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Article

2014

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## Resisting Idolatry and Instrumentalisation in Loving the Neighbour: The Significance of the Pilgrimage Motif for Augustine's "Usus–Fruitio" Distinction

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### How to cite

STEWART-KROEKER, Sarah. Resisting Idolatry and Instrumentalisation in Loving the Neighbour: The Significance of the Pilgrimage Motif for Augustine's 'Usus–Fruitio' Distinction. In: Studies in Christian Ethics, 2014, vol. 27, n° 2, p. 202–221. doi: 10.1177/0953946813514012

This publication URL: <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch//unige:100789>

Publication DOI: [10.1177/0953946813514012](https://doi.org/10.1177/0953946813514012)

Resisting Idolatry and Instrumentalisation in Loving the Neighbour:  
The Significance of the Pilgrimage Motif for Augustine's *Usus-Fruitio*  
Distinction

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This article addresses Augustine's distinction between *usus* and *fruitio* – and O'Donovan's critique of it – in order to consider the dangers of disordered love in the forms of idolatry and instrumentalisation in neighbourly relations on earth. Examining the Christological heart of the pilgrimage image as articulated in *De doctrina Christiana* addresses O'Donovan's critique that the pilgrimage image instrumentalises one's relationships to others in the progress of one's own journey to God. In fact, this image presents a Christological dialectic that establishes the continuity of earthly and eschatological neighbour-love and thus protects the neighbour from being made either idol or instrument by securing their right place in the order of love.

Keywords: Augustine, Christology, *De doctrina Christiana*, neighbour-love, O'Donovan, pilgrimage, use and enjoyment.

The driving concern of the *usus-fruitio* distinction for Augustine is how human beings are to relate to themselves, to their neighbours, to earthly goods, and to God. The distinction is subject to the complex demands of accounting for human relations across several planes of lived reality: objects or goods, people, God. At times, Augustine employs the distinction narrowly, in order to contrast earthly goods and God. At other times, he stretches the distinction to accommodate the intricacy of human relationships with each other and with God. Discussion of the distinction by Augustine and by subsequent scholars is marked by fear of idolatry and of instrumentalisation, the poles toward which disordered human loves are drawn. On the one hand, one risks idolising the things of this world and allowing human love to rest in them as their final resting place, inhibiting the pursuit of true happiness in God. On the other, one risks making the things of this world (including the people in it) instruments in the individual's advance to beatific fulfilment. Augustine is primarily concerned with the former possibility; contemporary readers of him primarily with the latter.

Yet Augustine is not unconcerned with the possibility of instrumentalisation, although this is a modern term foreign to his thought. As his account of the "unnamed friend" reveals, he is familiar with the human tendency to make other people into objects for the satisfaction of one's own desires. The apparently opposite poles of idolatry and instrumentalisation betray a magnetic attraction: the problem with idolatry is precisely that it instrumentalises and objectifies what the self loves for its own pleasure and consumption. Idolatry and instrumentalisation cannot be divorced or simply opposed as concerns; idolatry itself contains an instrumental aspect of which Augustine is not unaware (yet which much contemporary scholarship overlooks). An excessive emphasis on idolatry or instrumentalisation without acknowledgment of their interrelation is likely to create problems in our ordering of loves. Contemporary readers may claim that Augustine is overly concerned with idolatry, opening up the problem of instrumentalisation, but Augustine may turn out to be a greater resource in this problem than the torrent of twentieth century criticism suggests.<sup>1</sup> He may also remind us of the dangers of falling too far on the side of a concern with instrumentalisation without a corresponding concern for idolatry. How are neighbour-love and divine love to be reconciled without falling into either pole of idolatry or instrumentalisation? Tackling Augustine on the *usus-fruitio* distinction may aid us in envisioning how such a reconciliation might be achieved.

The ongoing scholarly debate over the *usus-fruitio* distinction has been defined in recent years by the work of Oliver O'Donovan: the book, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine*,<sup>2</sup> and the article, "Usus and *Fruitio* in Augustine, *De*

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<sup>1</sup> Since Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros*, Augustine's Platonic eudaemonism has been subject to intense criticism for the same concerns that mark the *usus-fruitio* debate and the journey image within it: the subordination of temporal goods and creatures – most egregiously, fellow human beings – to the solitary search for blissful union with God, resulting in a self-serving acquisitive form of love.

The criticism of Augustine on this point is so dominant as to be a twentieth century scholarly commonplace, however, notable critical voices in addition to Nygren include Josef Brechtken, Hannah Arendt, Martha Nussbaum, and as noted by Eric Gregory, Timothy P. Jackson, Paul Ramsey and Robert M. Adams. See Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 319-335.

<sup>2</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven: Yale, 1980).

*doctrina Christiana* I.”<sup>3</sup> O’Donovan’s driving critical allegation is that the early articulation of the *usus-fruitio* distinction in *De doctrina Christiana* I is a misstep, wisely thereafter abandoned. O’Donovan claims that by applying the distinction as he does to people, Augustine instrumentalises fellow human beings as means to the individual’s beatific end. Many insightful responses to O’Donovan’s work have since been made by Augustine scholars, especially in challenging the claim that the *usus-fruitio* distinction may be regarded as a means-end schema.<sup>4</sup> Yet a feature of his critique remains largely unaddressed, which is his identification of the pilgrimage motif as a primary source of the instrumentalising tendency in Augustine’s *usus-fruitio* distinction.<sup>5</sup> Linked to this critique is his charge that it is the eschatological (as opposed to ontological) framework for ordering loves, epitomised by the pilgrimage motif, which introduces the problematic instrumentalism of the distinction.

O’Donovan presents us with two linked challenges. The first is whether his portrayal of the pilgrimage motif as instrumentalising is accurate; the second

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<sup>3</sup> Oliver O’Donovan, ‘*Usus and Fruitio in Augustine, De doctrina Christiana* I’, *Journal of Theological Studies* 33 (1981), pp. 361-397. The book is a broader examination of Augustine on love, therefore in this paper I restrict myself to the focused critique of the *usus-fruitio* distinction found in the article.

<sup>4</sup> These include both direct responses to O’Donovan and responses to the means-ends critique of which he has been the most dominant recent scholarly voice. To name a few: T.J. van Bavel, ‘*Fruitio, delectatio and voluptas in Augustine*’, *Augustinus* 38 (1993), pp. 499-510; John Bowlin, ‘Augustine Counting Virtues’, *Augustinian Studies* 41.1 (2010), pp. 277-300; Raymond Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine* (Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993); Kevin Corrigan, ‘Love of God, Love of Self, and Love of Neighbor: Augustine’s Critical Dialogue with Platonism’, *Augustinian Studies* 34.1 (2003), pp. 97-106; William Riordan O’Connor, ‘The *Uti/Frui* Distinction in Augustine’s Ethics’, *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983), pp. 45-62; Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Walter Hannam, ‘*Ad illud ubi permanendum est: The Metaphysics of St Augustine’s usus-fruitio Distinction in relation to Love of Neighbour*’, *Studia patristica* 38 (2001), pp. 169-173; Rowan Williams, “‘Good for Nothing’? Augustine on Creation.” *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994): 9-24; and Luc Verheijen, ‘Le premier livre du *De doctrina christiana* d’Augustin: Un traité de ‘télicologie’ biblique’, *Augustiniana Traiectina* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1987), pp. 169-187.

<sup>5</sup> Scholars who respond to O’Donovan’s critique of the *usus-fruitio* distinction have not substantively challenged his critique of the pilgrimage motif. Some, as for example William Riordan O’Connor, reiterate it: O’Connor claims that the humans-as-instruments implication is “reinforced by the various means/ends analogies [Augustine] uses to contrast use and enjoyment,” the “most important of [which] is the ‘journey image of *De Doctrina Christiana* I, 4.” O’Connor, “*Uti/Frui*,” p. 57 Earlier in the article he makes an even stronger statement to this effect: “[t]hat [human beings] are mere instruments is the clear implication of the journey image that Augustine employs.” O’Connor, “*Uti/Frui*,” p. 52

is whether his division of the eschatological and ontological frameworks makes sense of Augustine's thought. I will posit that the pilgrimage motif is more complex than O'Donovan has allowed, and that it does not straightforwardly support a purely instrumentalist order of love. My presentation of the pilgrimage motif will reframe the eschatological ordering of love as a necessary complement to the ontological on the terms of O'Donovan's argument, but I further claim that they are not distinct frameworks at all but interwoven threads in a unified Augustinian framework that is fundamentally Christological. Finally, I contend that this integrity of the ontological and eschatological threads of Augustine's thought, united in a Christological dialectic, addresses both the concern for idolatry of earthly goods and earthly friends, as well as the concern for turning those friends into mere instruments. As we shall see, it is precisely by loving the neighbour in God that neighbours are loved not as objects manipulated for satisfying the self's desires but in themselves and as fellow pilgrims. Responding to O'Donovan's critique will allow us to explore the heart of the concern with idolatry and instrumentalisation while addressing the oft-noted but substantively-neglected pilgrimage motif of the *usus-fruitio* distinction.

### I. O'Donovan's Critique

The pilgrimage motif appears at several points throughout the first book of *De doctrina Christiana*. It likens the Christian life on earth to a journey to the homeland, one in which the Christian sojourner must "use" – but not "enjoy" – the road, the vehicles, the pleasures of travelling itself. This imagery typifies the sort of passage that contemporary readers find distasteful and even repugnant about the *usus-fruitio* distinction and its implications for Augustine's understanding of the Christian's relationship to the world (and especially love relationships between human beings). The concern about the instrumentalisation of creation in the *usus-fruitio* distinction emerges primarily from the transcendent

eschatological<sup>6</sup> nature of Augustine's understanding of love, readily evident in the pilgrimage motif.<sup>7</sup>

Augustine's eschatology seems to imply a denial of the world that obscures and degrades the things and people in it, subordinating them to the ultimate goal of beatific union with God. O'Donovan contrasts the ontological framework for the order of love with the eschatological, associating the eschatological with the problematic subordination of the neighbour as a means to an otherworldly end. The ontological order of love reflects the given order of being in which some things are appropriate objects of use and others of enjoyment according to their ontological status. O'Donovan claims that, "[u]nderstood within such an ontological framework, 'use' loses its offensive instrumental sense."<sup>8</sup> In the ontological resolution of the "outstanding tension between the twofold command of love in the New Testament and the monist principle that God alone is to be loved," "'use' becomes a subordinate form of love, appropriate to the ontologically subordinate being whom we are commanded to love after God, the neighbour."<sup>9</sup> In the ontological framework, according to O'Donovan, use-love and enjoyment are thus coherently – and inoffensively – distinguished and yet unified in a cosmological ordering of the universe in which creature and Creator are ontologically distinct, but necessarily in relationship.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Transcendence is a slippery term, as it has been used pejoratively to describe Augustine's intellectual flight from the world and an ascetical denial of the world for the sake of higher spiritual things. I use it to refer to this pejorative perception, but I also use the term to describe simply the movement of *referral* to God and to the eschatologically-anticipated divine beatitude, which I claim has a complementary immanent reality. I describe Augustine's understanding of love as eschatological, rather than teleological, because Augustine's teleology is fundamentally eschatological: the *telos* of human life is the eternal life of resurrected humanity with the triune God.

<sup>7</sup> As M.A. Claussen asserts in his survey of the *peregrinatio* literature, "'Peregrinatio' and 'Peregrini' in Augustine's 'City of God'", *Traditio* 46 (1991), pp. 33-75, Augustinian *peregrinatio* "is not simply a way to pass the time; it is a very serious business indeed," which "seeks a goal: to arrive as a full citizen *in illa stabilitate sedis aeternae*." These two aspects "make *peregrinatio* both transcendent and teleological."<sup>7</sup> Claussen, "'Peregrinatio,'" p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> O'Donovan, '*Usus and Fruitio*', p. 396.

<sup>9</sup> O'Donovan, '*Usus and Fruitio*', p. 383.

<sup>10</sup> O'Donovan describes the ontological framework as the case in which "the difference between *usus* and *fruitio* is given wholly by the ontological relation of their objects: 'use' of the neighbour and 'enjoyment' of God happen simultaneously." O'Donovan, '*Usus and Fruitio*', p. 383.

In the eschatological framework, according to O'Donovan, the distinction between use and enjoyment is found in a person's progress from this life to the next, such that "*fruitio* succeeds to *usus* as his pilgrimage comes to an end in heavenly bliss."<sup>11</sup> The eschatological framework instrumentalises *usus* as the earthly means to attaining heavenly *fruitio*. O'Donovan claims that there is in Augustine a fundamental tension between the ontological sense of use and "the more long-standing instrumental [sense of use], which focuses on the idea of a journey to the eschatological fatherland."<sup>12</sup> For O'Donovan, the homeland pilgrimage imagery illustrates the morally repugnant aspects of applying the *usus-fruitio* distinction to the question of neighbour-love in an eschatological framework. According to O'Donovan, Augustine attempts to make neighbour-love a form of *usus* in order to accommodate the distinction to the twofold love command, but ultimately abandons this formulation due to its instrumental overtones.

O'Donovan describes the ontological framework in *De doctrina Christiana* as the ordering of the *usus-fruitio* distinction regarding three kinds of things: things for use (earthly goods), things for enjoyment (God), and things for both use and enjoyment (human beings). These distinctions correspond to an ontological order appropriate to creation, Creator, and the special kinds of creatures human beings are. But, he claims, this ontological framework is undermined by the eschatological: "[t]he analogy of the soul's journey to its fatherland, making use of 'vehicles' on the way, has hardly taken seriously the task of placing the human subject in its proper position on the scale of being."<sup>13</sup> Rather, the eschatological framework presents the human being "as an amphibious creature, moving freely out of the sphere of the temporal into that of the eternal."<sup>14</sup> In the eschatological framework, the human being is involved in a pilgrim's progress from one state to another. The human sojourner on earth occupies the temporal realm of *usus*, while moving toward and awaiting in hope

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<sup>11</sup> O'Donovan, '*Usus and Fruitio*', p. 383-84.

<sup>12</sup> O'Donovan, '*Usus and Fruitio*', p. 383.

<sup>13</sup> O'Donovan, '*Usus and Fruitio*', p. 384.

<sup>14</sup> O'Donovan, '*Usus and Fruitio*', p. 384.

the eternal realm of *fruitio*. In both the ontological and eschatological frameworks, *usus* is subordinated to *fruitio*; the difference consists in the nature of the subordination. For O'Donovan, the ontological subordination avoids the divide between this world and the next, and thus a means-ends schema in which means are instruments or tools that drop away in the attainment of the end.

O'Donovan notes that Augustine forms an equation between *usus* and *fruitio* and forms of love: "*usus=diligere propter aliud, fruitio=diligere propter se.*"<sup>15</sup> This allows Augustine to qualify *usus* as a form of love and to apply it to human beings, thereby forming "the bridge between the twofold love-command and the twofold distinction between the use of temporal things and the enjoyment of eternal things."<sup>16</sup> O'Donovan's assertion is that the conflation or bridge between the *diligere propter aliud-propter se* distinction and *usus-fruitio* distinction was a mistake. *Usus* is ultimately mired in instrumental associations in Augustine's thought and cannot accommodate a purely ontological framework in which human beings are not problematically reduced to instruments.

According to O'Donovan, the problematic instrumental sense of *usus* is most evidently illustrated in the pilgrimage motif, which Augustine persistently associates with the "'use' of the world...in which the object of use is assumed merely temporarily and without commitment."<sup>17</sup> In conclusion, O'Donovan claims that "the context for the term 'use' indicates a predominantly instrumental sense, which is reinforced by its connection with the pilgrimage motif."<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, "although [Augustine] undertakes to establish a strong ontological context for the pair *usus-fruitio*, the pilgrimage motif reasserts itself, so that the instrumental sense of 'use' remains alive."<sup>19</sup> O'Donovan thus closely ties an inherent instrumentalism in the pilgrimage motif with Augustine's eschatological deployment of the *usus* category, and calls the whole thing misguided. For O'Donovan, *usus* is tainted with instrumentalism as a result of its persistent

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<sup>15</sup> O'Donovan, 'Usus and Fruitio', p. 386.

<sup>16</sup> This is "the cardinal assertion, daring and contentious, of *De doctrina Christiana i.*" O'Donovan, 'Usus and Fruitio', p. 386.

<sup>17</sup> O'Donovan, 'Usus and Fruitio', p. 393.

<sup>18</sup> O'Donovan, 'Usus and Fruitio', p. 396.

<sup>19</sup> O'Donovan, 'Usus and Fruitio', p. 397.



association with the eschatological framework and its hallmark, the pilgrimage motif. Despite Augustine's attempts to redefine "use" along ontological lines, the eschatological association of "use" with the pilgrimage motif undermines the attempt. O'Donovan claims that *usus* (and presumably the pilgrimage motif) must be discarded as a characterisation of human love relationships as a result.<sup>20</sup>

O'Donovan's critique is powerful, as evidenced by the scholarly response. It is certainly true that the pilgrimage motif features prominently in the eschatological aspect of Augustine's thought. It is also true that the pilgrimage motif, particularly in certain of its articulations, lends itself to an instrumentalising reading. But in most instances, the motif is a great deal more varied and nuanced than O'Donovan allows; it is not *merely* eschatological, in the impoverished pejorative sense in which O'Donovan seems to employ the term, nor is Augustine's eschatology separable from his ontology such that distinct frameworks may be opposed to one another. It is more apt to speak of ontological and eschatological threads of Augustine's thought, which work intimately and reciprocally together, unified in a Christological framework for understanding love, happiness, and the end we seek.

## II. Temporal Goods, Ontological Order and Providence

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<sup>20</sup> O'Donovan goes on to claim that there is an implicit distinction between Augustine's employment of "use" and "enjoying one another in God", supported by the fact that Augustine does not continue to use the term "use" for love relationships between human beings. I agree with Luc Verheijen, however, that the heavenly *frui in Deo* is matched by an anticipatory *frui* of human beings in this life, and that human beings are capable of a true though incomplete and imperfect *frui proximo in Deo*. Luc Verheijen, "'Télicologie' biblique", pp. 169-187. I also agree with Raymond Canning that O'Donovan's claim that Augustine abandons *usus* as a category for neighbor-love is overstated. Even if Augustine never again engages in an explicit treatment of *usus*-love for the neighbor, it is clear that in his later theology (Canning cites *De civitate Dei* 15.7), Augustine still believes that right *uti* orders our earthly loves and right *frui* orders our heavenly ones and that therefore neighbor-love (and I would add, the love of temporal goods insofar as they fall within the providential ordering of the cosmos for harmonious union with God), which belongs to both heavenly and earthly realms, remains subject to both *usus* and *fruitio*. Canning, *Unity of Love*, pp. 114-115. The argument I will make in this paper for the Christological dialectic of the pilgrimage motif supports these readings by proposing that the incarnate mediation establishes the continuity of the heavenly and earthly realms and the integral reciprocity of the ontological and eschatological elements of the distinction.

I turn now to the pilgrimage motif, which makes several important appearances in *De doctrina Christiana* I. The first mention of the journey image in *De doctrina Christiana* occurs almost immediately and typifies the offending articulation of the image:

Supposing then that we were exiles in a foreign land, and could only live happily in our own country, and that being unhappy in exile we longed to put an end to our unhappiness and to return to our own country, we would of course need land vehicles or sea-going vessels, which we would have to make use of in order to be able to reach our own country, where we could find true enjoyment. And then suppose we were delighted with the pleasures of the journey, and with the very experience of being conveyed in carriages or ships, and that we were converted to enjoying what we ought to have been using, and were unwilling to finish the journey quickly, and that by being perversely captivated by such agreeable experiences we lost interest in our own country, where alone we could find real happiness in its agreeable familiarity. Well that's how it is in this mortal life in which are exiles away from the Lord; if we wish to return to our home country, where alone we can be truly happy, we have to use this world, not enjoy it, so that we may behold the invisible things of God, brought to our knowledge through the things that have been made; that is, so that we may proceed from temporal and bodily things to grasp those that are eternal and spiritual.<sup>21</sup>

The first thing to note here is that the image regards the appropriate human relations to earthly goods; the discussion as to appropriate human relationships of love between neighbors has not yet been developed. Augustine's primary concern in this passage is not with how the travellers relate to one another – indeed, that they are travelling *together* is presupposed (note the plural “we”) – but how they experience the journey and relate to its pleasures. Enjoying temporal things

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<sup>21</sup> Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City, 1996), I.4.4.

mistakenly reflects a failure to grasp the order of temporal and eternal reality. In this sense, the movement is an epistemological one: by gaining knowledge of the invisible things of God in relation to things made, we learn to recognise the order of reality accurately. In this image there is clearly a sense in which certain things (land vehicles and sea-going vessels) are used as instruments - specifically with the epistemological aim of coming to grasp eternal realities. These instruments serve for the voyage but will no longer be needed in the home country, where God will be known and loved fully. To know and to love rightly are interconnected: the recognition of the ontological status of an object is critical to loving rightly, for ultimately human happiness consists in knowing and enjoying God. Augustine coordinates grasping and enjoying eternal realities.

If we resist reacting viscerally to this passage, it makes some sense of our relationship to temporal goods. I might delight in a car because it allows me to get from one place to another, and I enjoy the passing scenery, the wind in my hair, the sense of freedom it allows. This delight becomes problematic, however, if I love the car so much that I wish to devote a great deal of my time and energy to the car merely for its own sake to the detriment of my other obligations and relationships. Imagine that I were to love my car so much that I began to sleep in it, for example – not as travellers sometimes do for expediency's sake, or those without homes for necessity's sake, but purely for the sake of sleeping in the car I love so dearly, wishing to extend unto sleep the luxuriating experience of the scent and feel of its leather, the power of its engine cased in steel ready to fire upon ignition, the aesthetic pleasure of its multiple gages and the flowing lines of the dashboard, windshield, wheel. Surely we would think there was something wrong with me. Loving temporal goods this way – excessively, solipsistically – is unseemly, but worse than that, Augustine says, it is wrong. It will stunt our growth and derail us from our true aim: coming to a full embrace of God, full in knowledge and full in love. This coheres with the notion of ascent present in this passage, of proceeding *from* temporal bodily things *to* eternal spiritual things.

These temporal goods are to be used in the more instrumental sense of the term, although even this does not preclude finding pleasure and delight in them.<sup>22</sup>

Augustine's concern here is that we might begin to delight excessively in the journey itself and as a result might lose our way or stop altogether, forsaking the ultimate goal in pursuit of the pleasures of travel. Augustine is worried about treating things of this life on the same ontological level as God, which reflects a flawed understanding of the world. In an ontological framework, there is an order of being that defines the appropriate relationship to an object: "[e]njoyment, after all, consists in clinging to something lovingly [*amore inhaerere*] for its own sake, while use consists in referring what has come your way to what your love aims at obtaining [*quod amas obtinendum referre*]."<sup>23</sup> If a thing is loved for its own sake, it is loved as the source of happiness, but only God is the source of true happiness. This is consistent with and grounded upon Augustine's ontological distinction between creature and Creator and their relationship, a distinction that undergirds the differences in human and divine forms of "use" and the uniqueness of human "enjoyment" as participation in the divine life.

For Augustine, only the Creator is to be enjoyed *propter se*, as the aim of all loving. But this is not a merely static onto-metaphysical state of affairs to be recognised and obeyed, although this recognition founds the possibility of loving rightly. The ontological ordering of love involves a corresponding dynamic vision of human moral purification through the gifts of divine providence, a distinctly eschatological element, which in fact vivifies the relations of love as belonging to the salvific drama. Take another journeying passage from later in *De doctrina* I:

So in order that we might know how to do this and be able to [love things rightly], the whole ordering of time was arranged by divine providence for our salvation. This we should be making use of with a certain love and delight [*quadam dilectione et delectatione*] that is not, so to say, permanently settled in, but transitory, rather, and casual, like love and

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<sup>22</sup> As T.J. van Bavel demonstrates in "*Fruitio, delectatio and voluptas in Augustine*," *Augustinus* 38 (1993): 505-06.

<sup>23</sup> Augustine, *DDC* I.4.4.

delight in a road, or in vehicles, or any other tools and gadgets you like, or if you can think of any better way of putting it, so that we love [*diligamus*] the means by which we are being carried along, on account of the goal to which we are being carried.<sup>24</sup>

Note the dynamism of this image, the sense of movement and of impetus; here Augustine does not hesitate to say that there is a love and a delight in the road and in vehicles, which reflects the development of the *usus-fruitio* discussion between this appearance and the first. Part of this has to do with the fact that the road has been identified with Christ (a crucial point to which we will return), and that Augustine has introduced the notion of providence, for God's gifts are to be received with joy.

The ordering of our time on earth and the gifts of divine providence within it elicits love and delight. Loving rightly involves a recognition of the "whole ordering of time" arranged by divine providence. *Usus* must be read in its connection to the gifts of divine providence, as the relationship appropriate to them.<sup>25</sup> But the road and the vehicles, the temporal realities, are loved and delighted in not as places to rest permanently but along the way to the homeland, just as God's providence sustains creation *unto* redemption. For Augustine, the problem is not love and delight in these objects *per se*, but inappropriately

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<sup>24</sup> Augustine, *DDC* I.35.39. Only God is to be *enjoyed*, but here Augustine begins to complicate the distinction between use and enjoyment such that *love* (in various forms) is involved in both use and enjoyment relationships. Note that Augustine describes this "love" of temporal goods as *dilectione* and *delectatione* – not *amor*, as when he talks about enjoying God – and that we only love (active verb *diligamus*) temporal goods on account of the goal. This is important because he later says that only human beings and angels are to be loved (*diligenda sunt*), which distinguishes people from temporal goods. So temporal goods may be used with a certain love (*dilectione*) and delight (*delectatione*) and may even be loved (*diligamus*) on account of the goal, but only people and angels are to be loved (*diligenda sunt*) full stop, and as we shall see (citation 28) they may be enjoyed (*perfruamur*) in God. Augustine is not systematic in his use of language and so the way to make sense of these distinctions is to pay attention to the applications of the concepts. The application of the active verb *diligere* indicates a love that involves companionship (see footnote 27), which is inappropriate to temporal goods. But temporal goods may be loved on account of the goal. The subtlety of this distinction, rather than denigrating human relationships and the particular kind of companionship implied in their love, enhances the status of temporal goods as belonging to our social existence in a way that cannot be easily extricated from the companionship of human love.

<sup>25</sup> A point developed by Ragnar Holte, *Béatitude et Sagesse* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1962) and picked up by Raymond Canning.

establishing them as permanent abodes. In this sense, the eschatological framework is crucial to understanding the living dynamism of human love on earth, and indeed it softens what might otherwise be a static ontological divide. We may delight in the ordering of the world and our loves according to the movement of divine providence. The quality of our attachment in the vital context of our lives, and not just the ontological status of the object in an order of being, matters for the moral quality of our loves. We love “on account of” the goal, and the goal is ordered for our salvation, for our flourishing. A great many aspects of our earthly lives might fall within that providential ordering – including earthly goods – and thus may be loved on account of their role in drawing us along the road to God. The epistemological recognition of the ontological framework clarifies that these objects are not to be loved as if they were the true source of our happiness (mistakenly), but the eschatological framework allows them to be loved as part of the providential ordering of the earthly life for human participation in the divine life. Knowing eternal realities allows one to recognise the ontological ordering of the world and thus to love things rightly within it. But the controversial crux of the *usus-fruitio* distinction and the pilgrimage imagery concerns not earthly goods so much as human neighbours: to this we now turn.

### III. The Collective End: Neighbour-love and Inclusive Eschatology

The interpretation of the pilgrimage motif and its eschatological tones as instrumentalising depends upon the idea that people are signified as vehicles in the same way that temporal goods are.<sup>26</sup> While the instrumentalisation of creation or earthly goods may still be regarded as problematic, the urgent concern of the *usus-fruitio* debate is the status of human relationships. The question is whether human beings are included in the category of objects that serve merely as “vessels” or “vehicles” carrying us along the way to our ultimate aim. The implication of describing the relationship to both human beings and temporal

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<sup>26</sup> Although as we have seen, Augustine allows a certain delight in the providential ordering of time which may be seen to include these temporal goods insofar as they are part of it, and an argument can be made for a more robust valuing of temporal goods.

goods as “use” initially suggests a continuity between them in terms of being vessels.

But Augustine makes it quite clear that people are not used in the same way that temporal goods are. We may find a certain delight in temporal goods, but only human beings are to be *loved*, which Augustine claims is very close to enjoyment.<sup>27</sup> Most importantly, unlike temporal goods, neighbors may enjoy one another in God. In this connection, let us examine another journeying image. This passage directly follows the critical line, “the supreme reward is that we should enjoy [God] and that *all of us who enjoy him should also enjoy one another in him [nobis etiam inuicem in ipso perfruamur]*”<sup>28</sup>:

Because if we do that in ourselves, we are standing still on the road, and placing all our hopes of bliss in human beings, or angels. This is a position proud people and proud angels arrogate to themselves, and they are delighted when others place all their hopes in them. But holy people and holy angels, even when we are longing out of weariness to stay still and find our rest in them, prefer rather to provide us simply with refreshment, whether from the fare for the journey they have received for us, or even from what they have received for themselves—but ‘received’ is the word. And so they urge us, thus refreshed, to continue on the way toward the one by enjoying whom we will share their bliss on equal terms.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Augustine writes, “only those [things] which can be related to God *together with ourselves in a kind of social companionship*” (*DDC* I.23.22, emphasis added) are to be both used and loved (*diligenda sunt*). He includes in that category human beings, their bodies, and angels. He does blur the distinction between people and temporal goods to some extent, insofar as he speaks of loving the whole ordering of time on account of the goal (footnote 24). The relationship of love and delight is not systematically parsed with regards to people as opposed to temporal goods, for as noted above, he speaks of loving and delighting in things as the gifts of providence, and he claims, “Although, as a matter of fact, there is a closely related sense of ‘enjoy,’ meaning ‘to use with delight.’ [*cum dilectione uti*] When something that is loved, after all, is available to you, delight is also bound to accompany it.” Augustine, *DDC* I.33.37. This parallels the earlier citation and commentary from footnote 24. The distinction between goods and people remains insofar as Augustine speaks of loving temporal goods on account of the goal, whereas Augustine speaks of loving people full stop – and further, only human beings are *enjoyed* (*perfruamur*) in God.

<sup>28</sup> Augustine, *DDC* I.32.35, emphasis added.

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *DDC* I.33.36.

Augustine has well established that we cannot find our permanent rest in human beings *qua* human beings; this is to “stand still,” self-defeatingly, for in so doing we attempt to stand still in what is necessarily moving, shifting and changing around us. But note the relationship he describes between the pilgrims and “holy people and holy angels,” who help us along the way to that enjoyment of God and enjoyment of one another in God, providing encouragement and refreshment.<sup>30</sup> Not only is there here a picture of hospitality and support among the people of God but most importantly, the final line indicates the anticipation of a communal delight – the bliss that we will share on equal terms. This reflects the communal nature of the beatific aim.

The pilgrimage Augustine describes is not solitary and individual, an obstacle course in which one exploits goods and people to serve one’s own eschatological progress.<sup>31</sup> The defining activity of human beings is a movement of love toward a shared enjoyment of God and of one another in God. The end is communal, as is the journey to get there. Love, for Augustine, is fundamentally social in character, and aims not only at individual happiness but at the inclusive end of communal happiness.<sup>32</sup> The continuity of earthly and heavenly love is one of form and content. In form, the very structure of the pilgrimage image is that the way on earth leads to the homeland; the way there is a relational journey modeled on the incarnate Christ, who inhabits the temporal realm in order to form relations of love that bridge earth and heaven. In content, the fulfilment of earthly love (the love practiced on the way) is the collective participation in the divine life; the pilgrim’s homeland is that union of love in heaven. Structurally and substantively, therefore, the journey image reflects the continuity of earthly and heavenly love.

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<sup>30</sup> This image is echoed in *De Trinitate*: “If however something pleases the will in such a way that it rests in it with a certain delight, and yet is not the thing it is tending toward but is also referred to something else, it should be thought of not as the home country of a citizen but as refreshment, or even a night’s lodging for a traveler.” Augustine, *De Trinitate*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City, 1991), XI.10.

<sup>31</sup> As Claussen points out, “*peregrinatio* is a social, not an individual event.” Although “pilgrimage is often taken to be a somewhat solitary exercise, for Augustine, it is not.” Rather, it “is something the whole community of saints, whether among the impious or in heaven, does together.” Claussen, ““Peregrinatio,”” 43.

<sup>32</sup> William O’Connor thus calls this an “intersubjective eudaemonism.” O’Connor, “*Uti/Fruī*,” 60.



But even if we accept that the journey image reflects a collective voyage guided by an inclusive eschatology toward a shared beatitude, it still seems to imply a flight from this world, a devaluing of the temporal mediate realm as instrumental for the sake of the eternal (albeit an eternal fellowship). We have perhaps saved the eternal soul of the neighbour from devaluation but what does that mean for our life together on earth, as embodied mortal creatures?

There is no way around Augustine's deferral of full and complete happiness to eternity, such that our lives on earth are transitory and anticipatory. But this does not rob them of meaning, value, and delight. The providential ordering of our lives on earth establishes continuity between this life and the next; our human neighbours are our companions both on earth and in heaven. This continuity is encompassed in the journey image insofar as it describes a movement of ascent, but inherent and crucial to it is the notion of descent. The key to this aspect of Augustine's theology lies in the fundamentally Christological character of the pilgrimage motif, which draws together creation and redemption, ascent and descent, ontology and eschatology, into a salvific whole.

#### IV. The Christological Dialectic of the Pilgrimage Motif

The bulk of the journey images in *De doctrina Christiana* are in fact Christologically centered, for it is Christ who makes himself "the pavement under our feet along which we could return home."<sup>33</sup> In an extended metaphor of Christ as Wisdom, Augustine writes: "So since [Wisdom] herself is our home, she also made herself for us into the way home."<sup>34</sup> Christ is both the end and the way to get there, the home and the road, and the wayfarer who walks before and alongside his human followers. By being both human and divine he both creates and simply is the way (and the) home.

It is at this juncture that the full impact of the journey imagery in *De doctrina Christiana* emerges. For Augustine, the fellowship of human beings –

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<sup>33</sup> Augustine, *DDC* I.17.16.

<sup>34</sup> Augustine, *DDC* I.11.11.

with each other and with God – is possible only through Christ. Augustine’s understanding of the ordering of human loves cannot be evaluated apart from its Christological centre, which distinctly shifts his eudaemonism from its antique moorings. But Augustine’s Christ-oriented journey images vary in their emphases. At times he emphasises the earth-bound moral life of the Christian tied to very tangible images of Christ as the pavement upon which we walk, at other times he suggests that we pass beyond even the temporal aspects of Christ to reach the eternal God. This might be read as an inconsistency; I read it as a dialectic that reflects Augustine’s emphasis on Christ’s mediating role.

The strong emphasis on Christ’s mediation in Augustine’s thought allows for a reciprocal dynamism in the ongoing relationship between this life and the next – mortality and resurrection, temporality and eternity. The journey image remains in an important sense unidirectional, in that the ultimate hope for humanity is resurrection and eternal life with God. Augustine’s eschatology does not permit the journey to be a full circle (and nor should we wish it to be, if we desire eternal rest in God). Although in one sense for Augustine all movement in this world is a movement beyond the world, there is still meaning and value in human activity in this life precisely in its embodied engagement with the world – and this is displayed and established by Christ, who saves humanity for eternal life by living a human life in the world.

Christ moves toward us in the Incarnation, a movement from eternality to temporality, immortality to mortality, incorporeality to embodiment. He then journeys like us and with us, from birth to death, paving a road for us and walking it alongside us: Christ “is the one who wished to offer himself not only to be possessed by those who have arrived, but also to be the way there for those who have come to the beginning of the ways; that is, he wished to take flesh himself.”<sup>35</sup> There is a complementary “descent” to the imagery of “ascent” present in the pilgrimage motif, for Christ’s descent to us forms our moral life as embodied and relational, in continuity with the heavenly life in which both our bodies and our relationships of love will be perfected.

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<sup>35</sup> Augustine, *DDC* I.34.38.

In Christ's narrative and in our own, there is a succession of descent to ascent: we seek eschatological redemption. Yet it is also the nature of the pilgrimage that even as we move toward the beatific end, we are called to love the neighbour on earth; the continuity of earthly and heavenly love creates an interlocking momentum of ascent and descent in the span of our lives—drawing us upwards by grounding us and grounding us by drawing us upwards. The pilgrimage image clearly involves ascent, but the Christological nature of the pilgrimage motif inherently draws in the importance of earthly-heavenly mediation for our voyage to God, and therefore, of Christ's descent to us in time and flesh. In ascending to God in Christ, we must love as Christ loves, that is to say, incarnationally. Loving the God who becomes human for us means that *fruitio Dei* does not inhibit human action in the world or extricate it from the world but frees it by ordering it rightly in the world.<sup>36</sup>

We travel the road in Christ, seeking to know and love God. Yet in knowing God we know ourselves and others more truly, in loving God we must love our neighbours as ourselves, and this is a movement that grounds love in time from eternity. Our journey to God is not therefore simply a vertical movement above and beyond the world, but a movement toward one who took flesh himself in order to walk with us as a human being and show us how to walk in love with our fellow human beings. In the most strikingly tangible articulations of the Christological pilgrimage motif, Augustine asks:

what greater generosity and compassion could [Christ] show, after deliberately making himself the pavement under our feet along which we could return home, than to forgive us all our sins once we had turned back to him, and by being crucified for us to root out the ban blocking our return that had been so firmly fixed in place?<sup>37</sup>

Christ is not only the way, the road – he is the very “pavement under our feet.” The potency of Christ's mediation is here vividly expressed: for Augustine

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<sup>36</sup> A point made by Gregory: “Those beloved of God are set free, to a certain extent in this life, to love others.” Gregory, *POL*, p. 362.

<sup>37</sup> Augustine, *DDC* I.17.16.

the image of the paved road is an imperial one,<sup>38</sup> suggesting the power and vast infrastructure of the empire as well as humility and submission to the trampling of many feet. The relationship to Christ is therefore almost all-encompassing: Christ is king and servant, he is the one who walks first, to whom we walk toward, with whom we walk, whom we walk along. He is all things to us: road, way, home, wayfarer. Christ's descent and ascent are narratively distinct, but they are inextricably united in his role as mediator and in the life to which Christ calls us. We move toward our heavenly ascent but in doing so we must embody the incarnational descent of love. Thus the movements of descent and ascent are not successive, in that we are on a straightforward upward trajectory. Our trajectory, to be sure, is toward heaven, but it is not a simply ascending line. Not only does ascent require descent in the sense of living out the call to love in the world, but as human beings, we are constantly caught between the moral tension of divided wills and the ontological-eschatological tension between time and eternity, this life and the next. This tension is precisely what Christ assumes in the incarnation, not to abolish but to heal by unifying. The Christological aspect of the pilgrimage motif, in its association with *usus*, thus introduces the dynamic integrity of earthly and heavenly love, complicating O'Donovan's picture of the eschatological framework – and the pilgrimage motif – as the instrumental subordination of this world to the next.

This is not to deny that there are instances of the pilgrimage motif that appear to contradict this claim. One of its articulations in particular appears to instrumentalise the Incarnation, thus reinforcing a strongly theocentric vision of God. In so doing, this passage seems to discard the temporal, human reality of Jesus in favor of the eternal, incorporeal Godhead, and along with him all of those temporal, creaturely, particular realities I have been arguing are not subordinated by the *usus-fruitio* distinction:

For when you reach him, you also reach the Father, because it is through his equality that the one to whom he is equal can be recognised, with the Holy Spirit binding and so to say gluing us in there, so that we may abide

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<sup>38</sup> An insight I owe to conversation with Peter Brown.

for ever in that supreme and unchangeable good. From this it can readily be understood how nothing must be allowed to hold us back on the way, when even the Lord himself, insofar as he was prepared to be the way for us, did not wish us to hold onto him, but to pass along him. He did not wish us to cling feebly to any temporal things, even those he took to himself and carried for our salvation, but rather to run eagerly along and through them, and so deserve to be swiftly and finally conveyed to him himself, where he has deposited our nature, freed from all temporal conditions, at the right hand of the Father.<sup>39</sup>

The aim is eternal life in the bosom of the Trinity, and to this end we cannot become excessively focused even on Jesus. This articulation of the image seems to make the incarnate Jesus a mere conduit for reaching the (immanent) Trinity. This passage typifies the thread of world-denying asceticism in Augustine's thought offensive to modern sensibilities. But this is part of Augustine's Christology of mediation: insofar as Jesus Christ is human, we love him with the use-love appropriate to humanity. Insofar as Jesus Christ is both human and divine, however, he unites use-love and enjoyment simultaneously, so as to deny a straightforward progression from temporality to eternity.

Indeed, already in the second instance of the journey imagery in *De doctrina Christiana*, Augustine begins to complicate the pilgrimage motif from its initial appearance as a kind of model for Christian progression beyond the earthly life:

Those, however, who do see [the light of the sun] and run away from it, have had the sharpness of their minds blunted by growing accustomed to the dark shadows of the flesh. So people are beaten back from their home country, as it were, by the contrary winds of crooked habits, going in pursuit of things that are inferior and secondary to what they admit is better and more worthwhile. That is why, since we are meant to enjoy that truth which is unchangeably alive, and since it is in its light that God the

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<sup>39</sup> Augustine, *DDC* I.34.38.

Trinity, author and maker of the universe, provides for all the things he has made, our minds have to be purified, to enable them to perceive that light, and to cling to it once perceived. We should think of this purification process as being a kind of walk, a kind of voyage to our home country. We do not draw near, after all, by movement in place to the one who is present everywhere, but by honest commitment and good behavior.<sup>40</sup>

Augustine describes the journey as internal in terms of the purification of the mind (recall the epistemological element of the journey from section II), but he also emphasises the importance of habit and behaviour in drawing near to God, and associates purification with walking as a concrete activity. Clinging to the light requires drawing near through the tangible activities of righting our crooked habits, of walking the paths of moral discipline. If we wish to know and love God, we must take seriously the mundane moral work of the voyage as an embodied undertaking.

For Augustine, the journey moves toward a vision of the Triune God, and it is both an internal ascent<sup>41</sup> as well as an enactment of the earthly moral commitments of honesty and good behaviour. It involves real movement, not only of the mind but of the body. “Of this we would be quite incapable,” Augustine writes, “unless Wisdom [Christ] herself had seen fit to adapt herself to such infirmity as ours, and had given us an example of how to live, in no other mode than the human one, because we too are human.”<sup>42</sup> We would be incapable of making these tangible movements of honest commitment and good behaviour

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<sup>40</sup> Augustine, *DDC* I.9.9-10.10.

<sup>41</sup> An example from *De doctrina Christiana* that more closely reflects the notion of a “movement in place”: “Furthermore, we are still on the way, a way however not from place to place, but one traveled by the affections. And it was being blocked, as by a barricade of thorn bushes, by the malice of our past sins.” Augustine, *DDC* I.17.16. We see the dialectic at play here; Augustine wants to refute the Neo-Platonic model of an emphasis on the journey of the mind as an extrication from the life of the body, and at the same time to refute the classical emphasis on self-mastery as the management of our actions, neglecting the internal affections, as sufficient for the reorientation of our moral behaviour.

<sup>42</sup> Augustine, *DDC* I.11.11. Augustine throughout this section speaks of Christ in the feminine as Wisdom. “How did she [Wisdom] come, if not by the Word becoming flesh and dwelling amongst us?” Augustine, *DDC* I.13.12.

if Christ did not come to us in the incarnation and give us an example of how to live. Thus the purifying walk requires the incarnate Christ, whom we are called to model.

Christ's becoming flesh and dwelling amongst us establishes the importance of the specificity, particularity, temporality and distinctiveness of our earthly loves in loving and seeking God. The humanity of Jesus and his life on earth is marked by distinct interactions with people encountered in time and space and relationships of love developed with particular friends. Loving the neighbour takes on a concrete, temporal and earthly reality not only as a love command issued from on high, and not only modeled on earth for us by the God-man, but enacted by him in relationship with us. Jesus Christ as the mediator loves the neighbour in God, as God.<sup>43</sup>

Christ as the ontological mediator bridges the divide between temporal mortal creature and eternal incorporeal Creator. As the eschatological mediator of this life and the next, he bridges the providential ordering of time and the eternal redemption of humanity for participation in the divine life. At the heart of the pilgrimage motif lies Christ's incarnate mediation, and therefore a dialectic of ascent and descent, a unification of the ontological and eschatological threads of our existence, and of our love for God and neighbour.

Far from compromising the *usus-fruitio* distinction as a picture of ordered love, the pilgrimage motif is a rich and nuanced image of the complex formation of relationships between human beings and God, on earth and in heaven. Further, this examination of the pilgrimage motif demonstrates that the eschatological framework is not at odds with the ontological; they cannot be separated from each other for they weave together a complementary understanding of the order of love. Alone, each is impoverished. Indeed, they are not, finally, distinct frameworks at all but two integral pieces of a single Augustinian framework for understanding how human beings love rightly as the complex creatures that they are. For Augustine, that understanding of love is fundamentally Christological,

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<sup>43</sup> According to John Bowlin it is the "combination of eternal and temporal perfections that enables Christ to love aright...if we love our friends justly and in truth, then, in a way, we also love them in Christ." Bowlin, 'Counting Virtues', p. 299.

which means that it encompasses the earthly and heavenly realities of who we are as selves, neighbours, and believers – that is, as pilgrims.

### V. Idolatry and Instrumentalisation: Loving Rightly

The integrity of the eschatological and ontological threads of Augustine's Christological framework for understanding love of God and of neighbour provides the means for addressing the opening concern of this paper: how are we to avoid the polar pitfalls of idolatry and instrumentalisation in our earthly loving? The resolution lies in the fact that, like the false dichotomy between the eschatological and ontological frameworks, they are not in fact opposed poles.<sup>44</sup> For Augustine, idolatry, the mistaken excessive attribution of value to some person or thing, precisely makes them an instrument of our need in a way that not only fails to satisfy our own needs but disastrously fails to satisfy theirs. In idolising things and people, we risk becoming consumptive and rapacious lovers, for we love in pursuit of something that no earthly object or person can possibly fill. Christ's mediation unites the eschatological and the ontological pieces of human loving in order to hold together our loves in fruitful tension, such that our love may be fecund and nourishing rather than grasping and exploitative.

Loving things wrongly and "using" them unlawfully, which for Augustine means enjoying anything other than God as if it were the source of bliss, is not only idolatrous but constitutes "abuse or misuse."<sup>45</sup> Human love therefore must always rightly value the objects of love in relation to the God who creates them, but love also has a referent beyond the human beings themselves that orients them in the context of the journey toward God. The integrity of the ontological and eschatological aspects of *usus* and *fruitio* checks our tendency to overrun the

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<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Eric Gregory notes that *usus* and *fruitio* are not opposed, and that if we resist inserting competition into the *usus-fruitio* discussion, then we have a picture of love that "overcomes any absolute bifurcation of utility and delight," that "attends to the individual as a wonderful creature participating in the luminous beauty of God." Gregory, *POL*, p. 45.

<sup>45</sup> Augustine, *DDC* I.4.4.



order of loves in search of what Gregory aptly calls a “premature rest.”<sup>46</sup> Premature rest is dangerous to ourselves and to others.<sup>47</sup>

Take the example of the unnamed friend in *Confessiones* IV. Here Augustine recounts how, prior to his own conversion, he had a friend whom he turned “away from the true faith,” whose friendship “had been sweet to me beyond all the sweetnesses of life that I had experienced.”<sup>48</sup> When this friend falls ill and is baptised, Augustine is surprised to find that when he attempts to joke with him about his emergency baptism, his friend rejects his influence and asks him to stop speaking thus. Augustine decides to wait until his friend has regained health to speak with him again, at which point he anticipates “I would be able to do what I wished with him.”<sup>49</sup> Augustine intends for us to be disturbed by this resolution; unlike the friends he later describes as companions and supports in his own conversion, Augustine here actively plans to turn his friend away from God.

Augustine loves this friend so ardently as the “other self”<sup>50</sup> that he cannot stand to suffer any difference or distinction from him. His friend’s change of heart regarding Christianity upon his baptism is unacceptable to Augustine. He cannot bear to have his friend think differently from him for his friend’s harmony with him validates and affirms him in his own belief, in his influence, and in his powers of persuasion. Here we catch a glimpse of how the sort of idolatrous love that loves another as the highest sweetness of life may take a rapacious turn. The friend is loved in part for the sweetness of the reflection he provides to Augustine himself; Augustine enjoys the symmetry and identity of their friendship, which bolsters his own sense of self. When that validating symmetry is threatened, he plots to regain it.

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<sup>46</sup> Gregory, *POL*, p. 362.

<sup>47</sup> “It is this premature rest that denies the ceaseless dynamic of loving which is fundamental to Augustine’s vision of God.” Gregory, *POL*, p. 362.

<sup>48</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford, 1991), IV.iv.8.

<sup>49</sup> Augustine, *Cf*IV.iv.8.

<sup>50</sup> “I was even more surprised that when he was dead I was still alive, for he was my ‘other self’. Someone has well said of his friend, ‘He was half my soul’. I had felt that my soul and his soul were ‘one soul in two bodies’.” Augustine, *Cf*IV.vi.11.

Augustine never has the chance to exercise his formidable rhetorical powers of persuasion, for his friend dies soon after and Augustine falls into a profound grief.<sup>51</sup> Augustine becomes so mired in bitterness that he writes, “I was so wretched that I felt a greater attachment to my life of misery than to my dead friend.”<sup>52</sup> In death, the bitterness of his friend’s loss is as self-satisfying as was the friend’s sweetness in life. Augustine’s grief serves his desire for emotional fulfilment, meaningfulness, and intensity – whether its source be sweet or bitter. His friend’s death consumes him completely; but the damage to Augustine’s own sense of identity is greater than the care for the lost friend. His misery is self-reflective, as was his love. As a friend, Augustine does not hold his friend’s interests truly to heart, but clings to him as the source of meaning and validation in his life. As such, Augustine can neither abide the friend’s death-bed differentiation from himself – the initial blow to the mirror self – nor can he grieve the permanent loss of his friend well, but wallows in self-perpetuating misery. Thus his superlative delight in his friend, his idolatry of him as his source of joy, in its disorder in fact turns the friend into an instrument in the service of Augustine’s own emotional satisfaction.

Commenting on his state, he exclaims “What madness not to understand how to love human beings with awareness of the human condition!”<sup>53</sup> His error, he reflects, was his god; he can find no solace in his Manichean faith.<sup>54</sup> Delighting in transient things in praise of God is good and right, but becoming stuck to them is to seek permanence and rest in the wrong place – neither are to be found in things of this world. Therefore, Augustine advises praising God for delight in physical objects and loving souls in God for thus do they acquire stability.<sup>55</sup> Loving friends in God, we draw them alongside us on the journey to

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<sup>51</sup> “Everything on which I set my gaze was death...My eyes looked for him everywhere, and he was not there... I had become to myself a vast problem.” Augustine, *CfIV.iv.9* “I was in misery and had lost the source of my joy.” Augustine, *CfIV.v.10*.

<sup>52</sup> Augustine, *CfIV.vi.11*.

<sup>53</sup> Augustine, *CfIV.vii.12*. Similarly he writes, “The reason why that grief had penetrated me so easily and deeply was that I had poured out my soul on to the sand by loving a person sure to die as if he would never die.” Augustine, *CfIV.viii.13*.

<sup>54</sup> Augustine, *CfIV.vii.12*.

<sup>55</sup> Augustine, *CfIV.xii.18*.

God, and thus may we love them for eternity. Here we see the intimate and inextricable relationship in Augustine of the ontological and eschatological aspects of human love:

Rest in [God] and you will be at rest. Where are you going to along rough paths? What is the goal of your journey? The good which you love is from him. But it is only as related to him that it is good and sweet. Otherwise it will justly become bitter; for all that comes from him is unjustly loved if he has been abandoned. With what end in view do you again and again walk along difficult and laborious paths? There is no rest where you seek for it.<sup>56</sup>

Loving something rightly according to its ontological status as a good created thing means loving it not as a thing to rest in, but loving it along the way to the Creator and the abode of eternal rest. This protects not only the self from wandering away from God, but the neighbour from the impossible demands of a love that seeks in them the source of its joy and meaning. For Augustine, only God can fill that desire, and therefore no other object or person in the world can rightly “serve” our desires, for they cannot satisfy them. They cannot rightly be instruments of our own satisfaction. But far from undercutting their inherent value, this frees us to offer and receive delight as we truly are.

The concern about instrumentalising people is that they are reduced to objects without value apart from our valuing of them for our own, selfish purposes. But in fact Augustine illustrates in the story of the unnamed friend that it is exactly by loving people apart from God as Creator and Redeemer (that is, outside the ontological *and* eschatological order of love) that we fall into valuing them for our own purposes rather than for themselves. Instrumentalisation becomes a problem when we have false notions about where we find our happiness. And this is idolatry: locating the source of our happiness in things and people rather than in God. Thus both instrumentalisation and idolatry may involve ontologically or eschatologically disordered love. People become

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<sup>56</sup> Augustine, *Cf* IV.xii.18.

instruments in the project of our need when we mistake their place in the order of being or in the movement of the journey. But loving the neighbour rightly in God – ontologically as created *imago Dei*, eschatologically as fellow *peregrini* – cannot involve undermining the neighbour. And for Augustine, loving the neighbour in God means loving them both according to Creator’s cosmo-ontological ordering of the world and according to the eschatological end of loving union with God and the saints, toward which we as creatures are made to move.

### Conclusion

O’Donovan’s critique of Augustine sets up an opposition between the eschatological and the ontological frameworks for the *usus-fruitio* distinction. The ontological framework preserves the neighbour’s intrinsic value, whereas the eschatological framework, illustrated by the pilgrimage motif, instrumentally subordinates the neighbour to the self’s journey to God. The argument of this paper is that this is a false opposition: the ontological and the eschatological aspects of Augustine’s understanding of ordered love are integral threads bound together in a Christological understanding of love, richly developed in the pilgrimage motif.

The centrality of Christ’s mediation to the pilgrimage motif reveals the continuity for Augustine of the human, temporal, earthly realm and the divine, eternal heavenly realm. Earthly and heavenly loves are drawn together in Christ, who restores us as creatures both earthly and heavenly by becoming the road for us to travel home together. We love God by loving Christ, and loving Christ means loving as Christ loves – that is, both as embodied, temporal, incarnate creatures and as creatures bound for resurrection in the heavenly afterlife. Far from undermining the neighbour, it assigns to the neighbour a profound value: an eternal value that must be reflected in our love on earth, just as Christ loves us eternally and redemptively by becoming flesh and living amongst us in the world. The pilgrimage motif draws together the communal journeying of fellow human

beings and the sense in which that community locates its source of life and happiness in God, who both creates and redeems. Creation and redemption, together, are the work of a loving God. So must our love reflect both the creative ontological work of God and the redemptive eschatological work of God. Thus do we protect both ourselves and our neighbours from the damaging consequences of seeking our ultimate satisfaction in those who cannot give it to us. Thus do we resist making others into idols and instruments – in either case, objects of our own desire – rather than beloved fellow travellers with whom we share the road and with whom we will share heavenly bliss.