of rationalism and of natural law philosophy, is based on the modern Enlightenment and unwittingly shares its prejudices, ... [including] the prejudice against prejudice itself, which denies tradition its power.*¹²⁰

That is, “reconstructing the conditions in which a work ... from the past was originally constituted” in order to reproduce its past meaning exactly (historicism) is a fool’s errand¹²¹ because human beings’ fundamental reality is their embeddedness or “belonging” to a particular point in historical time,¹²² with all the social and cultural baggage (“prejudices”) that come with that point in time (historicality). Augustine agrees with this constraint in many ways, pointing to our *self* as life being stretched out in time (*distention animi*),¹²³ to our individual interpretive perspectives as affected at every temporal step in our personal histories,¹²⁴ and to the fundamental limitations of time and culture on our interpretations of the truth.¹²⁵

However, the basic reality on which Augustine finds his understanding of temporal hermeneutics is eternity. Augustine’s eternity is a real and totally other realm that is nevertheless connected to us within temporality by our active participation in the Word of God (Christ). Gadamer hints at this alternate possibility in his rejection of the “timelessness” of art. Gadamer says that “historicality”—the “radical finitude” of Heidegger’s *Dasein*—is not just one way to understand existence but is rather “the mode of being of understanding itself.”¹²⁶ This undercuts the idea of a timeless “sacred time” of art, with Gadamer’s following caveat:

Only a biblical theology of time, starting not from the standpoint of human self-understanding but of divine revelation, would be able to speak of a “sacred time” and

theologically legitimate the analogy between the timelessness of the work of art and this “sacred time.”¹²⁷

However, Gadamer’s own focus seems to be on the timelessness of the work of art and the “re-creation ... of the created work” in a way that “presents itself so differently in the changing course of ages and circumstances,” yet is “contemporaneous with every age.”¹²⁸ This contemporaneity is not a “mode of givenness” (i.e., it is not ahistorical or eternal) but is rather the interpretive “*task* for consciousness and an achievement that is demanded of it.” That is, when we fulfill our task of being given over to the text in this play of an interpretive game, “all mediation is superseded in total presence.”¹²⁹ This “total presence” seems to suspend historical time existentially, but it is the result of giving oneself to the being of the work within the horizon of one’s historical time. “Participation,” which Gadamer references specifically in its ancient Greek manifestation, is a giving of oneself to the being of the work, “being totally involved in and carried away by what one sees.”¹³⁰ Thus, Gadamer’s focus is on *participation in the work of art through hermeneutic openness*, a total fusion of the being of the work and one’s own historicity that manifests in existential timelessness. While this description may hold for works of art in general (a topic beyond the scope of this project), it violates an Augustinian understanding of participation by replacing a real point of contact between two real and different realms with an immanent participation of one historical horizon in another, existentially achieved through hermeneutic openness.

Gadamer also thus undercuts the “biblical theology of time” through his philosophical description, even while he provides pictures of biblical interpretation that fit well with an Augustinian participatory hermeneutic. For example, Gadamer picks up Kierkegaard’s concept of a “claim,” which is “something lasting” and “can be enforced at any time.” It is the “legal

basis for an unspecified demand,” which is made concrete in different historical periods *as a* demand.¹³¹ The claim could be seen as a divine speech act, an approach favored by Wolterstorff,¹³² but Gadamer keeps its function within history:

The application to Lutheran theology is that the claim of faith began with the proclamation of the gospel and is continually reinforced in preaching. The words of the sermon perform this total mediation ... We shall see that in other ways too *the word is called on to mediate between past and present*, and that it therefore comes to play a leading role in the problem of hermeneutics.¹³³

It is true to an Augustinian perspective, in my estimation, that the lasting “claim of faith” comes down to us through the scriptural “proclamation of the gospel,” which is constantly made alive again in our historical time through the performative interpretation of the “word.” The “permanence” of the claim has to be applied through its “performance,” which in Augustinian parlance would be “confession.” However, the word that is mediating past and present, in an Augustinian perspective, must also be mediating the realms of eternity and temporality to have any legitimacy in its “permanence.” That is, while we participate horizontally in the languages, traditions, and texts of our fellow humans in the temporal plane (i.e., Gadamer’s focus), we must also be participating vertically through the Word in the eternal plane. Augustine acknowledges and discusses the importance of the first, horizontal dimension of interpretation while setting it in the context of the more basic, spiritual dimension of interpretation. “Total presence”¹³⁴ for Augustine is not an existential result of virtuous hermeneutical actions but a real future state outside of historicity itself,¹³⁵ and in this temporal life, it is the goal and motivation for participating in the *real presence* even in its mediated temporal artifacts.

However, Gadamer's criticism of modernistic "historicism" and his philosophical descriptions of the performative incarnations of the (scriptural) text in the current historical moment can be helpful language for Evangelical hermeneutics, especially if it is recontextualized in an Augustinian framework.¹³⁶ One particular passage shows the promise of Gadamer's discussion of "contemporaneity" in the reception of a textual work:

For Kierkegaard, "contemporaneity" ... names the task that confronts the believer: to bring together two moments that are not concurrent, namely one's own present and the redeeming act of Christ, and yet so totally to mediate them that the latter is experienced and taken seriously as present (and not as something in a distant past). ...

Contemporaneity in this sense is found especially in religious rituals and in the proclamation of the Word in preaching. Here, "being present" means genuine participation in the redemptive event itself. ... A spectator's ecstatic self-forgetfulness corresponds to his continuity with himself. ... What rends him from himself [the self-forgetfulness of total mediation] at the same time give[s] him back the whole of his being.¹³⁷

Gadamer means this description of "ecstatic self-forgetfulness" through the total mediation of the Christological text or ritual as an existential event, an exemplar of a good tradition of hermeneutic openness. However, for an Augustinian participatory hermeneutic, we could say that "being present" in the reading of the text of scripture is truly—not just existentially—"genuine participation in the redemptive event itself." When Paul wrote that we have "died" with Christ and have been buried with Him in baptism,¹³⁸ he did not merely invite an existential fusion of historical events (Christ's event, Paul's addressee's conversion, the modern reader's conversion) but, even more, described the real connection of the eternal event of the sacrifice of

Christ (“slain from the foundation of the world”¹³⁹) *and* the temporal event(s) of Christ’s work *and* its every recurrence in every conversion throughout time. It is a “rend[ing]” us from our temporal selves—“thin,” stretched out, fallen, self-absorbed¹⁴⁰—to “give [us] back the whole of [our] being,” the creational depth of self only possible through the participatory redemption of the *imago dei* and the worshipful focus upward, through the scriptures, that restores meaning by putting our “self” in its decentered place.

Linguisticity and Narrative. The question of how Augustine’s grounding concept of the “inner word” and Inner Teacher squares with Gadamer’s appropriation of medieval linguistic thought is a complicated one. Considering the fact that scholars of the stature of David Vessey and John Arthos seem to disagree on this point of the Augustine-Gadamer relationship, my own conclusions should be understood as tentative.¹⁴¹ First, however, we should look at Gadamer’s basic comparison between language and the Trinity:

The mystery of the Trinity is mirrored in the miracle of language insofar as the word that is true, because it says what the thing is, is nothing by itself and does not seek to be anything ... It has its being in its revealing. Exactly the same thing is true of the mystery of the Trinity. ... This is more than a mere metaphor, for the human relationship between thought and speech corresponds, despite its imperfections, to the divine relationship of the Trinity. The inner mental word is just as consubstantial with thought as is God the Son with God the Father.¹⁴²

Drawing primarily on Augustine’s *De Trinitate*,¹⁴³ Gadamer appropriates the analogy between the eternal procession of the Son from the Father and the eternal procession of the “inner mental word” from “thought.” Echoing Augustine’s hermeneutical warning not to be “slaves of a sign,”¹⁴⁴ Gadamer says that our “reason preserves its freedom” by inventively exhibiting its

“capacity to rise above bondage to language to attain the sense intended,” but this “capacity itself is, as we have seen, linguistic.” That is, reason preserves its freedom by multiplying language, not by getting beyond language.¹⁴⁵ So, thinking proceeds, like the Son, into its “consubstantial” inner mental word (i.e., sense, meaning) that can be incarnated into a multiplicity of words, gestures, and other signs.

Not satisfied yet, Gadamer further interrogates this “inner word.” He says that as a true description of some aspect of the world, this “inner word” “has the ontological character of an event,” orienting itself towards utterance but not “completely coincid[ing]” with any “particular language” or specific linguistic formulation.¹⁴⁶ That is, it has a solid root in its connection to the world but is not predetermined in the direction of its linguistic flowering. This characterization of the “inner word” as linguistic without being tied to any specific language or formulation is also strongly Augustinian.¹⁴⁷ Also like Augustine, Gadamer characterizes the “discursiveness of human thought [as] not basically temporal in nature,”¹⁴⁸ but like the atemporal procession of the Son from the Father, thought is a dialogic process in the special sense that its conversational ontology operates before any “reflective act.”¹⁴⁹ That is, the basic hermeneutic act is when our openness to some aspect of the world elicits, “simultaneous[ly]” with our attention, a thinking-inner-word,¹⁵⁰ ready to find expression in outer words before we even realize that we have thought/interpreted anything.

Gadamer follows Aquinas’s distinctions between the Trinity and a human inner word, noting that the Son (unlike the inner word) must remain “incomprehensible”; that unlike the Trinity, “the human word is potential before it is actual”; that though the inner word “reflects completely what the mind is thinking” (similar to the Son), the mind’s thinking itself is finite and thus “imperfect” in its attention to self and world; and that the thinking human interpreter, unlike

God, “cannot contain [the thing] as a whole within itself.”¹⁵¹ That is, because human beings are finite and historically rooted, their interpretive grasp on the real world is true, but radically limited, proceeding in “not one, like the divine word, but ... necessarily ... many words.”¹⁵²

Springing off of this, Gadamer insightfully notes that “even the divine Word is not completely free of multiplicity” since “there is an essential connection between the unity of the divine Word and its appearance in the church.”¹⁵³ The unified Word in the church is multiple because “the meaning of the word cannot be detached from the event of proclamation,”¹⁵⁴ an event which might take place in different times, circumstances, and choices of exterior language. In “*totus Christus*” language that resonates with Augustine and Dietrich Bonhoeffer,¹⁵⁵ Gadamer asserts that “the Christ of the resurrection and the Christ of the kerygma are one and the same.” Gadamer recognizes that this medieval solution to the problem of the *one and the many* manifests a view of the world that is “not covered by the structure of logic” and is “not content with viewing concept formation as simply the reflection of the order of things.”¹⁵⁶ That is, tying this development of Gadamer’s thought back to his analogy with the Trinity that is “more than a mere metaphor,” the hermeneutical inner word can be said to be an atemporal unity of meaning that has its being in its expression in a multiplicity of expressions throughout time—just as the Son is the “event” of a unique, eternal Word of God while also being the “events” of his proclamation through time in the Church. This identification of the timeless event of Christ in God and the temporal events of Christ in his church hint at a different logic and a different relationship of word and world, as Gadamer says. This also brings Gadamer right up to the threshold of Augustinian participation.

Arthos points out that Gadamer believed the *verbum interius* was the core concept to explain the universality of human hermeneutic experience.¹⁵⁷ A version of this concept also

undergirded Augustine's understanding of the potential universality of hermeneutics, but are they the same inner word? Summarizing his perspective on this connection, Arthos says,

Augustine's analogy of the *verbum interius* feeds on the epochal achievement of the church to conceive of itself and its kerygmatic mission as an extension of God's utterance, and of world history as a figural and narrative enactment that bespeaks the person of the Word. Gadamer's reappropriation of the link between incarnation and *Sprache* ... continues to feed on this link.¹⁵⁸

The Augustinian inner word operates with revelational potential, connected to a creational beginning, a historical narrative "whole," and a "kerygmatic" identity that goes beyond mere description of the world. There is no doubt that Gadamer drew on this link, but if we follow Vessey's pointers,¹⁵⁹ we might find that while much of Gadamer's language is helpful, his appropriation of Augustine misconstrued the *world* that Augustine was attempting to describe. The world described by Augustine's philosophy of communication is different than that construed by Gadamer in that Augustine's hermeneutical world is creational, fallen, and graced with a divine Other in its basic dialogic linguisticity.

In Augustine's description, it is not only the Son who is the image of God but, through the Son's creation and maintenance of the world, we are as well. The *imago Dei* is ineradicably present in all people as the universal ground of human interpretation, as explained in Chapter 3. Gadamer seems to take creation as a conceptual metaphor that "only interprets the structure of the universe in a temporal scheme," "not a real process" that sets out the ontological conditions for linguisticity itself.¹⁶⁰ In this way, though Gadamer and Augustine have similar perspectives on the linguisticity of being,¹⁶¹ Augustine gives us the ground of this linguisticity.

Augustine also gives us a different perspective than Gadamer on the conversational nature of the inner word. Gadamer says, “Because our understanding does not comprehend what it knows in one single inclusive glance, it must always draw what it thinks out of itself, and present it to itself as if in an inner dialogue with itself. In this sense all thought is speaking to oneself.”¹⁶² That this is not merely an individualistic subjective inner dialogue is clear from Gadamer’s insistence that the “content” of tradition is inseparable from this dialogic inner word.¹⁶³ However, all the conversation partners in Gadamer’s conception of hermeneutics are within the plane of temporality, whereas Augustine explains his dialogic linguisticity in terms of an Inner Teacher who is not present merely structurally (in tradition or language) but also personally. The inward turn is also an upward turn. The Inner Teacher is, in a Christian mode, a Hermes figure¹⁶⁴ who speaks the languages of God and humans, of the eternal plan of God and the temporal situation of particular historical humans. The Inner Teacher is an Other who can lead interpreters to read their situation otherwise than some of the voices of tradition while affirming other voices of tradition. The Inner Teacher is a norming criterion who is not a conceptual principle but a communicating person. Vessey points out that, in contrast to Gadamer, Augustine’s inner word can be more fundamentally true (because of the Inner Teacher) while its outward expression in language can never be comprehensive or perfect.¹⁶⁵ That is, in dialogue with the Inner Teacher, a faithful interpreter can gain a perspective on the world that, while still limited, is precisely what is needed to respond faithfully to a particular historical situation. In Augustine’s understanding, our dialogic hermeneutics can be “true” to the eternal plan and the narrative whole of history, even when we ourselves do not have the whole of the eternal plan and the narrative whole of history in our possession.

In this way, participation in God’s truth enables a right hermeneutical response to a moment—a faithful hermeneutical event—without needing or giving a comprehensive description of the rest of the world. Knowledge of the part can be in true relation to its whole as long as the Inner Teacher who knows the whole has enabled a clear knowledge of the part. An instructive illustration of this from the scriptures appears at the beginning of Acts when the disciples (understandably) ask the post-resurrection Christ about the whole: “Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” Jesus answers them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”¹⁶⁶ Granted, the Teacher here was also exterior, but the dynamic between part and whole is helpful for us. The disciples had been preaching the kingdom of God, and they knew “the end of the story,” but now with access to the manifestly divine Son of God, they were ready to get the whole story, the whole schedule, straight from their authoritative source. Jesus does not cooperate in playing the part of informant, though, but rather gives a command and a promise. This command and promise within its largely unknown whole is nevertheless a clearly known part, and it comes from the participatory relationship with that authoritative personal Teacher.

A final significant difference between Augustine’s inner word and that of Gadamer is that Gadamer seems to insist that all language is a true though limited perspective on the world, but Augustine argues that the impact of fallenness on language—especially in the mode of lying—can create whole linguistic worlds (interior and exterior) that have no fundamental connection to the world.¹⁶⁷ That is, Gadamer insists that the “word reflects completely what the mind is thinking,”¹⁶⁸ but Augustine points out that because of sin, people routinely have divided hearts,

leading to divided interpretive possibilities. He says we love the truth because it is the truth, though we also dislike it because it calls our other loves and actions into question.¹⁶⁹ In this, Augustine insists that we are faced with not one hermeneutically discerned world, but multiple competing ones. In agreement with Gadamer, our perspectives are limited by our historicity, but Augustine goes further and says that our historical perspectives are always already morally divided and scattered as well. The path that turns *away* from the Inner Teacher's voice is still linguistic, but leads to interpretations that are less and less connected to any real world, which was created good. That is, the fallenness of our loves complicates our basic hermeneutic approach to the world and makes possible interpretations and representations that have no legitimate connection to the world, including lies, falsehoods, and false doctrines. The creational and participatory presence of God in the inner parts of humans, on the other hand, keeps open the hermeneutical possibilities of participation in the world as it is, which is not merely physical or historical but also moral and spiritual.

The end rhetorical product of both Gadamer and Augustine is the multiplication of interpretive discourses to elaborate the given inner word. Gadamer's inner word multiplies and grows as the interpreter's horizon shifts—as the world he encounters continues to manifest new aspects. Augustine's (faithful) inner word multiplies and grows, first, as the interpreter seeks exterior language to do better justice to the inner word (though he never quite gets there), and second, as the eternal inner word is disclosed differently in participatory response to the temporal historical situation.¹⁷⁰ Neither one of them expects to find, through interpretation, exterior linguistic expressions that perfectly mirror the inner word which perfectly mirrors a world horizon uniformly for all time and all people. Such an "objective" interpretation would need no further words, no further attention to its world, and no further participation in its Creator God,

but would instead make itself a prime candidate for fossilization in text and use in uncritical social segregation, an “objective” labeling without further listening. In the conceptual language of the inner word, such is the description of modernistic interpretation that, I argue, should be recognized as an interloper in Evangelical hermeneutics. This hermeneutic is at cross purposes as well, I argue, with the participatory command from Acts to obedience in evangelism without a comprehensive grasp of the projected narrative, a missional imperative which is another significant part of the Evangelical identity. “We believed and therefore we spoke,” Paul says,¹⁷¹ and Gadamer understands this generative need in the structure of Protestant hermeneutics.¹⁷² There is a content to the gospel that continues through history,¹⁷³ but needs to have its textual tradition reembodyed over and over again, multiplying its interpretations/applications through the unified multiplicity of the church of Christ.

Transcendence Versus Participation. From the very beginning of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer insists that his project is one of “description,” not normative prescription.¹⁷⁴ However, if every interpretation is application (at least, embryonically),¹⁷⁵ it should come as no surprise that Gadamer’s interpretation of interpretation has manifested in a specific religious application. For an Evangelical appropriation of hermeneutic philosophy, this is where Augustine’s applied hermeneutics is a much better fit than Gadamer’s.

Gadamer identifies the Augustinian analogy of linguistic incarnation as a key improvement over Greek hermeneutical thought, as we have seen. But further, as Jens Zimmerman explains from an interview with Gadamer late in his life, Gadamer came to see this hermeneutical inner word as itself a “quasi-religious” experience of transcendence:

Gadamer does not merely use the theological model as a heuristic device but believes, and indicates in *Truth and Method*, that the correspondence of inner word and intended meaning is itself an indication of the divine or religious transcendent.¹⁷⁶

In line with his phenomenological tradition, Gadamer insists that this transcendence is not “theoretical” but “must be genuinely experienced.”¹⁷⁷ Gadamarian transcendence, then, is the act of openness to the world that provokes a true inner word whose linguistic expression enables both true knowledge of the world and true self-knowledge of oneself as a historically limited knower. We know something, but we know that our knowledge is due to our traditioned standpoint, and thus we know that continued hermeneutic openness to continued fusions of horizons is the essential precondition for knowledge in every new historical moment.

For this reason, Gadamer “refuses to allow any positive content for religious experience,”¹⁷⁸ an insistence that stands in tension with his argument for the permanence of content in traditions¹⁷⁹ and with his indebtedness to the specifically Christian ontology of language.¹⁸⁰ Though he acknowledges this tension in his interpretation-application, Gadamer “insists that he does not see any other way to ensure religious dialogue than to reduce all religions to a common denominator: the experience of transcendence.”¹⁸¹ It only makes sense, then, that Gadamer also locates the hope of “inter-faith dialogue” in philosophy rather than in religious traditions proper because of the danger of “dogmatism,” which is the positive content of experienced creeds.¹⁸² It also makes sense that he would similarly reject missionary work, at least in terms of promoting the specific content of a tradition¹⁸³ (his own promotion of hermeneutic openness is an acceptable form of proselytizing, apparently). In line with many other recent philosophers who have made a “religious turn” without turning to any traditioned

religion,¹⁸⁴ Gadamer redefines religious transcendence philosophically as a felt experience of human finitude within a uniform horizon of temporality.

As we have seen, Augustine would take issue with this in many ways, providing counter concepts which I argue prove to be important philosophical resources for not only correcting modernist leanings in Evangelical hermeneutics but also defending Evangelical hermeneutics from Gadamer's historical-linguistic ideology. In this, again, the Augustinian ground of participation provides the key corrective to Gadamer's "all too human" concept of hermeneutic transcendence. In its basic contours, an Augustinian hermeneutic—while agreeing with the fact of finitude and emphasizing more the seriousness of fallenness—upholds the hope of truth from divine eternity, and it is this participatory ground of truth that upholds the content of the Christian tradition, which both opens and forecloses the hermeneutic possibilities in the scriptures and enjoins evangelism, with confidence that the eternal "gospel delivered once for all"¹⁸⁵ can speak timelessly to every time and culture. In a biographical illustration that should set Evangelicals more at ease, the same Augustine who argued for the multiplication of true interpretations of most particular scriptures (the opposite of modernistic hermeneutics) was also the Augustine who was confident enough in a textual and participatory hermeneutic to spend much of his life and writings correcting various misreadings of the scriptures.

It is participation that is the key ground for an Augustinian hermeneutic that puts boundaries around a Gadamarian openness because participation 1) entails a level of reality (eternity) beyond the temporal plane of bare history and purely human transmission of tradition and 2) in its Augustinian incarnational dimension, entails an active inward connection to that eternal realm through both creational memory, which is the active general participation of Christ

as “the light of every man,”¹⁸⁶ and the active specific participation of the Holy Spirit in Christians—in individuals, ecclesial bodies, and traditions.¹⁸⁷

As pointed out by many scholars (especially the Radical Orthodoxy movement), our potential connection to an eternal realm provides a depth to reality and a check to historical knowledge—creating a persistent source of alterity and critique—without giving any person or group an “Archimedean point” in the modernist sense. In Augustinian participation, we know some truth, but it is more important that we know the One who knows and is the Truth. Epistemology is not merely structural but also relational. Retaining a hermeneutic openness about things that we have had no participatory communication about, *pace* Gadamer, is necessary and commendable, which is a type of faithful ignorance that St. Paul also advocated.¹⁸⁸ However, if we retain a participatory openness about things that we do know, after having been party to a participatory communication between eternity and our historical moment, we would be sinning, violating our vertical interpersonal relationship by turning away from the Inner Teacher. The paradigmatic case of standing on one’s ground of participatory knowledge would be Jesus himself, pressured by the religious leaders (whose authority came horizontally, from one another) to deny that he knew God. Jesus said, “If I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word.”¹⁸⁹ For the one who knows something from the testimony of the Inner Teacher, there are positive and negative duties of discourse. Negatively, we are not to deny what we know to be true, lest it be pushed down in our individual and communal memory until it seems forgotten. Positively, we are to confess the truth, a conclusion that Gadamer acknowledges,¹⁹⁰ though he also rejects its missionary implications.¹⁹¹

As Zimmerman notes, Gadamer’s position is in tension between the need for “convictions” in a tradition and the need for radical hermeneutic of openness.¹⁹² Augustine has

his own tension between the mixed identity of the church (i.e., a body never fully participating in Christ) and its authority—with scripture—to define and maintain the dogmatic content of the faith. These are similar descriptions of the problem of a tradition’s content, but coming from different grounds and met with different solutions. It seems that Gadamer’s solution is to select hermeneutic openness as the necessary emphasis (perhaps trusting in the tribalism of tradition to forever play the yang to hermeneutics’ yin). Gadamer chooses philosophy as the ideal home for this hermeneutic religion since its tradition is already so weighted towards the question, not the answer. Augustine, on the other hand, argues that for eternal orthodoxy to continue being incarnated in temporal history, the church needs to continue its tradition of charitable, dialogic hermeneutics that keeps it desperately close to its scriptures and its divine Teacher. Because the church will continue to face heresies within and contradictions without, it can never be finished with its participatory labor in the scriptures. There is no “definitive” edition of systematic theology,¹⁹³ only the faithful, participatory response of theology and spiritual praxis to the expressions of finitude and fallenness of the current historical moment.¹⁹⁴ And because every individual interpreter is also finite—by nature and by the eternal design of the church—this hermeneutics is necessarily dialogic within the institution that has been entrusted with the few essential answers to the perennial human questions.

I argue that these philosophy of communication resources from Augustine should find their natural home in Evangelicalism. However, to be a confirming support to Evangelicals in their opposition to the hermeneutical “spirit of the age,” Augustine’s philosophical hermeneutics also has to correct Evangelicals where they have strayed into unholy alliances with the gods of modernism. As defined in Chapter 1, the operational construct of Evangelical identity I am working with is an ecumenical coalition centered on the scriptures and shared missional action

through the gospel. Such cross-tradition ecclesial communication and cross-cultural missionary communication makes it both natural and necessary for the Evangelical movement to be characterized by open hermeneutic discovery and intensely participatory hermeneutical dialogue.

That is, Baptists and Anglicans recognizing each other as cross-traditional brothers in the gospel despite different liturgical practices extracted from the scriptures can plant the forms of charity and hermeneutical multiplicity in healthy ways, while also sending both of these confessing people back to the scriptures with renewed awareness of their own finitude and fallenness. This encounter pushes them back towards the scriptures and back towards the Inner Teacher, but it also confirms them in the creed of the gospel in which they both participate. Cross-culturally, Evangelicals can recognize that “God has not left himself without witness” in peoples across the globe,¹⁹⁵ while at the same time recognizing that every culture has a darkened understanding because of turning away from the Inner Teacher, and it is this mixed tradition that makes hermeneutic openness and careful scriptural wariness natural and necessary in missions. While still wary of syncretism, Evangelical missiology has become progressively more and more open to listening to the communicational keys already present in every culture, conceptual gifts present in native traditions because of their creational and historical participation in God. By listening, Evangelical missionaries have discovered that untouched native cultures already know about the Creator God’s unique characteristics, God’s manifestation as a Trinity, humans’ disconnection with God because of past historical sin in which they listened to a deceiving spirit, the need of blood atonement for sin, and the promise of a future message of reconciliation that would come through a book sent from God.¹⁹⁶

Though these insights from the mission field and from cross-tradition work in evangelism are an essential part of traditional Evangelical identity, the missional move towards a right

balance of hermeneutic openness and orthodoxy needs to be translated back into the realm of biblical hermeneutics and philosophical apologetics in the West, a task for which Augustine's open and faithful hermeneutics can be the bridge. Theologians convening at Wheaton College, the Evangelical educational institution par excellence, have already begun moving theology this way, with George Lindbeck arguing as early as 1995 that in the task of reformulating theology and ecclesial practice to meet the postmodern moment, the task "is more likely to be carried on by evangelicals than anyone else."¹⁹⁷ That task in hermeneutics must be carried out in conversation with Gadamer, which I argue should be engaged within the deeper participatory context of Augustine's scriptural hermeneutics.

An Excursus with Ricoeur

Paul Ricoeur is often mentioned in the same breath with Gadamer,¹⁹⁸ and his work has been engaged frequently by Evangelical scholars.¹⁹⁹ While I acknowledge Ricoeur's work as independent from Gadamer's and a worthy dialogue partner in its own right, this current project can only afford to pick up from Ricoeur a few of his ideas that have sometimes been aggregated into a Gadamarian philosophical hermeneutics. That is, this excursus further defines philosophical hermeneutics through the philosophy of communication of Ricoeur, especially with regard to the possibilities of figuration in an Augustinian scriptural hermeneutics.

Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics is similar to Gadamer's in several of its key metaphors, including their overarching ground of historicity, their focus on the "being of the text," their shared emphasis on the "productivity" of the text in its every new performance (Gadamer's "fusion of horizons"), and their vision of the hermeneutical process as one that responds to finitude by holding in tension both a "naïve" commitment to an interpretation and a wariness of dogmatism. While Gadamer gives us the guiding metaphor of play as the way an

interpreter approaches a particular world through language, Ricoeur develops for us the fundamentally human maneuver of that game—metaphor—that keeps the hermeneutical circle connected but not closed.

Ricoeur and Gadamer Together. Ricoeur, like Gadamer, insists that the constant movement of language (and its purveyors) *through time* is the fundamental ground of hermeneutics. For Ricoeur, this is expressed in “diachronic analysis ... [of] language over time” because “words mean different things not only in different literary and social contexts, but also at different times.”²⁰⁰ Ricoeur also makes it clear that temporality is a fundamental constraint of even biblical hermeneutics:

As a text, [the Gospel] expresses a difference and a distance, however minimal, from the event that it proclaims. This distance, always increasing with time, is what separates the first witness from the entire line of those who hear the witness. Our modernity means only that the distance is now considerable between the place I myself occupy ... and the original site of the first witness.²⁰¹

Ricoeur takes as a strong distinction the one between the “discourse” event possible in conversation and the distanced trace of that event set down in text, a “difference and distance” that by its very nature introduces the need for the textual hermeneutic that he develops.²⁰² As Wolterstorff points out in his summary of this distinction, the key underlying distinction for Ricoeur—beyond the mediums of conversation and text—is the possibility of dialogue.²⁰³ An author who cannot interact with his reader dialogically must leave the author to his own hermeneutical devices with the quasi-permanent text/artifact that remains.

Like Gadamer, Ricoeur sets his hermeneutic philosophy in contrast to the psychologism of earlier general hermeneutics, and both of them restore to the *text itself* a sense of being that

can speak for itself rather than merely reveal the mind of its past author. If anything, Ricoeur takes this importance of the text itself further than Gadamer, though he takes care to avoid the closed textual essentialism of the structuralists.²⁰⁴ As we have seen above, the text is not equivalent to the discourse event that initiated it, and Ricoeur proclaims the autonomy of the text as a “threefold autonomy: with respect to the intention of the author; with respect to the cultural situation ... of the production of the text; and finally, with respect to the original addressee.”²⁰⁵ Though there is still technically a connection between the text and the author, the meaning of the text does not stay stable because cultural, literary, and historical contexts continue to shift on the plane of temporality and because the “polysemy of language,” especially “metaphorical language,”²⁰⁶ also affect the sense and reference of the text. What the author said came out in a discourse that had a specific sense (textual meaning) and reference (pointing to some aspect of the world), but once that discourse leaves the realm of possible dialogue, its reference value remains clear in only certain genres and its original sense is slippery.²⁰⁷ However, Ricoeur still maintains that the text provides a significant constraint on the interpreting subject:

For an interpreter of a text in a distanciated situation [separated from authorial presence], everything *of significance* in the act of discourse, of which that text was the medium, has been lodged in, and is therefore recoverable from, the sense of the text which was composed.²⁰⁸

The text, by its own being, continues to speak things “of significance” through time, but the key to that significance is not the original author’s intention. Thus Ricoeur says that “what the text says *now* matters more than what the author meant to say.”²⁰⁹

Though it is unclear whether Ricoeur is justified in doing so, he distinguishes between straightforward texts and artistic texts, with the latter including religious texts such as the

scriptures. Religious texts, to Ricoeur, do not refer to *the* world but they do invite the reader into “a world,”²¹⁰ a Gadamarian game that, in a roundabout way, effects self-knowledge through linguistic participation in productive interpretation.²¹¹ Ricoeur says,

What is “made our own” [from the text] is not something mental, ... nor some design supposedly hidden behind the text; rather, it is the projection of a world, the proposal of a mode of being-in-the-world which the text discloses in front of itself by means of its non-ostensive references.²¹²

To Ricoeur, then, the point of texts, especially religious texts, is to communicate a “way of being-in-the-world,” an existential orientation rather than an assertion about something in the world itself.

As already implied in the discussion above, Ricoeur and Gadamer both emphasize the point of meeting between the text and the historically bound standpoint of the interpreter, what Gadamer calls the “fusion of horizons.” Texts have no being apart from their interpreters/performers, but their being in the act of performance is not an imposition from their performers. Rather, through an interpretive “dialectic of belonging and distanciation,”²¹³ reading a text is “productive” of a sense that is not “immediat[e]” but rather “mediate[s] again and again in a new and more creative fashion.”²¹⁴ In this emphasis on the productive dimension of interpretation, Ricoeur is less enamored than Gadamer of tradition, less sure about the intersubjective possibilities of human linguisticality, and more insistent on the need for a dialectical engagement with the problems of the text itself.²¹⁵ As Westphal summarizes Ricoeur’s dialectic of belonging and distanciation,

By belonging he means the embeddedness of (human) author and reader alike in contingent and particular horizons, contexts, and perspectives to which the meanings they

put or find in a text are relative. ... By distanciation Ricoeur means the adoption of methods of testing interpretations that render the reader as objective as possible and that treat the text as an object to be explained[,] ... scholarly norms by which biblical interpreters seek to step back, to distance themselves from the particularities of the traditions to which they “belong.”²¹⁶

As synthesized by Lewis Mudge and affirmed by Ricoeur, this “productive” dialectic proceeds through three stages. Because of our “belonging” to a historical position, our first reading of a text is always necessarily “naïve,” but as we distance ourselves methodically to read more objectively, we move into a “critical” reading. Unlike critical theorists and other denizens of modernity, however, Ricoeur argues that our dialectic must progress beyond “arid criticism” to a “secondary naiveté.”²¹⁷ That is, we must *belong again* to the text, letting the textual senses that emerge present us with a world and an attitude that we can make “our own.”²¹⁸

Thus, as we have already seen with Gadamer, Ricoeur also negotiates the tension between “naïve” commitment and hermeneutic openness from the ground of radical historicity. Traditions of interpretation and of textual methodology are our inescapable starting points, but as historical accidents, they cannot also be our unchanged ending points. Likewise, critical interrogation of the text is an essential middle step to enable the being of the text to speak anew to our historical moment, but it cannot be the ending point, either, because interpretation always ends up creating the “world” we live and act in currently. Because of Ricoeur’s ground of historicity, though, no interpretation lasts unchanging through time, and each generation’s secondarily naïve response to a text’s sense is undergirded by a critical readiness to move on. In this way, Ricoeur’s commitment to interpretational commitment also precludes dogmatism. This

critical commitment, or savvy naiveté, is what Ricoeur says characterizes hermeneutics as a self-aware discipline in the modern era.²¹⁹

Thus Ricoeur provides a second conversation partner, next to Gadamer, to lay out some of the language and concepts of current hermeneutical thought that might be engaged productively by an Augustinian approach. Ricoeur's more focused exploration of textual issues makes him, in some sense, a more likely candidate for an Evangelical hermeneutics that rightly focuses on the interpretation of the text of the scriptures as its lodestone. Besides Ricoeur's hermeneutical themes that largely overlap with Gadamer's, however, we still have to explore how his exposition of metaphor fits with his broader theory of textual interpretation.

Ricoeur and Metaphor. The way in to this question is Ricoeur's metaphor of the "world in front of the text," the world in imagination to which the artistic text refers through the means of the "split reference" of metaphor. But this will need to be explained more carefully. Westphal helps us, first, to define this world "in front of" the text: "What is 'in front of' the text rather than hidden behind it is a world, a complex of meaning and truth that is 'opened' by the text and thereby 'proposed' as a mode of being-in-the-world that we might 'inhabit.'"²²⁰ Ricoeur's world "in front of" religious texts, as we have seen, does not primarily reference the historical time-space world (nor the spiritual world), but it is still a public world through shared interpretation of a text that invites its interpreting community to "inhabit" its world together existentially. As in the post-liberal theory of Hans Frei, the text is a "history-like" narrative that gathers a community and organizes identity and action.²²¹ "Narratives, more than any other 'language games,'" says Ricoeur, "have this power of reshaping human experience at least along its temporal features,"²²² and Ricoeur traces their power to the linguistic structure of metaphor,

which allows “the emergence of new meanings in language and of the referential claims raised by such nondescriptive languages as poetic discourse.”²²³

How does metaphor negotiate a “relationship between suspended reference and displayed reference,”²²⁴ though, to create new meanings, and thus new worlds, and thus a shared habitation for an interpreting community? Ricoeur sees the *sense* of the text itself as the rails on which reference to a “world” runs, but the textual sense of metaphors splits that reference in productive ways, *creating* a new way of being-in-the-world. The two parts of the metaphor each still maintain meaning relative to the literal world-reference (e.g., “you” and “frog”) while they violate the normal contextual relationship with the identifying “is” (“you *are* a frog”).²²⁵ That is, while “you” has referential validity to a human addressee and “frog” to a type of amphibian in the real world, their equivalence produces a “semantic impertinence” that opens new ways of knowing “you” and knowing “frogs.”²²⁶ About this “split reference,” Ricoeur says it “contains *in nuce* all that can be said about metaphorical truth,” and he develops the process more in depth, following Jakobson, as follows:

What happens in poetry [and, by extension, religious texts] is not the suppression of the referential function but its profound alteration by the workings of ambiguity: “The supremacy of poetic function over referential function does not obliterate the reference but makes it ambiguous. The double-sensed message finds correspondence in a split addresser, in a split addressee, and what is more in a split reference, as is cogently exposed in the preambles to fairy tales of various peoples, for instance, in the usual exordium of the Majorca storytellers: ... ‘It was and it was not.’”²²⁷

Thus, underlying the dialectical hermeneutic of distancing and belonging in Ricoeur’s approach to religious texts, there is the deeper dialectic between the “is” and “is not” in

metaphoric discourse that perpetually creates an opening for interpretive productivity,²²⁸ for new synthetic worlds of meaning that respect both the being of the text and the historical being of the interpreter, while transcending both.

This metaphoric vision of the world created by seeing simultaneously two incommensurable references at the same time creates a “stereoscopic vision,”²²⁹ a sense of depth of meaning that cannot be reduced to “logical ... consistency.”²³⁰ Paul explains the connection between metaphor’s “split reference” and the space of interpretive meaning as follows:

The reference within the [speech] code is then the reference to a world, to a set of relations that have been refigured by the semantic impertinence of the metaphor. This refigured understanding of reality is what Ricoeur calls “the world in front of the text.” Metaphorical language contains a “surplus of meaning,” and this provides new cognitive space for the reader to inhabit.²³¹

Ultimately, it is not primarily the ambiguity of this “surplus of meaning” (which would be just blurred vision) but rather the *transference of sense* between different things and their autonomous words that is important and productive.²³² Citing Goodman and Aristotle, Ricoeur says that “metaphor is not one figure of discourse among others, but the transference principle common to all of them.”²³³ It is this transference principle that can function at every level of discourse, from explicit sentence metaphors to the broader metaphorical patterns of narratives,²³⁴ and that can tie together “it is” and “it is not” in a “stereoscopic vision” of a textual world that one can inhabit, along with the rest of one’s public community of interpreters. It is this transference feature of Ricoeur’s hermeneutical theory that not only explains the openness and possibility of understanding language across time (opening as well the closed system of

correspondence)²³⁵ but also, as we will see, provides the opening and boundaries for Augustinian figural interpretation, especially when shifted to the key of participation.

Thus, Ricoeur also provides constructive language and concepts that can be appropriated as gifts, in an Augustinian philosophy of communication, though in a qualified way. Like Augustine, Ricoeur points out that interpretation of a text is done with respect to a whole (a literary context, and that within a narrative) which is historically, temporally bounded—“no one, neither the author nor the reader,” Ricoeur believes, “is in actual possession of the whole that would give fully final and determinate meaning.”²³⁶ Like Augustine’s insistence that scriptural words themselves are an insistent dialogic voice which enjoins listening and obedience,²³⁷ Ricoeur emphasizes the being of the text that continues to speak anew to each generation with a textual sense that holds its own in the dialogue of interpretation. Like Augustine’s hermeneutical discovery process constituted by a dialogue of questioning, attention to textual detail, figural creativity, and “naïve” obedience to the text, Ricoeur’s dialectic moves between personal and textual horizons to produce “imaginative” interpretations that are not reducible to the logic of textual structuralism but still require some level of action and commitment.

Besides these broad-brush similarities, Ricoeur’s analysis of the way metaphor opens up language at every level can be especially helpful to my proposal of Augustinian participatory hermeneutics as an Evangelical approach to the scriptures. As developed with help from Matthew Levering in earlier chapters, a participatory approach to the scriptural narrative operates also with “stereoscopic” vision, fixing the historical reference of a scriptural event or command with one eye (in dialogue with the text and the tradition) while fixing one’s interpretation of the current historical moment with the other (in dialogue with the tradition), all while in dialogue with the Inner Teacher whose voice can bring these two dissimilar references into focus as a

“true” match with historical and spiritual depth—or conversely, can blur or contraindicate possible metaphorical connections between the scriptural text and one’s historical moment. That is, because metaphoric “transference” can open the text to many possible interpretations within the boundaries of a particular communal narrative (Ricoeur’s “public” of discourse, or Gadamer’s “tradition”), it enables the text to be continually relevant, but requires the continual labor of a dialogic interpretive practice that respects the text, puts the interpreter to the question, and ultimately gives the interpreter a ground for belief and temporal action. These are the Augustinian hermeneutic goals that I argue are consistent with the longer and broader Evangelical tradition—in which interpreters approach the scriptures humbly, looking for how they are to change us and what direction they give us for faith and practice. Ricoeur’s analysis of metaphor, applied to the narratives of the scripture, the tradition, and the hermeneutical process itself, can help restore to Evangelical hermeneutics the philosophical language that explains how, exactly, people “shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”²³⁸

As implied above, though, this Evangelical use of Ricoeur’s hermeneutic philosophy is dependent on the broader Augustinian ground of a Christian participatory hermeneutics. Without the underlying Augustinian ground of participation—participation in the creational memory as the site of dialogue with the Inner Teacher and in the pneumatological grace that can overcome the fallenness of our wills—Ricoeur’s bare historicity and optimistic reliance on the being of the text itself cannot provide any scriptural “truth” that could be obeyed as “God’s truth.” That is, Ricoeur (like Gadamer) binds his hermeneutics to the temporal plane, making any metaphoric openings and constraints immanent to the text and the horizon of the interpreter rather than linked to the larger context available by participation, the “world above the text.” He thus

restricts unnecessarily the possible “world in front of the text” and misses the radical possibilities of metaphoric “split reference” to connect text, world, and eternity.

Ricoeur (unlike Gadamer) is suspicious of primary linguistic intersubjectivity,²³⁹ arguing instead for a secondary intersubjectivity through dialogic discourse and, in turn, only an oblique and world-focused intersubjectivity through distanced texts.²⁴⁰ Without confidence in the “intention” of a human author and without the hope of a creational or spiritual dialogue with the Inner Teacher, however, interpretation of the text of the scriptures, I argue, is both too “productive” relative to the subjective and traditional biases of the current historical moment²⁴¹ and too *barren* relative to the correctional and edifying perspective that might be spoken from the eternal plane. Thus, for example, the highly literate Christian tradition in South Africa—literate in both the scriptures and textual hermeneutics—could respond to the text and the historical moment to create a powerful “productive” reading that built the segregational system of apartheid instead of reading the text “against” themselves and their historical biases through the voice of the Inner Teacher.²⁴² In building this interpretational edifice, the Presbyterian Church in South Africa was not without critical, prophetic voices that argued for an alternate interpretation, but it is instructive that the primary prophetic voice was that of Andrew Murray, whose now-classic writings on Christian spirituality and revival all emphasize what we have been calling the participatory nature of interpretation. The alterity of the eternal enabled Murray to escape the racist biblical interpretation of his tradition and time.

In a particular counter-example to the temporal and cultural interpretational plane of the larger church, Murray was himself confronted in his interpretive prejudices, and changed, in mid-life. When a “disorderly” revival service had started spontaneously with the prayers of a young black woman, Murray initially tried to quell the disturbance, but he allowed the Inner

Teacher to chasten his prejudices, which led him to read the scriptures differently on this issue than his contemporaries.²⁴³

Thus, theoretically and practically, Ricoeur's focus on the metaphorical openness and productivity of the scriptural text can be helpful for Evangelical hermeneutics if there is "behind the text" not a singular ideal meaning put there intentionally by a singular past author (modernistic hermeneutics) but rather our creational memory and an active Inner Teacher who can legitimately transfer the sense of the world "in front of the text" to the world in front of the interpreter(s) through our participatory dialogue with the creational and spiritual "world above the text." In this way, though we continue to pursue, with Augustine, a better and better reading of the being of the text itself—its history, best critical text, intratextual connections, and linguistic and literary devices—we can have *now* a right and a *good* reading of the text through our participatory attention to the meanings already offered us by the Inner Teacher's lessons about Christ, the gospel, and ecclesial charity. And this good reading will often be an application that has us interpret the scriptures "stereoscopically" as referring to past events, promises, commands, and ways of being-in-the-world that "are not" and—*vitally*—"are" equivalent events and speech acts relevant to us now, "today." Thus, for example, Evangelicals can read "stereoscopically" the exhortation by the author of Hebrews to a first century group of Christians—which is already a metaphorical application of an older Psalm 95, which is already a metaphorical interpretation of the Pentateuchal narrative of the post-Exodus rebellion—"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.'" ²⁴⁴ Though we want to understand the text as best we can in its three different temporal reference points (times of composition of Pentateuch, of the Psalm, and of the letter to a first-century Jewish Christian community) and the intratextual interrelationships

between them, we need only hear ourselves the “voice” of the “Holy Spirit” speaking through this text to tremble at the possibility of a hard heart and to recognize where this warning applies “today” in our own personal and ecclesial horizon.

Extant Evangelical Fusions

In mining the philosophies of communication of Gadamer and Ricoeur for Evangelical hermeneutics, this project is, of course, following in the footsteps of (and profiting from the work of) several Evangelical scholars who have gone before. My debt to several of these scholars should already be apparent in the way I have cited them in conjunction with primary sources from Gadamer and Ricoeur. Because these scholars form part of the emerging tradition of Evangelical interpretation of philosophical hermeneutics, which has undergirded my own such interpretation, it will be important to provide synopses of their interpretational perspectives in order to position my own within this emerging tradition. Though this project has been informed by insights from several Evangelical scholars,²⁴⁵ the three whose interpretational paradigms as a whole have been my conversation partners are Merold Westphal, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and James K. A. Smith.

Westphal: The Apostle of Finitude and Fallenness

Though there have been a number of philosophers who have recently explored the intersections of Continental philosophy and religion, Westphal’s approach has been a “more conservative counterpoint” to those fusions while still provoking interest in Continental thought on the part of traditional and modernist-leaning Evangelicals and their conservative kin.²⁴⁶ In his provocative readings of Continental philosophers normally demonized among Evangelicals for their postmodernism, Westphal has done good work in listening carefully to the questions these thinkers are addressing, turning an honest eye to the Christian tradition through the lenses of

these thinkers, and identifying not only common ground between Christianity and Continental thought but also the prophetic ways in which Continental philosophers remind Christians of the hermeneutic truths they have forgotten in their modernistic “hubris.”²⁴⁷ Drawing on Kant and Kierkegaard, and ventriloquizing Ricoeur and Gadamer in many ways, Westphal’s contribution to an Evangelical philosophical hermeneutics, at least for my project, can be summarized by his themes of finitude, fallenness, and prophetic hermeneutics.

Because I have drawn extensively on Westphal’s books *Overcoming Onto-Theology* and *Whose Community? Which Interpretation?* in earlier sections and chapters, my discussion of his themes of finitude and fallenness will be brief. Westphal believes that the move of Continental philosophy after Heidegger and Gadamer to a radical historicity could help Christianity to return to its roots in creational finitude,²⁴⁸ rejecting the presumptions of “pure reason” and its metaphysical edifices.²⁴⁹ “Postmodernism, [to Westphal], is another expression of the hermeneutics of finitude dedicated to reminding human beings that they are not God.”²⁵⁰ The genius of Westphal’s project has been to read the concerns of Kant, Kierkegaard, Freud, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur as “theological” and to do the work of philosophical translation that makes the boundary between theology and philosophy permeable.²⁵¹ The philosophical hermeneutic emphasis on finitude that we have been examining in Gadamer and Ricoeur, therefore, is one that Westphal connects to the theology of Christianity, specifically of the “Augustine of the *Confessions*.”²⁵²

Westphal also connects the premodern Augustinian argument that fallenness has a radical impact on our hermeneutics with postmodern hermeneutics of “suspicion” who examine interpretations critically for their skewed readings that create and maintain power over others, especially skewed readings embedded in authoritative traditions.²⁵³ “The interests of the

interpreter,” Westphal says, “may be morally problematic, even from the standpoint of the interpreter, in which case interpretation and self-deception will be inseparable.”²⁵⁴ Putt notes the convergence between Westphal’s dual emphases on finitude and fallenness in hermeneutics, specifying about fallenness that

These malignant motivations directly affect rationality in both the individual and communal dimensions, substituting rationalism for reason and ideologies for traditions. The skepticism of suspicion confronting these mutations of epistemic sin directly challenges the integrity of the person and the public.²⁵⁵

That is, neither individual interpreter nor institutional bearer of the tradition of interpretation get a pass in Westphal’s prophetic Christian hermeneutics because, similar to Augustine’s insistence on human depravity, Westphal points out that sin introduces “epistemic” problems deeper than any methodology, rationality, or public institution.²⁵⁶ Westphal’s hermeneutics of suspicion is not “skepticism,” though, and our selective “editing” of the truth “is not an all or nothing affair.” “Suspicion,” he says, “doesn’t ask whether our beliefs are true or whether they have sufficient warrant”; rather, it targets the questionable motives and destructive uses to which a particular scriptural reading is the mere instrument.²⁵⁷

Finitude and fallenness together combine to make interpretation not just a dim mirror but, in Westphal’s metaphor, a “prism.” To Putt, this is Westphal’s central hermeneutical metaphor, and is thus ensconced in Putt’s book title *Gazing Through a Prism Darkly: Reflections on Merold Westphal's Hermeneutical Epistemology*. Westphal’s metaphor entails that interpretation become “irreducibly manifold,”²⁵⁸ just as a prism separates light into incommensurable parts based on their place in the spectrum. That is, our finite perspective in a particular time, place, and culture splits the light coming from the scriptures, as does our mixed motivations stemming

from a will that is still oriented toward self-preservation, pride, and power over others (Augustine's *libido dominandi*). To Westphal, we need, along with a hermeneutics of belief, his hermeneutics of suspicion, constituting a dialectic of belonging and distancing that he models after Ricoeur.²⁵⁹ It is this need for the believer to doubt his interpretations of himself and his tradition that Westphal believes philosophical hermeneutics can help provide, though he does note that the postmodern undermining of Christian truth itself might not be positive in an unqualified way.²⁶⁰ The target he attacks is the synthesis of Christianity and modernistic philosophy that has been labeled by postmodern critics as "onto-theology,"²⁶¹ and he hopes by such a targeted approach to let Christian truth re-emerge, a truth that is characterized by the "wisdom of humility,"²⁶² the "fear of the Lord,"²⁶³ and a temporally-oriented hermeneutics that focuses on situational "obedience" rather than metaphysical "knowledge."²⁶⁴

In this, his deep affinity with Gadamer's translation-performance-application model of hermeneutics emerges, further clarified with Speech Act language borrowed from Wolterstorff. Westphal says the goal of the Christian interpretive community is to "embody scripture" through a dialectic of reading and obeying, which is Gadamer's traditioned *phronesis*: "To understand is to apply; to apply differently is to understand differently."²⁶⁵ We will develop more fully Wolterstorff's theory of "double discourse" and "double hermeneutics" in the next section, but the key point that Westphal borrows in his connecting of hermeneutics and application is Wolterstorff's insight that the scriptures, as "covenantal discourse," are not primarily focused on asserting truths about the world but are rather speech acts of warning, promising, commanding, etc.²⁶⁶ That is, they are already interpersonal relational speech pointed towards shared action more than they are a scientific mapping of the world. While it is important to establish as clearly as possible what speech acts were being performed in the original biblical context (Gadamer's

“reproductive” aspect), this investigation is only preliminary to, not primary over, the “productive” question of how we are to understand and apply these speech acts to ourselves today.²⁶⁷

Finally, the deep biblical roots of Westphal’s Christian philosophical hermeneutics can be seen in his focus on the image of the prophet as the model for the Christian hermeneutic philosopher.²⁶⁸ He separates the roles of the preacher and the Christian philosopher,²⁶⁹ a separation we will return to in a moment, but he gives to the latter the responsibility of speaking prophetically into each historical hermeneutical situation. Westphal characterizes prophets as the ones to speak the apt response to the particular historical moment in the context of human sinfulness.

Through discourses characterized as personal, untimely, political, and eschatological, the biblical prophets brought messages that were not universally grounded but oftentimes were ad hoc admonitions fitted to the particularities of a given situation. The prophets admonished their listeners that truth was often absent ... because of intentional rebellion against the precepts of God. Westphal contends that prophetic philosophers of religion should likewise speak critically against the unattainable absolutism of universal foundations and against the reality of calculated deception and delusion for purposes of oppression and manipulation.²⁷⁰

Because it is already the traditional province of philosophy, Westphal proposes that the dialectic between defending and doubting—between the “priest” function and the “prophet” function—be the realm of the Christian hermeneutic philosopher, though the preponderance of “priestly” apologetics in the modern age makes the role of “prophet” more needful.²⁷¹ In line with Ricoeur, Westphal agrees that the “priest” function of Christian philosophers and institutions is necessary

to forestall the illiteracy and cultural erosion that always threaten a tradition.²⁷² Priests keep the tradition, and “tradition gives the gift of voice, of a language given to express the community’s inherited patterns of reality and to respond to other voices calling those patterns into question.”²⁷³ However, he sees current philosophic prophets, from inside or outside the Christian tradition, as walking in the footsteps of the Hebrew prophets who, wary of the ability of the tradition to “betray” itself,²⁷⁴ “are always appealing to the tradition against the tradition ... [and] are always affirming that which [they are] critiquing.”²⁷⁵ Westphal seems to see different Christian confessional traditions as fairly self-consistent within themselves but prophetically “pluralistic” in their openness to one another as they pursue “overlapping consensus.”²⁷⁶ Thus, he has an Evangelically “ecumenical” vision of hermeneutics that folds his own Reformed tradition within it, enabling both appeals to tradition and critiques of the tradition.

It is this appeal to the tradition in order to critique the tradition that this project has been engaged in, pulling from the church’s longer tradition of charitable participatory hermeneutics and Evangelicalism’s broader identity in ecumenism, scriptural populism, and evangelism to critique the more recent imposition of socially divisive modernistic hermeneutics as a criterion for Evangelical orthodoxy. However, despite Westphal’s ostensible grounding in Augustine, I argue that his prophetic vein slips into overcorrection, paying more heed to the secular prophets than to the creational and participatory ground of the sacred prophetic tradition. His emphasis on finitude and fallenness without their Augustinian theological counterpoints leaves him open to sliding into a philosophy of religion alien to the broader Christian tradition, and he also separates unhelpfully the believer and the philosopher, the proclaimer of the kerygma and its believing critic.

Especially in a sociological context where Christians are often divided between those in “primary naiveté” (i.e., the naïve Evangelical masses), those in prophetic critical mode, and those attempting “secondary naiveté,”²⁷⁷ this “division of labor” approach to scriptural hermeneutics avoids the hard question of philosophy of communication, which is how can these conceptual resources be appropriated for the benefit of the broader discourse community.²⁷⁸ In scriptural terms, the separation of ecclesial and philosophical applications works against Westphal’s own advocacy for interpretation-application and puts in question his own use of II Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the [person] of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”²⁷⁹ This upward teleology of scriptural interpretation (scriptural comfort and critique to make Christians “complete”) may never be “ontotheologically” stable—especially as the dual task of a preacher-philosopher—but there should be discernible progress, faith that moves into knowledge and thus opens the door for another faith opportunity. If the believing preacher of the kerygma is kept in a role separate from the prophetic (or priest-prophet) role of the Christian hermeneutic philosopher, Augustine would be a strange patron saint for Westphal.

Though Westphal sees his hermeneutic position as one intentionally medial,²⁸⁰ Putt would push the implications of Westphal’s prophetic hermeneutics further in the direction of critique. Stating the implications of Westphal’s position, he says,

Since faith seeks understanding always within the structures of existence, it is a timeless task that should not succumb to the seduction of security offered by the idols of modernity. ... [It should be] a prophetic philosophy of religion that always maintains an element of doubt concerning whether truth and meaning have indeed been discovered.²⁸¹

Without a strong Augustinian counterpoint in creation and grace (i.e., without Augustinian participation), I cannot but agree with Putt that this is where Westphal’s hermeneutical “prism” leaves us. Westphal affirms that “suspicion is not incompatible with trust,” explaining that a healthy self-awareness of our sin-skewed hermeneutics is an “essential ingredient” in the trust in God’s love and His justifying and sanctifying work in our lives.²⁸² But wouldn’t a robust self-suspicion also call into question our trust in the basic facts of the gospel or their applicability to us, personally, at least without an equally robust belief in prophetic comfort?²⁸³ To frame this question with Putt’s language, is it true that “faith seek[ing] understanding . . . within the structures of existence” precludes any glimmer of truth from outside these temporal structures? If it does so preclude glimpses of eternal truth, then doubt must necessarily be the constant companion of belief, and the content of the ecclesial tradition that is passed down is more a set of existential questions than any positive content—which is where Gadamer would leave us.²⁸⁴

As we have seen in Chapter 3, though, God “has not left himself without witness,”²⁸⁵ speaking to all people through the inward witness of creational memory and closing the gap between the temporal “structures of existence” and the eternal realm through the “downward participation” of the life and work of Christ.²⁸⁶ Though sin diverts our attention from the good and thus skews our interpretation of the scriptures, the participatory grace of Christ refocuses, again and again, our vision and our hermeneutics, restoring our horizon through repentance to see again Him who is invisible. Though creaturely finitude restricts our earthly horizon to a particular time, culture, language, and social location, our creaturely memory—the *imago Dei* within—can be accessed and sharpened through continual pursuit of the truth with the Inner Teacher. Because this inward turn is also, in its very nature, an upward and outward turn to a Person, this Augustinian move to true knowledge cannot be interpreted as a personal discovery

or cause for self-congratulation, but is instead the very “wisdom of humility” that Westphal also wants to promote. An Augustinian participatory cosmology, that is, maintains both creational finitude and creational access to the eternal God; and it both acknowledges the radical hermeneutical skew of sin and proclaims, kerygmatically, the equally radical hermeneutical *ortho*-doxy of grace, established by the cross of Christ and worked moment-by-moment by the Holy Spirit.

As we see in Westphal, and will see systematically later with James K. A. Smith, the question of a Christian hermeneutics is inescapably tied up with perspectives on temporality, and in this we are all following the lead of Augustine. However, Westphal’s emphasis on the temporality of hermeneutics *with an insufficient calibrating connection to eternity*²⁸⁷ keeps him from seeing how a hermeneutics of temporality and eternity might function together. I would propose that the participatory “wisdom” that we gain in interpretation is *absolute particular knowledge in temporality*. That is, it is a true “part” delivered to us from the “whole” which God knows in full and we know only vaguely and partially, but it is knowledge that has been opened to us by the Inner Teacher explicitly for that point on the temporal plane.

Westphal, following Gadamer’s perspective on the interpretation of the work of art in time, comes close to my position, but still without the participatory dimension. Quoting Gadamer, he says that the scriptures’ “own original essence is to be something different. . . . It has its being only in becoming [difference] and return [identity].”²⁸⁸ This language is close to a participatory perspective, but the stable thing that remains itself while being constantly different, here, is the textual work (not the eternal Word of God), and the participation is still on the temporal plane only. Westphal similarly quotes Gadamer on the interpretation of the gospel:

The gospel does not exist in order to be understood as a merely historical document, but to be taken in such a way that it exercises its saving effect. This implies that the text ... if it is to be understood properly—i.e., according to the claim it makes—must be understood at every moment, in every concrete situation, in a new and different way.²⁸⁹

Westphal says, following Kierkegaard, that such understanding is beyond the question of belief or doubt but is instead a matter of obedience or disobedience,²⁹⁰ but I would suggest that the metaphor of belief/doubt that Westphal is referencing is the specifically modern one, not the scriptural or Augustinian one. To separate belief and action ontologically is already to have stepped across the threshold into the modern world, where belief is a pure process of mind. To interpret in a participatory frame is to seek incarnational wisdom, and when we thus “draw near to God” in this way, He “draws near” to us,²⁹¹ giving us through memory and Spirit a word of truth that is apt for that moment in time, since wisdom and action are fundamentally interconnected. As that moment passes, the truth we learned does not change or invite doubt—nor is it to be glued immovably into a metaphysical edifice—but it rather fades into the background, still in memory but no longer the focus of attention. Its ground is in eternity, its token is in the scripture, its claim on belief and action is in the moment. Once its moment has passed, it lies there until it is brought to memory again by the conjunction of the horizon of the text of the scriptures, the multi-level horizon of the participatory Inner Teacher, and the horizon of the historically-located interpreter, who is facing ever-new interpretational needs in the cultural horizon of challenges to her faith and life. This, I argue, is how to describe hermeneutics in an Augustinian philosophy of communication.

To illustrate this, perhaps a bit whimsically, we can pair Jeremiah and Heidegger. Jeremiah tells us that the word of God is like a “hammer that breaks the rock in pieces,”²⁹² and

Heidegger famously tells us about hammers that fade in and out of our abstract awareness, depending on whether they are part of the unconscious structure of our world (ready-to-hand) or something “objectively” present through “severe abstraction from experience.”²⁹³ In the flow of temporality, the Evangelical is faced on a regular basis with the need for some kinds of conceptual tools—and this is where we intersect with an Augustinian philosophy of communication. For the Evangelical, it is not enough to find just any conceptual language that might provide pragmatic coping by opening up some interpretation of her situation; the Evangelical wants to hear from God. In the unconscious structure of her world, her social-cultural-linguistic position has also been laced through with the narratives, metaphors, and phrases of scripture. These are all ready-to-hand, hammers of all types lying in the background, some for rebuke, some for correction, some for comfort. All of them are true, but then one of them is brought forward by the question of the moment, suddenly “present-to-hand” as a gift, brought forward by participatory dialogue between the scriptures, the will, and the Inner Teacher. Then, what was true and hidden becomes true and revealed, a truth that can be made public by assertion, given to the community as common property, and kept in memory for such time as it may be needed again. It is not any problem with this hammer that makes it present-to-hand, nor is it the desire to objectify experience for the sake of building knowledge, but it is rather the voice of a wise inner counselor drawing the attention of his friend to the particular tool, already present, that she needs to make public for the temporal situation at hand. The result is not mere coping or the defensive warding off of cognitive dissonance but rather charitable action, thanksgiving, praise, and love.

What scriptural interpretation is designed for is, in part, the breaking of the “rocks” of “Luciferian” pride,²⁹⁴ the exposing of self-idolatry and of the destruction of the weak and

victimized. As Westphal points out, “since the sinful misuse of religious beliefs may occur even when those beliefs are correspondently or consistently true[,] ... sinful thinkers may still use true beliefs in order to ‘justify ungodly practices of exploitation or domination.’”²⁹⁵ In this correcting-rebuking function, Westphal’s prophetic hermeneutics is strongly in line with what is needed in Evangelical hermeneutics today. However, the other main purpose of scriptural hermeneutics is to “comfort the faint-hearted,”²⁹⁶ to encourage the believers in what they have believed, that they might have an “anchor of the soul”²⁹⁷ without the constant companion of doubt. This is also a “prophetic” function, as Paul says: “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort” to people.²⁹⁸ For these things, a more Augustinian hermeneutic—one that is both pastoral and philosophical—is needed to meet the pastoral and philosophical needs of the current Evangelical crisis in hermeneutics.

Nicholas Wolterstorff: Double or Nothing

If Westphal provides us with a conservative “postmodern Christianity” that uses the postmodern “armies of Assyria”²⁹⁹ to provoke repentance among Evangelicals for their hermeneutical hubris, Wolterstorff does the philosophical labor to try to explain the phenomenological data of God speaking in human interpretational situations. That is, while Westphal preaches the limitations to Evangelical hermeneutics, Wolterstorff tries to speak for its possibilities and to explain its successes.

Wolterstorff is interested in examining philosophically the “far more ancient and enduring ... practice of interpreting scripture for divine discourse.” Explicitly or implicitly in preaching and devotional contexts, Christians have long been reading the scriptures as “the Word of the Lord.”³⁰⁰ What does it mean, Wolterstorff asks, for us to say that the scriptures speak to us as the Word of the Lord?

As mentioned above and summarized briefly here, Wolterstorff appropriates the language of Speech Act Theory to formulate his theory of “authorial discourse interpretation” through the concept of “double-agency discourse.” Hermeneutical theory is normally discussed as between the poles of author intention, on the one side, and reader-response, on the far opposite side—either reconstructing the psyche of the author or wrenching the text itself from the cold, dead hands of the author and doing with it whatever one likes. Wolterstorff argues for “authorial discourse” as his position between these two poles, which entails the interpreting of the text not primarily as the “self-revelation” of the author but as the author’s record of a series of speech acts (i.e., discourse), illocutions such as commands, questions, promises, requests, and assertions. Though we generally say what we intend to say, creating a natural connection between an author’s intention and her discourse, that connection is neither airtight nor essential to understanding and applying the text.³⁰¹ Wolterstorff makes it clear that authorial discourse interpretation seeks to discern the illocutionary act that the author “*did* perform, whether or not it was intended.”³⁰²

Wolterstorff further applies Speech Act Theory to divine discourse itself through the theoretical extensions of “deputized” and “authorized” speech. In *deputization*, people can be sent to speak on behalf of someone else (e.g., ambassadors), and their promises and threats thereby carry the force of the one they represent, even if the form of their discourse is uniquely theirs. In *authorization*, an authority can appropriate or “sign” an existing discourse, giving it his or her authority during or after the fact of its generation (speaking temporally).³⁰³ This is how Wolterstorff understands the famous *tolle lege* command that Augustine hears, a child’s song from over the wall that is appropriated by the *authorizing* voice of God. Augustine’s subsequent

reading of Romans 13, to “put on Christ,” is a similarly authorized command which effects Augustine’s salvation.³⁰⁴

These possibilities create a “double-agency discourse” situation in which the original authorial discourse may be joined by a divine discourse that is being “literally” spoken to the reader here and now.³⁰⁵ This, of course, necessitates a “double hermeneutic,” not only an interpretation of the original authorial discourse through close attention to the text in its various contexts but also an interpretation of the divine speech to us through this text,³⁰⁶ which may bear different levels of similarity to the discursive figure of the original text. Relating these two aspects of hermeneutics, Wolterstorff says,

Interpreting Scripture for divine discourse requires a double hermeneutic: first one interprets these writings so as to discern the human discourse of which they are the trace; then, and only then, does one move on to interpret for what God said by way of this human discourse.³⁰⁷

Wolterstorff rejects the imposition of a single mode of discourse and a single universal hermeneutics³⁰⁸—suggesting we “embrace literary-critical heterodoxy”³⁰⁹—but he does argue for his “authorial discourse hermeneutics” of “human discourse” as the one “all of us employ most of the time.”³¹⁰ Further, he notes that this default hermeneutic in its “double-agency” application to divine discourse has been the normal approach to scriptural hermeneutics for most Christians throughout the history of the church.³¹¹ That is, though Wolterstorff engages in detail with a number of philosophical questions and fields in order to conceptualize and defend this double hermeneutic, the underlying exigence for his development of this concept is the long and broad experience of religious people. In this, Wolterstorff is himself engaging in a philosophy of communication project, not a mere philosophical “thought experiment.”³¹²

Wolterstorff's authorial discourse focuses on the text as someone's discourse about something in a form that largely maintains its integrity through historical time. In this, he connects the being of the text more closely to its author than we have seen in Ricoeur and Gadamer, though he also quotes both of them in agreement with this "anti-historicist" view of the text.³¹³ Since the text is not primarily the self-revelation of an author's psyche but instead a complex of publicly understandable illocutionary actions, Wolterstorff points out that we have an ethical responsibility to perform the first level of hermeneutics with diligence, acknowledging that the author wrote something with the desire of being understood.³¹⁴ Wolterstorff has a "conviction"

that interpretation is a mode of normative engagement with my fellow human beings. ... that in interpreting texts we have responsibilities to their authors. In reading and interpreting the *Confessions*, I have responsibilities to Augustine. I may not just engage in a play of interpretation, and I may not take cheap shots.³¹⁵

In this, he aligns himself with what he argues is a better reading of Schliermacher, that what we know of the author of a text is secondary to and dependent on how we understand what the author has said.³¹⁶ Our knowledge of the author is oblique; our knowledge of her discourse is the more direct focus of our interpretive labor; but we undertake that textual labor within the ethical sphere of human communication and interpersonal responsibility.

Wolterstorff acknowledges a number of different legitimate types of hermeneutics—including the "performance" hermeneutic exemplified by music—but, as a greater proponent of "objective" interpretation than Westphal,³¹⁷ Wolterstorff argues that before and behind those special cases, the human communication practice of authorial discourse hermeneutics constitutes the basic ground.³¹⁸ Thus we are ethically obligated to respect the author's discourse, but the

interpretation process is not simple. Wolterstorff describes the process of even this first level of interpretation as a series of challenges that require “imagination” and “phronesis.” First, one has to imagine and “discern” the authorial discourse in the text at hand: what is the nature of the speech acts present here, as compared with the possible speech acts and their contexts that I know from my communication *phronesis* (i.e., practical wisdom)? Then, one has to imagine and discern the “world of the text” that is being constructed through that discourse, and which thus functions as the whole that further qualifies one’s interpretation of the discursive parts. Finally, one “indwells the text,” imagining the spaces of one’s own world as coextensive with the spaces of that textual world, imagining and acting the text in ways that build further phronesis and feed back into the interpretive process,³¹⁹ which Wolterstorff characterizes as a “spiral” rather than a circle.³²⁰

It is when Wolterstorff brings in the divine discourse aspect of his double-agency discourse that things get both more interesting and more open to an Augustinian shift. What the metaphor of double-agency discourse allows Wolterstorff to do is to acknowledge the historical and cultural distance of the text³²¹ while, at the same time, to free texts (especially the scriptures) to speak with illocutionary force in the present historical moment. That is, what the author said to his own time can be studied, with imagination and phronesis, as a *past* discourse, but that authorial discourse can be appropriated as divine speech—understood through imagination and phronesis as *present* discourse—even if the product of the first level interpretation is never fully complete. Thus, ideally, the connection between the first and second hermeneutical steps is centered on a respectful discernment of the speech acts embedded in the text itself. “God is in the details,” Wolterstorff says, “It’s the details of texts that resist imposed interpretations.”³²² It is Wolterstorff’s belief that God will speak through our present, incomplete understanding of the

scriptural text; nevertheless, ideal scriptural interpretation involves listening to how God “appropriates” the scriptural discourse as he originally “deputized” it, the original “authorial discourse” which we have faithfully interpreted through our common communicational medium of human speech acts.³²³ This hermeneutic paradigm has been fairly influential in the Evangelical scholarly community, and it is especially interesting for this project since it addresses both the Evangelical practice of dealing seriously with the scriptural text as enduring communication and the broadly Evangelical identity marker of hearing God’s voice.

However, to fully tie together the human authorial discourse *of* the text and the divine authorial discourse *through* the text, I argue that we have to cross the boundary between philosophy and theology,³²⁴ a need that Wolterstorff acknowledges but refuses to meet fully.³²⁵ Augustinian participation is the cosmology that calls such boundaries into question and can not only help tie together these two forms of discourse but can also say something to Wolterstorff’s insistence on speech acts as the basic ground of interpretation. Wolterstorff is certainly not antagonistic to the basics of a participatory perspective. He says that to be able to interpret divine discourse at all, we would need some “knowledge of God” on which to build our spiritual phronesis and guide our imaginations. “Specifically,” he says, we need “knowledge which enables us to determine with more or less confidence what God would have wanted to say by appropriating these texts.”³²⁶ This knowledge of God enables us to hear “when God was speaking literally and when metaphorically.” Those who know only the horizon of the text and the horizon of the interpreter—both radically located in temporal history—might anxiously ask, “Don’t we learn everything we know about God *from* Scripture?” Wolterstorff replies, “I think not.”³²⁷ His immediate reasoning is that such a circle would be closed, precluding hearing anything from God, which is not only theoretically infelicitous but contrary to the general

experience of a number of people, currently and historically.³²⁸ He seems, though, to have in mind an upward progress of hermeneutical pronesis, both through a first level growth in understanding scriptural discourse and through a second level growth in knowledge of God as a discourses. “Here, too, there’s the hermeneutic spiral.”³²⁹

There are parallels, here, to Augustine’s picture of the growth of true knowledge about the text and the world (first level) being an entry point to true wisdom about eternal things and God himself (second level), a hermeneutic process that starts with and continues on the track of creational memory of God and that has one of its key ends in obedience to the promises and commands (speech acts) of God.³³⁰ Thus, to Augustine and Wolterstorff, while scripture is a key aid to progressing upward on the hermeneutical spiral toward God, it is not the only or even the primary source of knowledge of God. However, I would argue that Augustine’s grounding in participation gives us a clearer picture of how to deal with temporality, how to understand scripture as truth, and how to understand the figural and metaphoric language that mediates past and present meanings.

In Wolterstorff’s theory, he makes a strong separation between revelation and divine speech. “Revelation occurs when ignorance is dispelled—or when something is done which would dispel ignorance if attention and interpretative skills were adequate,” Wolterstorff says, emphasizing that revelation is “unveiling the veiled, of uncovering the covered. . . . The counterpart of the revealed is the hidden.”³³¹ What is unveiled by the revelation of the scripture, to Wolterstorff, is primarily the “hidden” self of God.³³² By contrast, divine speech engages a different level of interpretation and manifests in speech acts that—though riding on the prior scriptural interpretation—are not revealing the hidden in ancient text but engaging us in right, “godly” responses to the current temporal moment.³³³ Wolterstorff hopes that this picture can

move conservative Christians past their obsession with “infallibility” since most of what is in the scriptures (as divinely *appropriated* human discourse) and some of what we get out of the scriptures (as divine discourse) is outside the province of infallibility,³³⁴ which is focused on the truth or falsity of assertoric statements.³³⁵ That is, Wolterstorff has narrowed the scope of difficult questions in biblical criticism to the bible’s few seeming assertions about the world that don’t square with modern prejudices, and he is impatient with biblical scholars who focus all their attention on biblical cultural history while giving none to the discourse of the human or divine authors of scripture. Wolterstorff argues that biblical critics are often asking the wrong questions by reading the scriptures as only assertoric revelation,³³⁶ and he proposes, as we have seen above, that below and before discerning the “world of the text,” we should ask, what is the nature and purpose of the discourse in the scripture under consideration.

However, as Mary Hesse has pointed out, this diminution of the question of assertoric truth still leaves unanswered the question of how truth relates to these other speech acts. As an analytic philosopher, Wolterstorff may be comfortable with separating assertion, with its true/false orientation, from promises and commands, with their apt/inapt orientation, but this still leaves truth and falsity out of the realm of normal discourse with others and with God.³³⁷ This would not only seem like a prevarication to most Evangelicals, reared as we are on the language of truth, but it would also disconnect most of the scriptures and our experiences of divine discourse from their connection to eternal truth, which was Augustine’s theoretical center. That is, Augustine understood that the scriptures witness, however vaguely and imperfectly interpreted, to an eternal Word which we can also access and confirm through our “discourse” with the Inner Teacher. Both first-level temporal authorial discourse and second-level divine discourse, to Augustine, have the same root in eternity, not just the same divine speaker in two

different temporalities. Therefore, what was said about Moses leading a people out of bondage and what was said about Jesus leading a people out of bondage and what was appropriated by Martin Luther King, Jr., about leading a people out of bondage, to Augustine, might all be recapitulations of the same eternal word that had its epitome in Christ, whereas to Wolterstorff, the connection between these historical manifestations would seem not to be essential but rather created by the decision of God as spoken in the current moment. In this way, Wolterstorff is perhaps just being faithful to his Reformed tradition which, after Scotus and the rise of nominalism, emphasized God's absolute decisional power to maintain theologically God's freedom to act in an otherwise univocal universe.³³⁸

This disconnection from Augustine's focus on eternal speech also manifests in the lack of clarity in Wolterstorff's theory concerning figures of speech, though he does elucidate the question to some degree.³³⁹ Leading up to the exposition of his own theory, Wolterstorff discusses the textual-sense interpretation of the New Critics, whose claim that the text's sense comes from its unity leads to the further claim that the "open-ended ... metaphorical meanings" in the text open that "sense" up to multiple valid interpretations. The unity of the text provides the stability while the metaphorical "ambiguity" of the text provides the flexibility for different interpretational horizons that enable the artistic text to be timeless.³⁴⁰ However, Wolterstorff argues, the assumption that "texts have unified senses" is problematic³⁴¹ except through recourse to a real human author (for most texts) or a divine author (for the scriptures). Double-agency discourse "offers us a way of understanding the unity of Scripture at a deep level ... [as] God's deputized and/or appropriated discourse."³⁴² Though authorial-discourse interpretation has been criticized, Wolterstorff says, for restricting the "richness and openness of the meaning of texts," he responds that "illocutionary acts are just as open-ended, and as little determined in their

character by what their performers think their character to be, as textual-senses were assumed to be.”³⁴³ However, we can notice here that Wolterstorff has *replaced* figurative language with illocutionary acts as the source of the indeterminacy that a trans-historical text would need in order to continue to meet new horizons. He has not given us a way to understand how metaphors function *with* or *alongside* discourse to create the text’s sense within its unity as divine discourse. In *Divine Discourse*, he offers that we receive metaphors with some level of assumption about what the discourser would “intend” to say to us through the metaphor,³⁴⁴ but also that the author “only dimly apprehends” what she intended when she spoke metaphorically.³⁴⁵ Attempting to keep “meaning” unitary, Wolterstorff separates the question of meaning (the author’s intention as performed in discourse) from the question of “literality and metaphoricity,” which he aggregates to “use.”³⁴⁶ But this shuffling of metaphor to the periphery, outside the question of meaning and outside the question of truth, does not seem valid from an Augustinian participatory standpoint, as pursued below. This lacuna was also pointed out by Mary Hesse, who notes that the “classic tropes” were treated as having “no truth value” in original Speech Act Theory. “But in all serious natural language texts, and pre-eminently in Scripture, metaphor and the other tropes are pervasive. No theory of interpretation that neglects them can be adequate for biblical hermeneutics.”³⁴⁷

How should the “pervasive” figuration of the scriptures relate to Wolterstorff’s focus on the scriptures’ discursive aspects, especially given his helpful openness to both human and supra-human communicational factors? First, Wolterstorff’s either/or between performative and discourse approaches to interpretation would need to be loosened.³⁴⁸ It would seem to me that participatory figuration invites a more “performative” interpretation of the scripture, so that the figure, say, of walking “through the valley of the shadow of death” under the care of the

shepherd is performed again in each particular situation where threatening circumstances are to be counterbalanced by trust in the divine shepherd. There is, to be sure, a degree of attention that needs to be paid to the interrelationship of textual factors in that Psalm, especially an illocutionary act of trust (the “word of faith”).³⁴⁹ Even in Wolterstorff’s example of Augustine’s conversion, the divine discourse had preempted and overpowered Augustine’s attention to the original authorial discourse. Augustine did not first discern the original authorial discourse of the child singing *tolle lege*, or of Paul’s letter to the Romans, but rather discerned immediately the second level of discourse, the divine.³⁵⁰ While Wolterstorff may have been using this as an example of something other than normal authorial discourse interpretation, the example hangs over his whole discussion as paradigmatic. For the appropriation of biblical scenes, situations, commands, and promises as figurally applicable to the present moment, the present voice of God would similarly need to be heard to confirm which of the many biblical figures we are *now* to inhabit, and how. That is, contra Wolterstorff’s suggestion,³⁵¹ the second level of discourse (the divine) is often necessary in order to choose and appropriate which metaphoric worlds the interpreter is to inhabit, which thus provides the context for understanding how the ambiguities of the original speech acts are to be interpreted. In line with participation, Wolterstorff’s hard either/or between metaphoric and literal stances³⁵² would need to be reconfigured.

To try to make this clearer, let’s look again at our previous example of how a New Testament author interprets the Old Testament. The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 95 as a current message to his Christian (and probably Jewish Christian) audience, “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years.”³⁵³ Tracing the author’s use of Old Testament scripture here, the *first* thing that the author does is establish the

metaphoric connection between the children of Israel led by Moses toward the Promised Land and the church led by Jesus toward the promised land of faith.³⁵⁴ How does the author know this figural connection is valid? This, I argue, is where divine speech would be needed first. The author of Hebrews sits down to write his letter, and the divine voice speaks to him convincingly that “*this is like that.*” Once the metaphoric connection between past and present has been thus mediated through the Word from the realm of eternity (Augustine’s Inner Teacher), the ambiguities of both the figural relationship and the discursive acts in the passage can be approached responsibly with serious attention to the text and serious attention to the further speech of God. For example, we can now ask how the discursive situation should be characterized between the children of Israel and God in that passage—should the command/refusal speech acts be emphasized or the complaint/rebuke speech acts, and how should we understand the temporality of the figurative comparison (“today”)? For these further interpretational decisions, divine speech would also be sought.

It may be that Wolterstorff and others would fault this example for taking the scriptures themselves as an exemplar of participatory scriptural interpretation. However, with Gabrielson and Augustine,³⁵⁵ I argue that though the scriptures have a different level of authority than their later interpreters, the scriptures lay out the pattern of interpretive practice that is still possible and necessary. The difference between the text of the scriptures and any other text through which God might speak is not merely that the scriptures are revelatory (since God could technically unveil himself through any text) but that it is the text through which God has committed to continue speaking, again and again. That is, the text of the scriptures always has latent potential for divine speech because God, by divine speech, has committed the speech act of promising to speak to those who honestly seek him in that Word,³⁵⁶ the mediating venue where the scriptural

text and the eternally spoken Son can be heard together. Wolterstorff recognizes that Christians keep coming to the scriptures, again and again, because it is a “medium of divine revelation” that meets every new historical situation down through time and provides a formative reservoir of “phrases and images, ... narratives and songs ... [through which] it sees reality and imagines possibilities.”³⁵⁷ All this is true from an Augustinian participatory standpoint, but while Wolterstorff makes revelation and speech two different divine activities, demanding two types of hermeneutics that are not connected at the root in God’s eternal Word, Augustine ties both scriptural revelation and present divine speech to that eternal Word that is accessible to all through creational memory and the Inner Teacher and is even more strongly opened through the grace given by the participatory work of Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit. In a participatory hermeneutic, God speaks *literally* by metaphor, tying phrases, narratives, and images from past moments in divine history with the present moment in divine history and thereby opening a space for shared action between God and his people—not merely a command nor merely a human interpretation of a situation, but a participatory event that includes both.

In Wolterstorff’s hermeneutical texts so far perused, two other important Augustinian themes are missing or deemphasized. The first is the question of where the community fits in the hermeneutic process; the second is where worship fits in the goals of interpretation. Though Wolterstorff is acutely aware of the role of the community in continually recreating its self-understanding through scriptural language, following its hermeneutic tradition,³⁵⁸ it is unclear how the community participates together in discerning either human authorial discourse (the first level of interpretation) or divine discourse (the second level of interpretation). If God’s speech through the scriptures is “free” in that it is not rooted in an (Augustinian) eternal Word, how can it be shared as a community resource, as emphasized by Augustine?³⁵⁹ That is, must God

“freely” speak the same word at a particular moment in time to multiple members of the community in order for them to share in common that divinely infused scripture?

Second, Wolterstorff emphasizes that the “goal of interpretation” is not to “understand the other,” especially not to understand (except obliquely) the radical alterity of the personhood of God, but rather to understand “what the other said.”³⁶⁰ While commendably humble, avoiding the hubris of a modernistic God’s-eye theology of God himself, this interpretational goal does not address the Augustinian and apostolic goal of worship, which *is* the contemplation of God himself.³⁶¹ While scriptural speech acts do put Christian disciples under their Master by putting them under the discourse conventions of human language (the *vita activa*), they are not clearly targeted to aiding Christians in “beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, ... being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord”³⁶² (the *vita contemplativa*). To Augustine, of course, both of these are necessary,³⁶³ and both are connected together by a participatory interpretation of the eternal Word of God.

James K. A. Smith: The Presence of the Spirit?

James K. A. Smith, the final philosophical interlocutor of this chapter, has been busily mining a number of Continental thinkers for philosophical concepts and vocabularies through which to rethink Christian hermeneutics and worship. He argues for the fundamentally constructive nature of hermeneutics as part of creational goodness,³⁶⁴ and for the importance of an incarnational grounding in Continental philosophy of language,³⁶⁵ all from a “modified” Augustinian perspective.³⁶⁶ In his proposal for a “creational hermeneutic,” Smith first describes what he sees as three current but problematic models of hermeneutics: the “present immediacy model” of many Evangelicals that sees interpretation as a “curse” resulting from the Fall but, “lifted here and now ... for the Evangelical Christian”;³⁶⁷ the “eschatological immediacy” model,

where interpretation is similarly to be overcome, eventually, through some form of evolutionary or historical process; and the “violent mediation” model of Heidegger and Derrida, where interpretation—as co-constitutive with mediation—is never to be “overcome” but is also structurally “violent.”³⁶⁸ Against these modern and insufficiently postmodern models of hermeneutics,³⁶⁹ Smith posits an Augustinian creational hermeneutic, arguing that the limitations of human creaturehood and the indeterminacy of the linguistic medium are both “structurally good” as aspects of God’s creation. Interpretation is fundamentally linguistic (like Gadamer’s view) and never-ending *by God’s design*, and thus will not cease to be so at the eschaton but will continue as part of human be-ing. It *can* be practiced violently (a la Derrida) in the current fallen world, but it doesn’t have to be.³⁷⁰ This “Augustinian philosophical hermeneutic,” Smith says, entails that interpretation “is not accidental but an inescapable aspect of human existence,” that it is “affected by the Fall but not ... the product of the Fall,” and that “it is an aspect of human being that is primordially good and remains such in a postlapsarian world,” not a problem to be “overcome.”³⁷¹

Though Smith grounds this creational hermeneutic in Augustine, it is a confessedly “demythologized” Augustine. That is, Smith “seek[s] to critically read [Augustine’s] devaluing of temporality, finitude and language against the horizon of his fundamental affirmation of the goodness of creation,” two Augustinian themes that Smith sees in “tension.”³⁷² Smith’s reading of Augustine as “devaluing temporality, finitude, and language” is part of the problematic tradition of reading Augustine as significantly corrupted by Platonic influences,³⁷³ a tradition of whose disputes Smith is aware.³⁷⁴ Smith chooses to emphasize Augustine’s doctrine of the goodness of creation, but he seems, in my reading, to aggregate to it the metaphors of historicity and situatedness of post-Heideggarian philosophical hermeneutics. In so doing,

Smith follows Derrida in calling into question the nostalgia for “total presence,” for a communion that is unmediated by language or hermeneutics. He says, “As finite human beings we never have (nor ever will have) access to the thoughts of another as immediately present,” and he argues that without intersubjective difference, “one would wonder if even something like communication would be necessary, let alone possible.”³⁷⁵ Though Smith identifies his place in the tradition as following the “good” Augustine, mediated through Abraham Kuyper and the Wesleyan-Pentecostal tradition of affirming creation,³⁷⁶ I suspect that his choices of emphasis in Augustine are significantly grounded in his promotion of hermeneutical “difference,”³⁷⁷ which is a cardinal doctrine of the church of philosophical hermeneutics and a formational theme from Smith’s own history.³⁷⁸

Smith does, however, helpfully bring together the hermeneutical questions and themes from Augustine and the philosophical hermeneutical tradition—and in a clear and perceptive manner. Of the many conversations about hermeneutics that this project could engage in with Smith, the two most pertinent are, first, how Augustine’s incarnational/participatory thought affects Smith’s understanding of hermeneutics and, second, how a Pentecostal praxis might inform participatory hermeneutical theory.

Two years after publishing his book on a modified Augustinian creational hermeneutic, Smith engaged more fully with the participatory theme of Radical Orthodoxy scholars in his excellent book *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation*. There, he both identified participation with Augustine’s Incarnational thought and rejected the Radical Orthodox synthesis of Platonic participation and Augustinian Incarnation.³⁷⁹ After examining Smith’s basic exposition of language, we will consider more fully how participation might speak further to his hermeneutics.

Smith first develops the problem of language in Continental thought as between the violence of kataphantic approaches (positive referential content in language) and apophantic approaches (respect for ungraspable otherness).³⁸⁰ That is, does the nature of language imply that we have to commit the violence of grasping the other through speech, or should we instead move towards silence as the only ethical alternative? Smith argues that Augustine's linguistic theory deals with this conundrum in both exterior and interior aspects. Exterior language is "insufficien[t]" because "things" are always more than what they can be described linguistically, and there is a similar interior "insufficiency" because the incomprehensible "depth" of the self means that no language can fully or perfectly articulate the "infinity" of the self.³⁸¹ Smith develops Augustine's philosophy of language in response to the *external* challenge of "conceptualization" and the *internal* challenge of "expression": "If 'praise' is a methodological strategy developed in response to the challenge of *conceptualization*, then 'confession' is a correlate strategy taken up in response to the challenge of *expression*."³⁸² Both "praise" and "confession," Smith says, follow from Augustine's understanding of the "incompletion of the sign."³⁸³

External language is "radically incommensurate" with not just God but any "thing"; however, language can *point* someone towards a thing that people can then "experience" themselves. This knowledge of experience then makes the knowledge of the words more "complete."³⁸⁴ But since the *thing* always exceeds language while still calling for language, it generates "praise," which is "a non-objectifying, non-positivistic mode of conceptualization,"³⁸⁵ and which "says something about someone, but without prescription or definition."³⁸⁶ Smith says that every *thing* in the world, to Augustine, is also to be a sign used to direct "non-objectifying" attention to God, following Augustine's language of love in which our love of earthly things

should be *referential* to our enjoyment of God through praise.³⁸⁷ That is, all earthly things are like signs in that they point toward God while not objectively describing God, constituting a world of provocations to praise God. Because not all these external descriptions can be “known,” they have to be largely taken by “faith” through interaction with the “Inner Teacher.”³⁸⁸ Thus, external language, by its ontological incompleteness, provides a space for intersubjective experience of the world and a medium for the continual flow of praise from things made to their maker.

External language is also incommensurate with the *internal* language of the self, even though “language makes public the ‘private’ intentions and desires of the self [and] words are therefore ‘common property,’ belonging to a community.”³⁸⁹ This public external language does not capture the “secret life of the soul,”³⁹⁰ both because the soul is never fully known to itself and because “the radical *privacy* of the self is incommensurate with the *public* traffic of language” (i.e., the self is particular, language is universal).³⁹¹ However, for the sake of ethical engagement with our community, we cannot be and are not silent. Augustine’s metaphor of “confession,” Smith suggests, “is literary and aesthetic rather than doctrinal and didactic, ... able to indicate the secret of the soul in such a way that the secret can be (ap)present to the other, but not fully disclosed.”³⁹² Because we are not privy to the interior “secret souls” of others except through the incomplete medium of language, we have to take by “faith” our shared “confessions” of our inward selves.³⁹³

Smith’s driving thesis is that Augustine’s Incarnational thought is key to understanding how language functions as both a “presence” and an “absence,” neither conceptually determinate of meaning nor disconnected from meaning. Smith says that the Incarnation

is a structure of both presence and absence: present in the flesh, and yet referring beyond. [It] retains the structural incompleteness of the sign which is constitutive of language. ... Divinity, while it cannot be reduced to this body, is nevertheless infleshed in it and thus signaling beyond itself. This is why the God-man is a *mediator* between divinity and humanity, finitude and the Infinite. This is also why, for Augustine, all signs function as mediators ... By referring or pointing to what is other than themselves, signs make knowledge of transcendence possible.³⁹⁴

Through the mediating function of language, we make “present” to one another in a “weaker sense” our internal knowledge of external things or of our internal selves,³⁹⁵ and these linguistic incarnations are received partly by faith and partly by experience. True communication happens, but never so completely that *things* or *others* are grasped comprehensively, and thus true communication continues to provoke more interpretation and more language, more “praise” and more “confession.” It is this connection between Incarnation and hermeneutics that leads Smith to posit hermeneutics as a prelapsarian and post-eschaton structure of creation, affected by the historical fall but not ontologically connected to a Fall. Confession and praise through the incompleteness of the sign is, to Smith, part of God’s perfect plan in creation.

It is perhaps unfortunate that the form of participation that Smith is primarily reacting to is the self-described “Platonism/Christianity” of Milbank and company. As I have endeavored to describe in Chapter 2, participation has a much broader and longer heritage than Platonism, and there are sources to draw from other than Radical Orthodoxy. Smith rejects the Platonism of Milbank, but it is not clear whether he fully sees the possibilities of traditionally participatory Christian thought, or “deification.”³⁹⁶ If we consider the Incarnation of Christ as paradigmatic for the possibility of language (though not operative in its every instantiation³⁹⁷), then the language

of identity and reference is not adequate. That is, Christ was not making the Father present in a “weaker form,” nor was he “referring or pointing to what is other than” himself. As God, he fully participated downward in our humanity; as man, he fully participated upward in the Father. As a mediator, he is not a weaker form of both sides, whose insufficient representation of divinity makes unrequited “faith” a continual structural necessity. Through the medium of Christ, we go from “faith to faith,” or in Augustine’s terms, through faith to knowledge to wisdom.³⁹⁸

Likewise, words can be a strong form of mediation between eternal truths and temporal people, creating an incarnational “presence” by the participatory work of God *in the particular time and situation of their utterance*. Full “presence” does not mean that the grace-filled utterance is objectively perceptible to all hearers, the modernistic fallacy that Smith rightly critiques, but it does mean that the word bears actionable fruit, whether direction, obedience, conviction, or guilt and condemnation. Even a word that is fully present, like Christ’s incarnation itself, is not a comprehensive statement that unveils all the secrets of the universe, but a word in due season with a purpose, an audience, and sometimes a date of expiration.³⁹⁹ “He who has seen Me has seen the Father,”⁴⁰⁰ Jesus said, but the full presence of the Father in Christ did not obviate the particular focus of Christ’s purpose, audience, and timing as the Word.

Perhaps I am tilting at windmills, but I argue that a broader participatory understanding of language, while resonating with Smith’s description of its common function, would also look for the strong form of linguistic incarnation as a relatively common event in the context of seeking God through the scriptures. Here, perhaps, Wolterstorff’s “divine discourse” can make its appearance, not as an alien divine voice that “possesses” (i.e., “authorizes”) a scriptural text, but as the divine voice that authored the text and proclaims that it is the time and situation for the text to be incarnated again. That is, reading the scriptures can initiate the opening of a space for

the “human, all too human” words of the text to become, again, not merely pointers to the divine but words that participate in the very power and presence of God. “Take up your bed and walk” would be one of these divine speech acts, as would be a “Come” spoken to a disciple in a storm-tossed boat.⁴⁰¹ The authority in these words is not conventional, not *nomos*, as in “I pronounce you man and wife,”⁴⁰² but instead ties together heaven and earth to provide certainty and truth for that particular situation in time.

This strong form, it may be argued, moves a bit beyond Augustine, but Augustine also argued for a (non-Platonic) access to knowledge and wisdom, an access that starts with faith but does not end there. For different particular truths (to recap Chapter 2), we need knowledge of them in order to love them, but our knowledge is hidden inaccessibly in creational memory. The true things are depicted, though, in language that can provoke our love and our search for these things inwardly. Finding them inwardly, our faith becomes true knowledge and a stronger ground for our continued love, which we maintain through “praise” (referring our love of the truth to its object in the love of the Truth) and “confession” (making the truth public and thus keeping it fresh in personal and communal memory through the dulling effect of time). That is, there are at least two points of connection to universal truth—in creational memory and by the participatory voice of the Holy Spirit—that are mediated through language, which is then made more “complete” by its connection to those realities.⁴⁰³ Because of the participatory structures of memory and the grace of the indwelling Spirit, intersubjectivity can be present *through* language, generally, but Augustine may also have believed in the voice of God being incarnated in language with power. What else is Augustine doing when he asks God to speak through him in his preaching and writing? What else was he hoping for when he agreed to government force against the Donatists, if only they could be brought again under the preaching of the gospel?

Though the preacher may be inadequate—as Augustine felt of himself—and the audience be ill-disposed to search their own hearts—as the Donatists were—the word itself can still come as an incarnational force, a medium that becomes by grace a mediator.⁴⁰⁴

Smith points us *toward* this participatory perspective on language through his exploration of the hermeneutical implications of incarnation for language and hermeneutics, but I have argued that Smith, perhaps reacting against the fundamentalism of his upbringing,⁴⁰⁵ did not go far enough toward an incarnationally re-enchanted cosmos. However, as can be seen in Smith’s scholarly agenda to bring pentecostalism and philosophy to bear on each other,⁴⁰⁶ he does point us, in ways germane to philosophy of communication, to current Christian “social imaginaries”⁴⁰⁷ that picture for us a participatory biblical hermeneutic. Taking up briefly Smith’s invitation to “see [his] articulation of a pentecostal worldview challenged, revised, and supplemented,”⁴⁰⁸ I affirm his hermeneutic emphasis on “radical openness to God” while qualifying its description as “surprise,” I affirm his emphasis on embodied praxis in interpretation while retaining a more integral role for philosophy of communication, and I affirm his “affective, narrative epistemology” while broadening the operative narrative to the Evangelically ecumenical tradition.⁴⁰⁹

To an Evangelical sensibility, “radical openness” can be a disturbing metaphor, but Smith develops this metaphor well in an exploration of how a pentecostal worldview holds a position between “nonreductive naturalism” and what he calls “interventionist supernaturalism.”⁴¹⁰ Smith describes the modernistic continuum of hermeneutic ontologies from reductive naturalism (all things are material and materially caused) to nonreductive naturalism (there are causes, properties, and categories that emerge from and above material realities) to “interventionist supernaturalism.” The latter Smith identifies with modernist strains of Evangelicalism, which

presupposes a “natural” world similar to the other two ontologies while arguing for God’s “intervention” into such naturalism from a “super,” or outside, position.⁴¹¹ In opposition to these ontologies, Smith describes a pentecostal ontology as “noninterventionist,”⁴¹² even though it is clearly “fantastic” and open to “events of miraculous healing, divine revelation in tongues-speech, divine illumination, prophecy, and other ‘supernatural’ phenomena.”⁴¹³ Drawing generally on the participatory thought of Radical Orthodoxy⁴¹⁴ and what he characterizes as the “gritty, material, physical mode of worship” of pentecostalism,⁴¹⁵ Smith argues that a pentecostal noninterventionist ontology understands God as always already at work in and through the material world. Thus, the “regularity” of natural processes is understood as God’s faithful maintenance of the material world,⁴¹⁶ and the “special action” of the miraculous is not an intervention but rather an intensification of the grace that was always already present in the situation.⁴¹⁷ In light of this ontology, Smith rejects the implications of the word “super-natural,” though he has to retain the word for the sake of the public he is addressing.⁴¹⁸ This participatory pentecostal ontology—or cosmology—gives pentecostal-charismatics⁴¹⁹ justification for being unsurprised at (and thankful for) the normal operation of the world while also being “committed to a universe open to surprise.”⁴²⁰ As an example of the practical outworking of this viewpoint, Smith notes the non-conflicting pentecostal attitudes toward medical care, both seeking God’s grace through the normal medical processes (in which God always already participates) and through the “surprise” of a more intense influx of grace, resulting in divine healing.⁴²¹

As we have seen in the description of Augustinian participation in Chapter 2, this ontology is very Augustinian, and Smith even cites Augustine’s argument in *De Trinitate* about the naturalness of miracles.⁴²² Applied to scriptural hermeneutics, this ontology would imply that God always already undergirds the communicational process—oral or textual—through the

constant action of the Inner Teacher, while he sometimes intensifies the Inner Teacher's voice in some way, resulting in a "miraculous" scriptural communication. While God's presence in communication is always already there in the background, his manifest presence sometimes jumps into the foreground, just as both God's omnipresence and his localized, special presence are attested by the scriptures, sometimes in the same passage.⁴²³ But are the metaphors of "openness" and "surprise" the best way to describe or communicate this phenomenon? Here, Kenneth Burke's argument for the fundamental human appetite for the eloquent movement of plot over the formless energy of "surprise and suspense"⁴²⁴ can give timely language to Augustine's insistence that we participate in a story with cosmic aesthetic dimensions.⁴²⁵ While we are "open" to the voice of God's "divine discourse," that openness operates within the boundaries of a rule of faith, a historical Christian story, and a personal history with God, all of which have always already partaken of God's grace and are therefore essential to the open/closed dialectic of scriptural hermeneutics. While we are momentarily "surprised" by God's intensified voice beyond the historical or grammatical horizon of the text, the aptness of the divine message or action to the current situation tempers our surprise with our recognition of the narrative plot. This is all the more true as we grow in what Wolterstorff identifies as spiritual "phronesis," wisdom concerning what types of things God would say to us through the scriptures.⁴²⁶ God's surprises operate unsurprisingly in the repeated patterns of his character and plan, as epitomized in the overarching narrative of the work of Christ.

According to Jon Bialecki, this intensified participation of God in scriptural interpretation is thematized as God's "presence" in the broad pentecostal-charismatic community of Evangelicals and is held in an ecclesiological dialectic with the "disseminated" scriptural text.⁴²⁷ Even the cessationist "fundamentalists" who theologically dismiss the gifts and the voice of God

actively spoken through scripture—whose theologians still speak in “interventionist” terms⁴²⁸—take part in the broader lay practice of this participatory “social imaginary.”⁴²⁹ From my historical treatment of Evangelicalism in Chapter 1, I argue that this commonality of “spiritual” hermeneutics is due to the experiential, egalitarian lay Evangelical foundation that has survived the onslaught of modernism, both within fundamentalist denominations and through their Pentecostal offshoots. Since it is the openness of the social imaginary, with its implied worldview, that is Smith’s focus of description, I would therefore broaden the population for which this description is relevant, even beyond the “catholicity of charismatic Christianity.”⁴³⁰ This connection of ancient and future scriptural hermeneutics across denominational and religious-cultural lines is particularly important at the current time for the self-understanding of a globalized Christianity, whose participatory stirrings in the West need appropriate conceptual equipment to interact effectively and charitably with the native “charismatic” participation of the exploding church in the global South.⁴³¹ My argument is that this ecumenical spirituality that finds its Christological center in the gospel is and has always been, in on-the-ground spiritual practice, the real force animating Evangelicalism, more so than the slick marketing campaigns, the crusade organizational strategies, or the purity and unanimity of orthodox doctrinal statements. However, without a clearer conceptual language in which to practice a public shared understanding of its identity and scriptural hermeneutic, Evangelicalism will have difficulty grasping the possibilities of the cross-denominational scriptural hermeneutic that it already practices and may lose the ecumenical foundation for a global Christianity, and with it the fruits of its missional labor. While Smith gets us part of the way there in his “pentecostal” philosophy of communication, it is Smith’s Augustinian ground that, I believe, can provide us a less

sectarian and less philosophically compromised philosophy of communication to meet the Evangelical need for an ecumenical hermeneutical ground.

A final way Smith's philosophy of communication helps us resist a Cartesian modernity in hermeneutics is his emphasis on the essentially "affective" and embodied nature of a participatory hermeneutics. A more full discussion of this must wait until the next chapter, but Smith basically argues that since God is always already participating in all our material reality, a pentecostal approach to worship values the body and the material concomitants of worship. While he uses the term "worldview," Smith also deconstructs it in several of his books,⁴³² saying that

It should be noted that being able to articulate [a worldview] is not a requirement for absorbing the understanding; rather, this affective understanding can be transformatively absorbed, shaping our passions and dispositions, even if we might not have the theoretical ability to articulate what we "know." ... [This] "I know that I know that I know" ... is a knowledge, an "affective understanding," that is on a register prior to propositional articulation.⁴³³

So, reading Heidegger and Augustine together,⁴³⁴ Smith understands our worldview as "transformatively absorbed" through our material embodied practice and continually "shaping our passions and dispositions." In this process, he devalues rationality and doctrine, not absolutely but relative to the affective and embodied aspects of hermeneutics which, he argues, are what shape our "loves."⁴³⁵

While it is true to Augustine's hermeneutics that our interpretations are shaped by our loves, that the (dis)order of our loves is partly given to us by our social and embodied "thrownness" in Adam's race, and that such problematic embodied hermeneutics are

strengthened through the “chains of habit,”⁴³⁶ Augustine’s way out of this vicious hermeneutic circle is not primarily through the body, but rather through the scriptures. Given, Augustine emphasizes action on the basis of the scriptures in order to ground true and good interpretations again in the individual and social body,⁴³⁷ but it is the voice of God through the scriptures that provides a grace-filled interruption in our otherwise helpless selfhood. This is the voice of God through the normal meaning of the scriptural text, which can be sought through participation with the Inner Teacher in creational memory, and this is the voice of God as the manifest presence of God in the text, an incident of divine speech for a specific historical moment. However, whether through normal participatory interpretation or special divine speech—or a dialectic of the two—even an affective charismatic spirituality, I argue, should be seen as conceptual as much as it is embodied, though the concepts are the narrative structures and phrases of the scriptures. Though Evangelicalism in its modernistic aspect may have erred in emphasizing too much the rationalistic conceptual nature of the faith (i.e., “worldview”), Smith, in my view, goes too far in his overcorrection, proposing primarily an embodied liturgical solution to Evangelical ecclesial problems that need, instead, a philosophy of hermeneutics that synthesizes the conceptual and the material in the scriptures. In this, Smith needs to give more heed to his teacher Augustine than to his teachers among the Continental philosophers.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the question of what philosophical resources might be brought to bear on an Augustinian scriptural hermeneutics in order to “translate” it into a current philosophical register. In its approach as Augustinian philosophy of communication, this project considers the extant conceptual resources of Gadamer, Ricoeur, Westphal, Wolterstorff, and Smith as potential gifts, providential systems of thought that have at least a partial purchase on

the truth and that, therefore, might need to be appropriated by Evangelicals if this movement is to return to a participatory scriptural hermeneutic, a hermeneutic that takes seriously not only the being of the text and its human author but also the very real authorial presence of its divine author. Though all of these philosophers have a self-confessed claim to be doing an Augustinian hermeneutic—and they provide us with helpful vocabulary along the way—I have argued that none of them have fully captured the hermeneutic humility (through finitude and fallenness) and possibility (through creational memory and God’s “presence” through participatory grace) that Augustine’s system provides, nor have they provided a similarly robust explanation of how we participate in scriptural figures not just aesthetically (through imagination) but also actually (living in the moment Christological patterns that are spoken timelessly from eternity).

Augustine’s confidence in the eternal Truth that, through the scriptures and the Spirit, can be discerned as the truth that is fit for *today* explodes the problematic distinction between doctrine and application and returns us to a pre-Cartesian holistic cosmology. At the dawn of a globalizing Christianity in which the “norming” center is shifting away from the Cartesian West to the “native” participation of the global South, it is this Augustinian philosophy of communication that can provide an ecumenical Evangelical basis for hermeneutics that is both textual and spiritual.

Isaiah 55 provides us a concluding picture of scriptural hermeneutics through the lenses of several of our philosophical interlocutors. The chapter opens with a call to receive blessing without payment or work, moves to a call to repentance, characterizes the distribution and effect of God’s word, and finally describes the Edenic scene of joy that greets those who receive such blessing. Merold Westphal picks the second of these sections as his key to hermeneutics, saying

that “the hermeneutics of finitude can be read as a commentary on Isaiah 55:8-9,”⁴³⁸ which is the famous section,

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord.
“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Westphal says that this hermeneutical finitude means that our “embedded” standpoint will always be necessarily different from other humans’ and from God’s.⁴³⁹ With this separation of ways and thoughts, we start and end the interpretation process in ignorance, but at least we are humble.

Gadamer takes the next verse as his focus, citing it for its “sensitivity” to the linguisticity of humankind.⁴⁴⁰ It reads as follows:

For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,
And do not return there,
But water the earth,
And make it bring forth and bud,
That it may give seed to the sower
And bread to the eater,
So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void,
But it shall accomplish what I please,
And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Gadamer rightly sees in this passage a proto-Incarnational metaphor,⁴⁴¹ but his focus is still on the workings of language within the plane of human temporality.

So, while Westphal sees a check on human interpretive arrogance through the alterity of God (and others), Gadamer sees the common stream of language as the hermeneutical conditions of being. Neither one of them seems to put together the participatory possibilities of the metaphor: God's eternal thoughts and ways are in heaven and our temporal ones are on earth, but through the downward participation of His Word (from the heavens to the earth), all sorts of goods are produced that, in their turn, not only provide earthly sustenance (Smith's "confession") but also grow upward toward the heavens (Smith's "praise"). To Augustine, the real otherness of the eternal God, provoking continual interpretation, and the real participatory grace rained down on us through the scriptures and the Spirit, provoking continual hope, do indeed create a spiral of interpretation in which we make "progress" even while we continue to seek. Augustine thus homes in on the verse of Isaiah 55 in which the tension of that spiral is manifested:

The prophet Isaiah testifies that the Lord God can be found provided he is sought, when he says, *Seek the Lord and as soon as you find him call upon him, and when he draws near to you let the godless man forsake his ways and the wicked man his thoughts.*⁴⁴²

But does anyone ever comprehensively "find" God, Augustine asks? No, of course not. Knowing that God is unsearchable, though, how does the interpreter go forward without losing heart?

Augustine says

You should not give up the search as long as you are making progress in your inquiry into things incomprehensible, and because you become better and better by looking for so great a good which is both sought in order to be found and found in order to be sought ...

It is sought in order to be found all the more delightfully, and it is found in order to be sought all the more avidly.⁴⁴³

That is, a Christian hermeneutic enables real progress but not completion, with the outcomes of personal growth for the interpreter, delight in the contemplation of God, and motivation to continue the searching and the finding—in a word, worship. It is this worship—generated “in between” heaven and earth, between seeking and finding, between mystery and knowledge—that is the telos of an Augustinian scriptural hermeneutic. Beyond modernist fantasies of comprehensive control and postmodern reductions of the cosmos to historical intertextuality, Augustine can reopen the scriptures for Evangelicals through the participatory third dimension of the mediating Word of God.

NOTES

¹ Recall the rejection of Gadamer’s language of “horizons” in the 1982 Evangelical Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics, for example—“Chicago Statement of Biblical Hermeneutics, with commentary by Norman L. Geisler,” in *Bible Research: Internet Resources for Students of Scripture*, created by Michael D. Marlowe, accessed January 2016, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago2.html>, reproduced from *Explaining Hermeneutics: A Commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics* (Oakland, California: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1983), Articles VIII, IX.

² See Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 3-4.

³ Arthur Holmes, *All Truth is God’s Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977).

⁴ Merold Westphal, *Overcoming Ontotheology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), x-xi, xix-xx.; see also his book *Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism*.

⁵ See Calvin L. Troup, ed., *Augustine for the Philosophers: The Rhetor of Hippo, the Confessions, and the Continentals* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014).

⁶ This use of “poet” is from Kenneth Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968), but it corresponds with what Neil B. MacDonald says in “The Philosophy of Language and the Renewal of Biblical Hermeneutics,” in *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, 123-140 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 123-140, 131n28, on “metaphor.”

⁷ MacDonald, “Philosophy of Language,” 123-140, 138.

⁸ As seen, for example, in Hans-Georg Gadamer’s description of the temporality of ancient festivals/plays, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Continuum, 1975/2004), 122-23.

⁹ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, 19; Lewis S. Mudge, “Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation,” in *Paul Ricoeur, Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge, 1-40 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 9.

¹⁰ See Troup, *Augustine for the Philosophers*; and Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, ed. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

¹¹ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 15, 32-33.

¹² Calvin L. Troup, *Temporality, Eternity, and Wisdom: The Rhetoric of Augustine’s Confessions* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).

¹³ See Clare Carlisle, “The Question of Habit in Theology and Philosophy: From Hexis to Plasticity,” *Body & Society* 19, nos. 2 & 3 (2013): 30-57; and compare John Arthos, “Locating the instability of the topic places: Rhetoric, phronesis and neurobiology,” *Communication Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2000): 272-292; and Jeff Pruchnic and Kim Lacey, “The Future of Forgetting: Rhetoric, Memory, Affect,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 41, no. 5 (2011): 472-494.

- ¹⁴ For a provocative hint in this directions, see Edith Wyschogrod and John D. Caputo, “Postmodernism and the Desire for God: An Email Exchange,” *Cross Currents* 48, no. 3 (1998), n.p. See also Arnett, “Arendt and Augustine: Identity Otherwise than Convention,” in *Augustine for the Philosophers*, ed. Calvin L. Troup (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014).
- ¹⁵ This is, by the way, a key parallel with the theory of Gadamer, for whom all interpretation was also application. My argument that it is possible to recontextualize the thought of Augustine in the Christian tradition—in contrast to Gadamer’s position—will be developed further below. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 306-307.
- ¹⁶ See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, Rev. Ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
- ¹⁷ Sermon 339.4, in *Essential Sermons*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Edmund Hill, O. P., intro and notes Daniel E. Doyle, O. S. A. (New York: New City Press, 2007), 392.
- ¹⁸ Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits*, 51.
- ¹⁹ Augustine, *Revisions* (Retractationes), ed. Roland Teske, S. J., trans., notes, and introduction Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2010).
- ²⁰ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xx.
- ²¹ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xvi.
- ²² Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xx.
- ²³ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xiii, 76.
- ²⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).
- ²⁵ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xiv.
- ²⁶ Augustine, *Confessions* I.vi.7, for example.
- ²⁷ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xii-xv.
- ²⁸ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xi.
- ²⁹ See John C. Cavadini, “The Darkest Enigma: Reconsidering the Self in Augustine’s Thought,” *Augustinian Studies* 38, no. 1 (2007): 119-132, p. 123.
- ³⁰ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xii.
- ³¹ There are several different technical definitions of “immanence,” paired with different technical opposite definitions of “transcendence,” but whether truth is considered accessible or inaccessible, in the individual mind (Descartes), in the shared categories of the mind’s structure (Kant), in the spirit of history (Hegel), in Being (Heidegger), or in Being as understood in Language (Gadamer, and differently, Barthes, Kenneth Burke), all of these immanence-transcendence theories bypass the idea of truth in the real spiritual realm of Augustine’s “eternity” and cannot fully conceptualize revelation (or divine speech) as something beyond the basic human abilities for understanding.
- ³² Karl Möller, “Renewing Historical Criticism,” in *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, 145-171 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 153.
- ³³ Mary B. Hesse, “A Response to Neil B. MacDonald,” in *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, 141-144 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 144.
- ³⁴ Nicholas Wolterstorff, “The Promise of Speech-act Theory for Biblical Interpretation,” in *After Pentecost: Language & Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, 73-90 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 77-79.
- ³⁵ Merold Westphal, *Whose Community? Which Interpretation?: Philosophical Hermeneutics for the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 81-82.
- ³⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 269.
- ³⁷ Troup, *Temporality*, 108.
- ³⁸ See Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994).
- ³⁹ I Cor. 4:20.
- ⁴⁰ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 69.
- ⁴¹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans’ Pub. Co., 1980), 294.
- ⁴² As acknowledged by Gadamer scholar John Arthos in his *The Inner Word in Gadamer’s Hermeneutics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 219.
- ⁴³ See Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 304.
- ⁴⁴ To Augustine, participation is similarly always already a fusion of horizons, though we are not always aware.
- ⁴⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 298.
- ⁴⁶ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 294-296, 305, though “hermeneutically trained mind” is Gadamer’s term.
- ⁴⁷ See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 386-91.
- ⁴⁸ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 313.
- ⁴⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 299.
- ⁵⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 299.
- ⁵¹ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 303; see also Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 237-38.
- ⁵² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 239.
- ⁵³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 301-302.
- ⁵⁴ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 300-302.

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- ⁵⁵ See David Vessey, "Alterity and Faith in Gadamer's Hermeneutics," conference paper, October 2005, Conference of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP), Salt Lake City, Utah, accessed 9 May 2016 at http://www.davevessey.com/Vessey_Gadamer_Faith.htm.
- ⁵⁶ See Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 85.
- ⁵⁷ See Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 92.
- ⁵⁸ See Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 294-95, 305-307.
- ⁵⁹ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 305.
- ⁶⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 271-72.
- ⁶¹ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 306.
- ⁶² Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 306.
- ⁶³ These are, at least, the texts which Gadamer was most interested in. See Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 93-95.
- ⁶⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 297.
- ⁶⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 298.
- ⁶⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 298-99.
- ⁶⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 83-86.
- ⁶⁸ See for discussion, Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 304-305.
- ⁶⁹ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 97.
- ⁷⁰ See Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 89.
- ⁷¹ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 304.
- ⁷² See Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 84.
- ⁷³ See Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 92.
- ⁷⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 302-303.
- ⁷⁵ See Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 91.
- ⁷⁶ See Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 308.
- ⁷⁷ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 300.
- ⁷⁸ See David Vessey, "Gadamer, Augustine, Aquinas, and Hermeneutic Universality," *Philosophy Today* 55, no. 2 (2011): 158-65.
- ⁷⁹ Vessey, "Gadamer, Augustine," 161.
- ⁸⁰ Vessey, "Gadamer, Augustine," 161; the quotation from Gadamer is from *Truth and Method*, 417.
- ⁸¹ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, 62.
- ⁸² Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, 66.
- ⁸³ See John Arthos, "'A Limit that Resides in the Word': Hermeneutic Appropriations of Augustine," in *Augustine for the Philosophers*, ed. Calvin Troup (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 100.
- ⁸⁴ Arthos, "A Limit," 96.
- ⁸⁵ Arthos, "A Limit," 99.
- ⁸⁶ See Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 95-97.
- ⁸⁷ Vessey, "Gadamer, Augustine."
- ⁸⁸ Vessey, "Gadamer, Augustine," 162.
- ⁸⁹ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 112.
- ⁹⁰ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 111-112. See also Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 180-188.
- ⁹¹ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 186.
- ⁹² Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 183.
- ⁹³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 156; Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 184. See below for discussion of this in terms of the "in-betweenness" of "play," as Gadamer explains in *Truth and Method*, 109. Richard E. Palmer discusses the etymological roots of hermeneutics in its patron god, Hermes: "Hermes is the god of crossroads and boundaries, where piles of rocks (Herms) were placed to honor him. [He] led the dead into the underworld, so he 'crossed the line' between the living and the dead, between the living human world and the underworld of Hades. Hermes is truly the 'god of the gaps,' of the margins, the boundaries, the limins of many things. He is a 'liminal' phenomenon." See Palmer, "The Relevance of Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics to Thirty-Six Topics or Fields of Human Activity," lecture delivered at the Department of Philosophy, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, April 1, 1999, accessed March, 2016, at <http://www.mac.edu/faculty/richardpalmer/relevance.html>.
- ⁹⁴ For this synopsis of Gadamer's thought, I am drawing from both Palmer's *Hermeneutics* and Westphal's *Whose Community?*
- ⁹⁵ Westphal, *Which Community?*, 98.
- ⁹⁶ Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 14, 33.
- ⁹⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 153.
- ⁹⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 120.
- ⁹⁹ See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 102-103.
- ¹⁰⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 104.
- ¹⁰¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 105.
- ¹⁰² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 106.
- ¹⁰³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 104, 105.
- ¹⁰⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 106.

- ¹⁰⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 109.
- ¹⁰⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 108.
- ¹⁰⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 109.
- ¹⁰⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 108.
- ¹⁰⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 110.
- ¹¹⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 108-109.
- ¹¹¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 108.
- ¹¹² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 122.
- ¹¹³ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 299.
- ¹¹⁴ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 299.
- ¹¹⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 159-160.
- ¹¹⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 117.
- ¹¹⁷ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, 84.
- ¹¹⁸ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xviii-xix.
- ¹¹⁹ Jens Zimmerman, "Ignoramus: Gadamer's 'Religious Turn'" in *Symposium* 6, no. 4 (2002): 203-218, p. 209-210.
- ¹²⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 272-73.
- ¹²¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 159.
- ¹²² Westphal, *Whose Community?*
- ¹²³ Arthos, *The Limit*"; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 446.
- ¹²⁴ As he illustrates throughout the *Confessions*, which attempts to show Augustine's different interpretive perspectives at different points in his life, and as further shown by his *Revisions*, which by their very existence witness to the impact of historical time on even the interpretive consistency of one author in one historical moment, working from the same mind and language.
- ¹²⁵ See Augustine, *City of God* IV.31.
- ¹²⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 120.
- ¹²⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 120.
- ¹²⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 118-119.
- ¹²⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 123-24. Italics mine.
- ¹³⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 122.
- ¹³¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 123.
- ¹³² Westphal, *Which Community?*, 38-39.
- ¹³³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 123; Italics added.
- ¹³⁴ Gadamer talks about "total presence" in several places in *Truth and Method*, including p. 124.
- ¹³⁵ See Augustine, *City of God* XI.29.
- ¹³⁶ See Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology* for a discussion of the "appropriation" of philosophical language for Christian purposes.
- ¹³⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 124-25.
- ¹³⁸ Romans 6:3-4.
- ¹³⁹ Revelation 13:8.
- ¹⁴⁰ Elshstain, *Augustine and the Limits*, 6.
- ¹⁴¹ The disagreement itself may be my perception more than theirs. Vessey himself pointed me towards Arthos's book on the subject, *The Inner Word in Gadamer's Hermeneutics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), but while Arthos seems to see Gadamer's *verbum interius* as Augustinian, Vessey contends that it is fundamentally different from Augustine. See Vessey, "Gadamer, Augustine."
- ¹⁴² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 420.
- ¹⁴³ Arthos, "A Limit," 101.
- ¹⁴⁴ Augustine, *De Doctrina* III.ix, p. 74.
- ¹⁴⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 420-21.
- ¹⁴⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 421.
- ¹⁴⁷ See Augustine, *Confessions* X.ii.2, xii.19.
- ¹⁴⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 422.
- ¹⁴⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 425.
- ¹⁵⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 425.
- ¹⁵¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 424.
- ¹⁵² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 424.
- ¹⁵³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 426.
- ¹⁵⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 426.
- ¹⁵⁵ See Kimberly Baker, "Augustine's Doctrine of the *Totus Christus*: Reflecting on the Church as Sacrament of Unity," *Horizons* 37, no. 1 (2010): 7-24; and Dale L. Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Life Together in the Contexts of Monastic Literature and The Communion of Saints," *Journal of Communication & Religion* 28 (2005): 188-205, p. 195.
- ¹⁵⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 426.
- ¹⁵⁷ Arthos, *Inner Word*, 1.

- ¹⁵⁸ Arthos, *Inner Word*, 3.
- ¹⁵⁹ See Vessey, "Gadamer, Augustine," 162.
- ¹⁶⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 423.
- ¹⁶¹ Arthos, "Augustine and the Limit."
- ¹⁶² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 422.
- ¹⁶³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 438-39.
- ¹⁶⁴ See Palmer, "The Relevance."
- ¹⁶⁵ Vessey, "Gadamer, Augustine."
- ¹⁶⁶ Acts 1:6-8.
- ¹⁶⁷ For Augustine's position on this, especially in contrast to Jerome, see Virginia Burrus, "'In the Theatre of This Life': The Performance of Orthodoxy in Late Antiquity," in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus*, 80-96 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 89-91.
- ¹⁶⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 424.
- ¹⁶⁹ Augustine, *Confessions* X, xxiii.33-34.
- ¹⁷⁰ Arthos, "A Limit," 99.
- ¹⁷¹ II Cor. 4:13.
- ¹⁷² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 123.
- ¹⁷³ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 308, quoting Gadamer.
- ¹⁷⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxii-xxiv.
- ¹⁷⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 306-307.
- ¹⁷⁶ Zimmerman, "Ignoramus," 211.
- ¹⁷⁷ Zimmerman, "Ignoramus," 209.
- ¹⁷⁸ Zimmerman, "Ignoramus," 208.
- ¹⁷⁹ For example, Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 123.
- ¹⁸⁰ Zimmerman, "Ignoramus," 211; Arthos, "A Limit," 96.
- ¹⁸¹ Zimmerman, "Ignoramus," 208.
- ¹⁸² Zimmerman, "Ignoramus," 209.
- ¹⁸³ Zimmerman, "Ignoramus," 213-14.
- ¹⁸⁴ Zimmerman notes several of these in the first pages of "Ignoramus."
- ¹⁸⁵ Jude 3.
- ¹⁸⁶ Augustine, *Confessions* VII.ix.13.
- ¹⁸⁷ For example, Augustine, Sermon 267.4; and *Confessions* X.iii.3.
- ¹⁸⁸ I Corinthians 8:2: "And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know."
- ¹⁸⁹ John 8:55.
- ¹⁹⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 302-303, 306.
- ¹⁹¹ Zimmerman, "Ignoramus."
- ¹⁹² Zimmerman, "Ignoramus," 213.
- ¹⁹³ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 89.
- ¹⁹⁴ For the argument that theology has the primary burden of leading in participatory responses to the historical moment, see Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011).
- ¹⁹⁵ Acts 14:17.
- ¹⁹⁶ For details and sources on the presence of these traditions in various ethnic tribes, see the work of anthropologist and missionary Don Richardson, especially *Eternity in Their Hearts*.
- ¹⁹⁷ Grenz and Franke, Preface to *Beyond Foundationalism*, ix.
- ¹⁹⁸ David Vessey says that "philosophically, the closest hermeneut to Gadamer is Ricoeur," in his chapter "Paul Ricoeur's and Hans-Georg Gadamer's Diverging Reflections on Recognition," in *Gadamer and Ricoeur: Critical Horizons for Contemporary Hermeneutics*, ed. Francis J. Mootz III and George H. Taylor, 142-55 (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 143.
- ¹⁹⁹ A fact recognized by Lewis Mudge in his extended introductory chapter to Paul Ricoeur, "Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge, 1-40 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), and noted with concern by Nicholas Wolterstorff in *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 133. See also Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?: The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 106-108.
- ²⁰⁰ Ian Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," in *After Pentecost: Language & Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, 387-402 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 391-92.
- ²⁰¹ Paul Ricoeur, "Preface to Bultmann," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge, 49-72 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 56.
- ²⁰² Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning*, 106-107.
- ²⁰³ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 142-43.
- ²⁰⁴ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 152.

- ²⁰⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, as quoted in Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 63.
- ²⁰⁶ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 65-66.
- ²⁰⁷ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 136-37.
- ²⁰⁸ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 149. Italics mine.
- ²⁰⁹ Quoted in Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 63. Italics mine.
- ²¹⁰ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 144-45.
- ²¹¹ Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," 391.
- ²¹² Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, as quoted in Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 146.
- ²¹³ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 67.
- ²¹⁴ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 62-63n13; the second part is a quotation from Ricoeur in *Debates in Continental Philosophy*.
- ²¹⁵ Vessey, "Paul Ricoeur's and Hans-Georg Gadamer's."
- ²¹⁶ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 67-68.
- ²¹⁷ Mudge, "Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation," 22-32.
- ²¹⁸ Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, as quoted in Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 146.
- ²¹⁹ Ricoeur, "Preface to Bultmann," 56-57. This sentiment has structural parallels with Barfield's argument for a self-aware participatory approach to the world.
- ²²⁰ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 64.
- ²²¹ See Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 5-6.
- ²²² Paul Ricoeur, "Reply to Lewis S. Mudge," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge, 41-45 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 42.
- ²²³ Ricoeur, "Reply," 41.
- ²²⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975/1981), 221.
- ²²⁵ Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," 393.
- ²²⁶ Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," 395.
- ²²⁷ Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 224.
- ²²⁸ Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," 397.
- ²²⁹ Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 231.
- ²³⁰ Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," 392.
- ²³¹ Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," 393.
- ²³² Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," 397.
- ²³³ Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 237.
- ²³⁴ Note Ricoeur's comment above about the structuring power of narratives, along with his connection of metaphors to scientific models, saying "metaphor is to poetic language what the model is to scientific language" in *Rule of Metaphor*, 240. Compare the work of Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* on paradigms/examples/synecdoche in science, which function by transference to structure the disciplinary "world" of the scientist. Or, as Ricoeur puts it, "the model [i.e., paradigm] is essentially a heuristic instrument that seeks, by means of fiction, to break down an inadequate interpretation and to lay the way for a new, more adequate interpretation" (240).
- ²³⁵ See Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 120-21.
- ²³⁶ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 66.
- ²³⁷ See Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* II.iii, p.32.
- ²³⁸ Matthew 4:4.
- ²³⁹ That is, Gadamer follows Heidegger in presupposing intersubjectivity through linguisticity as an always already present condition of human being rather than something that has to be sought between fundamentally disconnected individuals through language. See Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), especially chapter 2, "The Controversy Over Intersubjectivity."
- ²⁴⁰ Vessey, "Paul Ricoeur's and Hans-Georg Gadamer's."
- ²⁴¹ As Vanhoozer also argues, *Is There a Meaning?*, 107-108.
- ²⁴² See Stephen E. Fowl and L. Gregory Jones, *Reading in Communion* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1998).
- ²⁴³ William Lindner, Jr., *Andrew Murray* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1996; J. Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in Africa* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1975).
- ²⁴⁴ Hebrews 3:7-8.
- ²⁴⁵ Specifically, I will leave out Anthony Thiselton and Kevin Vanhoozer, both for reasons of space and because I have not engaged their systematic standpoints.
- ²⁴⁶ B. Keith Putt's short list of scholars engaging in Continental philosophy of religion is Carl Raschke, Mark Taylor, Charles Winquist, Edith Wyschogrod, and John Caputo. See his "The Benefit of the Doubt: Merold Westphal's Prophetic Philosophy of Religion," *The Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 3, no. 3 (2002), para. 1-2. Accessed at <http://www.jcrt.org/jcrt/archives/03.3/putt.shtml>.
- ²⁴⁷ This synthesis is my own, but for a discussion of hubris, see Putt, "Benefit of the Doubt," para. 17-18.
- ²⁴⁸ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xx.
- ²⁴⁹ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xv.
- ²⁵⁰ Putt, "Benefit of the Doubt," para. 17.

- ²⁵¹ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xx; and “In God We Trust?: Biblical Interpretation and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion,” in *The Hermeneutics of Charity*, ed. James K. A. Smith and Henry Isaac Venema, 98-108 (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 102-103.
- ²⁵² Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xx.
- ²⁵³ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 22; Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xx.
- ²⁵⁴ Westphal, “In God We Trust?,” 102.
- ²⁵⁵ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 22.
- ²⁵⁶ Westphal, “In God We Trust?,” 103.
- ²⁵⁷ Westphal, “In God We Trust?,” 103.
- ²⁵⁸ Westphal, as quoted in Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 20.
- ²⁵⁹ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt”; see also Merold Westphal, “The Dialectic of Belonging and Distanciation in Gadamer and Ricoeur,” in *Gadamer and Ricoeur: Critical Horizons for Contemporary Hermeneutics*, ed. Francis J. Mootz III and George H. Taylor, 43-62 (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011).
- ²⁶⁰ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 19.
- ²⁶¹ This is the project of his book, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*.
- ²⁶² Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 3.
- ²⁶³ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 19.
- ²⁶⁴ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 21.
- ²⁶⁵ Westphal, *Which Community?*, 109-110.
- ²⁶⁶ Westphal, *Which Community?*, 38-39.
- ²⁶⁷ Westphal, *Which Community?*, 112.
- ²⁶⁸ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 7.
- ²⁶⁹ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 8.
- ²⁷⁰ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 8.
- ²⁷¹ In Westphal’s metaphor, prophets carry out the critique function and priests carry out the maintenance of the tradition as a historical tradition.
- ²⁷² Mudge, “Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation,” 4.
- ²⁷³ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 34.
- ²⁷⁴ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 35.
- ²⁷⁵ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 36.
- ²⁷⁶ Westphal, *Which Community?*, 133.
- ²⁷⁷ Mudge, “Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation.”
- ²⁷⁸ Ronald C. Arnett, “Defining Philosophy of communication: Difference and Identity,” *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* 11, no. 1 (2010): 57-62.
- ²⁷⁹ Westphal cites this scripture in *Which Community?*, 109.
- ²⁸⁰ Westphal, “In God We Trust?,” 107; *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, xxv.
- ²⁸¹ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 19.
- ²⁸² Westphal, “In God We Trust?,” 103-104.
- ²⁸³ John Bunyan’s spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, frighteningly exemplifies this side-effect of a strongly Reformed doctrine of depravity on one’s ability to believe the gospel as applicable to oneself.
- ²⁸⁴ See Zimmerman, “*Ignoramus*.”
- ²⁸⁵ Acts 14:17.
- ²⁸⁶ See David Vincent Meconi, S.J. “The Incarnation and the Role of Participation in St. Augustine’s Confessions.” *Augustinian Studies* 29.2 (1998): 61-75, p. 69.
- ²⁸⁷ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 10-13.
- ²⁸⁸ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 103. The quotation is from *Truth and Method*, but the material in square brackets is Westphal’s.
- ²⁸⁹ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 113.
- ²⁹⁰ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 21.
- ²⁹¹ James 4:8.
- ²⁹² Jeremiah 23:29.
- ²⁹³ Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology*, 56-57.
- ²⁹⁴ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 17.
- ²⁹⁵ Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 24.
- ²⁹⁶ I Thessalonians 5:14.
- ²⁹⁷ Hebrews 6:19.
- ²⁹⁸ I Corinthians 14:3.
- ²⁹⁹ See Isaiah 10—God used the ungodly armies of Assyria as a rod of discipline for his own people, though the Assyrians thought their success and power were from themselves.
- ³⁰⁰ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 18.

- ³⁰¹ For this summary, see Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 36-43. There is no “one to one correspondence” between locutions and illocutionary act—Wolterstorff, “A Response to Trevor Hart,” in *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, 335-41 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 335-36.
- ³⁰² Wolterstorff, “The Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 82.
- ³⁰³ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 39-40. See Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 38-45.
- ³⁰⁴ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 4-7.
- ³⁰⁵ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 84.
- ³⁰⁶ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 83.
- ³⁰⁷ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 87.
- ³⁰⁸ Wolterstorff, “A Response to Trevor Hart,” 338-39.
- ³⁰⁹ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 252.
- ³¹⁰ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 81.
- ³¹¹ See Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 86; *Divine Discourse*, 8, 266.
- ³¹² As Westphal does, as quoted in Putt, “Benefit of the Doubt,” para. 8.
- ³¹³ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 79.
- ³¹⁴ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 82-83.
- ³¹⁵ Wolterstorff, “A Response to Trevor Hart,” 338.
- ³¹⁶ Wolterstorff, “A Response to Trevor Hart,” 340.
- ³¹⁷ Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 43.
- ³¹⁸ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 81.
- ³¹⁹ See Wolterstorff, “A Response to Trevor Hart,” 335-37.
- ³²⁰ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 88.
- ³²¹ See Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 77. Though Wolterstorff says that he is in full agreement with Gadamer’s metaphor of historicity, his description of the attention needed to the historically shaped sense of the text and its original authorial discourse seems more in line with the “historicism” that Gadamer critiques, though with the “out” of divine discourse.
- ³²² Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 202.
- ³²³ See Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 204.
- ³²⁴ This is an old disciplinary boundary, with its origins in the Middle Ages (See Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol. 3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 255-63), but the strong barrier between the two disciplines is, I would argue, a product of the modern age, the age where the loss of “participation” as a functional category has disconnected most academic disciplines from their original self-understandings as spiritually undergirded.
- ³²⁵ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 89.
- ³²⁶ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 88.
- ³²⁷ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 88.
- ³²⁸ See Margaret M. Poloma and Matthew T. Lee, “Prophetic Prayer and Two-Way Communication with the Divine,” *Journal of Communication and Religion* 35.3 (2012).
- ³²⁹ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 89.
- ³³⁰ See Chapter 3.
- ³³¹ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 23.
- ³³² Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 24-25.
- ³³³ I am uncomfortable leaving this “this is that” assertion here without developing it more fully from my reading of Wolterstorff’s *Divine Discourse*, but that might end up a chapter in itself. For now, take this assertion as a “let us suppose.”
- ³³⁴ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 85.
- ³³⁵ See Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 14-15.
- ³³⁶ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 16-18.
- ³³⁷ Augustine insisted on a charitable, full-bodied truth, but accuracy was still an important part of the equation. See Burrus, “In the Theatre of This Life.”
- ³³⁸ See Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 187, for a hint at this influence. The emphasis on divine freedom in a newly univocal cosmos, that started in the high-to-late Middle Ages, is discussed by Matthew Levering in *Participatory Biblical Exegesis* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2008), 19.
- ³³⁹ See his *Divine Discourse*, 191-201.
- ³⁴⁰ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 76.
- ³⁴¹ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 80.
- ³⁴² Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 84.
- ³⁴³ Wolterstorff, “Promise of Speech-act Theory,” 89.
- ³⁴⁴ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 192, 195.
- ³⁴⁵ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 201.
- ³⁴⁶ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 193.
- ³⁴⁷ Hesse, “How to be a Postmodernist and Remain a Christian,” 93.
- ³⁴⁸ See his discussion in *Divine Discourse*, 181.

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- ³⁴⁹ To coin a name for a speech act particularly important in scriptural discourse.
- ³⁵⁰ See Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 6-7.
- ³⁵¹ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 191-93.
- ³⁵² See Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 198.
- ³⁵³ Hebrews 3:7-9.
- ³⁵⁴ See Hebrews 4:3: "For we who have believed *do* enter that rest."
- ³⁵⁵ Timothy A. Gabrielson, "Along the Grain of Salvation History: A Suggestion for Evangelical Hermeneutics," *Trinity Journal* 36 (2015): 71-90.
- ³⁵⁶ For example, Isaiah 66:2: "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word."
- ³⁵⁷ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 184-85.
- ³⁵⁸ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 184-85.
- ³⁵⁹ Calvin L. Troup, "Rhetorical Interpretation in the Confessions," *Journal of Communication & Religion* 24, no. 1 (2001): 43-67, p. 53.
- ³⁶⁰ Wolterstorff, "A Response to Trevor Hart," 340.
- ³⁶¹ As seen, for example, in Augustine, *Confessions* XI.xxii.28.
- ³⁶² II Corinthians 3:18.
- ³⁶³ Augustine, *City of God* XIX.19.
- ³⁶⁴ James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000).
- ³⁶⁵ James K. A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation*, Radical Orthodoxy Series, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward. (New York: Routledge, 2002).
- ³⁶⁶ See Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*, 148.
- ³⁶⁷ Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*, 20.
- ³⁶⁸ Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*, 23.
- ³⁶⁹ Smith argues that much of postmodernity is still mired in modernity, and that a sufficiently postmodern approach to the scriptures and ecclesiology would converge with an Augustinian premodernity. See his *Who's Afraid of Post-Modernity?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006).
- ³⁷⁰ Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*, 23.
- ³⁷¹ Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*, 148.
- ³⁷² Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*, 147-48.
- ³⁷³ Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*, 22, 147; for criticisms of this tradition, see Troup, *Eternity, Temporality, and Wisdom*.
- ³⁷⁴ Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*, 134-37.
- ³⁷⁵ Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*, 150.
- ³⁷⁶ Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*, 136.
- ³⁷⁷ Smith, *Fall of Interpretation*, 23.
- ³⁷⁸ Smith says that *Fall of Interpretations* "is a book that has been penned with wounds. Having been at times excluded from my own tradition for being *too* different, the project of this book is to make space for difference within our communities," p. 9.
- ³⁷⁹ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 124-25, 170.
- ³⁸⁰ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 3-7, 44.
- ³⁸¹ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 114-115.
- ³⁸² Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 115-116.
- ³⁸³ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 123.
- ³⁸⁴ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 119-120.
- ³⁸⁵ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 128.
- ³⁸⁶ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 132.
- ³⁸⁷ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 122.
- ³⁸⁸ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 120.
- ³⁸⁹ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 138.
- ³⁹⁰ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 137.
- ³⁹¹ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 138.
- ³⁹² Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 143.
- ³⁹³ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 137.
- ³⁹⁴ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 123.
- ³⁹⁵ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 125.
- ³⁹⁶ As seen in Augustine as explained, for example, by Gerald Bonner, "Augustine's Conception of Deification." *Journal of Theological Studies* 37.2 (1986): 369-86.
- ³⁹⁷ Because sin is a void, a negative non-entity, sinful uses of language can approach nothingness, a dis-incarnation.
- ³⁹⁸ Romans 1:17 says that in the gospel we live from "faith to faith"; see the development of this progress from faith to knowledge to wisdom from *De Trinitate* in Chapter 3.

- ³⁹⁹ To bring up again the example from Hebrews 3/Psalm 95, the original addressees lost their opportunity to go into the Promised Land—"So I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest'"—but the exhortation was then applied to much later generations.
- ⁴⁰⁰ John 14:9.
- ⁴⁰¹ Mark 2:9; Matthew 14:29.
- ⁴⁰² One of the classic examples of Speech Acts that "do" something in the social realm. See Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*.
- ⁴⁰³ Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 119-120.
- ⁴⁰⁴ See Frederick H. Russell, "Persuading the Donatists: Augustine's Coercion by Words," in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus*, ed. William E. Klingshirn and Mark Vessey, 115-130 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999) and Jennifer V. Ebbler, *Disciplining Christians: Correction and Community in Augustine's Letters* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- ⁴⁰⁵ Smith, "Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?", 119.
- ⁴⁰⁶ See James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 1-16. Smith uses the "small p" pentecostal designation to describe the "pentecostal or charismatic prephilosophical commitments" (*Thinking in Tongues*, 10n20), a "social imaginary" much broader than classic Pentecostalism and that covers a much larger cross-section of denominations, including much of the Evangelical world. See also Paul W. Lewis, "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit as Paradigm Shift," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 13, no. 2 (2010): 301-344, p. 301-302; and Jon Bialecki, "The Bones Restored to Life: Dialogue and Dissemination in the Vinyard's Dialectic of Text and Presence," in *The Social Life of Scriptures: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Biblicism*, ed. James S. Bielo, 136-56 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 155.
- ⁴⁰⁷ Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, xviii.
- ⁴⁰⁸ Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 13.
- ⁴⁰⁹ See Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 12.
- ⁴¹⁰ James K. A. Smith, "Is the Universe Open for Surprise? Pentecostal Ontology and the Spirit of Naturalism," *Zygon* 43, no. 4 (2008): 879-96, p. 887.
- ⁴¹¹ Smith, "Is the Universe Open," 882-85.
- ⁴¹² Smith, "Is the Universe Open," 884.
- ⁴¹³ Smith, "Is the Universe Open," 879.
- ⁴¹⁴ Smith, "Is the Universe Open," 881.
- ⁴¹⁵ Smith, "Is the Universe Open," 879.
- ⁴¹⁶ Smith, "Is the Universe Open," 891.
- ⁴¹⁷ Smith, "Is the Universe Open," 892.
- ⁴¹⁸ Smith, "Is the Universe Open," 887.
- ⁴¹⁹ See Smith, "Is the Universe Open," 893n1.
- ⁴²⁰ Smith, "Is the Universe Open," 880.
- ⁴²¹ Smith, "Is the Universe Open," 891-92.
- ⁴²² Smith, "Is the Universe Open," 892.
- ⁴²³ Compare, for example, II Chronicles 6:18-20, "There's not enough room in all of heaven for you, Lord God. How could you possibly live on earth in this temple I have built? But I ask you to answer my prayer. This is the temple where you have chosen to be worshiped," with chapter 7:1-2, "As soon as Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and burned up the offerings. The Lord's dazzling glory then filled the temple, and the priests could not go in." God is always in all heaven and earth, but somehow God was uniquely in the temple at that particular time.
- ⁴²⁴ Kenneth Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968), 37.
- ⁴²⁵ See R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 16.
- ⁴²⁶ Wolterstorff, "Promise of Speech-act Theory," 88.
- ⁴²⁷ Bialecki, "The Bones Restored to Life."
- ⁴²⁸ See Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 6n14.
- ⁴²⁹ Bialecki, "The Bones Restored to Life," 155. That is, they listen to God's voice through scripture.
- ⁴³⁰ See Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 32n38.
- ⁴³¹ Wolfgang Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010), 14-15.
- ⁴³² Significantly in James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).
- ⁴³³ Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 27.
- ⁴³⁴ See James K. A. Smith, "Confessions of an Existentialist: Reading Augustine After Heidegger, Part I," *New Blackfriars* 82, no. 964 (273-282); and "Confessions of an Existentialist: Reading Augustine After Heidegger, Part II," *New Blackfriars* 82, nos. 965-966 (335-347).
- ⁴³⁵ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*.
- ⁴³⁶ John G. Prendiville, "The Development of the Idea of Habit in the Thought of Saint Augustine," *Traditio* 28 (1972): 29-99.
- ⁴³⁷ Michael J. Scanlon, "Augustine and Theology as Rhetoric," *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994): 37-50, p. 42.

⁴³⁸ Westphal, "In God We Trust?" 101.

⁴³⁹ Westphal, "In God We Trust?" 101.

⁴⁴⁰ Arthos, *Inner Word*, 3, quoted from Gadamer, "Die Philosophie und die Religion des Judentums," *Gesammelte Werke* 4 : 68-77.

⁴⁴¹ Arthos, *Inner Word*, 3.

⁴⁴² Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.2.2 (Prologue), 395.

⁴⁴³ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.2.2 (Prologue), 395-96.

Chapter 5

Moving Augustinian Hermeneutical Principles into Current Evangelical Practice

In this final chapter, we will examine the rhetorical implications of applying a participatory Augustinian hermeneutics to the current crisis in Evangelical hermeneutics. That is, what might the philosophical concepts recovered from Augustinian hermeneutics look like if embodied in current Evangelical contexts? Could an Augustinian approach to the scriptures function as a new norm for an Evangelical “language of biblical hermeneutics,”¹ restoring the scriptures to their rightful place at the heart of Evangelical community and mission? Answering these questions is the rhetorical turn required by a philosophy of communication interpretive approach, which submits proposed conceptual solutions to the “pragmatic test of public opinion in the public domain,” according to Ronald C. Arnett.² For “a public” to “ask whether the theory does what it attempts to do,” the theory must have some concrete applicability or social embodiment. Such embodiments of communication theory enable “assessment” on the ground, which is “itself ... a communicative event.”³

Therefore, to complete this philosophy of communication project, this chapter seeks to describe the proposed hermeneutic theory concretely enough to make it assessable within its target context, which is Evangelical ecclesial practice. This description will proceed in two ways: comparatively and synthetically. Comparatively, we will examine how other theorists and practitioners have provided similar descriptions of one or more metaphors of an Augustinian participatory hermeneutics. Not all of these examples are explicitly Augustinian, but they are all responding in similar ways to some of the same aspects of the hermeneutic crisis into which modernism has led the church. Synthetically, I will describe a particular set of ecclesial practices that might provide a testing ground for a participatory Augustinian hermeneutic.

First, then, the key themes of a participatory Augustinian hermeneutic will be summarized from their theoretical development in the preceding chapters. Second, these themes will be examined in various recent descriptions and embodiments. These more recent examples will be assessed for their comparative value with Augustine's theory and for their fit with the tradition of Evangelicalism. Third, a synthetic ecclesial praxis of participatory Augustinian hermeneutics will be described for the Evangelical tradition. I will explain and defend the particular description of participatory Augustinian hermeneutics in the context of an Augustinian version of philosophy of communication articulated in this project, in which the conceptual resources of the scriptures and the Christian tradition continue to return as gifts of grace to the church, and in which the "public domain" of assessment is the greater public of the "city of God."

Toward a New Evangelical Norm: Augustinian Hermeneutic Themes

Augustine's hermeneutics lived in the actions of the church, not just in an academic ethereal sphere, so his hermeneutical theory is particularly well-suited to the assessment associated with philosophy of communication. As I argued in Chapter 4 in opposition to Merold Westphal's separation of the roles of preacher and scholar, Augustine embodies the synthesis of the faithful preacher and the hermeneutic scholar, providing a challenging premodern model toward which Evangelical hermeneutists should again aspire. Augustine's biblical hermeneutics encouraged continual academic study, not on the ground of academic elitism but rather on the ground of universal access to God through creational memory and the Holy Spirit, within the boundaries of charity and of the mission of the church. His hermeneutics was embedded in the mission of the church, directed toward spiritual communion with God, intensely scriptural, and embodied in charitable social interactions.

Interpretation as Participation through Language, Will, and Narrative

In Chapter 3, I summarized Augustine’s hermeneutic thought through the themes of language, will/love, and the hermeneutic importance of narrative “wholes.” First, language, especially the language of scripture, “points” people to participation in God’s truth. Second, a charitable will is the ideal guiding principle of the interpretation of the scriptures. Third, participation in communal and narrative “wholes” directs the interpretation of scriptural “parts” in appropriately charitable ways. I emphasized in Chapter 3 that, in Augustine’s perspective on language, will, and communal narrative wholes, human interpreters have control or comprehensive knowledge of *no part* of the interpretive process. Language does not correspond inherently to truth. Our wills are neither perfectly charitable nor unchanging in their hermeneutic focus. And the *whole* of the story of salvation history is known to us only dimly, making our interpretation of scriptural “parts” a contingent affair. All of these hermeneutic contingencies, to Augustine, must be met by the active temporal participation of human interpreters in God—in the Inner Teacher operating through creational memory and the divine discourse of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, this human upward participation depends on God’s foundational “downward participation” through the Incarnation.⁴ Only in this way can our language, our wills/loves, and our individual and communal narratives have an effective and ethical grounding, enabling unity, action, and worship.

As developed in earlier chapters, Augustine’s grounding of language, charitable will, and narrative wholes in *participation* makes it the key metaphor in his complex premodern hermeneutic, a radically different paradigm than that assumed by modernist or postmodernist hermeneutics. In this way, participation provides a bridge back to the earlier tradition of Evangelicalism, as well as to the longer Christian tradition (premodernism) and to the broader

missiological context (non-Western religious sensibilities). Participation, I have argued, also provides an alternative to both modernist historicism and “postmodern” historicity, both of which throw out eternal truth in their move to root all perspectives in temporal human history. Modernist historicism assumes that with enough scientific historical study, the chasm between the present and the past can be overcome, eliminating the bias of the current interpreter and making the text perspicuous and transparent. This puts the current interpreter in a godlike position over the text, extracting self-evident interpretations that can then be used to justify social divisions that are more numerous and less charitable than need be. This problematic historicism has been the default position of American Evangelicalism since its turn to modernistic epistemology in the social and philosophical upheavals of the late 19th century,⁵ but as I argued in Chapter 1, this historicism is neither the predominant position in the history of Evangelical hermeneutics nor the de facto hermeneutical practice of most of the Evangelical “priesthood of believers” currently, in Western or non-Western contexts.

“Postmodernist” historicity correctly locates interpreters within their own historical perspectives, and Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur both helpfully emphasize the text itself in the hermeneutic process. However, their historicity restricts the horizons of interpretation to the limited ones of the horizontal temporal plane. The human-in-time interprets the text within the context of that historical moment of an interpreting tradition. The “being of the text” is posited as a trans-historical factor.⁶ But, even as an “ideal entity,” the text does not rise much above the plane of temporality. Rather, interpretation of texts makes brief flights of “naiveté” punctuated by “critical” returns to the historical moment in the Ricoeurian dialectic of interpretation.⁷ The key importance of the “being of the text” for both Gadamer and Ricoeur is that the horizon of the text disciplines the subjectivity of interpreters, forcing interpreters into a

never-ending process of interpretation that nevertheless allows for moments of application. Interpretation of a text never ends or settles on interpretational norms (i.e., eternal truth); rather, interpretation *pauses* to constitute a temporary ground from which it launches itself again down the dim track of time. This hermeneutic position has become attractive to many Evangelical philosophers who have been actively seeking ways to appropriate historicity while also safeguarding orthodox Evangelical positions on truth. However, historicity excludes explicitly spiritual horizons: it has no place for unchanging elements of creational memory, for the horizons of inward spiritual interlocutors (i.e., the Inner Teacher, and/or the Holy Spirit), or for an eternal realm from which truth can be manifested in time as both “stable” and adaptable to the historical moment. Augustinian participation disciplines and enriches the historicity of philosophical hermeneutics by returning to hermeneutics its earlier spiritual and eternal horizons. It is Augustine’s participatory hermeneutics that can, I argue, provide an Evangelically orthodox way to appropriate the most helpful “postmodern” critiques of Evangelical hermeneutical science.

Interpretation Elevates the Scriptures as Eternal/Temporal Medium

Augustine’s hermeneutics is also inescapably scriptural, which provides both a point of commonality with the Evangelical tradition and a point of assessment for the practical outworking of his hermeneutic metaphors. As we have seen, modernist biblical hermeneutics naturally creates strong divisions based on the mastery of historical and linguistic knowledge *about* the bible—a division between Evangelical leaders who focus on objective correctness and defensibility of their interpretations and Evangelical laypeople who focus on the devotional value of their interpretations. There is no theoretical bridge between these two forms of “scriptural” faith in modernist-leaning Evangelicalism. However, Augustine’s insistence that Christians come

under the scriptures falls neither in the errors of objective mastery of the scriptures nor of subjective molding of the scriptures to one's own preferred practice. Instead, he insists that the scriptures, as a revelation of God from beyond the temporal realm, provide a divinely appointed venue through which eternal truth can make its return in temporality.

This truth is sometimes understood through figuration and sometimes understood directly, but the choice in how it should be understood and applied can be made only with the participatory aid of God. At times, our understanding of a scripture will be frustrated or denied, requiring long labor and humility while highlighting our lack of objective mastery. At times, scripture will offend our current sensibilities, chastising our beliefs and practices and thus highlighting our shortcomings in holiness. The church, as a group of interpreters who for many reasons see the truth only dimly, strives together in the scriptures through dialogue and a persistent focus on the model of Christ to *become* a scriptural community. “Bible-believing” would describe not primarily a community in full possession of a set of doctrinal content statements (though they would have stable elements of the tradition) but rather a community which pays reverent attention to the divine voice as it manifests through scripture, from which the church builds its common possessions of truth and practice.

This metaphor of “scripture” in Augustinian and Evangelical hermeneutics—the special place of one particular narrative text within the hermeneutic process—marks a significant difference with philosophical hermeneutics,⁸ and with all modern/postmodern traditions for whom historical being is seen as the fundamental reality. Scripture, focused through the lens of the Christ-narrative, is the grounding “meganarrative” that provides a continual and relational connection to eternal Truth.⁹ The comprehensive divine narrative “whole” (“above the text”) that comes in partial and contingent ways through the scriptural text provides a check on all other

competing narrative wholes, including the sometimes idolatrous narratives of personal selfhood, community traditions, ecclesial self-righteousness, and national identity. It is the grounding story of the city of God that provides a continual narrative contrast to the earthly city in every age of temporal history.¹⁰ Without a return to participation, though, the scriptural story has no continuing anchor against the constant “evolution” of interpretation within a tradition, and thus the potential for both doctrinal stability and ethical critique through the scriptural story is severely weakened.

Interpretation Privileges Communal Charity over Comprehensive Knowledge

As we have also seen, Augustine’s scriptural hermeneutic is built on his assumption that charity is more foundational than comprehensive knowledge in the interpretational matrix of the church. This is a point that can be both more appreciated and more misunderstood in the wake of the social revolutions of postmodernity that give explicit priority to “love.” In the (post)modern social imaginary profiled by Robert Bellah, et al., “love” represents the value of human connectivity, especially affective, over the truth value of any ideational structure but one; that one remaining doctrine is the inviolability of the individual’s will and beliefs.¹¹ That is, “loving people” in postmodernity are assumed to remain connected through affectivity and mutual affirmation of their different desires and beliefs. For this reason, Augustine’s argument that good interpretations of scripture are the ones that produce charity—and Augustine’s excoriations of premodern fundamentalists¹²—would be well-received initially by those who are embedded in the current social imaginary.

However, Augustinian charity is not our current cultural value of “love.”¹³ In the charity that underpins Augustinian interpretation, individual wills and beliefs are exactly what are to be questioned. His charity presupposes a narrative of human depravity, divine perfection, and

growth through humble submission. Charity is affirming someone else's interpretation of a passage—even though it differs from our preferred one—because both their interpretation and ours challenge us both to right thoughts, affections, and behaviors after the pattern of Christ. The (Post)modern “love” of the emotivistic self locates interpretive flexibility in individual preference;¹⁴ Augustinian charity locates interpretive flexibility in the scriptural narrative of recovery from the sickness of depravity to the ultimate health of becoming like God.

A thoroughly modernistic epistemology, of course, leaves both love and flexibility outside of the scriptural interpretation process. While Augustine could be said to say that God's ends (our deification) justify the means (multiple true interpretations of scriptures that apply differently at different times, applied with charity), the modernist-leaning hermeneutic of Evangelicalism denies the legitimacy of any means other the one that can be both controlled and used for social control by those with institutionally approved historical and linguistic knowledge. Where there is only one true answer to every hermeneutic question and that answer is found through academic knowledge, charity has no place in scriptural interpretation. Scriptural knowledge is no longer a publicly shared good among Christians who give and receive truth within a shared narrative, but rather a universal fact that is *de facto* withheld from all but the appropriately educated. The authority of the scriptures themselves among charitably disposed interpreters becomes then, instead, the authority of certain interpreters whose teachings can be either followed uncritically or disputed. Charity drops out of the equation.

Though Augustine understood charity as being integral to scriptural interpretation in the context of ecclesial life, this understanding of charity involved conflict, persuasion, and real boundaries. That is, charity does acknowledge multiple true interpretations of scripture that lead to the same good end, but it also argues against certain sets of interpretations that violate the

good ends of worship, orthodox doctrine (focused on the identity of God), and right ethical practice. Charity does not argue against certain interpretations from a standpoint of comprehensive knowledge, but from a standpoint of true partial knowledge gained through humble participation in God. Similarly, as Augustine models many times, charity may also argue from a standpoint of seemingly true knowledge, hoping that the ensuing dialogue will drive both parties further towards listening to their divine Teacher, leading to greater knowledge of the truth by one or both of the disputants.¹⁵ In this way, Augustine's metaphor of hermeneutic charity makes scriptural interpretation more flexible, and it provides a persistent motivation to engage in dialogue in scriptural interpretation. Charitable hermeneutics encourages and opens ecclesial interpretation of the scriptures without thereby abandoning communal truth or dividing the ecclesial community into unspeaking camps.

Interpretation is Individual AND Communal Embodied Praxis

Whereas the inward vision of eternal truth, to Augustine, is primarily individual, it has its necessary outworking in the communal truth shared through ecclesial life in the scriptures, which entails the inward truth discerned individually by the *many* then being recognized together through the pointing language of the scriptures. Christianity is meant to be social and public, and the life together of the church is meant to be an integral part of its interpretation process.

This metaphor was developed in Chapters 2 and 3 from *De Trinitate* and under the term of intersubjectivity. Though language does not adequately correspond to truth in an essential way, it can enable two different partakers of divine truth to recognize their shared inheritance, rejoice in it together, and engage in appropriate action on the basis of that truth, which then enables them both to know that truth in a deeper way. That is, Augustine gives us a picture in which our inwardly discerned true knowledge is to be enriched by becoming public communal

truth—enriched through shared praise and its embodiment in shared language—and then further developed through its embodiment in shared action, which gives it a history/tradition, feeds back into the hermeneutic process, and enables habit-formation as a positive possibility in contrast to the former sinful “chains of habit.”¹⁶

Thus, Augustinian hermeneutics cannot be merely textual, mental, or individual, but must rather become incarnated into public language (confession) and shared action. This public confession and shared action in Augustine’s rendering also had a different end than just pragmatic communal action. Rather, it was focused on the end of enjoying God, either directly through praise or through the medium of shared charitable actions toward others. The point of all interpretation was to enjoy God, the ground and end of our shared life, and the means of enjoying God was primarily our charitable actions toward one another.¹⁷ An interpretation of scripture which did not enjoy God through doing good together to other believers or those in need would not have made sense to Augustine: no matter how correct the textual interpretation, the hermeneutic as a whole would be incomplete outside of its intended narrative, which says that “faith without works is dead.”¹⁸

This metaphor of hermeneutic praxis has not been as developed as the others in earlier chapters, but it will be explained more fully from the *Rule of Augustine*, among other sources, in the comparison and synthesis below. Augustine’s *Rule* was not as ascetic as the earlier examples of the Desert Fathers and was not as institutionally structured as St. Benedict’s later rule.¹⁹ Rather, his rule emphasized charity, flexibility, and dialogue that nevertheless found its end in a shared rule of life—a combination that I argue would be humanly possible only through continual communal participation in the divine life. If Evangelicals are to succeed in their stated desires for missional community through the scriptures, though, Augustine’s participatory model

of the interpenetration between textual interpretation and communal action demonstrates a way to proceed that is both rhetorical and spiritual.

Trying to tie together Augustine's hermeneutic theory briefly in order to test its implications and applications can only ever be an incomplete endeavor. However, at the risk of some repetition with earlier chapters, I have brought together what I argue are the key elements of Augustine's hermeneutic theory, the elements which, from a philosophy of communication standpoint, would need to find some expression in a concrete ecclesial embodiment of his hermeneutics. First, and foundationally, an Augustinian hermeneutic would need to demonstrate its dependence on participation in language, will/loves, and narrative rather than making any of those elements either absolute or hopelessly historically relative. Second, an Augustinian hermeneutic reserves a special place for the scriptures as the revelation of God, through participation in which our language, loves, and narratives are informed and chastened. Third, an Augustinian hermeneutic demonstrates charity both through opening scriptures to multiple interpretations and through reconfiguring the boundaries of interpretation around the *end* of loving God in the context of the basic Christ-narrative. Fourth, an Augustinian hermeneutic pushes interpretation beyond a merely mental and individual act toward a confessional, communal, and "incarnational" act. In the next section, we will examine recent theoretical and praxical attempts to bring one or more of these elements back into ecclesial life and practice, testing their fit with Augustine's theory and practice and their potential applicability to Evangelical hermeneutics.

New Approaches to Hermeneutic Praxis

This section will restrict its examination of recent hermeneutical thought to the practical themes of ecclesial bible reading, liturgy/community formation, and the impact of the

Charismatic revolution on recent Evangelicalism. While examining recent thought—from Christian ethics, philosophy, and theology—on each of these themes, I will comment on the fit of this recent work to a possible Augustinian hermeneutic in Evangelical ecclesial contexts. In particular, I will focus on how scholars such as Brian Brock, James K. A. Smith, and Jonathan R. Wilson help us get a better idea of the possible shape of the four hermeneutic criteria discussed above. To be assessed as helpful and appropriate for the real communicational problems of the Evangelical historical moment, these four hermeneutic criteria need this development through comparison, making them more clear and actionable.

Ecclesial Bible Reading

When Evangelicals have spiritual conversations with people from other Christian traditions, their relative scriptural literacy often stands out,²⁰ and Evangelical spiritual formation consistently emphasizes that every individual should read his/her bible daily. As a former lay and staff worker with the Evangelical organization The Navigators, I was involved in this kind of cultural maintenance work of encouraging and building Evangelicals' biblical literacy through regular study and bible memorization. The cultural ideal for an Evangelical “great man” was that he (or she) knew the “great words,” the scriptural *epea* that provided not just a biblical style but, more importantly, the right truths, stories, and exhortations for the current situation.²¹ This ideal in the Navigators was somewhat systematized through a “Topical Memory System” (TMS) which pointed young Evangelicals toward particular scriptures to memorize for particular recurring situations, but the system was a loose heuristic rather than a science. Each person was encouraged to listen to God through scripture for their own particular “promises” and occasional guidance.²²

However, despite the continuing prevalence of this ideal of bible reading practice in pursuit of biblical literacy, the actual practice among Evangelicals has followed the general downward cultural trend towards the biblical “linguistic impoverishment” that Ricoeur has brought to our attention.²³ While Ricoeur was concerned about the loss of “symbolic, metaphorical, mythological language [which] gives us ... the basis for reflective reasoning,”²⁴ I argue that the current Evangelical bible-reading practices are impoverished in a number of ways that acknowledge Ricoeur’s point but go further.

First, as I have argued in Chapter 1, Evangelical bible reading has partially shifted away from a mode of participatory attention to God and towards a defensive and scientific marshaling of apologetics. In Evangelical parlance, this is called “prooftexting,” with two combatants drawing and deploying scripture after scripture in the attempt to win a theological argument. While this does encourage a *form* of biblical literacy, it is an impoverished form in which texts become ossified chess-pieces in the hands of the combatants, no longer venues in which the voice of God is sought. This attitude toward the scriptures is aided by many of the tools of the bible study industry, whose various word study reference works and study bibles encourage a linguistic essentialism that portrays the bible as a Newtonian linguistic system.

Second, Evangelical bible reading is impoverished by being practiced more as an individual discipline than as a communal one. While many have argued that the printing revolution enabled Protestantism to be grounded in individual bible reading from the very beginning, Elizabeth Eisenstein points out the counterbalances of liturgy and community in these emerging Christian traditions.²⁵ Though people did read their bibles individually, they always also read them together, and the together part was strengthened by the sociological ties of the ecclesial institutions that provided the essential structure for Christian formation. To illustrate,

though the Christian of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* can be read as an isolated individual—fleeing the City of Destruction alone with his fingers in his ears—the story continues by emphasizing the importance of friendship and, in Part II, the way that the church is on pilgrimage together. In Part II, the church on pilgrimage can only go as fast as its slowest members.²⁶

Printing itself did not break up ecclesial bible reading or make diversity in ecclesial interpretation a problem. That linguistic and ecclesial inflexibility came about, as argued in Chapter 1, through the combined traumas of the sociological disintegration of communities and the defensive philosophical reaction to the approaching apex of modernistic ideology in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Continuing from that time into our own, ecclesial communities have generally become transient collections of strangers. Because reading the bible together well takes time, practice, and charity, the Evangelical path of imbibing scripture has generally taken the paths of less resistance, which are the pulpit and individual devotions. Lacking communal bible reading and interpretation, though, impoverishes the community because, first, avoiding communal reading allows charity to again drop out of the equation and, second, it does not enable the church to be open to the resources of the priesthood of all believers. It should be, as Paul says of the church, “the *whole* body, joined and knit together by what *every joint* supplies, ... [that] causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”²⁷

The final way that Evangelicals are becoming biblically impoverished, relatively speaking, is in the overall downward trend in actually reading the Bible, especially among the younger generation.²⁸ In my seven years teaching at a university that served primarily Evangelical and Pentecostal young people, I discovered that no biblical knowledge on the part of the students could be assumed. For most of the students, the scriptures were not just a foreign

country morally, as Brian Brock highlights,²⁹ but the scriptures were also a country in which the students had not really traveled at all. It may be that the Evangelical call to reengage with the world has been pursued vigorously, but without the parallel practice of engaging the world through the lenses of the scriptures. It may be that the uglier sides of a modernistic-leaning Evangelicalism (i.e., moral arrogance, epistemological hubris, political tribalism) have provoked an overreaction that rejects not just the uncharitable use of the bible but also the focus on the bible itself.³⁰ It may be also, in combination with the other factors, that the success of the Evangelical culture industry that first began picking up steam in the 1970s has absorbed the Evangelical time and interest that used to be devoted to the scriptures. Who has time for reading Malachi when they are in the middle of a Christian Romance novel, setting the kids up with Veggie Tales, and keeping up with the latest albums in Christian music? In most of American history, even the unbelievers and the marginally committed had enough knowledge of biblical language and metaphors that the allusions to scriptural figures in sermons, political discourse, and interpersonal communication could be readily understood.³¹ Now, however, such allusions would not be readily or widely understood even in Evangelical churches, especially among the younger generation. To open the possibility of hearing God through the reading of the scriptures, Evangelicals have to at least read the scriptures.

Different aspects of this practical problem have been recognized and addressed by Stephen Fowl and L. Gregory Jones, Brian Brock, and—a key figure for these scholars—Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Both Brock and Fowl and Jones approach bible reading and interpretation from the disciplinary perspective of ethics, and both attempt to bring back together the estranged disciplines of biblical studies and Christian ethics through a communal return to the scriptures themselves.

Fowl and Jones on Moral Distance. Fowl and Jones argue that though historical distance between the biblical authors and current interpreters is a real and important interpretational challenge, “our complicity in sin leaves us captive to destructive patterns of life [which] ... undermines our ability to read Scripture well.”³² That is, our interpretation problem is fundamentally moral, and that morality is shaped by our “interpretive interests,” which we learn in ecclesial communities of scripture reading and practice.³³ There is no morally or theologically pure spot from which to extract a comprehensive exegesis of the scriptures, so we must, together, “learn to read the Scriptures ‘over-against ourselves’ rather than simply ‘for ourselves.’”³⁴ This practice of self-interrogation through scriptures requires, in culturally “Christian” domains, “separate spaces where we can instruct and form each other to be disciples and wise readers.”³⁵ That is, following Alasdair MacIntyre, Fowl and Jones argue for clearly demarcated communities of tradition that require “commitment and concentration,”³⁶ though they also argue strongly for systematically listening to the cultural “outsider” to forestall the tendency of reading communities to close in on themselves. In line with their argument about our lack of moral objectivity in interpretation, Fowl and Jones identify Jesus, speaking through Scripture, as the first of the outsiders to whom we need to be open, though they give little guidance as to how this is to be done in ecclesial bible reading. Impressively, they say that “the goal of seeing Scripture as an outsider is the maintenance of interpretive humility and openness to hearing the voice of Scripture afresh.”³⁷

However, they continue listing outsiders without reference to hierarchies of importance, emphasizing instead the language work necessary to “translate” the perspectives between real “others” and ourselves so that a Gadamerian fusion of horizons can take place.³⁸ These others include the non-Messianic Jewish community and the “alien” voices of secular readers of

scripture.³⁹ Under “outsiders in our midst” to which we should listen, they draw lines of connection between the history of racism in the South African church and the early precedent of including Gentiles in the church with the current situation of homosexuals and Christian communities. “On this (and other) issue(s),” they say, “we have needed to embody the conversational openness and discernment characteristic of the conference in Jerusalem in Acts 15” that formally opened the Christian church to non-Jews.⁴⁰

It is this indiscriminating openness to all that separate Fowl and Jones from Augustine and from Evangelicalism. Fowl and Jones cite Augustine appropriately against the interpretive hubris of modernist theologies and linguistic essentialism.⁴¹ However, their emphasis on human historicity and moral failure leads them subtly, and perhaps unknowingly, to prioritize the current temporal and cultural fusion of ethical horizons in the interpretation of scripture. Ironically, they do this while noting how modernistic interpreters trumpet “the” interpretation in isolation from the longer tradition of Christian interpretation. In their discussion of the homosexual as an outsider in the church’s midst, for example, they seem to give more weight in interpretation to those outsiders than to the voice of the longer tradition of interpretation, and it is unclear how they envision the church reacting if the outsider voice of Jesus and the outsider voice of the homosexual confessor lead to different readings of the scripture. Here is where an Augustinian emphasis on participation would be essential to the Evangelical tradition, whose own stand on the issue of the morality of homosexuality has not been helped by its modernistic textual militancy. The issue is not merely the texts on these questions, but as Fowl and Jones note, the charity and truth in the hearts of the interpreters. However, when we ask the question of possible moral distortions of good reading, why would we give the moral high ground to the

current cultural climate (e.g., that all exclusion on moral grounds is bad) instead of to the longer tradition of interpretation of these texts?

The point here is not to present an argument about this particular moral issue, but to clarify by example what I see as a problem with the “way forward” described by Fowl and Jones.⁴² Augustine’s insistence on participating with God in eternal truths through the provocation of the scriptures and within the boundaries of the church’s rule of faith provides a picture of communal scripture reading that is able not only to listen to the truth of God that is spoken by “outsiders” but also to resist the distortions of the scriptures that are always threatening from inside or outside the Christian tradition. Thus, though the recommendations of Fowl and Jones for ecclesial bible reading that is both traditioned and open to correction from outsiders is Augustinian in many ways, it does not provide a robust theoretical or practical door to participation with God. For Evangelicals to shift from their own problematic hermeneutical modernism to something more ethical and true, a more faithful “way forward” is needed, one whose underlying ethical direction is really from God and not merely from the ethical sensibilities of the current age.

The bias of Fowl and Jones can also be seen in their criticism of Bonhoeffer’s act of resistance to the Nazi regime, as compared with their commendation of Bonhoeffer’s theology of bible reading up to that point.⁴³ We will examine Bonhoeffer’s theory and practice of bible reading more further on, but for now, it is important to point out that Bonhoeffer argues for the reading of scripture “against ourselves” (i.e., in a non-utilitarian way), *together*, as a way to witness to the risen Christ’s preeminence over the values and practices of the current age.⁴⁴ Fowl and Jones quote Bonhoeffer’s instructions to his seminarians: “grounded in the Scripture, we learn to speak to God in the language which God has spoken to us.”⁴⁵ Fowl and Jones suggest,

however, that under the pressure of the increasing darkness of the Nazi regime, Bonhoeffer compromised, privileging his “reading of the world” over his previous pacifistic “reading of the Word.”⁴⁶ Brock disagrees with Fowl and Jones on this point, arguing from a perspective on Bonhoeffer’s ethics informed by Bonhoeffer’s writings on the Psalms. Brock notes the “anthropocentric” nature of the communitarian reading of Fowl and Jones and argues that Bonhoeffer’s scriptural ethics were performed through a robust place for the “Spirit’s work,”⁴⁷ a place for the Holy Spirit in our reading of scripture that can provide real moral content, not just a formal process or ethical principles. Brock captures this idea in Bonhoeffer’s description of scriptural ethics as “a way.”⁴⁸ It is a path with a real beginning (creation) and a real ending (the eschaton), but this narrative structure still requires that we listen to and participate in the voice of God through the scriptures every step along the way.⁴⁹ Bonhoeffer’s pacifism may have been a good position to take through much of his path, for example, but if God speaks through the scriptures to take non-pacifistic action at another step along the path, that divine word becomes the scriptural ethical response. An allergy to the moral “content” of Bonhoeffer’s scriptural mandates and the preference for “process” demonstrated by Fowl and Jones⁵⁰ show that their recommended practices of communal bible reading are not sufficiently participatory to fit with either Augustine’s hermeneutics or the Evangelical tradition.

Brian Brock on Singing the Psalms. Brock develops his own perspective on bible reading as a Spirit-informed ethical “way” by examining exegesis of the Psalms in Augustine, Luther, and Bonhoeffer. According to Brock, all these exegetes were formed in their theory and practice of bible reading through individual and corporate meditation on (i.e., “singing of”) the Psalms. Using these historical exemplars, Brock seeks to explain a middle way between modernistic “objective” approaches to ethics and hermeneutics and communitarian approaches

such as demonstrated by Fowl and Jones. To Brock, scripture reading is to be communal, but dependent on God's "presence" rather than method.⁵¹ The communal response to the historical moment through the reading of scripture cannot be done through a specific method but through "a theologically attuned ear."⁵² Here, we will examine Brock's basic argument through his appropriation of Augustine and Bonhoeffer.

Brock follows the contours of much of Augustine scholarship in arguing that Augustine's progressive immersion in scripture modified, undercut, and replaced the neo-Platonic and Stoic metaphors in which he had written in his early work.⁵³ Brock embeds Augustine's writings on the scriptures within the Christian community's praxis:

We begin to see anew the basic texts that founded a tradition not by asking what these texts are, or what they tell us, but in joining a reading tradition by practicing reading that is attentive, moral, and communal. We enter a tradition not by grasping its theoretical underpinnings but by learning its ethos and the skills that make it function.⁵⁴

That people learn to read the scriptures in community, not through theory or method, might resonate with the basic tenets of communitarians, but Brock rightly brings in Augustine's much broader concept of the scripture-reading community that includes God and the whole of the community of the faithful throughout history (i.e., the "city of God")⁵⁵. In this way, Brock approaches the dynamic of participation without explicitly naming it or discussing it. He explains Augustine's participatory scripture reading through the metaphor of "praise":

Augustine does not understand this metaphysics in terms of complete or systematic knowledge, but as a conceptualization of truth that orients our action ... Here knowledge is not the possession of human actors but a quality of living and desiring in which knowledge is built by remaining in the reciprocal gaze of human and divine vision. ...

Augustine's conclusion is that life within this reciprocal gaze is characterized by and sustained in the singing of praises.⁵⁶

This "reciprocal gaze" does not start from a historically embedded "self" (Brock's critique of Taylor) but is initiated by the God who creates and sustains. God's creational work in us provides a starting place, and his continued grace to us through his presence in the scriptures provides our steps of understanding and obedience along the way.

Learning to read the scriptures in community, in this aspect, means learning to read the scriptures with God. "Augustine discovers that the Psalms give humanity words and thus a self within God's life as we participate in taking them up."⁵⁷ Recognizing that our reading of the scriptures is always dependent on God's sustaining of the reading self,⁵⁸ Augustine replaces the goal of comprehensive knowledge of scripture, of God, or of self with the participatory response of praise for the gifts of understanding God is currently giving. "It is not [the] words we construct but words that we are given that orient us in moral space, in claiming and reshaping our self-identifications, our desires, and our sense of the beautiful."⁵⁹

On this level, then, scripture reading is done in community with God when we recognize the contingency of our reading self and express that knowledge through praise, rather than fear or angst. Brock's reading of Augustine, here, not only parallels my earlier description of Augustine's theory of participation (through creational memory and the voice of the Holy Spirit) but also describes the practical outworking of that faithful scripture reading in the attitudes of the community. Reading the scriptures *with God* in an attitude of praise is an attitude that the Evangelical community needs to recapture.

Brock also explains how Augustine's practices of reading the Old Testament and New Testament (and the historical books and the Psalms) *in tandem* provides each current ecclesial

community the “grammar” of its own story with God. “Grounded in certain biblical images and metaphors,” Augustine “guide[s] the ethic of the church of his day [in *City of God*] by showing Christians how they are in a *story* that frames their moral transformation as they learn about and pursue their *telos*.”⁶⁰ Brock’s argument is that the whole community of Old Testament saints, Christ, and the church can be seen in their unity through the dialogic “grammar” especially evident in the Psalms.⁶¹ According to Brock, Augustine does not flatten the narratives of scripture into so many mere symbols of Christ, but preserves the historical veracity of the accounts while reading them also as returns and “elaborations” of the *kind of thing that God does* with his people again and again through history⁶²—the “grammar” of God’s active singing of history that repeats key elements of its “melody” with minor variations.⁶³

Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac and Stephen’s martyrdom, in this reading, are not just pointers to the sacrifice of Christ, though they are that, too. “God is always putting to death and raising up”⁶⁴—that is one of the key elements in God’s figural grammar. Reading the scriptures together in the current community is thus a practice of discerning the narrative rationality of the current community’s story from the real scriptural elements in the larger and broader community’s story. This discernment, in Brock’s reading, operates through the external stories of the scriptural narratives in tension with the internal dynamics of the Psalms.⁶⁵ The scriptures are our larger community’s stories (i.e., stories of the “city of God”), which demonstrate through repetition the figural grammatical moves that are available for our story, now. As Brock says, “Scripture prepares believers to discern God’s particular interventions in human affairs. These divine interventions have a describable grammar but cannot be humanly performed, only seen and cooperated with or not looked for and hence not seen.”⁶⁶

Thus, Brock reads Augustine as connecting past “ecclesial” actions and events (the “ecclesia” of the broader city of God) with current ecclesial actions and events through a figural grammar that cannot be narrowed to one interpretation or merely decided on by a current interpreting community. Instead, the right figural reading must be “seen and cooperated with” by the community, a conclusion that I argue should be read more explicitly through the lens of Augustinian participation. In contrast to the historical traditionedness of communitarian textual interpretation, as intimated by MacIntyre and Taylor among others, Brock follows Augustine in seeing the ecclesial community as one that can be continually renewed in its faithful responses through seeing and hearing how God is applying scriptural figures to them, now.⁶⁷ And “what brings that community of praisers together so that they may ‘stay on the path’” is not method nor merely embeddedness in a tradition but rather God “bestowing his presence on us.”⁶⁸

So, Brock has shown us how the ecclesial community is led by God’s voice to follow the right element of figural grammar inherited from scriptural narrative and Psalmic dialogue, a perspective which frames the community’s shared bible reading. Related to this, Brock comes even closer to participatory themes through his exposition of bible reading as the communal activity of the *totus Christus*, powered by the scriptures as “Christ’s heart.”⁶⁹ We have already come across Augustine’s *totus Christus* concept and the importance to him of “whole and part” in interpretation. Christians are really, not metaphorically,⁷⁰ part of the whole which is the body of Christ, and thus the scriptural descriptions and mandates written about and for the whole church (including its Head, Christ) are potentially applicable to each part. Key is the application that since all the canon speaks about Christ, it also speaks about his body (the Church), and can potentially speak to any particular analogical part of that Christ-body (a local congregation). Kimberly Baker quotes Augustine at length on this two-way identification between Christ (the

Head) and the church (the body)—note especially the downward and upward participatory language in what follows:

But in fact he who deigned to assume the form of a slave, and within that form to clothe us with himself, he who did not disdain to take us up into himself, did not disdain either to *transfigure us into himself*, and to *speak in our words*, so that *we in our turn might speak in his*. ... Facing death, then, because of what he had from us, he was afraid, not in himself but in us. When he said that his soul was sorrowful to the point of death, we all unquestionably *said it with him*. Without him, we are nothing, but in him we too are Christ. Why? Because the whole Christ consists of Head and body. The Head is he who is the savior of his body, he who has already ascended into heaven; but the body is the Church, toiling on earth.⁷¹

Because as the “body of Christ” “we too are Christ,” then Christ’s cry from the Psalms while on the cross was also our cry and, in another example, God’s voice from heaven—“this is my beloved son ... hear him!”⁷²—can also be God’s voice to the world about the Christian ecclesial community.

Brock examines Augustine’s *totus Christus* from the “Christological and ecclesiological hermeneutics of the Psalms,” identifying three levels of interpreting Old Testament prophecy in Augustine’s work on the Psalms.⁷³ There is, first, the past historical referent of an OT prophecy and, second, the future referent of an earthly dominion at the eschaton. Third, though, Brock quotes Augustine that

these words apply appropriately to the whole people of God who belong to the Heavenly Jerusalem: both to those who were concealed during the time of the old covenant, before

the revelation of the new, and to those who, after the revelation of the new covenant, are clearly revealed as belonging to Christ.⁷⁴

Thus, while acknowledging both past historical and future eschatological reference, Augustine saw also the whole of the scriptures referring to the whole of the body of Christ, pre-cross, Christ, and post-cross. This “Israel-Jesus-church interpretive schema ... serves to link and intertwine the testaments [and] ... yields a single account of the present community of faith and the authors of Scripture.”⁷⁵ Brock points out that the centerpiece of this identification between past ecclesial communities, present ones, and Christ is the scriptures themselves, which Augustine called “Christ’s heart”:

Thus, to meditate on the Bible is to meditate on the heart of the divine Word. This is why he can say that each part of Scripture is not necessarily about Christ directly; but, as the plow is to its blade, each part serves to reveal Scripture’s main theme, which is Christ.⁷⁶

It is not enough that this scripture exist in text alone, however, but rather, “specific forms of speaking are essential in maintaining” both the individual believer and the confessing community “in the path of blessedness.”⁷⁷ Thus, “the church is ... a sung reality expressing a God-given desire for God,”⁷⁸ not a pragmatic articulation of a framework of meaning, a la Taylor, but a practice of submission to “the hopes God has for us”⁷⁹ through attentiveness to the narrative grammar of scripture. Because “only the praising church will endure,” Brock synthesizes from Augustine’s approach to the scriptures that “the central act of the church is not a mode of living that those outside the church also do, such as moral deliberation or pedagogy, but it is a mode of resonating with the reality of God’s work”⁸⁰ through the confessional work of praise.

While Brock’s description of Augustine’s hermeneutic supports my participatory reading, his lack of explicit attention to the metaphor of participation forces him into some unhelpful

distinctions. First, Brock posits too strong of a turn from the Augustine of *On Christian Doctrine* (supposedly still in the thrall of neo-Platonic and rhetorical theory) and the more scriptural Augustine of the *Narrations on the Psalms* and *City of God*.⁸¹ Strangely, Brock does not follow up on the implications of the facts that the fourth (and most classically “rhetorical”) book of *On Christian Doctrine* was written after his scriptural turn and that this was one of his works to which Augustine made no corrections in his *Retractions*.⁸² While it is true that Augustine’s thought did evolve through continuing growth in the scriptures—and through a sequence of doctrinal controversies—Augustine did not abandon anything from his rhetorical and philosophical training that was useful but rather repurposed and synthesized the truths of the pagan tradition for the church. As we have seen, Augustinian participation looks for truth from creational memory—in Christians or pagans—as well as from the Spirit’s voice through the scriptures. Understanding Augustine’s account of participation would have kept Brock from dividing Augustine’s thought with an unhelpfully bold line.

Brock also makes an unhelpful distinction between the “material” nature of Augustine’s *totus Christus* and Luther’s more existential approach.⁸³ “Augustine’s *totus Christus* is not best described as a mystical union,” Brock says, “but as a real and material forepresence of God’s renewal of all things in Christ”⁸⁴—an echo of the Greco-Roman focus on the *telos* of the polis.⁸⁵ Brock seems to be separating Augustine’s material metaphors from his mystical metaphors, his general “theory of meaning” from his submission to the particularities of the scriptures,⁸⁶ and his general theory of “social groupings” from his ecclesiology.⁸⁷ However, attention to Augustinian participation would provide a different way to relate these pairs of concepts. As Augustine continually emphasized to his own congregation, participation in Christ spiritually is part and parcel with loving actions toward his body materially,⁸⁸ our submission to the scriptures, while

primary, is meant to spur us on to seek their meaning from the Inner Teacher; and both ecclesial and non-ecclesial social groupings participate in both earthly and spiritual voices. If there is a distinction between Augustine's material and mystical elements, it is between God's voice available through creational memory and his voice of the Holy Spirit spoken to and through the church, primarily through his "material" voice in the scriptures.

These quibbles aside, though, Brock has done an admirable job of bringing Augustine's hermeneutical theory to bear on the active shared reading of the scriptures in the ecclesial community in order to discern the particular "way" the community should hear and obey God. His work on Bonhoeffer is also helpful, which we will examine next in conjunction with Bonhoeffer's own work and some of the attention it has garnered in scholarly circles.

Bonhoeffer's Reading in Community. Augustine and Bonhoeffer lived in similarly troubled times and both provided philosophy of communication resources for their church's approach to scripture. Augustine provided the church with the conceptual resources at the turn of the 4th century to be able to negotiate the boundary between using the scriptures as a tool of domination and being comforted by them in a socially precarious time.⁸⁹ He showed the church newly triumphant how to continue to read the scriptures as strangers and pilgrims, listening to the Inner Teacher's application of scriptural figures to put God's sons and daughters to the question, to deliver them over and over again to death,⁹⁰ and to set their hope on a future resurrection.

Bonhoeffer was "thrown" into the acme of Western civilization, the highly educated elite of Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century,⁹¹ and he witnessed first-hand what Max Horkheimer called "the eclipse of reason"⁹² that followed from that high point of modernism. Working through the troubles endemic to his Lutheran church, he had to fight simultaneously

“idealism” and the threatening backdrop of frank materialism, both of which had been part of his own intellectual formation. It was when he went to Rome that Bonhoeffer “discovered the church,”⁹³ awakening to the larger body that Augustine had called the city of God;⁹⁴ it was through the influence of Barth that Bonhoeffer “discovered the Bible,”⁹⁵ awakening to the power of God’s voice to his church through scripture; and it was through Bonhoeffer’s interaction with lay American Evangelicals in New York that he discovered the call of community and of discipleship founded on the presence of the real Christ.⁹⁶ He had previously written his two academic dissertations in theology, but he says that “For the first time I discovered the Bible. . . . I had often preached, I had seen a great deal of the Church, and talked and preached about it—but I had not yet become a Christian.”⁹⁷

After his discovery of the Bible, and while the specter of Hitler loomed, Bonhoeffer began to insist that “Jesus Christ, the *risen* Christ, is present in the word, in the sacrament, and in the community.”⁹⁸ As expressions of the one risen Christ, these three things are interrelated, and Bonhoeffer wrote especially about the way the scriptural word and the community together manifested Christ in the world. “For history Scripture is only a source, for pneumatology it is testimony,” Bonhoeffer said,⁹⁹ which is to say that the scriptures are to be read through the Spirit *in the presence of others* in order to witness not only to one another in the church but also to the watching world. What Bonhoeffer wrote about how the church should return to the scriptures was in line with how he himself came under the scriptures, which parallels Augustine’s similar realization and process of submission to the scriptures.

Has it not become terrifyingly clear again and again, in everything that we have said here to one another, that we are no longer obedient to the Bible? We are more fond of our own thoughts than of the thoughts of the Bible. We no longer read the Bible seriously, we no

longer read it against ourselves, but for ourselves. ... [W]e must read the Bible in quite a different way, until we find ourselves again.¹⁰⁰

Bonhoeffer is not just talking here about personal bible reading, but also the reading practices of the community together. “The Bible,” he says, “is nothing but the book upon which the Church stands.”¹⁰¹

He frames the way the church needs to read the bible as Christological and eschatological—a narrative whose primary figure is Christ and whose *whole* will only be clear from the end. He says “the Scriptures need to be read and proclaimed wholly from the viewpoint of the end. ... The Church of Christ bears witness to the end of all things. It lives from the end, it thinks from the end, it acts from the end, it proclaims its message from the end.”¹⁰² The ground of our understanding of the scriptures and the ground of our understanding of ourselves as the church community, therefore, is not settled and comprehensive but is a matter of listening to Christ anew in the scriptures, a confession of that truth in “each and every historical situation,”¹⁰³ and a persistence on pilgrimage toward that endpoint that we cannot ourselves produce. “You who have lost the Church,” Bonhoeffer preaches, “let us return to Holy Writ, let us go forth and seek the Church together. ... Church, remain a church! ... Confess, confess, confess.”¹⁰⁴

Reading the scriptures together, then, was to Bonhoeffer the way to confess, and thus live, the church’s own identity as Christ in each historical moment. Because Christ’s real presence lives in his Word (his scriptures as faithfully confessed) and lives in his church (his people who confess and obey his voice), the church and the scriptures continually confront and reinfuse each another with the presence of Christ. Bonhoeffer’s emphasis on the real presence of Christ through active confession of and obedience to the scriptures prevents biblical hermeneutics from becoming merely a reflection of community biases or an exposition of the

text that has no relevance to the community. Listening to the voice of Christ while reading the scriptures confessionally together points the church toward an interpretation that is not “objective” or “subjective” but a spiritual praxis.

In his *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer argued for scriptural reading that had both a private, individual aspect and a public, communal aspect. Alone, we are “silent” before the Word, which enables us to hear God’s voice speaking from the scripture we have read. This silent time alone with the Word is not a “mystical desire to get beyond the Word” but rather a listening attentiveness “because the Word is still speaking and living and dwelling within us.”¹⁰⁵ After being alone with the Word, though, it is essential that we come together in community for the purpose of testimony and shared life as the real body of Christ on earth. Bonhoeffer recognized the dangers to ecclesial hermeneutics from both the flight into the aggregate (an overreliance on a social group as the ground)¹⁰⁶ and from the flight into the individual (a rejection of Christ’s communal call). “We recognize, then,” he says, “that only as we stand within the community can we be alone, and only those who are alone can live in the community. Both belong together.”¹⁰⁷ This attention to divine discourse in its dual aspects of the individual and the ecclesial community parallels what we have seen in Augustine’s participatory thought in *De Trinitate*, where the Inner Teacher can lead us through inward dialogue to wisdom, but where it is also essential to bring those treasures to the common storehouse of ecclesial memory, where the shared voice of God brings joy, confirmation, and the possibility of shared action. That is, both Bonhoeffer and Augustine reserve a fundamental place for individual scripture reading, but also insist that shared testimony from the scriptures cannot be replaced by that individual mode, or at least not except for brief periods.¹⁰⁸

Bonhoeffer also, like Augustine, wrote about a structure of life together in the scriptures, a type of monasticism that attempted to leave space for the real presence of Christ to be a necessary component. That is, in contrast to monastic practices that are comprehensive and controllable enough to function without the infusion of the divine voice in scriptures, Augustine and Bonhoeffer's communal hermeneutic practices could only guide their adherents to listening, not deliver a set hermeneutical method.¹⁰⁹ As Dale L. Sullivan argues, Bonhoeffer's critiques of monasticism need to be read in the light of both his continuing rejection of idealism and his progressive move from abstract theology to pastoral work with the scriptures in real communities.¹¹⁰ Bonhoeffer argued for the centrality of church community—with mutual confession, shared action, and shared liturgy similar to monasticism—but a community that depends constantly on God's presence because it is perilously “in the midst of enemies.”¹¹¹ By contrast, a monasticism structured to obtain safety, control, or individual accolades cuts itself off from reading the scriptures submissively and blocks its ability to hear God's voice.

I would argue that Bonhoeffer's hermeneutics was, practically speaking, participatory in the same vein as what this project has been proposing. However, Brock criticizes Bonhoeffer for having an insufficient pneumatology,¹¹² and it is certain that Augustine's more detailed exposition of how participation in the scriptures works individually and communally can provide further conceptual resources for Bonhoeffer's practical and compelling metaphor of scriptural interpretation as “a way.”

Liturgical Praxis

What we have seen in the last section is how some recent scholars have attempted to bring the academic questions of biblical hermeneutics back down into real arenas of community practice. The resulting theoretical-practical frameworks are all somewhat Augustinian, though

not enough so to take advantage of Augustine's broad range of philosophy of communication resources, which I thematized earlier as the following:

1. Interpretation Participates in God through Language, Will, and Narrative
2. Interpretation Elevates the Scriptures as Eternal/Temporal Medium
3. Interpretation Privileges Communal Charity over Comprehensive Knowledge
4. Interpretation is Individual AND Communal Embodied Praxis

Fowl and Jones helpfully join Augustine in pointing out the primacy of the moral lens in reading the scriptures, for good or ill, but then make morality merely a function of the historical progress of the scriptural tradition (i.e., Augustine's 3 and 4). Brock goes a long way toward reintroducing Augustine's hermeneutic in fresh language that says *yes* to the reality of biblical history, *yes* to its eschatological fulfillment, and *yes* to its potential fulfillment in the current ecclesial manifestation of the totus Christus (i.e., Augustine's 2-4). However, without explicitly seconding Augustine's notion of participation, Brock's excellent work on Psalmic exegesis is missing the conceptual centerpiece that would be needed in an Evangelical philosophy of communication. Bonhoeffer is the closest in spirit to Augustine, with a parallel process of submission to the scriptures, a parallel shift from individual philosophy to communal praxis, and addressing parallel uncertainties in the historical moment in which the church had to find its scriptural voice. However, Bonhoeffer was not able, in the short time he had, to put all of these themes together in an explicitly participatory alternative to the modernism in which he lived and breathed. What I have argued in this project is that Augustine's philosophy of communication should be important to Evangelicals not merely for its breadth, attentiveness to the scriptures, and piety but also because it provides a helpfully "other" approach to the cosmos—a participatory approach—that can serve as an antidote to the philosophical poisons of modernism

that Evangelicals, and most other recent hermeneutical scholars, still carry about in their social bodies.

However, it is one thing to argue that we should read the scriptures “over against ourselves,” or with a “theologically attuned ear,” and another thing to explain to a current congregation what this looks like. Moving down the ladder of abstraction ever closer to a concrete proposal for Evangelical hermeneutics, we will look briefly in this section at the more concrete proposals for liturgies and ecclesial habits that constitute the Evangelical community’s response to its felt needs for a hermeneutic more responsive to community and spirituality. Specifically, we will look at the New Monastic movement, one of the strands of the Evangelical missional movement¹¹³ which has attempted to follow the cues of MacIntyre and Bonhoeffer to create a radical contrast to normal Evangelical liturgy and community.

By taking on the metaphor of “monasticism,” the New Monastics point toward both positive comparisons with historical monastic commitments and the role of critique always implicit in monastic organization. Taking their cue from the longer philosophical tradition of *otium*, the early Christian church’s outliers responded to the growing worldliness of Christianity by moving into different kinds of monastic life,¹¹⁴ from the idiosyncratic mystical monasticism of the Desert Fathers to the highly communal and regimented Benedictines to the wandering reformational orders of the Franciscans and the Dominicans. Since the Protestant reformation, Protestant denominations have also experienced their own implicit critiques from outliers, but following the Protestant pattern of separation, Protestant outliers are manifested in new, separate denominations rather than monastic restorations.

As the culture of individualism has gained ground in the “social imaginary” through the period of modernity, these new denominations have been formed with less organizational

emphasis on shared communal identity and more emphasis on the “morality of individual choice,” especially in the incubator of religious individualism, the United States.¹¹⁵ In a paradoxical turn, however, the postmodern (or hypermodern) moment has given new conceptual life to the vocabulary of protest available to Protestant ecclesial outliers, pushing them more toward “traditionally” Catholic themes of sacrament, liturgy, embodiment, and committed community.¹¹⁶ Though there have been a number of Protestant monastic moves in the past century, this paper focuses on the New Monastic movement that was formally initiated at an ecumenical conference in Durham, North Carolina, in 2004.

This movement and its philosophy is well-documented by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove’s many works,¹¹⁷ but comprehensive sketch of its principles can be found in the book that came out of the 2004 conference, *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism*.¹¹⁸ In that book, Jonathan R. Wilson makes very clear that the conceptual starting point for the movement was MacIntyre’s work *After Virtue*, whose influential diagnosis of the fragmentation of Western society concludes with the following language:

What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us. . . . We are waiting not for Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict.¹¹⁹

School(s) for Conversion and other seminal texts give us some common themes for how New Monasticism attempts to build these “local forms of community.” The organizational practices New Monasticism aspires to are meant to exhibit both continuity with the history of the Christian faith (not separatism) and self-conscious separation for the purpose of embodied witness. Concerned with the ways (Protestant) Christianity has become indistinguishable from American

capitalist culture, New Monasticism is explained as “the only way for the church to recover faithful living [and] for the church to disentangle its life from the culture.”¹²⁰ Therefore, many of its identifying organizational principles are themselves critiques of the Christian culture status quo. Quoting Muldoon, Carter summarizes this theme thus:

The common feature is that new monasticism seeks to share with these other movements a radical discipleship, in the sense of eschewing participation in the structural/social sins endemic in contemporary American life: not only racism, but also individualism, economic disparity, and participation in war-making.¹²¹

Some of these principles are organized around economic themes, such as “Relocation to abandoned places of empire” (a call to physically disentangle the church from locational loyalty to prosperity), “Sharing economic resources” with each other (a call to question the ground of personal property), “Hospitality to the Stranger” (a call to question the ground of self-interest and tribalism), and “Support of our local economies” (a call to ecological and economic communalism).¹²²

Others are organized around structured rejection of individualism, such as “Nurturing Common Life,” “Geographical Proximity to Community Members,” and “Humble Submission to...the Church.” Principles/marks focused on specific communal communication patterns deal with peacemaking internal to the group (Mark 11), racial reconciliation and diversity within groups and communities (Mark 4), integration of married and celibate members (Mark 8), and sequential socialization along the lines of the “old novitiate” (Mark 6). The remaining mark is the only one focused on the individual spiritual life, under the sign of a “disciplined contemplative life.”¹²³

These marks are existential responses to the felt need for community and the felt worry over America's sociological drift toward tribalism,¹²⁴ but they are also conceptual responses to MacIntyre's thought, as repackaged by Jonathan R. Wilson (Wilson-Hartgrove's father-in-law) into a call for the church. In a way that resonates with an Augustinian philosophy of communication, Wilson wrote about New Monasticism as a way to recover the gospel narrative, holistically across vocations, in local practices that are disciplined and theologically reflective, recovering both "right belief and right practice."¹²⁵ This focus on the gospel narrative providing the broad context for life, denying a strong sacred/secular division, resonates with Augustine's narratively grounded hermeneutics, as do Wilson's emphasis on the limitations of our knowledge and his goal of communal embodied praxis. Wilson's extension of the "disciplined life" to both communal belief and communal practice, with the end being the "faithful life and witness of the church," also corresponds with the disciplined, end-oriented ecclesial practice advocated by Augustine.¹²⁶

This discipline and emphasis on communal commitment in New Monasticism draws explicitly from St. Benedict's principle of "stability."¹²⁷ Stated as a contrasting principle over against the wider Evangelical church, Jason Mahn and Grace Koloczek emphasize the importance of stability to New Monasticism as a way to combat the tendencies in Evangelicalism toward "church renewal" or youth movement fads.¹²⁸ The New Monastics believe that it is important to read "over against" the individualism, capitalism, and faddishness of both the current culture and the church, and that any headway with such a hermeneutic must be made through holistic community, stable commitment, and shared local praxis in the gospel narrative.

The purpose of this project is not, of course, to describe every aspect of New Monasticism, but rather to examine its holistic communal praxis as a model of lived biblical

hermeneutics in the Evangelical sphere. What conceptual models and practices are already at work in the broader Evangelical community, with which an Augustinian biblical hermeneutic might interact? This is an especially pertinent question since Bonhoeffer, who also called for a return to some form of monasticism, is one of the heroes of the New Monastic movement, and we have already seen the significant overlap between Bonhoeffer's hermeneutic and the contours of the one I have synthesized from Augustine.

Unfortunately, new monasticism is open to the criticism that it constitutes not a constructive but rather a negative reactionary response using critical class concepts based more in historical materialism than in revelation. Moreover, it seems to fall prey to the Nietzschean critique of Christian leadership that Jean Bethke Elshtain warned against: "There is a rather bizarre form of self-pride associated with this little-ness—something along the lines of 'Look at how abject and apologetic I am, and I will spend the rest of my life trying to make up in a tiny way for the horrific sins of my forebears.'"¹²⁹ Elshtain maintains that Bonhoeffer, one of the proclaimed forefathers of the new monastic movement, promoted confession in community, but rejected this form of cultural abjectness as a refusal to lead from the strength of the Christian confession.¹³⁰ Additionally, D. A. Carson, a central Evangelical scholar, has asked why, of all H. Richard Niebuhr's categories of relationship to culture, new monasticism is located in only "Christ *against* culture," including Christ *against* the traditional churches.¹³¹ Can healthy biblical hermeneutics be built on top of a merely reactionary stance to sins of the current historical moment?

New Monastic movements can be described as not scripture-centered but "idealistic" in the negative sense given by Bonhoeffer: "One who wants more than what Christ has established does not want Christian brotherhood. He is looking for some extraordinary social experience ...

Christian brotherhood is not an ideal, but a divine reality ... a spiritual and not a psychic reality."¹³² Observers of new monastic communities note that, despite their attention to commitment, they are "essentially unstable" and usually "short-lived," partly because the idealistic principles around which they form are not formative enough to withstand the "magnifying" effect of community on unchanged individualistic aspects of culture and always-present sins and weaknesses.¹³³

Conversely, the New Monastic movement is notable for its silence on the scriptures. While certainly not repudiating the scriptures, the dogmatic assertions of New Monastics bypass traditional Evangelical statements about specific doctrines and about the scriptures. Instead, their identifying "Marks" go straight to issues of social justice and the characteristics and goals of community. But can the higher goals of new monastic communities survive without an anchor in the traditional Evangelical focus on the scriptures? While Augustine and Bonhoeffer both had spiritual journeys whose landmarks were markedly scriptural, and who enjoined pursuit of the scriptures as foundational for social justice and ecclesial relations, New Monasticism lays no such foundation. They do use scripture (and some local communities more robustly than others), but the scriptures are not defended or even mentioned as part of their picture of healthy ecclesial identity. Therefore, while New Monasticism has been putting into practice a MacIntyrian return to tradition as a critique of modernist ecclesiology, they have not addressed the place of the scriptures and the specific approach to biblical hermeneutics that undergirds their communitarian ethos. Since New Monasticism is a subset of Evangelicalism, this lacuna makes it more difficult to carry out their professed desire to both learn from and critique the status quo church.¹³⁴ While ordinary Evangelical churchgoers have been challenged and inspired, to some degree, by New Monasticism,¹³⁵ the key question for Evangelical identity has gone unanswered: how does the

holistic communal commitment of New Monastic groups deal with the authority and interpretation of the scriptures?

This is a question that highlights the need for an Augustinian philosophy of communication, which can address the felt need for ecclesial community and for the conceptual framework that brings together language, will, and the communal narrative. Like the New Monastics, Augustine was impatient with those who preferred to talk about ideas instead of to act charitably for social justice,¹³⁶ but unlike New Monastics, Augustine was persistent in finding language to explain how biblical hermeneutics undergirds action and was insistent on the centrality of the scriptures themselves. At the crux of Augustine's thought on the intersection of hermeneutics, liturgy, and the body are his writings on habit.

As many authors point out, the return to communal habits in religious communities such as those in New Monasticism is partly a reaction to the historical moment of late modern capitalism, in which the meaning-giving cultural and religious practices of the past have not only been weakened by the motivating undercurrent of market capitalism but have even been replaced by cultural liturgies created for the propagation of capital production.¹³⁷ The mall has replaced the church; dinner and a movie has more social pull than a gathering for the Lord's Supper. Therefore, as James K. A. Smith emphasizes and Augustine would agree with, we are already in the grip of powerful habits, whether we know it or not. Smith, while not part of the New Monastic movement, has done a good job of articulating a conceptual connection between biblical hermeneutics and embodied communal praxis. However, while Smith and others rightly reject the intellectualization and individualization of Christian spirituality, they unhelpfully move the overemphasis to the body, pulling from secular philosophical traditions to create an idea of religious habit that is embodied and social, but not necessarily spiritual or scriptural.¹³⁸

In an Aristotelian frame—such as employed by MacIntyre, Wilson, and the subsequent New Monastic movement—habits are developed within the moral horizon of a particular community through attentiveness to the standards of the community, a practical wisdom (phronesis) of discerning the good, the bad, and the indifferent in any given situation.¹³⁹ Thus habit is practiced within a particular community, inscribed in the body as a “second nature,” accumulated over time through ethical decisions, and possessed by the person, to his glory or shame.¹⁴⁰ As Smith points out, our interpretations are also executed within the framework of our habits. What an ecclesial community can actually interpret in the scriptures, and thus obey, is constrained by its expectations of what the scriptures say, expectations which are formed by the community’s habitual practice. These habits that we exercise together in communal interpretation of and action on the scriptures are one of what Smith calls “liturgies,” which is for him a general philosophical category that describes sacred or secular cultural habits.¹⁴¹

Augustine began his Christian life with an understanding of habit very similar to the Aristotelian one, courtesy of Cicero, but progressively modified it in response to his controversies and in line with his Pauline scriptural turn.¹⁴² In his early philosophical writings, Augustine was attempting to take the received goods of his Roman education, including the concepts of habit and phronesis/wisdom, and find out how to re-validate them within the Christian faith, especially with regard to the question of sin. As Carlisle notes, one of the enduring ethical questions that is bound up with habit is how habitual or deterministic aspects of human life fit with freedom and responsibility.¹⁴³ In Smith’s use of the term “liturgy,” how do we, together, make our liturgies, and how do our liturgies make us.

At the beginning, Augustine pegged habit as the self-forged chains of the body that makes virtuous living difficult—it is not the body that is evil, contra the Manicheans, but rather

the habits of sin which we have inscribed in the body by past action. That is, our habitual sins in the periods of our lives before law and under law still give us a struggle in our period after the law (under grace), to be fully broken only in the final period of the redemption. The route to victory over past habits, into more spiritual habits, was still *prudence*, but as Augustine was forced to reckon more with Paul's doctrine of sin and the "carnal prudence/phronesis" of philosophy as critiqued by the scriptures, he shifted his emphasis to put sin in the body even before habit and to lift grace over phronesis as the remedy. Accordingly, Augustine writes in *Contra Faustus*:

But as that snow melts by heat and ceases to be snow in order to warm up, in the same way this carnal prudence, i.e., the habit of acting carnally—when our mind will be enlightened and when God submits the whole person to himself, along the precepts of the divine Law, he shall turn the bad habit of the soul into a good habit.¹⁴⁴

Gerd Van Riel writes in *Augustinian Studies* that Augustine turned the classical virtue of prudence/phronesis "into a vice."¹⁴⁵ This is putting the matter rather too strongly, but what Van Riel smartly puts a finger on is Augustine's recognition that classical versions of habit and virtue can be oriented by their particular communities in better or worse ways. And because Augustine argued that all human communities, including the church, are at best mixtures of elements of the city of God and the city of the world, classical phronesis itself can lead to not only *moral* but also *amoral* or even *immoral* action. Our liturgies, which guide our scriptural interpretations, come from mixed stock—both individuals and traditions that are heterogenous in will, language, and ethics. What's more, even the accumulation of good habits, if framed as a personal achievement, can turn a seemingly good application of classical phronesis into its opposite, a habitual accumulation of soul-killing spiritual pride.¹⁴⁶ As Lewis Mudge discusses at length, church

communities do not develop in isolation from these larger cultural forces, but are “porous” societies: “Effectively or not, with better or worse outcomes, congregations engender certain ways of seeing life just by being the kinds of communities they are.”¹⁴⁷ Like Bellah, Mudge notes the felt inadequacy of the current state of communication philosophy in the American Protestant tradition. An ecclesial community engaging in biblical hermeneutics, therefore, does so in the context of lived habit of thought and action that can never, of itself, mature into something that can be identified as an unequivocal good. It requires grace, or in our central Augustinian metaphor, *participation through the scriptures*, in order to move the habitual framework (thought and action) into a more sanctified direction.

Giving this much weight to habit in communal practice and interpretation has not set well with moderns. Hegel saw habit as “ambiguous,” both restrictive and freeing.¹⁴⁸ By regulating so much of our life beneath the threshold of conscious thought—a phenomenon which could be good or bad—he believed our critical faculties might be freed up to pursue other, higher endeavors.¹⁴⁹ Without a reference point external to humanity, however, modern philosophers were stuck in this tension between habits manipulating the machine-like body for good and habits as the sworn enemy of the freedom of the soul.

Calling for a return to the monastery, though with a radical focus on the individual, Kierkegaard believed that “Luther’s ‘affirmation of ordinary life’ and denial of a special status to the monk produced a leveling down and not a leveling up.”¹⁵⁰ However, Kierkegaard, similar to Luther, called for a life of continual striving, a “repeated leap” into the grace of God. This doctrine colored his perspective on monastic life to make it a setting for a serial set of experiences with God rather than “a progressive improvement in virtue” or hermeneutic wisdom.

Habit was banished to the realm of the body, a temptation towards inauthenticity and, in Kierkegaard's Existentialist descendants, a "cover for 'bad faith.'"¹⁵¹

Influenced by Kierkegaard, but also in textual dialogue with Heidegger and Nietzsche, Bonhoeffer sought to understand habit in the church in a way that was responsive to "the story of the faith, the historical moment, and the possibility of revelation in the form of the temporal presence of Christ."¹⁵² O'Gorman argues that it was in dialogue with Heidegger's thought that Bonhoeffer's Lutheran, Kierkegaardian distaste for the importance of communal habits was moderated, leading him to argue for the importance of dependence on the other, engagement with the world, and communicative responsibility for the future generations of one's tradition.¹⁵³ As we have seen, these themes were emphasized even more strongly in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. However, true to Bonhoeffer's Augustinian and Lutheran roots, he criticized any sort of monastic habits that led to first- and second-class spiritual citizens in the Kingdom of God. Difference in habit can too easily lead to an individual leaning on works-righteousness and a monastic group falling into the sin of spiritual pride.¹⁵⁴ In this, New Monastics have made a valiant effort to offer critique and embody difference without positing special status for their members.

Liturgies have also become an ambiguous inheritance for Evangelical ecclesial communities that have sunk deep roots in the Romantic stream of individual artistic expression. Novelty in interpretation and personal uniqueness in these groups is held in dialectical tension with the shared vision and sensibilities that unify these boutique congregations. Lynne Baab and Carolyn Kelly, writing about such Emergent church reappropriation of visual arts as a way to navigate "unity and diversity" in congregations, are perhaps an example of this overly optimistic vision of dialogic unity built up from individual artistic expressions.¹⁵⁵ Liturgies can be built, of

course, but one of the central marks of success in so doing is that you find yourself acting in harmony with a group without self-conscious attention to the process and without recognition of individual persons.

Bellaah's distinction between families with "elaborated codes" and those with "condensed codes" is helpful here to think about the difference between a church family that tries to be self-reflexive about everything and the church family that sees no need to talk about or explain anything that they do ("this is just the way we do things"). Groups with "elaborated codes" expect questioning, critique, and attention to personal feelings. Groups with condensed codes operate more according to roles and hierarchical positions, but are relatively untroubled by personal "feelings and abstract principles."¹⁵⁶ While New Monastic and Emergent Evangelical groups acknowledge the need for traditions and commitment, they have been criticized for accessing that tradition according to the elaborated code of individual aesthetic experience, picking and choosing liturgical bits from the tradition in order to maintain a contrast with the Evangelical status quo.¹⁵⁷ However, as part of the Protestant tradition, a fully condensed code would not be appropriate for an Evangelical liturgy that would house a participatory scriptural hermeneutic. A return to communal life in the scriptures as a venue for participation in God's narrative would allow Evangelicals to develop condensed liturgies that guide interpretation and practice according to the narrative of the gospel but that also leave structural openings for the divine voice to question, criticize, or otherwise direct them to a new praxis. As we will see from the description of early church liturgy in I Corinthians 14 below, the good order of a settled (condensed) set of practices and expectations is not incompatible with the in-breaking (elaboration) of revelation from the divine voice. Both of these are necessary in the Evangelical scriptural hermeneutic proposed here.

If New Monastics, and other Evangelical renewal communities, pay more close attention to this wisdom of living communal habit through participatory dialogue in the scriptures, as described by Augustine and Bonhoeffer, they may yet provide a model and witness for the Evangelical tradition.

Both Augustine and Bonhoeffer described monastic-like communities that featured shared participatory interpretation of the scriptures, modeling and writing about a realistic liturgy that pairs habitual reading of the word and communal service with openness to God's voice infusing and directing that interpretation and practice. Bonhoeffer's early academic work on the sociology of the church, *The Communion of Saints*, was sharpened through praxis into his later monastic guidebook for laypeople, *Life Together*. And Augustine's monasticism and ecclesiology both speak of the significance of his understanding of scriptural communal habits.¹⁵⁸ In addition, it can be seen from Bonhoeffer's long-term dialogue with Augustine, pivoting on the influence of his dissertation advisor and on the Augustine course he took while writing *The Communion of the Saints*, that the similarities between the two of them have not only the indirect connections of the Lutheran tradition but also the direct connections of theological engagement. In fact, "Bonhoeffer's basic axiom that ... the church is Christ existing as community represents in significant ways a recovery and restatement of Augustine's contention that in the church we encounter the whole Christ ... consisting of both head and body."¹⁵⁹

Sullivan argues that Bonhoeffer's years of practice of semi-monastic community separating *Communion* and *Life Together* demonstrates that the latter is the theory of the former informed by action. Both Bonhoeffer and Augustine lived for some time in monastic-type communities that they created, Augustine for more than half his life.¹⁶⁰ In doing so, both Augustine and Bonhoeffer distanced themselves from forms of monasticism that withdraw from

the world and the larger church.¹⁶¹ Both of them made a point of critiquing the idealism that destroys true Christian community by asking of merely human liturgies what can only be dispensed by God's participation. Bonhoeffer did so by flatly rejecting "psychological community ... based on Utopian desire and unmediated fellowship" and seeking instead "spiritual community ... based on recognition of reality and relationships mediated by Christ."¹⁶² Augustine, after an early flirtation with the idea of perfect exegesis and a perfect godly society,¹⁶³ spent decades undoing the damage of the ideal of a perfect Christian (against Pelagius) and the ideal of a perfect church (*Against the Donatists*), and for good measure, he wrote *The City of God* to detail the admixture of the godly and the worldly city in every age until the eschaton.

Further, as we have seen, Augustine and Bonhoeffer emphasized in their liturgies a communal meditation on the Word, specifically communal praying, reading, and singing the Psalms.¹⁶⁴ Within that communal habit of meditation, both of them emphasized the dialogic nature of interaction with the scriptures—dialogic with the strangeness of the text, with the various perspectives and questions of the human community, and with the mediating Spirit of Christ.¹⁶⁵ This can be seen in Augustine's *Narrations in Psalms* by his statement that "what [people] sing is all a piece with their minds and hearts ... [and] God has willed to grant human beings the ability to sing with understanding." That is, as McCarthy explains at length, the communal performance of the scriptures is a legitimate form of communal exegesis that does not separate identification and affect from cognition, but joins them under the banner of *caritas*.¹⁶⁶ Likewise, Bonhoeffer pictured the communal habit of scripture reading as "holy, divine reality. We are uprooted from our own existence and are taken back to the holy history of God on earth," which enables Christ's body to participate with the mind of Christ and take that participation into

the challenges of the world *now* and *here*.¹⁶⁷ Though New Monastic and Emergent communities are right to desire liturgies that engage the body and the emotions, not just arid intellect, such ends can only be gained by participation with God through attention and submission to the scriptures He has given. Like language in Augustine's philosophy of communication, aesthetic worship practices, beautiful architecture, and bits of well-loved traditional liturgies are, in themselves, empty vessels. They cannot be used to build a tower to God. But once the presence of God is there through participatory attention to what He has set before our eyes—His Son, his gospel, and their historical diversification in the scriptures—any or all of these other worship practices may become pointing liturgies to the inward and upward revelation of God.

Both Augustine and Bonhoeffer emphasized also the importance of work and of regular hours set for work, reading, prayer, etc.¹⁶⁸ This work included, for both of their communities, engagement with the real problems of the world, problems that kept anyone in their communities from believing they had everything figured out already. Both the training in the scriptures and the service to the church and the world were, for both sets of communities, intended to be a training ground for leaders who would go out and do likewise in other areas of the church and world.¹⁶⁹

Both of them, while noting the importance of personal choice, saw *choice* in the context of a narrative being spoken by God.¹⁷⁰ More than a narrative of a religious tradition, it is a constellation with a few bright stars of certitude and much darkness in which the community must listen for the step that is right by God in a particular time and place.¹⁷¹ Both of them understood the Christian life to be basically social, dependent on confession in both senses, and these steps of faith to be socially discerned.¹⁷² And finally, both of them saw the physical body

as important in the regulation of the habits of the community, an importance grounded in the Incarnation.¹⁷³

What is meant by “re-embodiment of the scriptures,” from both Bonhoeffer and Augustine, is that when the faithful gather and speak the scriptures together, they together identify with Christ as the divine author of the scriptures and thus, in that event, become the body of Christ with one mind. McCarthy’s exposition of Augustine on this point is worth quoting at length:

As Augustine’s own understanding of the Incarnation deepens, the biblical sign itself does not so much point to as it embodies the signifying reality ... Those who perform the “text,” in other words, *become its living subject*. Yet, the subject is *reconstituted in the communal inquiry* reflected in his sermons. Augustine never renounces his position as bishop, of course, but he minimizes it as biblical inquiry becomes a collaborative venture.¹⁷⁴

That is, as we will see more below in my synthetic proposition, a participatory hermeneutic must be structured to invite realistic collaboration of the priesthood of all believers. However, there is also more to re-embodiment of the scriptures than just the momentary event; the monastic rule of continual practice in performing this embodiment together brings us to the theological importance of action, of praxis, in the individual and social body.

In the social body, regular shared practices and interpretations produce communal interaction patterns of mutual responsibility in the context of a communally shared language, communal memory, and a shared space of discovery that grounds communal *action* in the historical moment. How regular? By one estimate, Augustine’s community made its way through the singing of all the Psalms every few weeks,¹⁷⁵ and Bonhoeffer’s community was similarly oriented toward the “vicarious prayer of Christ” represented by the Psalms.¹⁷⁶

This form of habit is not merely programmatic, but promotes interaction patterns that address the needs of the community in the moment, ready to “listen” and “allow ourselves to be interrupted by God.”¹⁷⁷ It is, in Bellah’s terms, a communal habit that produces “meaning” through a “condensed code,” but a meaning that is also open to the “elaborated code” of God re-vivifying His Word through the kairotic intersection of *this* community, *this* time, and *this* historical moment.¹⁷⁸ “The Law of the Lord creates space for human action,” as Brock says of Bonhoeffer’s thought, “because it provides a form within which humans may live, in making it possible to prepare to hear the Creator’s voice ... a form through which God guides human action.” Bonhoeffer’s ethics of the “way” is focused on learning to hear the next step, not knowing the further horizon. Bonhoeffer’s “judgement aims not at discerning the ‘absolute good act,’ but only the next step in a path of obedience, a path whose end is clear while the middle distance is not. Only so is Christian hermeneutics a journey of faith and hope, and not of sight.”¹⁷⁹ McCarthy’s take on Augustine puts him in the same camp:

Central to [Augustine’s] understanding of Christian worship is a reciprocal relationship between God, who addresses his people in the Bible, and the community of faith, who speaks in return. ... the divine word constitutes a kind of ongoing conversation that ennobles and transforms the partner over time. ... Revelation lay somewhere between the fixity of the written word and its quality as appeal, as a site of dialogue with the congregation that voiced the word.¹⁸⁰

With Gadamer, there is a disclosure of being through engagement with the scriptural text, but it can be a disclosure that is not merely the fusion of textual and traditional horizons in the temporal plane but also the intervening eternal horizon of the divine voice, whose timing, volume, and scope are not controlled or limited by the human temporal liturgy. What McCarthy

and Brock point out to us from Augustine and Bonhoeffer is that any such hermeneutic is a work of the whole body of Christ, a shared practice of reading, listening, recognizing the voice of God, and action. This hermeneutic phronesis is a community event, for which the Evangelical community needs the real, not imagined, God.¹⁸¹

Beyond the event and its long-term repercussions on the ecclesial body, this kind of communal scriptural practice is also inscribed in the *individual's* body. From participation in Christ through the communal body and its habitual confession, the memory of the real body of Christ is inscribed on the individual body through the memory of the scriptures that had been communally “quickened” in the past. Because they were training people to move into distant positions of Christian leadership, Bonhoeffer and Augustine knew this memory of the “real body of Christ”—a history and liturgy of shared interpretive praxis—would be more important for discipleship than the mere written words in letters and treatises.¹⁸²

An Augustinian “liturgy” of participatory scriptural hermeneutics would, then, seek to instill habits of communal “inhabiting” readings of scripture, reading together as the joint voice of Christ and acting toward each other and toward the world, in that historical moment, according to what Christ discloses in that reading. This communal habit of speaking the scriptures themselves would allow members (still living in the world) to be continually confronted with the strangeness of the Word (and the world), to be continually humbled by the community’s multiplicity of possibilities of meaning, and to be challenged with the real demands of *caritas* disclosed within and outside each particular ecclesial group.

While hermeneutic philosophers like Gadamer and Ricoeur might applaud parts of this description, their insistence on a forward movement of truth that precludes dogma does not fit with Augustine, Bonhoeffer, or the larger Evangelical community. Their hermeneutical

philosophies have been useful against the modern pretensions of anthropocentric knowledge and control but, despite awareness of the irony of their position, their dogmatic insistence on *questioning* is also “oracular” in an anthropocentric way.¹⁸³ As we have seen, they argue that the church community must develop a constantly self-reflective critical stance towards its liturgies, a persistent return to critique which still prefers emancipatory critical ideals to the possibility of revelation.¹⁸⁴ To them, truth has to change continually, ontologically, because the historical moment with which the scriptures are fused has to change continually.

The explicit answer of Augustine and the implicit answer of Bonhoeffer is that truths recur in temporality from the realm of eternity, as mediated through the figures of the scriptures and manifested by the divine voice to his listening communal body. The responsibility to question a particular habitual interpretation or change a particular habitual aspect of the church’s liturgy is not one that is on the shoulders of the human leaders primarily. The initiative for questioning human liturgies belongs to God, though it is mediated through communal attention to God through the scriptures. God’s voice participating in human ecclesial narratives through the scriptures is the one that speaks “a new song” and brings about “a new thing.”¹⁸⁵ Without participation, hermeneutics can only negotiate the spectrum between conservative habit and self-reflective critique according to the political structures of a particular tradition, controlling whose interpretations matter, who gets to speak when, which texts are featured, and which are buried. That is, without returning to an Augustinian participatory framework, Evangelical hermeneutics can in the final analysis only be about power, which is where Worthen leaves it in her unflattering history of Evangelical tensions in biblical interpretation.¹⁸⁶

Charismatic Impact on Evangelical Hermeneutics

It may seem naïve to argue for an embodied, multi-level hermeneutic of the scriptures that is keyed on participating in God’s current word to the ecclesial body of Christ, even though such concepts have experienced a resurgence in both scholarly attention and on-the-ground missional movements, both seeking more holistic Evangelical spirituality. The question of application is important to philosophy of communication, but it still seems daunting. How do we bring the theological concept of participation, from scholars such as Hans Boersma, into the “way” of encountering scripture, such as proposed by Brock, within a concrete and committed ecclesial community, whose members are to obey and praise more than to seek a comprehensive understanding? And how can this strange neo-Augustinian biblical hermeneutic not only have some impact but also even restore key Evangelical identity markers such as gospel-centered ecumenism, the priesthood of all believers, and a shared life in the scriptures that allows them to experience positive leading, not just safety from enemies behind the gates of orthodoxy? While there are many challenges to reconnecting Evangelicalism with this hermeneutic, I believe the groundwork of practice has already been laid by the influence of the Charismatic movement on Evangelicalism.

In an Augustinian philosophy of communication, the concepts and experiences delivered in a particular historical moment are to be received as gifts and faithfully put to work. It is entirely appropriate to ask, “God, what are you teaching us by foregrounding this scripture and/or this experience?” To revisit the scriptural paradigm used by Fowl and Jones, we can examine this receptive attitude in the first big hermeneutical conundrum of the early church—whether to allow gentiles to enter the church (as gentiles).¹⁸⁷ The council at Jerusalem considered the scriptures, the spiritual experience of gentile conversion parallel to the council’s own experience, and the larger context of the gospel. This discussion didn’t just happen, though, as an

academic exercise in theology. St. Peter had been prepared by a dream and by a divine word to go to the gentile Cornelius's house.¹⁸⁸ Everything in this event had contradicted Peter's habitual way of thinking about the audience for the gospel, and entering a gentile's house violated Peter's cultural habits, but the divine "elaborated" discourse came as a gift to open up the closed hermeneutic cycle regarding the gentiles, bringing the eternal Word into temporality as a "new" gift for that particular historical moment and opening up a number of heretofore unseeable scriptures.

Since the 1970s, the limited and somewhat isolated vein of traditional Pentecostalism has done something similar to open Evangelicals' eyes to the frankly spiritual nature of the faith, exploding onto the scene in a movement that has saturated parts of almost all denominations. This movement, normally designated the "Charismatic" movement, has even been a factor in creating several new Evangelical ecclesial denominations. Coming as a gift of both new experiences and new conceptual resources to the larger world of Christianity, the Charismatic movement can be seen as a conceptual-experiential doorway for Evangelicals to reappropriate participatory scriptural hermeneutics.

Even before the Charismatic movement emerged, theologian Leslie Newbigin wrote about divine provision of metaphors through the "three streams" of Christianity: the "continuity" and sacramentalism of Roman Catholicism, the "centrality of the scriptures" and proclamation of the Protestants, and the "present action of the Spirit in the church through the gifts" in Pentecostalism.¹⁸⁹ Since that time, the fairly stiff social boundary between Pentecostalism and other traditions, including Evangelicalism, has become permeable and, in some cases, perforated. This permeability is especially visible in "Third Wave" Charismatics, who fuse charismatic gifts and practices with their own "mainline evangelical" identities. One of the key spokesmen of

Third Wavers, C. Peter Wagner, explains it thus: “I see in the 80’s an opening of the straightline evangelicals and other Christians to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that the Pentecostals and charismatics have experienced, but without becoming either charismatic or Pentecostal.”¹⁹⁰

What this means for Evangelicals in particular is that their focus on the scriptures and gospel-centered missions, their central identity markers,¹⁹¹ does not have to be threatened by the return of a participatory spirituality and hermeneutics but can rather be strengthened and restored by it. In the ecumenism of gospel-centered mission, this openness to participatory spirituality has already been recognized by Evangelicals as already the current state of events, which needs to be nurtured.¹⁹² Synan notes Billy Graham’s participation in the 1987 Pentecostal/Charismatic New Orleans Congress on missions and reports on the undercurrent of influence that made such a high-profile Evangelical appearance make sense:

The coming together of evangelicals and charismatics in the 1980’s presaged other changes in American church life. Although little had been said by mainline church mission boards, Pentecostalism had long since swept into their mission fields. Southern Baptists whispered the rumor that an estimated 75 percent of their third-world missionaries had spoken in tongues in the various “renovation” and charismatic movements during the 1970’s. Large numbers of Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican, and Lutheran missionaries had become practicing Pentecostals in the field—a fact they did not broadcast back home.¹⁹³

Evangelicals have also been challenged by the extraordinary success and ubiquity of phenomenologically Pentecostal/charismatic missions movements worldwide. As Dave Barrett said as far back as 1988,

With Pentecostals/charismatics now active in 80% of the world's largest metropolises, all in process of actively implementing networking and cooperation with Great Commission Christians of all confessions, a new era in world mission would clearly appear to have got under way.¹⁹⁴

This activity in the 1980's can be supplemented with data from the turn of the recent century, where the number of global pentecostal/charismatic members crossed the 500 million mark.¹⁹⁵ In 1995, this group already constituted 23.9% of all world Christians and was larger than all other Protestant denominations together,¹⁹⁶ quite a rate of growth for a movement that started with 40 people only a century before.¹⁹⁷ As discussed earlier in this project, the Pentecostal/Charismatic experience has spoken more directly than the purely conceptual message of the West to a number of indigenous populations that had not yet lost their participatory worldview, which is why Synans's analysis includes the well-populated categories of "quasi-" and "indigenous Pentecostals." These are groups which have had minimal contact with Western missionaries and are not under the oversight of any Western denomination.¹⁹⁸ Some of these indigenous charismatic groups have even sprung up through the gospel message of (at the time) non-charismatic Evangelical missionaries.¹⁹⁹

The point of these numbers is, first, that Evangelicals have not ignored and should not ignore the major move toward participatory metaphors as represented by the worldwide phenomenon of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement. This renewal of participation may have returned to the West as a blessing from its obedience in taking the gospel to all peoples, as Christians were commissioned to do, or it may just be a divine gift of both conceptual and experiential riches in order to renew the church in the West.

The second point, though, is that Evangelicals should consider how participatory spiritualities have to be grappled with not only on the mission field but also in the way we approach our biblical hermeneutics back home. Evangelicals, like many in the modernist milieu generally, are experts at segmentation, even when calls to holism resonate with them emotionally. We are able to segment our personal and ecclesial approach to the bible into “devotions” and “exegesis,” as early Methodists (before splitting from the Anglicans) had to divide their church meetings into “experience meetings” and the authoritative Anglican service.²⁰⁰ The on-the-ground experiences and participatory approaches of pentecostal/charismatic “liturgy” challenge Evangelicals, in particular, to bring their scientific exegesis and their spirituality back together. While there are undoubtedly several Pentecostal and charismatic theologians whose conceptual resources could help Evangelicals return to a participatory scriptural hermeneutic, I have been arguing in this project that Augustine provides a better dialogue partner because of the thoroughness of his engagement with scriptural hermeneutics, with participation, and with ecclesiology—and because he is arguably writing from a time before the stream of Christianity divided into “three streams” in the first place.

Synthesis: Participatory Hermeneutical Praxis

So what might an Augustinian synthesis look like in practice *in our historical moment*? Following the Augustinian theme of *interpretation as individual and communal embodied praxis*, it would be important for the ecclesial community to keep both scriptural interpretation close to its application and individual interpretation and application in dialogue with the community. By keeping interpretation close to application, I do not mean to recommend the sometime practice of some pastors to avoid doctrine in favor of practical tips for personal “lifehacking.” To Augustine, the doctrine of God was eminently practical because it produced

inward humility and upward praise, which was to be applied both individually and corporately.²⁰¹

A good example of a close interpretation-application dynamic can be found in the Evangelical church-planting manual written by George Patterson and Richard Scoggins. They rightly point out that Western Christians tend to equate quantity of knowledge with spirituality, whereas the scriptures portray depth of obedience to what little we know as the measure of spirituality. Patterson and Scoggins teach that each congregation should be taught a scriptural concept, but that before the leaders move on to any other teaching, the congregation should show that it has incorporated that first teaching into its liturgical life. A teaching on hospitality, for example, must be fully understood by being agreed with and practiced. Stacking up knowledge without obedience, say Patterson and Scoggins, is dangerous to true spirituality.²⁰² Though Augustine would not withhold the words of the scriptures from a congregation that is not yet obedient,²⁰³ he does share in this more recent perspective on knowledge without obedience, constantly warning his own congregation to apply what he is teaching and often confessing his own fear for himself because of his own level of knowledge.²⁰⁴ Patterson and Scoggins's examples of praxis in local congregations can therefore give us some concrete steps for Evangelical hermeneutics.

By also highlighting the importance of bringing individual application of the scriptures under the purview of the community, I am not suggesting an authoritarian system of checks and permissions, such as was the downfall of the 1970's Shepherding Movement, a discipling structure that attempted to address perceived shortcomings in charismatic doctrine and practice.²⁰⁵ On the contrary, following the philosophy of Augustine (and Bonhoeffer), I argue that there is an irreducible place for the individual before God, and the individual's participatory

interpretation is foundational, though not incontestable. Every individual coming to an ecclesial meeting should be prepared to listen to the scripture and to the Spirit for him/herself, but as Augustine modeled and taught, God's goal for speaking to that individual interpreter is not merely to give him/her knowledge and direction but, even more, to contribute to and confirm through the individual what is necessary for the growth of the whole body.²⁰⁶

The individual's interpretation might need to be corrected in dialogue with the community, it might need to be added as a true but supplementary interpretation to the storehouse of the community, it might be true but not tending towards charity in a particular ecclesial situation, or it might be the interpretation given by the voice of God for the whole community to be able to grow in charity in that particular historical situation. The only way to know which of these ways a particular individual interpretation of scripture is to be characterized would be to bring it into communal dialogue, where ecclesial leaders referee the hermeneutic dialogue while keeping their ears open to the voice and presence of God. The apostle Paul actually describes this form of liturgy in I Corinthians 14:

But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you

can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.²⁰⁷

We see, first, that the precondition for participatory ecclesial liturgy is that “God is truly among you.” The presence of God then manifests in the manifold verbal ministry of all the believers. What sort of normal liturgical practice serves as the springboard for this kind of revelatory ministry is not hard to infer from Paul’s directions to Timothy: “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”²⁰⁸ However, what we see here is that the gathering of the Christians to worship together through communal verbal ministry did not center on inviolate individual exegesis of a univocal text, but it was instead both participating in the spiritual realm and developing through communal judgment as the body of Christ. There was not to be “confusion” but rather order, “as in all the churches of the saints,” but this liturgical approach to ecclesial interpretation and ministry was to be ordered without being controlled, spontaneous without being chaotic or self-aggrandizing. This, of course, has resonance with Augustine’s argument for dialogic sharing of multiple valid interpretations as a sharing in the bounty of God’s provision, the criterion of charity enabling the community to hear the Word of the Lord (whether encouraging, rebuking, or directing) from the revelatory offerings of the whole community.

This picture of a scriptural participatory hermeneutic would thus, according to Augustine, *privilege communal charity over comprehensive knowledge*, which is not to say nothing is known, but that nothing is yet known to the degree it might be.²⁰⁹ What might this look like in Evangelical ecclesial hermeneutics? Here, we come to a slight problem in the context of current Evangelical liturgies that focus on the ministry of the preacher alone. L. Roger Owens is limited

in this regard because his target of application for participatory liturgy is the sermon itself.²¹⁰

While I do not deny the sermon as an important site of participatory liturgy—and the sermon is an unmistakable part of the Evangelical and longer Christian traditions—the sermon cannot serve as the primary venue for a renewed biblical hermeneutic in Evangelicalism. The sermon demands proclamation from a hermeneut who has read the scriptures with ears open to the divine voice, but it does not encourage public dialogue or shared listening in the reading of Scripture.

While it does not necessarily follow that comprehensive knowledge is the goal or product of proclamation, it does follow that charity in scriptural interpretation is more difficult. The one sitting in the pew may have a different reading of the sermonic text—a better one, a worse one, or just a different one—but the sermon venue is not traditionally open to questions, comparisons, or corrections.²¹¹ I have myself taken up preachers' occasional invitations to participate in the sermon: in one instance, hearing the invitation and seeing the preacher struggling with his text, I held up my hand for the last half hour of the sermon to indicate my willingness to participate. However, the implicit rules of the sermon liturgy were too strong to allow for shared listening and shared work in the text. The scriptures themselves portray both sermonic venues and congregational participatory venues,²¹² but the shared work of hermeneutic ministry and action is the side of that coin largely missing in Evangelical liturgy currently. To put this in an Augustinian frame, though Augustine was a proponent and practitioner of the participatory sermon,²¹³ he was also a proponent of shared life in the scriptures that we have discussed under the metaphor “monasticism.”

Augustine's implicit sermonic liturgy (as fitting his North African culture and time) was naturally much more participatory, and thus in line with Owen's suggestions for that venue.²¹⁴ Augustine adjusted his sermons according to the understanding and response of his audience, his

content being shaped in the moment by his interpretation of his audience and of the divine voice in the moment. Even as a bishop, he had less structural authority over the people than we tend to think in hindsight,²¹⁵ and thus he depended on the shared work of communication in the sermon, which also means a shared work of charity.

However, Augustine's description and practice of monasticism is where we see his desire to set in the heart of the Christian church the shared life in the scriptures. Augustine was careful to avoid setting up an innate hierarchy between those who could enter his communal life and those who could not, and salvation could be found in Christ's Church whether inside or outside monastic life.²¹⁶ However, those who could commit themselves to his scripturally based community life would serve the larger church as a living prototype and encouragement on their shared road in the gospel. Tarsicius J. Van Bavel goes so far as to say, "We could characterize the Rule of Augustine as a call to the evangelical equality of all people."²¹⁷ Not only was Augustine's monastic thought ecclesiastically egalitarian but it was also not "ascetic," it had "few concrete regulations and detailed laws," and it was explicitly scriptural.²¹⁸

Augustine's goal was not to build an institutional superstructure on top of the scriptures, but rather to use his few scriptural rules as a liturgy to help Christians point one another to God through the scriptures. Starting from the foundational "ideal of the Jerusalem community from Acts 4:31," Augustine's monasticism was focused on shared life in the scriptures. Van Bavel summarizes that

In these references to the Scriptures Augustine's own vision and spirituality come to light, for the biblical ideas which he emphasizes are the cherished sources from which he himself lives. It is precisely this biblical and evangelic foundation which forms the

permanent structure of the Rule: it guarantees the Rule's value throughout changing times and cultures.²¹⁹

This monastic rule where “love and community” are the overarching principles²²⁰ emphasizes the sharing of material resources,²²¹ individual and communal prayer,²²² daily shared reading of the scriptures at meals,²²³ a flexible but similar standard of life,²²⁴ shared accountability for one another's temptations, sins, and treatments,²²⁵ a shared aim to do everything for “the service of the community” rather than the individual,²²⁶ a shared commitment to conflict resolution,²²⁷ a shared commitment to godly relationships between authorities and subordinates,²²⁸ and a shared commitment to stir up desire for the participatory life of this community and praise for its actualization, a stirring up through regular shared return to the *Rule* and the scriptures.²²⁹

I argue that the general orientation of Augustine's scriptural Rule, in tandem with his lived practice of this form of community life, provides both the appropriate attitude and some specific directions for Evangelicals who want to institute a venue for shared charitable interpretation of the scriptures. As mentioned above, New Monastics have broken some ground in their area of praxis, but in their philosophical resources for monasticism they have skipped over Augustine and in their foundational structure they have skipped over the scriptures.

In general, though, when an ecclesial community is attempting to share life and resources (in non-legalistic ways) while also sharing the hermeneutic burden in the scriptures, it becomes easier for the community to see scriptural interpretation in terms of their shared life, and each individual interpretation is regularly humbled by the shared hermeneutic activity. Because the commitment to charitable life together is primary, the group is driven to listen together to each other and to the divine voice. What this looks like in the vexing instance of interpretational disagreement, in my experience, is the “shelving” of a particular hermeneutical question at the

end of the service, with a mutual exhortation to prayer and study over the week and a renewed commitment to finding the most charitable interpretation for this scripture in the community's current situation. Because, as Evangelicals, all parties in this disagreement love truth, the discovery of the charitable answer cannot be a rejection of grammatical and historical evidence or of key doctrines, but, as people aware of their need to participate in the divine direction for the community, all parties are willing to submit to whichever truth God identifies as most needful in the moment. In one particular hermeneutic question, what my wife and I realized is that, though our position on a specific question was more technically correct, the direction the church leaders were taking with a specific passage was charitable and needful for the church's current situation. Our part in that charity would be to hold our interpretation for its appropriate time.

It is only possible to hold an interpretation for its appropriate time, though, if the scriptures are deeper than a textual object on the flat plane of temporality, which is where both the grammatical-historical hermeneutics of modernism and the historicity of philosophical hermeneutics ultimately leave it. An Augustinian hermeneutic opens up the depth of the scriptures through their special status as a *linguistic medium between eternity and temporality* which is actualized through spiritual participation in God. What might this look like in an Evangelical ecclesial venue where, as enjoined above, the hermeneutical burden is shared among the priesthood of all believers?

What should be clear at the outset is that, where the interpretation depends on the divine will and voice, there is no controllable "method" in the modern sense of the term. There cannot even be a willed decision by the ecclesial community always to be "open" or "self-reflexive" in their spirituality since, as Augustine highlights, our wills are neither constant nor fully pure. What's more, once the voice of God through scripture has been manifested to an ecclesial

community that was open enough to receive it, any further hermeneutical openness on that particular point would be disobedience, not faithfulness. The tenuous nature of our grasp and practice of scriptural eternal truths pushed Augustine to continuous prayer and confession of his need for God's help,²³⁰ as it has similarly pushed other Christians to prayer in their scripture-centered lives.

Where the hermeneutical task is only to extract the propositional content of scripture through the tools of historical, grammatical, and form exegesis, the hermeneut would rightly prioritize academic study. Where such a task is only to open the congregation to a fusion of the text's past tradition and the group's current historical situation, the hermeneut would pay attention to his tradition, to the relevant contours of the current culture, and to the group's attitude of openness. However, where the hermeneutical task is to hear the voice of God in scripture (at whatever time God wills to give it) despite or through the noise of personal, traditional, and cultural habits of belief and practice—for the purpose of meeting a historical moment that is often unknown—the hermeneut would naturally spend time in the scriptures themselves and in prayer with other listeners. Academic study of biblical contexts, of the tradition, and of the current historical moment are not precluded, but they do take a back seat to the primary importance of spending time together in the scriptures themselves *as the Word of God*.

When a community is engaged together in reading the scriptures, praying for divine illumination in them (in Evangelical parlance, “waiting on the Lord”), and practicing some level of communal life together, something happens in the community's phenomenological experience. Different scriptural figures, narratives, and phrases emerge and take hold of the ecclesial community's “social imaginary,” giving meaning and direction for the group or the

individual. According to a participatory reading of this phenomenon, this is the divine voice speaking through his word the eternal truths that pertain to a particular part of his body at a particular moment on the historical plane. The scriptures are conceived as the narrative of Christ spoken from eternity into diverse figures and mandates in time, and because Christ, his Word, the totus Christus comprised of the Christians of all ages, and (analogically) each particular ecclesial gathering are all identified together, the diverse figures and narratives of scripture can also be directed by the Holy Spirit to each congregation, listening together with attentiveness to scripture and the divine voice. “For all things are yours,” Paul says, “whether ... the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”²³¹

Just as Jesus could point to himself in scriptural past history—as Jonah in the fish, or as Moses’ serpent on the pole²³²—and could point to himself in the church’s future history—“if they persecuted me, they will persecute you”; “Saul, why are you persecuting me?”²³³—the ecclesial body of Christ now has available to its self-understanding and obedience the conceptual resources of all the scriptures through the mediating figure of Christ and the mediating narrative of his gospel. This means both that “all the promises of God in [Christ] *are* Yes, and in Him Amen,”²³⁴ because “whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope,”²³⁵ and that “these [scriptural narratives] became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted ... and [should] not become idolaters as *were* some of them.”²³⁶ With Augustine, the participating church dares not lift itself above the scriptures but must rather listen and tremble before the comforts and warnings and directives that come through them from the divine voice, taking seriously God’s promise to speak through his Word.²³⁷

To discern which particular part of this expansive scriptural “social imaginary” is applicable, therefore, the church needs to hear from God, together, in the temporal and embodied events of their coming together as the church. As we saw in I Corinthians 14, this requirement of the presence of God for the full functioning of the hermeneutics of his people is a key part of some early church “liturgy,” or congregational practice. It is also a constant theme throughout the scriptures. One of Augustine’s key scriptural themes was Amos 8:11, the warning to the people of Israel of a “famine of hearing the words of the Lord,”²³⁸ which parallels the description of scriptural judgment (e.g., “and the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation”²³⁹) and is the converse of the descriptions of scriptural blessings (e.g., “Your words were found, and I ate them, and your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart”²⁴⁰).

Paul wrote about the kingdom of God not being in word only but in power,²⁴¹ and he specifically identified the gathering of the church as the place where Christ’s power would be present to give judgment on different ecclesial situations,²⁴² just as had happened earlier when the presence of God in the church cost Ananias and Sapphira their lives.²⁴³ While the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost gets the most attention, the scriptures attest that, just like in the Old Testament,²⁴⁴ the church was continually in need of the renewed presence of God to be able to interpret and to speak its interpretation boldly. One such instance is recorded in Acts 4, and sets the stage for the communal sharing of life and goods that Augustine used as the foundation for his monastic thought: “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”²⁴⁵ Here is where we see that the recent Charismatic impact on Evangelicalism may be interpreted as a divine gift of a philosophy of communication, one that

insists on the irreducible need to hear from God. While this form of spirituality might seem “foolishness” to the sacred or secular scholar steeped in a flat univocal modernity, its basic contours of the interpenetration of spiritual and material worlds through different forms of sacred mediums was the ground on which most of the history of Christianity, and most global Christian traditions now, have functioned. What Evangelicals, with Augustine, can bring back to the table is obedience to the command and tradition of attention to the scriptures as the medium of God’s eternal word.

As we have seen in I Corinthians 14 above, there is no unilateral interpretation by one gifted Christian of a univocal text, but the interpretation comes, rather, as a participatory gift of the Spirit through the charitable dialogue and discernment of “two or three witnesses,” overseen by the elders whose authority comes from their own phronesis in this kind of charitable and attentive hermeneutics. In an ecclesial gathering, sharing life, obedience, and scriptural interpretation together through prayerful and charitable dialogue as shepherded within the Christological narrative can enable not just participatory openness to divine speech in the scriptures but also, at God’s pleasure, participatory reception of that eternal word for this community, now. In this way, Evangelical ecclesial gatherings can be understood after the pattern of the Emmaus experience:

So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. ... Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. ... Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them,

that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”²⁴⁶

While the sermon service will not and should not be removed from Evangelical liturgies, a communal scripture reading service should be practiced that is accorded equal or greater value, one that gives participants a reason and outlet for their own scripture reading and that provides training for the ecclesial community together in listening for and waiting on God while listening to and charitably waiting with others. This kind of participatory Augustinian hermeneutic—individual and communal, textual and embodied, questioning but submissive to Spirit’s voice in scripture—provides the philosophy of communication resources to restore an Evangelical church torn by modernism and, through its renewal in the Word, to witness to the city of God in this historical moment.

NOTES

¹ Gerald T. Sheppard, “Biblical Hermeneutics: The Academic Language of Evangelical Identity,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 32, no 2 (1977): 81-94, pg. 84.

² Ronald C. Arnett, “Defining Philosophy of communication: Difference and Identity,” *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* 11, no. 1 (2010): 57-62, p. 58.

³ Arnett, “Defining Philosophy of Communication,” 58.

⁴ To revisit this concept, see David Vincent Meconi, “The Incarnation and the Role of Participation in St. Augustine’s Confessions,” *Augustinian Studies* 29.2 (1998): 61-75.

⁵ See this also in Wolfgang Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans’ Pub. Co., 2010), 62-64.

⁶ Merold Westphal, *Whose Community? Which Interpretation? Philosophical Hermeneutics for the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 112.

⁷ See Lewis S. Mudge, “Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation,” in *Paul Ricoeur, Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge, 1-40 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 22-32.

⁸ As Brian Brock also says, as we will see more below.

⁹ From the distinction given by Merold Westphal, *Overcoming Ontotheology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), xiii.

¹⁰ See Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), XVI.2, for example: “The object of the writer of these sacred books, or rather of the Spirit of God in him, is not only to record the past, but to depict the future, so far as it regards the city of God; for whatever is said of those who are not its citizens, is given either for her instruction, or as a foil to enhance her glory”; see also *City of God* XV.8.

¹¹ Robert Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 85, 106-108.

¹² For example, Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Image Books, 1960), XII.xxv.34.

¹³ See Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1995), 59.

¹⁴ Dr. Janie Harden Fritz reminds me (personal correspondence) that “some would argue that postmodernity anchors interpretive flexibility within petite narratives.” Both Taylor and MacIntyre articulate this kind of postmodern narrative-focused identity in contrast to the emotivistic individualism of modernism, and Ronald C. Arnett has applied the idea of the petite narrative consistently in philosophy of communication. However, I believe a participatory Augustinian framework recovers yet a different conception of narrative identity and “love” that is neither petite nor comprehensively graspable by its participants-in-narrative. In this paragraph, I use the strong contrast to the emotivistic self because it is, in my reading, the more pressing sociological reality among the relevant population, even among the subset population of New Monastics, who are sometimes trying to own a petite narrative. This will be developed further on in the chapter.

¹⁵ See Jennifer V. Ebbler, *Disciplining Christians: Correction and Community in Augustine’s Letters* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 155, 70-71.

¹⁶ See John G. Prendiville, “The Development of the Idea of Habit in the Thought of Saint Augustine.” *Traditio* 28 (1972): 29-99.

¹⁷ See Raymond F. Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbor in St. Augustine* (Heverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993).

¹⁸ James 2:17.

¹⁹ Tarsicius J. Van Bavel, introduction to Augustine, *The Rule of Saint Augustine*, trans. Raymond Canning (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1986), 6-8.

²⁰ As was recently illustrated when an Evangelical, a Catholic priest-in-training, and a lay Orthodox Christian came together in a coffee shop and started talking about spiritual matters. Without self-identification, the Evangelical was correctly labeled by the people from the other two traditions. See Philip Goff, Arthur E. Farnsley II, and Peter J. Thuesen, P.I., *The Bible in American Life*, A National Study by The Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, March 6, 2014, accessed August 12 2016, http://www.raac.iupui.edu/files/2713/9413/8354/Bible_in_American_Life_Report_March_6_2014.pdf, p. 33; and Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith & Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House, 1991).

²¹ For a discussion of epea, or the “great words” of a tradition that provide the basic moves and vocabulary for leaders/rhetoricians to draw upon, see Jeffrey Walker, *The Rhetoric and Poetics of Antiquity*, 10.

²² Though this may have become less true over the history of the Navigators, this approach to participation in the scriptures was certainly evident in its founder, Dawson Trotman, who encouraged his eventual successor to find his own promises from God in the scriptures. See Betty Lee Skinner, *Daws: The Story of Dawson Trotman, Founder of the Navigators* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974); in one revealing anecdote, Trotman and Billy Graham engaged in an impromptu scripture recitation contest at one venue where these two friends were both speaking. Most other Evangelical heroes of the faith (though not necessarily Evangelical biblical scholars) modeled a similar attitude of listening to God’s voice through daily bible reading, including such figures as Francis Schaeffer and Corrie ten Boom.

²³ Mudge, “Paul Ricoeur,” 8; Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 2; Goff, Farnsley, and Thuesen, *The Bible in American Life*, 2.

²⁴ Mudge, “Paul Ricoeur,” 8.

²⁵ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²⁶ John Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 1989).

²⁷ Ephesians 4:16.

²⁸ Goff, Farnsley, and Thuesen, *The Bible in American Life*, 2; See also Lewis S. Mudge, *The Church as Moral Community: Ecclesiology and Ethics in Ecumenical Debate* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 93.

²⁹ Brian Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God: On the Place of Christian Ethics in Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2007), 24-25.

³⁰ See Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 254-57. It has become popular to question the value of reading the bible if one is motivated to do so by some “rule,” a reaction against the supposed legalism of Evangelical bible reading in the generation before. There is a palpable ethos of gleefully questioning everything among an influential subset of Evangelical youth, as evident in Donald Miller’s books such as *Blue Like Jazz*, William Young’s bestseller therapeutic narrative *The Shack*, and the slew of books by pop theologian Rob Bell, who finally left his church to host a program on the Oprah Winfrey channel.

³¹ Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, 220-21.

³² Stephen E. Fowl and L. Gregory Jones, *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), 31.

³³ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 15-16; on p. 16, they write, “Hermeneutics is inevitably, though not restrictively, a ‘political’ discipline.”

³⁴ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 42.

³⁵ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 32.

³⁶ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 32.

³⁷ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 112.

³⁸ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 127-28.

³⁹ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 116-17, 124-29.

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- ⁴⁰ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 113.
- ⁴¹ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 34.
- ⁴² Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 2-3.
- ⁴³ See Brian Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 26-27, on this point.
- ⁴⁴ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 140, 153, 156.
- ⁴⁵ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 147.
- ⁴⁶ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 150-52.
- ⁴⁷ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 26, 28, 93-94. Brock does state that Bonhoeffer has a “palpable lack of pneumatology” (p. 94; see also Brian Brock, “Bonhoeffer and the Bible in Christian Ethics: Psalm 119, the Mandates, and Ethics as a ‘Way,’” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 18, no. 3 (2005): 7-29, p. 28), but whatever theoretical lack this might imply in the fields of ethics or theology, Brock’s description of Bonhoeffer’s reliance on the Spirit’s work in the “middle space” of scriptural hermeneutics is a practical and powerful statement of the Spirit’s role. I interpret this distinction between “pneumatology” and “the Spirit’s work” as a corollary to the neglect of participatory thought.
- ⁴⁸ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 74.
- ⁴⁹ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 82.
- ⁵⁰ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 26.
- ⁵¹ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 156.
- ⁵² Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 94.
- ⁵³ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 106-108, though Brock does state this rather too strongly, implying that *De Doctrina* was a neo-Platonic artifact that Augustine contradicted performatively in his expositions of the scriptures and his sermons. For context on Augustine’s scriptural shift, see R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 9.
- ⁵⁴ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 104.
- ⁵⁵ For example, Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 146.
- ⁵⁶ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 141-42.
- ⁵⁷ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 131.
- ⁵⁸ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 121.
- ⁵⁹ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 132.
- ⁶⁰ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 108.
- ⁶¹ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 111.
- ⁶² Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 112, 114.
- ⁶³ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 112.
- ⁶⁴ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 112.
- ⁶⁵ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 110.
- ⁶⁶ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 112-13.
- ⁶⁷ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 144, 155.
- ⁶⁸ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 156.
- ⁶⁹ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 151.
- ⁷⁰ See See Kimberly Baker, “Augustine’s Doctrine of the *Totus Christus*: Reflecting on the Church as Sacrament of Unity,” *Horizons* 37, no. 1 (2010): 7-24, p. 8; for further reading on Augustine’s doctrine of the totus Christus, see p. 9n6.
- ⁷¹ Quoted in Baker, “Augustine’s Doctrine,” 10-11, from Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms*, trans. Maria Boulding, ed. John E. Rotelle, Works of Saint Augustine 3/15–20 (New York: New City Press, 2000–04), 15:322–23. Italics added.
- ⁷² Matthew 17:5.
- ⁷³ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 122-23.
- ⁷⁴ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 123.
- ⁷⁵ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 124.
- ⁷⁶ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 151-52.
- ⁷⁷ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 139, and for the communal nature of this hermeneutic, see 152.
- ⁷⁸ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 149.
- ⁷⁹ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 139.
- ⁸⁰ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 150.
- ⁸¹ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 107-108.
- ⁸² David W. Tracy, “Charity, Obscurity, Clarity: Augustine’s Search for a True Rhetoric,” in *The Rhetoric of St. Augustine of Hippo: De Doctrina Christiana & the Search for a Distinctly Christian Rhetoric*, ed. Richard Leo Enos and Roger Thompson, et al. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 271.
- ⁸³ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 165-66.
- ⁸⁴ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 124.
- ⁸⁵ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 165.
- ⁸⁶ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 124.
- ⁸⁷ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 144.

- ⁸⁸ See, for example, Sermon 137.2, p. 207, in Augustine, *Essential Sermons*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Edmund Hill, intro and notes Daniel E. Doyle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2007).
- ⁸⁹ R. A. Markus, "Refusing to Bless the State: prophetic church and secular state," in *Sacred and Secular: Studies on Augustine and Latin Christianity* (Variorum, 1994), sec. IV, pg. 373.
- ⁹⁰ Though there was still physical martyrdom in Augustine's time, it became much more infrequent, and especially more rare compared to the Diocletian persecution that formed the Catholic Church's social imaginary still. Rejecting the cult of the martyrs, Augustine argued for a life dead to self that was just as difficult and just as holy as being killed for the faith, a theme that his admirer Gregory the Great codified further during his papacy. See Carole Straw, "Martyrdom and Christian Identity: Gregory the Great, Augustine, and Tradition," in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R. A. Markus*, 250-266 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).
- ⁹¹ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 136-37.
- ⁹² Max Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947).
- ⁹³ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 137.
- ⁹⁴ Barry Harvey summarizes that the basic axiom of Bonhoeffer's dissertation is informed by Augustine, that "the church is Christ existing as community, [which is] ... a recovery and a restatement of Augustine's contention that in the church we encounter the whole Christ, totus Christus, consisting of both head and body" in "Augustine and Thomas Aquinas in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," in *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation: Theology and Philosophy in his Thought*, 11-29 (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 12.
- ⁹⁵ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 73; Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 137.
- ⁹⁶ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 138-39.
- ⁹⁷ Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 73-74n12.
- ⁹⁸ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 142.
- ⁹⁹ Quoted in Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 138.
- ¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 140.
- ¹⁰¹ Quoted in Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 141.
- ¹⁰² Quoted in Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 141.
- ¹⁰³ Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 153.
- ¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, 142.
- ¹⁰⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 84-85.
- ¹⁰⁶ Here, Bonhoeffer is reacting against the rising emphasis on national identity in Germany, seeing the dangers of what Heidegger called "das Man" and Arendt called "the social," but with a specifically Christological check on these social aggregates, not just an existential call to the individual.
- ¹⁰⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 83.
- ¹⁰⁸ Bonhoeffer emphasized in *Life Together* that though Christians are called to community, the brokenness of the world sometimes means the absence of such community in dark times, a phenomenon he was living through himself after the Third Reich shut down his seminary at Finkenwalde. See *Life Together*, 27-29.
- ¹⁰⁹ See Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* and Augustine's *Rule* for their particular recommendations of rule-governed listening.
- ¹¹⁰ Dale L. Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* in the Contexts of Monastic Literature and The Communion of Saints," *Journal of Communication & Religion* 28 (2005): 188-205, p. 203.
- ¹¹¹ Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 189.
- ¹¹² Brock, *Singing the Ethos of God*, 94.
- ¹¹³ Richarson, "Emerging Missional Movements: An Overview and Assessment of Some Implications for Mission(s)," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 37, no. 3 (2013): 131-136.
- ¹¹⁴ See Charles W. Brockwell, Jr., "Augustine's Ideal of Monastic Community: A Paradigm for His Doctrine of the Church," *Augustinian Studies* 8 (1977): 91-109.
- ¹¹⁵ Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart*; see also the reference to "pick and choose" Christianity in Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 273.
- ¹¹⁶ Eric C. Carter, "The New Monasticism: A Literary Introduction," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 5, no. 2 (2012): 268-284.
- ¹¹⁷ For example, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism: What It Has to Say to Today's Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008); see other resources at <http://www.new-monastics.com/media-resources/>.
- ¹¹⁸ The Rutba House, ed., *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005).
- ¹¹⁹ Jonathan R. Wilson, "Introduction," in *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism*, ed. The Rutba House (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005).
- ¹²⁰ Jonathan R. Wilson, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World: Lessons for the Church from MacIntyre's After Virtue* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 70.
- ¹²¹ Carter, "The New Monasticism," 281.
- ¹²² *School(s) for Conversion*.
- ¹²³ *School(s) for Conversion*.
- ¹²⁴ See Janzen, *The Intentional Christian Community Handbook* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2013), 37.

- ¹²⁵ Wilson, *Living Faithfully*, quoted in Philip Harrold, "The 'New Monasticism' as Ancient-Future Belonging," *Theology Today* 67 (2010): 182-193, p. 189.
- ¹²⁶ Wilson, *Living Faithfully*; Brockwell, "Augustine's Ideal of Monastic Community."
- ¹²⁷ Carter, "The New Monasticism," 282.
- ¹²⁸ Jason A. Mahn and Grace Koloczek, "What Intentional Christian Communities Can Teach the Church," *Word & World* 34, no. 2 (2014): 178-87, p. 184
- ¹²⁹ Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Bonhoeffer's Challenge to Evangelism," *Word & World* 25, no. 2 (2005): 180-190, p. 182.
- ¹³⁰ Elshtain, "Bonhoeffer's Challenge."
- ¹³¹ Carter, "The New Monasticism," 280.
- ¹³² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1949), 16.
- ¹³³ Carter, "The New Monasticism," 281.
- ¹³⁴ Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism*, 141-42.
- ¹³⁵ Mahn and Koloczek, "What Intentional Christian Communities," 186.
- ¹³⁶ See, for example, Augustine, Sermon 9.21, in Ramsey, *Essential Sermons*.
- ¹³⁷ See James Lawson, "Theological Formation in the Church of 'the Last Men and Women,'" *Ecclesiology* 9 (2013): 335-346; James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); Lynne M. Baab and Carolyn Kelly, "Art Has its Reasons: The Emerging Role of the Arts in Protestant Congregations," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 34, no. 1 (2011): 181-196.
- ¹³⁸ See my critique of James K. A. Smith in Chapter 4.
- ¹³⁹ Kelvin Knight, "Practices: The Aristotelian Concept," *Analyse & Kritik* 30 (2008): 317-29.
- ¹⁴⁰ Clare Carlisle, "The Question of Habit in Theology and Philosophy: From Hexis to Plasticity," *Body & Society* 19, nos. 2 & 3 (2013): 30-57.
- ¹⁴¹ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*.
- ¹⁴² See John G. Prendiville, "The Development of the Idea of Habit in the Thought of Saint Augustine," *Traditio* 28 (1972): 29-99; also, Babcock, William S. "Augustine and the Spirituality of Desire," *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994): 179-199.
- ¹⁴³ Carlisle, "The Question of Habit," 37.
- ¹⁴⁴ Gerd Van Riel, "Augustine on Prudence," *Augustinian Studies* 41, no. 1 (2010): 219-240, p. 237. See also Prendiville, "The Development of the Idea of Habit."
- ¹⁴⁵ Van Riel, "Augustine on Prudence,"
- ¹⁴⁶ Carlisle, "The Question of Habit," 33.
- ¹⁴⁷ Mudge, *Church as Moral Community*, 76.
- ¹⁴⁸ Carlisle, "The Question of Habit," 46.
- ¹⁴⁹ Carlisle, "The Question of Habit," 48.
- ¹⁵⁰ Lawson, "Theological Formation," 339-340.
- ¹⁵¹ Carlisle, "The Question of Habit," 49.
- ¹⁵² Ronald C. Arnett, *Dialogic Confession: Bonhoeffer's Rhetoric of Responsibility* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 51.
- ¹⁵³ Ned O'Gorman, "'Telling the Truth': Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Rhetorical Discourse Ethic," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 28 (2005): 224-248, pg. 229.
- ¹⁵⁴ See Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer."
- ¹⁵⁵ Lynne M. Baab and Carolyn Kelly, "Art Has its Reasons."
- ¹⁵⁶ Robert Bellah, "Habit and History," *Ethical Perspectives* 8, no. 3 (2001): 156-67, 157-58.
- ¹⁵⁷ Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 254-55.
- ¹⁵⁸ Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer"; Brockwell, "Augustine's Ideal of Monastic Community"; Michael C. McCarthy, "'We Are Your Books': Augustine, the Bible, and the Practice of Authority," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75, no. 2 (2007): 324-352.
- ¹⁵⁹ Barry Harvey, "Augustine and Thomas Aquinas in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," in *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation: Theology and Philosophy in His Thought*, edited by Peter Frick, 11-29 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 12.
- ¹⁶⁰ Brockwell, "Augustine's Ideal," 95; Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 192-193.
- ¹⁶¹ Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 188-189; Brockwell, "Augustine's Ideal," 98, 101, 106.
- ¹⁶² Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 190; see also pg. 200 on the primacy of the focus on Christ over the focus on human psychological fellowship.
- ¹⁶³ See McCarthy, "We Are Your Books," 333, 342.
- ¹⁶⁴ Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 190-191; McCarthy, "We Are Your Books," 336; see also Brian Brock, "Bonhoeffer and the Bible in Christian Ethics: Psalm 119, the Mandates, and Ethics as a 'Way,'" *Studies in Christian Ethics* 18, no. 3 (2005): 7-29, and Paul Burns, "Augustine's Distinctive Use of the Psalms in the Confessions: the Role of Music and Recitation," *Augustinian Studies* 24 (1993): 133-146.
- ¹⁶⁵ Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 191; McCarthy, "We Are Your Books."
- ¹⁶⁶ McCarthy, "We Are Your Books," 340-342. See also Harvey, "Augustine and Thomas Aquinas," 13.
- ¹⁶⁷ Quotation from Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*, in Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 202, in the context of the argument of his whole article.

- ¹⁶⁸ Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 190, 192; Brockwell, "Augustine's Ideal," 99, 103-105.
- ¹⁶⁹ Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 192; Brockwell, "Augustine's Ideal," 105.
- ¹⁷⁰ Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 194; Calvin L. Troup, "Rhetorical Interpretation in Augustine's Confessions," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 24, no. 1 (2001): 43-67, pgs. 49-52.
- ¹⁷¹ See Brock, "Bonhoeffer and the Bible," 8-9, a thesis that is developed throughout his article about Bonhoeffer's ethics and his exposition of Psalm 119.
- ¹⁷² "Confession in both senses," being both communal confession of sin and communal confession of the truth. Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 195, 197; Brockwell, "Augustine's Ideal," 93-94; McCarthy, "We Are Your Books," 335, 338.
- ¹⁷³ Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 194; Calvin L. Troup, "Rhetorical Interpretation in Augustine's Confessions," *Journal of Communication & Religion* 24, no. 1 (2001): 43-67, pp. 50-51.
- ¹⁷⁴ McCarthy, "We Are Your Books," 338, italics added.
- ¹⁷⁵ Paul Burns, "Augustine's Distinctive Use of the Psalms in the Confessions: The Role of Music and Recitation," *Augustinian Studies* 24 (1993): 133-146, p. 142.
- ¹⁷⁶ Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 191.
- ¹⁷⁷ Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 191.
- ¹⁷⁸ Bellah, "Habit and History," 160; Brock, "Bonhoeffer and the Bible," 17.
- ¹⁷⁹ Brock, "Bonhoeffer and the Bible," 23.
- ¹⁸⁰ Brock, "Bonhoeffer and the Bible," 23; McCarthy, "We Are Your Books," 345, 347.
- ¹⁸¹ Brock, "Bonhoeffer and the Bible," 19.
- ¹⁸² Sullivan, "Reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 192; Brockwell, "Augustine's Ideal," 105.
- ¹⁸³ This can be seen in any number of current philosophers, though Fred Evans was savvy and honest enough to discuss his unsolved question from his *The Multivoiced Body: Society and Communication in the Age of Diversity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008) with a Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies colloquium at Duquesne University in 2014.
- ¹⁸⁴ For a disturbing assertion of this need for communal reflexivity (in an otherwise excellent book), see Mudge, *The Church As Moral Community*, 88-93; it can also be seen in Bellah, "Habit and History."
- ¹⁸⁵ Psalm 40:3; Isaiah 43:19.
- ¹⁸⁶ See Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 261, though to be fair, Worthen's fundamental conclusion is that Evangelicalism is caught in a conflict of interpretations about the Bible and that the dialectic of this persistent tension has and may continue to push intellectual and moral growth.
- ¹⁸⁷ See Acts 11.
- ¹⁸⁸ Acts 10: 9-16, 19-20.
- ¹⁸⁹ Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 291.
- ¹⁹⁰ Quoted in Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 271.
- ¹⁹¹ See George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 4-5; and Sheppard, "Biblical Hermeneutics," 84.
- ¹⁹² Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 269, though the recent reactions against charismatic expression in the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board is a notable exception.
- ¹⁹³ Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 269.
- ¹⁹⁴ Quoted in Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 279; "Great Commission Christians" is Evangelical parlance for Christians whose personal narrative is strongly shaped by the need to obey the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) and be an active part of the meganarrative of the redemption of every tribe, tongue, and people.
- ¹⁹⁵ Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 281.
- ¹⁹⁶ Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 286.
- ¹⁹⁷ Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 281.
- ¹⁹⁸ See Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 282-85.
- ¹⁹⁹ For example, cessationist Nazarene missionaries of our acquaintance saw their long-term work among the Paiwanese explode in the 1970's and 80's into healings, exorcisms, and speaking in tongues, starting with the spontaneous healing of a boy with leukemia, even though they had not prayed for healing. The boy wanted to be baptized before he died. They brought a tub into his hospital room and lowered the emaciated, dying boy into it, but when he came up out of the water, he was completely healed and had immediately gained 20-30 pounds.
- ²⁰⁰ See L. Roger Owens, *The Shape of Participation: A Theology of Church Practices* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 5-10.
- ²⁰¹ See Robert Barron, "Augustine's Questions: Why the Augustinian Theology of God Matters Today," Habiger Lecture, March 27, 2005, Center for Catholic Studies, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota, https://www.stthomas.edu/media/catholicstudies/center/habiger/misc/Barron_spring2006.pdf.
- ²⁰² George Patterson and Richard Scoggins, *Church Multiplication Guide: The Miracle of Church Reproduction*, Rev. ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013).
- ²⁰³ See Augustine, Letter 185.2.8 on the need to bring erring Donatists under the preaching of the true gospel. Accessed at New Advent, August 13, 2016, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102185.htm>.
- ²⁰⁴ See, for example, Augustine, Rule of Augustine, 7.4, p. 24: "For it applies to you as well [as to your superior] that the higher a position a person holds, the greater the danger he is in"; and Augustine, *The Trinity/De Trinitate*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans., intro, and notes Edmund Hill, 2nd ed. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), I.iii.5.

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- ²⁰⁵ See Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 264-66.
- ²⁰⁶ See Tarsicius J. Van Bavel, commentary on Augustine, *The Rule of Saint Augustine*, trans. Raymond Canning (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1986), 76.
- ²⁰⁷ I Corinthians 14: 24-33.
- ²⁰⁸ I Timothy 4:13.
- ²⁰⁹ That is, as Paul says in I Corinthians 8: 2, "And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know."
- ²¹⁰ Owens, *Shape of Participation*.
- ²¹¹ To the English Puritans' credit in the Interregnum (1649-1660), they had allowed any church attendee to come up to the pulpit after the sermon and give their own commentary on the sermon (a provision exploited by the Quakers), but such allowances have been aberrations in the history of sermon-centric Evangelical churches. See Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984); George Fox, *George Fox: An Autobiography*, ed. Rufus Jones (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, [1694] 1976), reprinted from Jones's 1908 original.
- ²¹² Acts 2: 42, 46.
- ²¹³ See Daniel E. Doyle, introduction to Augustine, *Essential Sermons*, 14-15, 17-22.
- ²¹⁴ Among other places, Owens, *Shape of Participation*, 17.
- ²¹⁵ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, Rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 445-46.
- ²¹⁶ Brockwell, "Augustine's Ideal of Monastic Community."
- ²¹⁷ Tarsicius J. Van Bavel, introduction to Augustine, *The Rule of Saint Augustine*, trans. Raymond Canning (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1986), 8.
- ²¹⁸ Van Bavel, introduction to Augustine, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, 7.
- ²¹⁹ Van Bavel, introduction to Augustine, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, 7.
- ²²⁰ Van Bavel, introduction to Augustine, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, 7.
- ²²¹ Augustine, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, sec. 1.
- ²²² Augustine, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, sec. 2.
- ²²³ Augustine, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, sec. 3.2.
- ²²⁴ Augustine, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, sec. 3.
- ²²⁵ Augustine, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, sec. 4.
- ²²⁶ Augustine, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, sec. 5, quotation from 5.2.
- ²²⁷ Augustine, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, sec. 6.
- ²²⁸ Augustine, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, sec. 7.
- ²²⁹ Augustine, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, sec. 8.
- ²³⁰ For example, from *Confessions* XII.x.10: "O may it be the Truth, the light of my heart, not my own darkness, that speaks to me. ... I will drink at this fountain, and I will live by it. Let me not be my own life: badly have I lived from myself: I was death to myself: in you I live again. Speak to me, speak with me. I have believed in your books, and their words are most full of mystery."
- ²³¹ I Corinthians 3:22-23.
- ²³² Matthew 12:40; John 3:14.
- ²³³ John 12:20; Acts 9:4.
- ²³⁴ 2 Corinthians 1:20.
- ²³⁵ Romans 15:4.
- ²³⁶ I Corinthians 10:6-7.
- ²³⁷ II Timothy 3:16-17.
- ²³⁸ Augustine, *Rule of Saint Augustine*, sec. 3.2, p. 14.
- ²³⁹ I Samuel 3:1.
- ²⁴⁰ Jeremiah 15:16.
- ²⁴¹ I Corinthians 4:20.
- ²⁴² I Corinthians 5: 4.
- ²⁴³ Acts 5:1-11.
- ²⁴⁴ For example, Moses' request to God in Exodus 33 that He not remove His presence from the people, for then their whole identity would be lost.
- ²⁴⁵ Acts 4:31.
- ²⁴⁶ Luke 24: 15-16, 25-27, 30-31.

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