

Augustine's use of *Romans* in the conversion narratives of the *Confessions*

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DECLARATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of the quotations of Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* in the conversion narratives in Augustine's *Confessions*. The *Confessions* is an account of Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity. Within the *Confessions* there are many conversion narratives which form part of a greater narrative that culminates in Augustine's final conversion in Book 8 of the *Confessions*. Within these conversion narratives, Augustine often quotes from *Romans*.

In the first chapter, I discuss the use of *Rom.* 10:14-15 in the opening paragraph of the *Confessions*, particularly Augustine's sensitivity to the diatribe style. The opening paragraph is also significant within the context of the conversion narratives, as it features Augustine in his converted state and effectively represents the goal towards which the conversion narratives will strive. My second chapter deals with the "aversion" narrative in *Conf.* 5.3.5 and the use of *Rom.* 1:21-25. Much attention is given to Augustine's allusion to apologetic works, particularly the *Wisdom of Solomon*, which *Rom.* 1:21-25 emulates. Chapter three is concerned with the significance of *Rom.* 1:21-25 in the intellectual conversion of Augustine. While Augustine reuses a quotation in *Conf.* 7.9.13-15, I focus on the unique use of this quotation and its specific significance to the intellectual conversion. The fourth chapter deals with the scriptural conversion and Augustine's use of *Rom.* 7:22-25. In the final chapter, I discuss the use of the references to *Romans* in Book 8 which Augustine has already quoted earlier in the *Confessions*. I then show how these quotations affect the interpretation of the spiritual conversion at the end of Book 8.

Opsomming

Die doel van hierdie studie is om die gebruik van die verwysings na Paulus se *Brief aan die Romeine* in die bekeringsverhale in Augustinus se *Confessiones* te ondersoek. Die *Confessiones* is 'n berig van Augustinus se bekering tot die Katolieke Christendom. In die *Confessiones* is daar baie bekeringsverhale wat deel vorm van 'n groter verhaal wat sy voltooiing in die slotbekeringsverhaal in Boek 8 van die *Confessiones* vind. In hierdie bekeringsverhale haal Augustinus dikwels *Romeine* aan.

In die eerste hoofstuk bespreek ek die gebruik van *Rom.* 10:14-15 in die inleidende paragraaf van die *Confessiones*, met klem op Augustinus se aanwending van die diatribe styl. Die inleidende paragraaf is ook van belang met betrekking tot die bekeringsverhale, omdat dit Augustinus in 'n bekeerde toestand uitbeeld en effektief die doel verteenwoordig wat die bekeringsverhale nastreef. My tweede hoofstuk handel oor die "afkeer"-toneel in *Conf.* 5.3.5 en die gebruik van *Rom.* 1:21-25. Aandag word gegee aan Augustinus se toespeling op apologetiese werke, veral die *Wysheid van Salomo*, wat deur *Rom.* 1:21-25 nageboots word. Hoofstuk drie handel oor die belang van *Rom.* 1:21-25 in die intellektuele bekeringsverhaal van Augustinus. In *Conf.* 7.9.13-15 gebruik Augustinus weer 'n keer dieselfde aanhaling, en hier is die fokus op die unieke gebruik van hierdie aanhaling en sy spesifieke konteks binne die intellektuele bekeringsverhaal. Die vierde hoofstuk handel oor Augustinus se bekering tot die Skrif en sy gebruik van *Rom.* 7:22-25. In die laaste hoofstuk bespreek ek die gebruik van verwysings na *Romeine* wat Augustinus alreeds vroeër aangehaal het in Boek 8 van die *Confessiones*. Ten slotte toon ek aan hoe hierdie aanhalings die interpretasie van die geestelike bekeringsverhaal aan die einde van Boek 8 beïnvloed.

I wish to convey my sincerest thanks to Dr. Annemaré Kotzé for her guidance, knowledge, patience, and most importantly, her passion for her research, which was my inspiration for this study.

To my parents and my sister

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Introduction

Throughout the *Confessions*, Augustine makes use of biblical references, particularly to the book of *Psalms*. Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, however, accounts for the second most biblical references and allusions in the *Confessions*. While Augustine's use of *Psalms* has been extensively dealt with by Knauer (1957), a thorough investigation of the use of the *Epistle to the Romans* in the *Confessions* is lacking. This study will undertake to investigate Augustine's use of *Romans* in the *Confessions*. A complete and comprehensive survey and analysis of all the references and allusions to *Romans* in the *Confessions* would fill several volumes. In order to limit the scope an appropriate and relevant criterion must be established. In my initial survey of the quotations of *Romans* in the *Confessions*, I noticed certain trends in the placement of the quotations, particularly in certain passages concerning Augustine's conversion. Therefore, the criterion I have chosen to limit the references is references to *Romans* that are relevant to the "conversion narratives" in the *Confessions*. The goal of this study is to show that there is an overarching connection between the uses of the quotations of *Romans* in the conversion narratives in the *Confessions*.

The *Confessions* may be seen as the account of Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity. However, this conversion did not occur immediately or only at a specific time and place. Augustine reveals throughout the *Confessions* that his conversion was gradual, culminating in a final, spiritual conversion in *Conf.* 8.12.29. Throughout the *Confessions*, we are introduced to various personas that Augustine adopts, as he describes himself in the past. The *Confessions* begins with the words of the converted Augustine. The opening voice of the *Confessions* in a sense establishes the goal of the overarching conversion narrative of the *Confessions*. But, as I have indicated, the conversion narrative in *Conf.* 8.12.29 is not

the only conversion narrative in the *Confessions*. Several others can be identified. In *Conf.* 3.4.7-8, Augustine recalls his encounter with the *Hortensius* of Cicero, which sparks an avid interest in philosophy, which I will refer to as the philosophical conversion¹. In *Conf.* 7.9.13-15, Augustine narrates his discovery of certain books of the Platonists, which also have a profound effect on his thinking. I will refer to this narrative as the intellectual conversion. In *Conf.* 7.21.27, Augustine tells of how he started to read scripture, particularly the works of Paul, and how this also had an impact on his perceptions. I will refer to this as the scriptural conversion. The final conversion in *Conf.* 8.12.28-30, popularly known as the *tolle lege* or garden scene, will be referred to as the spiritual conversion². These are the commonly attested conversion narratives throughout the *Confessions*. I also identify another narrative, which should rather be regarded a conversion narrative, in as much as it is an “aversion” narrative, namely, his break from the Manichaeans, as recounted in *Conf.* 5.3.3-5. In all of these conversion narratives (except for the philosophical conversion), Augustine quotes from *Romans*.

The goal of this study is twofold: firstly, to illustrate, by a comparative analysis of the context of the quoted passage in the *Confessions* and its original context within its source, i.e. *Romans*, that Augustine demonstrates an awareness of the original context of the quotation and that such an awareness has an impact upon the interpretation of the passage in which the quotation appears; secondly, to

¹ The conversion narrative in *Conf.* 7.9.13-15 is sometimes referred to as the philosophical conversion (e.g. Vaught, 2004: 15). For the purposes of this study, I prefer to refer to the conversion narrative in *Conf.* 3.4.7-8 as the philosophical conversion, since it is the first time Augustine is exposed to philosophy. The conversion narrative in *Conf.* 7.9.13-15 is more often referred to as the intellectual conversion (e.g. O'Donnell, 1992b: 405). In this case, I prefer to call the narrative of *Conf.* 7.9.13-15 the intellectual conversion.

² The conversion narrative in Book 8 is often called *the* conversion narrative. To distinguish it more clearly, I shall use “spiritual conversion” to refer to this narrative.

demonstrate that there is an overarching link between Augustine's use of the quotations of *Romans* in the conversion narratives in the *Confessions* that has a significant impact upon the interpretation of the *Confessions*, particularly the final conversion narrative in Book 8.

My first area of inquiry is the relationship between the original context of the quotations of *Romans* and their use in the *Confessions*. It is my hypothesis that Augustine displays a sensitivity for the original context of the quotation, and that an understanding of the original context may offer wider insight into the use of the quotation in the *Confessions*. In order to show that such a relationship or sensitivity exists, I analyse the original context of the quotation of *Romans*, focussing on aspects which are shared with the passage in which the quotation occurs in the *Confessions*. I then apply such findings to the passage directly and relate how these findings affect the interpretation of the passage in the *Confessions*.

My second area of inquiry is the use of *Romans* specifically in the conversion narratives throughout the *Confessions*. My hypothesis is that there is a connection between the individual uses of *Romans* within the conversion narratives, and that a link can be established between these quotations. This link is made evident in my discussion of the eighth book of the *Confessions*, where a quotation of *Romans*, namely *Rom.* 13:13-14, is an important and central device in the spiritual conversion narrative.

The term "quotation" requires some definition or clarification. When referring to the use of scripture or any other text within a work, the terms quotation and allusion are often used. Ruse and Hopton describe the term allusion as a "device of making reference to a well-known person, place etc, the significance of which the reader or audience is expected to recognize and understand" (1992: 16). This may

also include reference to well known texts, as is the case of allusions to *Romans* in the *Confessions*. According to Ruse and Hopton, a quotation is “a word, phrase, passage, stanza etc reproduced from another literary work or speech... used to explain or support a point of view or idea” (Ruse and Hopton, 1992: 243). Such reproduced passages were often incorporated into sentences, and therefore required some editing of the grammatical features of the text in order to fit it in to the writer’s own words. Such is the case in most of the quotations of *Romans* that are the subject of discussion in this study. Nevertheless, the similarities with the original source are often overwhelmingly convincing. Regardless, I rely upon O’Donnell’s commentaries (1992b and 1992c) for the identification of scriptural quotations. In the case of scriptural quotations, it is necessary to ask, what is the source of the scriptural quotations? It is difficult to reconstruct the precise text Augustine would have had in front of him, as the text he used would have predated the Latin *Vulgate* (O’Donnell, 1992a: lxix). Again, I rely on O’Donnell’s reconstructions of these passages.

For the text of the *Confessions*, I have used O’Donnell’s text (1992a). In my discussion of *Romans*, it is sometimes necessary to quote from the Greek, as the original language of the *Epistle*. In such a case, I use Nestle & Aland’s 27th edition of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Aland & Aland, 2001). In both cases of quotations of the *Confessions* and of *Romans* I provide my own translations, unless otherwise noted.

Chapter 1: Augustine's use of Rom. 10:14-15 at the start of the *Confessions*

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how Augustine uses Rom. 10:14-15 at the start of his *Confessions* and how the original context of this verse may affect the interpretation of the first chapter of the *Confessions*. This chapter will also show how the opening of the *Confessions*, in light of the use of Rom. 10:14-15, affects how the rest of the *Confessions*, particularly the conversion narratives, is interpreted.

The first quotation from *Romans* occurs in the very first chapter and paragraph in the *Confessions*. As the introduction to his opus, the first paragraph sets up a certain expectation in the reader from the start and introduces many important themes in the *Confessions*. Augustine opens his work with a great *confessio laudis*, which, according to O'Donnell, is unprecedented in Latin literature (1992b: 8-9). O'Donnell argues that the first three words of the *Confessions*, "*Magnus es, domine*" is itself a complete confession and represents the fact that Augustine's conversion is complete at the time of writing (1992b: 9). The fact that Augustine is already converted from the very beginning of the *Confessions* is an important aspect of this work. It determines the light in which we should read the entire work. Following the opening, Augustine then humbly requests to know and to understand (*scire et intellegere*). After this request, Augustine dwells on how he should approach knowing and understanding God:

sed quis te invocat nesciens te? aliud enim pro alio potest invocare nesciens. an potius invocaris ut sciaris? quomodo autem invocabunt, in quem non crediderunt? aut quomodo credent sine praedicante? et laudabunt dominum qui requirunt eum: quaerentes enim inveniunt eum et invenientes laudabunt eum. quaeram te, domine, invocans te et invocem te credens in te: praedicatus enim es nobis. invocat te,

*domine, fides mea, quam dedisti mihi, quam inspirasti mihi per humanitatem filii tui, per ministerium praedicatoris tui. (Conf. 1.1.1)*³.

The underlined section above is a quotation from *Rom.* 10:14-15. This is not the first quotation from scripture that Augustine uses. He first quotes from *Psalms* in his opening⁴ and then from 2 *Cor.* 4:10, a Pauline epistle⁵. The next scriptural quotation, *superbis resistis*⁶, is significant, especially in proximity to the quotation from *Romans*. The next scriptural quotation of significance in this paragraph is *Matt.* 7:7: *quaerentes enim inveniunt eum*. I will discuss the significance of these last two quotations in light of *Rom.* 10:14-15 later in this chapter. In order to show how the context of *Rom.* 10:14-15 may effect the interpretation of *Conf.* 1.1.1, I will first discuss the context of *Rom.* 10:14-15 in the *Epistle to the Romans*.

The diatribe and Romans

Romans is characterised by the rhetorical style known as the diatribe. *The Epistle to the Romans* is generally accepted to show characteristics of the diatribe style⁷. A discussion of the rhetorical impact of *Romans* often includes mention of its diatribe-like features. Therefore, I will briefly discuss the nature of diatribe.

³ "But who can call upon you who does not know you? For someone can unknowingly call upon another. Should you rather be called upon in order to be known? But how can they call upon him in whom they do not believe? Or how can they believe without a preacher? And they who seek him will praise the Lord: for they who seek will find him and those who find him will praise him. Let me seek you, Lord, while I am calling upon you and let me call upon you, while I am believing in you. For you have been declared to us. My faith calls upon you, Lord, which you gave to me, which you breathed in me through the humanity of your son and through the ministry of your preacher."

⁴ The quotation of "*Magnus es, domine*" is quoted from either *Ps.* 47:2, *Ps.* 95:4 or *Ps.* 144:3.

⁵ The significance of this quotation will not be discussed in this study.

⁶ Quoted from *Prov.* 3:34 and used in 1 *Pet* 5:5 and *Jas.* 4:6.

⁷ The primary (though not the first) proponent of this is Stowers (1981).

The diatribe has been a contested concept in both Classical and New Testament scholarship (with particular emphasis on the Pauline corpus) for some time. The original focus of scholarship in this area until 1910 involved describing the diatribe as a literary genre. After 1910 the focus shifted to criticizing the conclusions the previous generation of scholars came to regarding diatribe as a genre and trying to establish the importance of the diatribe in Hellenistic and Latin literature (Stowers, 1981: 45-46). Describing the diatribe as a literary genre has proved problematic. There are disagreements on what qualifies as a diatribe, mainly because of the formal variation in what has been identified as diatribe. Stowers (1981: 48) identifies several examples of diatribal texts, including works by Teles (writing on Bion), Arrian (writing on Epictetus) and Lucius (writing on Musonius Rufus). According to Stowers, the diatribe represented a form which would have been employed in philosophical schools which were trying “to bring philosophy to the masses” (1981: 75).

The term genre is problematic in describing the diatribe, but certain stylistic characteristics are shared by what has been called “diatribes”. The most prominent characteristic of the diatribe is the dialogical element, especially the use of imaginary interlocutors who stand in opposition to the teacher. The questions and responses of the teacher are inspired by the Socratic method of “censure” (ἐλεγκτικός) and “persuasion” (πρωτρεπτικός) (Aune, 1987: 200). Aune also explains that “the imaginary opponent is not a real opponent against whom the author polemicizes, but represents a synthesis of possible objections voiced by students whom he is trying to teach” (1987: 200). The diatribe is considered to be a reworking of the style of wandering Cynic and Stoic philosophers, who used their rhetoric to exhort large crowds to a certain moral standpoint (Moles, 2003: 463). Contemporary scholars today prefer to use the term “diatribe style” when referring to a text showing characteristics of the diatribe, reflecting the conviction that it is not

a genre but rather a collection of rhetorical and literary devices used within the context of encouraging others to join a particular philosophical school or point of view and criticizing or refuting the errors in rival schools or opinions (Stowers, 1981: 49)⁸.

Scholars have identified many characteristics of the diatribe style, but a consensus regarding this has not effectively been achieved⁹. In the following, I shall not try to list all the possible characteristics of a diatribe, but rather focus on the characteristics which directly affect the passage under discussion. As mentioned before, the dialogical element of the diatribe is the most obvious and central characteristic of this style. Diatribe had its origin in philosophical schools and the dialogical character is the result of trying to rework the wandering philosopher's teachings for the classroom, and these teachings were later reworked again into a literary form (Stowers, 1981: 77). The primary characteristics are elements of *προτρεπτικός* and *ἐλεγκτικός*, a pedagogical approach, and a dialogical character with respect to an interlocutor representing a rival school of thought. Marrou broadly characterizes the diatribe as a fictional dialogue with an anonymous interlocutor, and identifies five characteristics: the use of apostrophe, comparison of the objections the author has with the interlocutor, questions and responses to them, particularly in an instructional manner, *prosopopoeia* or abstract personifications, and use of heroes or other famous personalities from the past (Marrou, 1976: 267). In a Christian diatribe, such as we have in *Romans*, the last mentioned characteristic would presumably favour biblical characters.

⁸ Stowers differentiates between diatribes (such as the works of Teles, Arrian and Lucius) and texts containing the diatribe style (such as the works of Maximus, Philo and Seneca).

⁹ This is not due to lack of study into the area of the diatribe, but rather the result of the fact that the diatribe is not rigidly defined as a genre would be, but as I have mentioned, a collection of stylistic and literary devices.

As mentioned before, scholars agree that Paul makes extensive use of the diatribe style in the *Epistle to the Romans*. The genre and purpose of *Romans* has been the subject of debate for some time¹⁰, and the diatribe has formed part of these arguments as its style permeates the text of *Romans*. David Aune (1991: 278) addresses this debate by proposing that the body of *Romans* is a λόγος προτρεπτικός. The λόγος προτρεπτικός, according to Aune, is “a lecture intended to win converts and attract young people to a particular way of life” (1991: 278). The particular way of life in this context is the Christian life, and it would not have been seen as a “religion”¹¹, but as a philosophy (Aune, 1991: 286). Both the λόγος προτρεπτικός and the diatribe are not “Christian” literary forms but have their origins in Classical and Hellenistic literature, where philosophers encouraged people to join their particular philosophy. Whether seen as a λόγος προτρεπτικός or whether read as employing a diatribe style, the protreptic character of *Romans* is generally accepted.

The use of the diatribe in Rom. 10:14-15

In *Rom. 10:14-15*, Paul employs many of the devices used in the diatribe and the λόγος προτρεπτικός. Below I quote the Greek of the passage Augustine quotes in *Conf. 1.1.1*:

¹⁰ For a complete review, see Donfried’s collection “The Romans Debate”, first published in 1977 and then further expanded in 1991.

¹¹ The term “religion” as we understand it did not have an equivalent Latin or Greek word (Aune, 1991: 286).

Πῶς οὖν ἐπικαλέσονται εἰς ὃν οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν; πῶς δὲ πιστεύσωσιν οὐ
οὐκ ἤκουσαν; πῶς δὲ ἀκούσωσιν χωρὶς κηρύσσοντος; πῶς δὲ κηρύξωσιν
ἐὰν μὴ ἀποσταλῶσιν; (*Rom.* 10:14-15)¹²

The section of *Romans* 9-11 is generally identified as a unit. It specifically concerns the promises made to the Jews by God in the Old Testament, and how the new gospel does not contradict this. This unit displays characteristics of protreptic, particularly addressing ideas or proposals which stand in opposition to those of the teacher (Guerra, 1995: 144). The passage in question, *Romans* 10:14-15 and its immediate context, makes use of the diatribe style, especially the dialogical element with the imaginary interlocutor. This imaginary interlocutor's questions represent the Jewish objections to Paul's arguments that the Jews have not accepted the "new, easy way to justification and salvation offered in the gospel and foreshadowed in the prophets of old" (Fitzmyer, 1993: 595). The interlocutor lists a number of objections one after the other:

1. How can they call on him in whom they do not believe?
2. How can they believe in one whom they do not hear?
3. How can they hear without a preacher?
4. How can they preach unless they are sent?

In other words, how can the Jews believe the gospel if the gospel has not been preached to them completely, by messengers sent by God (Fitzmyer, 1993: 595)?

After the interlocutor has had opportunity to state his case, the teacher addresses these objections. Paul, in the voice of the teacher, uses Old Testament scripture,

¹² "But how can they call on him in whom they do not believe? And how can they believe in one whom they do not hear? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent?"

which would be considered as authoritative by a Jewish audience, to address the interlocutor's objections in the following verse (*Rom.* 10:15-18):

καθως γεγραπται· ὡς ὥραῖοι οἱ πόδες τῶν εὐαγγελιζομένων [τὰ] ἀγαθά.
Ἀλλ' οὐ πάντες ὑπήκουσαν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ. Ἡσαΐας γὰρ λέγει· κύριε, τίς
ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν; ἄρα ἡ πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς, ἡ δὲ ἀκοὴ διὰ ῥήματος
Χριστοῦ. ἀλλὰ λέγω, μὴ οὐκ ἤκουσαν; μενοῦνγε· εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν
ἐξῆλθεν ὁ φθόγγος αὐτῶν, καὶ εἰς τὰ πέρατα τῆς οἰκουμένης τὰ ῥήματα
αὐτῶν.¹³

Paul uses scriptural evidence to show that the Jewish interlocutor's objections are not valid, since they have heard the Gospel but have not heeded it.¹⁴

The protreptic use of Rom. 10:14-15 in Conf. 1.1.1

Now that I have established the immediate rhetorical context of *Rom.* 10:14-15, I can show how this context may affect the interpretation of *Conf.* 1.1.1. Augustine also asks questions in *Conf.* 1.1.1, quoting from *Rom.* 10:14-15, but naturally using the Latin translation¹⁵ of the text¹⁶. The questions he asks are as follows:

¹³ "As it is written: 'How timely are the feet of those who bring good news'. But not all obey the gospel. For Isaiah says: 'Lord, who believed our tidings?' For faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes from the word of Christ. But I say, have they not heard? Of course [they have]: 'Their voice went out upon all the earth and their words unto the ends of the world'."

¹⁴ This is not the end of Paul's argument in this section. *Rom* 10:14-15 only contains one core part of Paul's argument. In *Rom* 10:16-21, he mentions three more arguments that the Jews may present against Paul's ministry. The point that Paul is ultimately making is that Israel's failure in accepting the gospel is not out of a lack of hearing, preaching or understanding, but rather of its own fault (Fitzmyer, 1993: 596).

¹⁵ The Latin translation refers to the *Vetus Latina*, that is, the pre-Vulgate Latin texts of the Bible. Unfortunately the *Epistle to the Romans* is one of the parts that has not yet been reconstructed in the Beuron *Vetus Latina*, but O'Donnell does provide us with his reconstructions. Nonetheless he warns that the reconstructions do not necessarily represent a definite reconstruction of the text Augustine would have in front of him while writing the *Confessions* (O'Donnell, 1992a: lxix-lxx).

1. *sed quis te invocat nesciens te?*
2. *an potius invocaris ut sciaris?*
3. *quomodo autem invocabunt, in quem non crediderunt?*
4. *aut quomodo credent sine praedicante?*

Although Augustine only directly quotes the last two questions from *Rom.* 10:14-15, i.e. questions 3 and 4, the two passages are similar as *Rom.* 10:14-15 also has four questions. Furthermore, the two questions he does quote also occur as the last two in *Rom.* 10:14-15. The fact that four questions are posed in both *Conf.* 1.1.1 and *Rom.* 10:14-15 is not without significance. It would suggest that Augustine is aware of the original rhetorical context of this quotation. Augustine's rhetorical training would have made him sensitive to rhetorical styles such as the diatribe. It can be argued that Augustine is aware of the rhetorical nature of the text he is quoting from i.e. the use of the diatribe style, and uses the same dialogical effect of questions and answers. In the same way Paul uses scripture to assist in his response in *Romans*, Augustine also uses scripture in order to respond to the questions he has just posed, directly following the questions. The scripture Augustine uses in this response to the questions is from *Matt* 7:7. I quote the context wherein this quotation appears:

et laudabunt dominum qui requirunt eum: quaerentes enim inveniunt eum et invenientes laudabunt eum. quaeram te, domine, invocans te et invocem te credens in te: praedicatus enim es nobis. invocat te, domine, fides mea, quam dedisti mihi, quam inspirasti mihi per humanitatem filii tui, per ministerium praedicatoris tui (Conf. 1.1.1)¹⁷.

¹⁶ According to O'Donnell's reconstruction: *quomodo autem invocabunt, in quem non crediderunt? aut quomodo credent, quem non audierunt? quomodo autem audient, sine praedicante? aut quomodo praedicabunt, si non mittantur* (1992b: 15).

¹⁷ "And they who seek the Lord will praise him: for they who seek will find him and they who find him will praise him. Let me seek you, Lord, calling upon you and let me call you, believing in you. For you are declared to us. My faith calls to you, Lord, which you gave to me, which you breathed in me through the humanity of your son, through the ministry of your preacher."

Here, Augustine is following the same pattern of question and answer response. But does it correspond to the diatribe style, as used by Paul in *Rom.* 10:14-15? The diatribe makes use of the imaginary interlocutor and the questions or objections should be voiced by the imaginary interlocutor. Can Augustine's questions possibly be voiced by an interlocutor, and if so, who or what would this interlocutor represent?

Augustine's audience is a difficult matter to ascertain. O'Donnell argues that Augustine never addresses those who are reading the *Confessions* (1992b: 9). He also argues that the *Confessions* is "enacted in the presence of the silence (and darkness) of God" (O'Donnell, 1992b: 9). However, Augustine is aware that his work is read by other people. In *Conf.* 2.3.5, he says,

*cui narro haec? neque enim tibi, deus meus, sed apud te narro haec generi meo, generi humano, quantulumcumque ex particula incidere potest in istas meas litteras. et ut quid hoc? ut videlicet ego et quisquis haec legit cogitemus, de quam profundo clamandum sit ad te. et quid propius auribus tuis, si cor confitens et vita ex fide est?*¹⁸.

Augustine is acutely aware that this confession of his is not spoken or written in a vacuum, and that it is not solely for God's ears. On a literal level, Augustine is addressing God but simultaneously aware of his secondary audience, i.e. the people who may read it. This must be taken into consideration when interpreting issues of audience in the *Confessions*.

¹⁸ "To whom do I tell this [story]? Surely not to you, my God, but rather in your presence I tell this to my kind, the human race, however small a portion may come upon my words. And to what end? Namely, so that I and whoever reads this may think about from what depths it is possible to call to you. And what is more appropriate in your ears, than a heart confessing and a life of faith?"

In the context of *Conf.* 1.1.1, on a literal level, there is no doubt that Augustine is addressing God. However, if the questions in *Conf.* 1.1.1 are interpreted in the light of the original source of the quotation i.e. a diatribe style question in the mouth of an interlocutor, the answer of God as audience is too simplistic and does not fit the context. It may be that Augustine is simply ruminating on these questions for his own recollection, but Augustine's conversion and confession has already been completed at this point, as indicated by "*Magnus es, domine*". Augustine's questions are not for his benefit, but for his secondary audience, the people who may read the *Confessions*. In my discussion of *Rom.* 10:14-15, I showed that the questions were posed by an interlocutor that represented the objections of a certain group, namely the Jews. If Augustine is indeed utilizing the rhetorical effect of the diatribe in this passage in the *Conf.* 1.1.1, it should be possible to identify the potential characteristics of the interlocutor.

The particular use of biblical quotations may assist us in identifying a potential interlocutor. The quotation of *superbis resistis* could be a first indication of the identity of the interlocutor. In *Conf.* 3.6.10, Augustine relates his first encounter with certain *homines superbe delirantes*, who we later learn are the Manichaeans. The use of *Matt* 7:7 is also significant. Paul uses the Old Testament to support his responses to the interlocutor, because the interlocutor represented the Jews who objected to Paul's mission, and the Old Testament would be a text the Jews would consider authoritative. *Matt* 7.7 gives us a clue as to how to identify this imaginary interlocutor. According to Teske, *Matt* 7:7 was constantly repeated by the Manichaeans (1999: 213). Augustine's relationship with the Manichaeans is well known. Augustine was well familiar with the objections of the Manichaeans, as is evident from his records of the objections of Faustus, regarding various biblical topics, especially that of the Old Testament, in the *Contra Faustum*. They accepted the truth of Paul's letters, but edited that which did not coincide with their

doctrines, claiming it as falsification (Teske, 1999: 213). Although it is clear that the Manichaeans may represent a good candidate for a group whose ideas would stand in opposition to Augustine's, would they have posed the objections listed in *Conf.* 1.1.1?

The first question is *sed quis te invocat nesciens te?* This question alludes to one of the main points of contention between the Manichaeans and Augustine: what should be first, faith or understanding? The Manichaeans were "uncompromising rationalists" (Brown, 1967: 48). Whereas Augustine was of the opinion that everything in the Bible should be accepted on faith, the Manichaeans did not accept anything until they understood it first (Teske, 1999: 213). All the other questions asked develop from the first. Augustine responds to the question by quoting from text considered authoritative by the Manichaeans (which they used to support their pursuit of understanding before faith), and expands upon it with *quaeram te, domine, invocans te et invocem te credens in te*. Therefore, Augustine is arguing that in order to seek God, you must call upon him, and in order to call upon him, you must first believe in him. Therefore the search must first begin with belief. If we return to the beginning of *Conf.* 1.1.1, Augustine is equally concerned with being able to know and understand God; but in order to do so, he needs to believe first. The diatribe style was used to correct false conclusions and ideas in order to attract followers to a particular philosophy. The use of *Matt* 7.7 is also considered significant to this end, and has been described as a "miniature protreptic" to "take action that will result in important change" (Kotzé, 2004: 121). This change Augustine wishes to address is the matter of faith before understanding.

The significance of Rom. 10:14-15 in Conf. 1.1.1

There is much evidence to suggest a conscious addressing of a potential Manichaean audience in *Conf.* 1.1.1, but I think it is too simplistic to narrow it down

to just the Manichaeans. The use of *superbis resistis* and *Matt. 7:7* may be an indication that Augustine is consciously addressing the Manichaeans. I would argue the use of the stylistic features of the diatribe as well as the protreptic elements would be just as effective to any who share the Manichaean adherence to rationalism. Below I will show how the context of *Conf. 1.1.1* supports such a finding.

The use of *superbis resistis* may direct us to identify the Manichaeans, in light of its use in *Conf. 3.6.10*, *homines superbe delirantes*, but attention should be given to the use of the quotation throughout the *Confessions*. Firstly, it should be noted that in *Conf. 3.6.10*, the only similarity to *superbis resistis* is the *superbe*. It is less a quotation than an allusion. Nonetheless, *superbia* is an important theme in both books 3 and 4. In book 3, *superbus* occurs three times, twice referring to Augustine himself¹⁹ and once referring to the Manichaeans²⁰. It should also be noted that both instances of *superbus* referring to Augustine occur before he has met the Manichaeans.

Superbia occurs once in book 3²¹, referring to the world in general, not indicating a specific group or person. In book 4, *superbus* is used four times²² to describe Augustine, once with the quotation of *superbis resistis*. Another instance refers to man's desire to blame the stars for man's fate by means of astrology²³, which could also refer to the Manichaeans, as they were adherents to astrology (O'Donnell, 1992b: 289). In *Conf. 4.3.5*, Augustine recounts meeting a certain proconsul who bestowed a prize for rhetoric to him. The quotation containing *superbis resistis* is

¹⁹ *Conf. 3.3.6, 3.5.9.*

²⁰ *Conf. 3.6.10.*

²¹ *Conf. 3.8.16.*

²² *Conf. 4.1.1, 4.15.17, twice in 4.15.26.*

²³ *Conf. 4.3.4.*

quoted in *Conf.* 4.3.5, although to whom *superbis* refers is (perhaps deliberately) ambiguous. It could refer to Augustine, or to the proconsul, or may not have any specific referent at all, but refers to *superbia* in general. In these instances, the Manichaeans are described as *superbi* in few cases, whereas Augustine himself seems to be indicated in the most cases. It is, of course, of significance that in book 4 Augustine is a Manichaean. However, the evidence in the text would make it clear that not every incidence of *superbus* or the quotation of *superbis resistis* would refer specifically to the Manichaeans. However, the significance of the Manichaean references should not be discounted. Augustine identifies himself and the Manichaeans as *superbi*, and throughout the *Confessions* it is shown how this *superbia* is resisted. It should rather be interpreted in the other direction. Instead of *superbus* referring specifically to the Manichaeans, it should rather be read as a quality Augustine identifies in himself, specifically during his time as a Manichaean.

The use of *Matt.* 7:7 in *Conf.* 1.1.1 could be influenced by the Manichaeans' familiarity with that verse. After quoting the verse in *Conf.* 1.1.1²⁴ he proceeds to clarify his use of the quote. The quotations from *Rom.* 10:14-15 and *Matt.* 7:7 are synthesized in one sentence following their "direct" quotation²⁵: *quaeram te, domine*,

²⁴ *quaerentes enim inveniunt eum.*

²⁵ It is difficult to specify what is a direct quotation and what is mere allusion. Latin allows one to alter the original grammatical context (e.g. subject/object relationships, cases, verb persons etc.) in order to use it within a sentence in a text. Furthermore, authors were indeed free to use what they wanted to from scripture, and often incomplete quotations are used. In the example of *Rom.* 10:14-15 quoted in *Conf.* 1.1.1, the second question, "*aut quomodo credent sine praedicante?*" is not a word for word rendering of the original from *Rom.* 10:14-15, "*aut quomodo credent, quem non audierunt? quomodo autem audient, sine praedicante?*" However here I would argue Augustine simplified the quotation, removing the *audierunt/audient* step. The similarity between the two is however significant, as opposed to the next line, "*quaeram te, domine, invocans te et invocem te credens in te: praedicatus enim es nobis*", which employs similar words, but lacks a convincing grammatical similarity.

invocans te et invocem te credens in te: praedicatus enim es nobis (Conf. 1.1.1)²⁶. The logic of the sentence would suggest believing (*credens*) precedes calling (*invocans*) and calling precedes seeking (*quaeram*). The first step (as deduced from Paul via *Rom.* 10:14-15) is, of course, preaching (*praedicatus*). According to Augustine (and Paul) this has already happened, as indicated by the perfect tense. The order, according to Augustine, is therefore preaching, believing, calling and then seeking. The last three words share the same tense²⁷ and suggests that the actions occur simultaneously. Therefore, seeking God requires calling and believing. Augustine concludes Conf. 1.1.1 with *invocat te, domine, fides mea, quam dedisti mihi, quam inspirasti mihi per humanitatem filii tui, per ministerium praedicatoris tui*²⁸. The means by which we believe, i.e. faith (*fides mea*) is given by God. The faculty of reason is not mentioned in any way, and would have been conspicuously absent to the Manichaean reader. Augustine is enforcing his interpretation of *Matt.* 7:7 by stressing the significance of faith in the process of seeking.

It should be mentioned again that the significance of Conf. 1.1.1 is not immediately evident until it is seen in the context of the rest of the *Confessions*, particularly the portions of the book dealing with Augustine's conversion²⁹. This significance will be

²⁶ "Let me seek you, Lord, calling upon you and let me call you, believing in you. For you are declared to us."

²⁷ The present subjunctive, here expressing desire or wish, expresses a wish for the future (Kennedy, 1987: 160). The action of the present participle occurs at the same time as the main verb (Kennedy, 1987: 167). Therefore, both the main verb and the participle point to an action in the future.

²⁸ "My faith calls to you, Lord, which you gave to me, which you breathed in me through the humanity of your son, through the ministry of your preacher."

²⁹ There are many "conversion narratives" throughout the *Confessions*. The significant conversion narratives are his discovery of Cicero's *Hortensius* (Conf. 3.4.7-3.5.9), his reading of the Platonists (Conf. 7.9.13-15), his reading of Paul (Conf. 7.18.24- 7.21.27), his spiritual conversion (Conf. 8.12-28-8.12.30). These passages will be discussed later in this study.

highlighted in the following chapters. It can be noted that in *Conf.* 1.1.1, Augustine has already realized a converted state, that is, *Conf.* 1.1.1 is told from the perspective of Augustine as a converted man. In the later books of the *Confessions*, much attention is given to his rational development. The latter part of the first book which deals with his early development is concerned with his acquisition of speech and eventually the ability to read. All this is done without the direct influence or guidance of God (Stock, 1998: 32). Augustine's criticisms of this period are not so much of the technical aspects of communication in general, but of the way in which one is instructed to use it (Stock, 1998: 33). The journey from book 2 to book 8 deals with how Augustine realizes the converted state which is evident in *Conf.* 1.1.1. This journey is obviously filled with many setbacks. We can evaluate these setbacks in light of the state which has been established in *Conf.* 1.1.1.

In conclusion, the interpretation of the use of *Rom.* 10:14-15 in *Conf.* 1.1.1 relies upon an understanding of the rhetorical nature of *Rom.* 10:14-15, i.e. the diatribe style. This places *Conf.* 1.1.1 in a strong protreptic context. It is possible to identify the Manichaeans as a possible candidate for the "imaginary interlocutor", in light of Augustine's use of specific scriptural references. However, it should also be noted that these references could also be equally used to address an audience with a similar adherence to rationalism, as the Manichaeans had. A non-Manichaean, with similar resistance to faith before reason would serve as equally eligible.

Chapter 2: Augustine's apologetic use of *Romans* and the criticism of secular wisdom

In the previous chapter, I showed that Augustine may be sensitive to the original context of the quotation of *Romans* which he uses in *Conf.* 1.1.1. Furthermore, *Conf.* 1.1.1 is important within the *Confessions* as a whole, as it portrays Augustine in his converted state. In *Conf.* 5.3.5, Augustine displays a similar sensitivity to the context of the biblical texts he quotes. In this chapter, I demonstrate the influence of apologetic and Jewish Hellenistic literature on *Conf.* 5.3.5.

Augustine's journey throughout the *Confessions* contains several events or pivotal moments which define Augustine's character as his account progresses. Augustine does not mind to stop a moment and reflect on such events, placing these events in the context of the entire *Confessions*. Book 3 and 4 describes Augustine's association with the Manichaeans, a Christian sect with strong Gnostic and dualistic characteristics, which was at the time opposed by both Christian and Roman authorities (Coyle, 1999: 521). The Manichaeans offered the curious Augustine an answer to his questions on the origin of evil. Book 5 tells of Augustine's increasing frustration with the Manichaeans and his eventual break from them. It contains a description of a pivotal event where Augustine determines the error of the Manichaeans and rejects them.

In *Conf.* 5.3.3, Augustine meets with Faustus, and this encounter further fuels the frustration which prompts his departure from the Manichaeans. Simultaneously, Augustine is engaging with the philosophers, a pastime he describes early in Book 3. His frustration with the Manichaeans and the limits of philosophy, which he nevertheless considers more convincing than the Manichaean ideas, causes Augustine to doubt the Manichaeans, and he decides to leave. In *Conf.* 5.3.5, at first

glance, Augustine criticises the philosophers, using *Rom.* 1:21-25 in support of his arguments.

The similarities between *Conf.* 1.1.1 and *Conf.* 5.3.5 are remarkable: *et sapientiae tuae non est numerus* in *Conf.* 5.3.5 occurs in this exact form at the beginning of *Conf.* 1.1.1, which leads O'Donnell to consider this passage to be a new beginning (1992b: 290). This is also supported by the fact that there is a veiled reference to *Matt* 7.7 in *non pie quaerunt*. This reference also occurs in *Conf.* 1.1.1. I would propose that there exists a connection between these two passages. The references to *Conf.* 1.1.1 bring to mind the converted Augustine, and would suggest that this passage is important with regards to the progress of his conversion in the *Confessions*.

Augustine's references to *Romans* after *Conf.* 1.1.1 are relatively sparse³⁰ until *Conf.* 5.3.5, where four references to *Rom.* 1:21-25 are present in a single paragraph. This dense arrangement focuses the attention on the content of *Rom.* 1:21-25, namely, Paul's criticism of secular wisdom, and associates it with Augustine's own encounter with this problem. The significance of this association will become apparent when Augustine reuses the exact same dense arrangement of quotations in Book 7, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The passage of *Conf.* 5.3.5 quoted below contains the quotation from *Rom.* 1:21-25. I have underlined the sections from *Romans* used by Augustine in the text.

non noverunt hanc viam, et putant se excelsos esse cum sideribus et lucidos, et ecce ruerunt in terram, et obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum. et multa vera de creatura dicunt et veritatem, creaturae artificem, non pie quaerunt, et ideo non inveniunt, aut si inveniunt, cognoscentes deum non sicut deum honorant aut gratias agunt, et evanescunt in cogitationibus suis, et dicunt se esse sapientes sibi tribuendo quae tua

³⁰ A single reference each occurs in *Conf.* 1.2.2, 2.8.16 and 4.3.4.

sunt, ac per hoc student perversissima caecitate etiam tibi tribuere quae sua sunt, mendacia scilicet in te conferentes, qui veritas es, et immutantes gloriam incorrupti dei in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis et volucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium, et convertunt veritatem tuam in mendacium, et colunt et serviunt creaturae potius quam creatori. (Conf. 5.3.5)³¹

In order to demonstrate the extent to which Augustine quotes Rom. 1:21-25, I quote the Latin reconstruction of the text of Rom. 1:21-25³². The underlined words below correspond to their equivalents in the passage above from Conf. 5.3.5. Following the Latin, I have also included the original Greek text of Rom. 1:21-25, as the Greek text has some significance to my discussion, and I will refer to it later.

quia cognoscentes deum, non ut deum glorificaverunt aut gratias egerunt; sed evanuerunt in cogitationibus suis et obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum, dicentes enim se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt. et immutaverunt gloriam incorruptibilis dei in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis, et volucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium. propter hoc tradidit illos deus in concupiscentias cordis eorum, in immunditiam. qui transmutaverunt veritatem dei in mendacium, et coluerunt et servierunt creaturae, potius quam creatori, qui est benedictus in saecula (Rom. 1:21-25).

³¹ "They did not know this way, and they thought that they were high with the stars and lights, and look, they have fallen onto the earth, and their foolish hearts are darkened. And they say many true things about creation but they do not dutifully seek the truth, the creator of creation, and so they do not find him, or if they do find him, they know him as God but they do not glorify him as God or give him thanks, and they grow dim in their thinking. They say that they are wise, by attributing to themselves what are yours, and through this they study with perverse blindness, and they even attribute things to you that are theirs, clearly carrying around lies against you and changing the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of corrupt man and flying creatures and four legged animals and crawling creatures. They change your truth into a lie and worship and serve the creation rather than the creator."

³² As reconstructed by O'Donnell (1992b: 430).

διότι γνόντες τὸν θεὸν οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ ἡνυχάρισθησαν, ἀλλ' ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδία. φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν, καὶ ἥλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνος φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ τετραπόδων καὶ ἐρπετῶν. Διὸ παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς, οἵτινες μετέλλαξαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ψεύδει, καὶ ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα, ὅς ἐστιν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας· ἀμήν. (Rom. 1:21-25)³³

In order to understand Augustine's use of *Rom.* 1:21-25, I briefly describe the immediate context of *Rom.* 1:21-25.

The context of Rom. 1:21-25

Rom. 1:21-25 is situated right after Paul's statement of his purpose in 1:16-17, where he states: δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι· δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν (*Rom.* 1:16-17)³⁴. Paul inverts this theme of salvation in the following verse to a theme of universal condemnation. He proceeds to show how God's wrath is manifested against the Gentiles: Ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων (*Rom.* 1:18)³⁵. Paul then goes on to

³³ "For although they knew God, they did not glorify [him] as God nor thank [him], but were foolish in their reckoning, and their hearts, empty of understanding grew dark. They claimed to be wise but were foolish, and exchanged the glory of an immortal God for the likeness of a mortal man or birds, animals or serpents. So God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to the impurity for degrading their bodies with one another. These people exchanged the truth of God for a lie and honoured and served the creation instead of the creator, who is blessed for all eternity. Amen."

³⁴ "For the power of God is for the salvation of all who believe, firstly for the Jew but also for the Greek. For the righteousness of God is revealed in him through faith unto faith."

³⁵ "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and injustice of men."

describe how these ungodly people should have been able to know God through observation of creation, but they did not glorify him as such, and because of this, they descended into sin and depravity, and represented God in the likeness of man or animal. This theme of condemnation is one that is popular in apologetic texts, particularly in Hellenistic Jewish apologetic. In the following I describe the nature of Hellenistic Jewish apologetic and the extent to which it affects the text and interpretation of *Rom.* 1:21-25.

Hellenistic Jewish Apologetic

At first glance, it would seem that Paul is addressing the Gentiles in this passage, but Paul never uses the word “Gentile” in *Rom.* 1:21ff. (Tobin, 2004: 89)³⁶. According to Guerra (1995: 48), *Rom.* 1:21-25 and its immediate context contain many motifs employed in Hellenistic Jewish apologetic, particularly the “natural revelation and knowledge of God” (1995: 49). Aune argues that *Rom.* 1:21-25 “exhibits no specifically Christian features, and it has well-known parallels to the Hellenistic Jewish tradition” (1991: 291). It is often easy to forget that Paul was first a Pharisee, a Jew among Jews essentially, before he was converted to Christianity. It can be argued that he would have been familiar with Hellenistic Jewish apologetic.

Apology or apologetic writing is as nebulous a term as diatribe is³⁷. Many works are attributed to be “apologies” or “apologetic” but the term itself has not been

³⁶ There are several actors in this discussion that may deserve some clarification at this point. When I refer to the Jews, I refer specifically to the non-Christians Jews of Paul’s time, i.e. those who have not accepted the gospel. When I refer to the Gentiles, I refer to the non-Christian Gentiles, i.e. the pagan Greeks and other foreign nations that do not believe in either the Christian gospel or the Jewish religion. When I refer to the Jewish Christians, I refer to those people who started off as Jews but converted to Christianity. When I refer to Gentile Christians, I refer to the Gentiles who have converted to Christianity.

³⁷ See my discussion on the diatribe in the previous chapter.

carefully defined (Guerra, 1995: 2). Typical themes in apologetic writing include a defence against accusations of beliefs that seem irrational, criticism of other religions' beliefs, particularly in the areas of idolatry, polytheism (in the case of Judaism and Christianity), animal worship and other cultic practices, and the exposition of how the author's religion is superior to all others, especially in areas of morality (Guerra, 1995: 180). Early Christian writers produced a number of such works, defending their beliefs against pagan criticism and criticising pagan worship and customs. They were influenced by the same kind of writings produced by Jewish authors during the intertestamental Hellenistic period. Among these are the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon*³⁸, Philo of Alexandria and later Flavius Josephus³⁹. *Romans* 1:18-32 displays distinct characteristics of specifically Hellenistic Jewish apologetic, as can be seen in a text such as the *Wisdom of Solomon* (Tobin, 2004: 109). The purpose of Hellenistic Jewish apologetic was to set the Jewish beliefs apart from the Gentile beliefs, particularly the Greco-Roman world, and this style exhibits the Jewish reaction to Gentile morality and religion (Tobin, 2004: 109).

In order to clarify the use of Hellenistic Jewish apologetic elements in *Rom.* 1:21-25, I will compare the *Wisdom of Solomon* 13.1-8 with *Rom.* 1:21-25. The choice of *Wisdom* is not haphazard, and I will show that it has implications for the interpretation of the passage, particularly its use in conjunction with *Rom.* 1:21-25. Augustine himself was familiar with the work and *Wisdom* 13.1-8 is quoted in *Conf.* 5.3.3-5, which I will be addressing shortly.

³⁸ The apologetic part of *Wisdom of Solomon* is generally limited to chapters 11 – 15 (Reese, 1970: 114).

³⁹ Josephus would not have been an influence on Paul at all, as his apologetic writing *Against Apion* was only published between 93-96 AD (Wandrey, 1998: 1090).

Jewish Apologetic in the Wisdom of Solomon

The central argument in Paul's attack upon the Gentiles is that God can (at least partially) be known through observation of the visible world (Guerra, 1995: 49). This is an argument that is prominent in Hellenistic Jewish apologetic texts, such as the *Wisdom of Solomon*. In *Wisdom* 13⁴⁰, the same type of language occurs:

Μάταιοι μὲν γὰρ πάντες ἄνθρωποι φύσει, οἷς παρῆν θεοῦ ἀγνοσία
καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὁρωμένων ἀγαθῶν οὐκ ἴσχυσαν εἰδέναι τὸν ὄντα,
οὔτε τοῖς ἔργοις προσέχοντες ἐπέγνωσαν τὸν τεχνίτην,
ἀλλ' ἢ πῦρ ἢ πνεῦμα ἢ ταχινὸν ἀέρα
ἢ κύκλον ἀστρῶν ἢ βίαιον ὕδωρ
ἢ φωστῆρας οὐρανοῦ πρυτάνεις κόσμου θεοὺς ἐνόμισαν (*Wisdom* 13:1-2)⁴¹.

Similarities between *Rom.* 1:18-32 and *Wisdom* 13 are clear in their respective choice of words. The author of *Wisdom* uses μάταιοι, "foolish" to describe the nature (φύσει) of all men (*Wisdom* 13:1). Paul uses the verb ἐματαιώθησαν, "act foolishly" (*Rom.* 1:21). There is a careful selection of words of physical perception (ὁρωμένων, εἰδέναι in *Wisdom*, φανερόν, ἐφάνερωσεν, καθαοῦται in *Romans*) and words of mental perception/understanding (Μάταιοι, ἀγνοσία, ἐνόμισαν in *Wisdom*, ἐματαιώθησαν, φάσκοντες, ἐμωράνθησαν, σοφοὶ in *Romans*). The argument Paul and Hellenistic Jewish apologists make is that God, although invisible and imperceptible, can nonetheless be seen through his creation, and therefore he can be known. God's attributes are mental, rather than physical, as indicated by νοούμενα (*Rom.* 1:20) (Guerra, 1995: 52). This concept is not limited to Jewish thinking, and can be traced to Middle Platonism (Guerra, 1995: 52). God, according to the Middle

⁴⁰ The text I have used for *Wisdom of Solomon* is Ziegler (1962).

⁴¹ "For all people who do not know God are, by their nature, foolish, and they were not able, through the good things that can be seen, to see the one who exists, nor did they consider his works and so did not recognise the maker, but thought that either fire or wind or swift air or the cycle of the stars or the violent water or the lights of heaven were gods that were the lords of the universe."

Platonists, is often considered as νοῦς, pure thought or reason. God causes “Ideas” which form the “intelligible cosmos structured in itself, an intelligible living creature which is the model for the visible cosmos” (Baltes, 2000: 295).

The argument is taken further that since God can clearly be perceived through his creation, there is no excuse for not glorifying Him as God, or accurately perceiving or understanding him as God. This argument was used by Hellenistic Jewish apologists against the Gentiles to criticize their gods, particularly the worship of animals and other superstitions. These elements are sometimes presented in Hellenistic Jewish apologetic with polysyndeton, e.g. *Wisdom* 13:2⁴² and *Romans* 1:23⁴³.

The significance of apologetic in Romans

Many scholars have placed the *Wisdom of Solomon* in the category of the λόγος προτρεπτικός (Grabbe, 1997: 25). According to Reese, *Wisdom* 13:1-9 demonstrates the characteristics of a typical diatribe (1970: 51). Winston (1980: 20) also identifies certain aspects of the diatribe in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, such as imaginary objectors⁴⁴. He states that “protreptic discourse readily lent itself to the incorporation of diatribe, the popular moral invective so characteristic of the Hellenistic period” (Winston, 1980: 20). The *Wisdom of Solomon* and the *Epistle to the Romans* share characteristics of protreptic, apologetic and diatribe. *Rom.* 1:21-25 depends upon a Jewish apologetic tradition, as can be seen from its similarities to *Wisdom* 13:1-9.

⁴² ἀλλ’ ἢ πῦρ ἢ πνεῦμα ἢ ταχινὸν ἀέρα ἢ κύκλον ἄστρον ἢ βίαιον ὕδωρ ἢ φωστῆρας οὐρανοῦ.

⁴³ καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ τετραπόδων καὶ ἐρπετῶν.

⁴⁴ An aspect shared with many parts of *Romans*. See my discussion in the previous chapter.

But why would Paul fall into an attack on Gentile belief at the beginning of a letter addressed to a congregation in Rome, the population of which contained both Jewish Christian and Gentile Christian members (Fitzmyer, 1993: 27)? The answer may lie in the cleverly omitted reference to Gentiles in *Rom.* 1.21ff. The Jewish Christians may have recognised this passage to represent a “typical” Hellenistic Jewish apologetic and the Gentile Christians would have agreed with Paul’s point of view (Tobin, 2004: 110). But Paul does not refer to the Gentiles explicitly, but rather to “all the godless and unjust men” (πασαν ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων) (*Rom.* 1:18). Paul uses Hellenistic Jewish apologetic, commonly targeted against the Gentiles, to implicate all humanity in sin, which necessarily includes Jewish people as well (Tobin, 2004: 110). This is particularly important considering Paul’s original audience may have included the Jewish Christians in Rome⁴⁵.

In summary, in *Rom.* 1:21-25, Paul uses elements from Jewish Hellenistic apologetic in order to indict not only Gentiles but all of humanity. In the following, I will show how this may affect the interpretation of *Conf.* 5.3.5.

The context of Conf. 5.3.5 and Latin apologetic

Conf. 5.3.5 describes the time when Augustine was introduced to the Manichaean Faustus. Augustine, who had been a Manichaean *auditor* for approximately nine years at this point⁴⁶, eagerly went to Faustus in the hope that such a highly regarded and well spoken man could reconcile what he had read in the books of the philosophers to the “stories” of the Manichaeans (*Conf.* 5.3.3). Augustine was more

⁴⁵ This standpoint is, in the scholarly debate surrounding *Romans*, far from agreed upon. Guerra argues that there is no textual support for excluding Jewish Christians from the audience of *Romans*, and proposes a mixed audience of both Jewish and Gentile Christians (1995: 171).

⁴⁶ The precise amount of time he spent with them is disputed, as Augustine himself is not always consistent with the reckoning. He does however refer to *novem annos* in the *Confessions*, e.g. *annos... ipsos novem* (*Conf.* 5.6.10).

convinced of the philosophers' points. In the course of his discussion, he dwells upon the limits of the philosophers. In support of his argument, he quotes from the *Wisdom of Solomon*:

et quoniam multa philosophorum legeram memoriaeque mandata retinebam, ex eis quaedam comparabam illis manichaeorum longis fabulis, et mihi probabiliora ista videbantur quae dixerunt illi qui tantum potuerunt valere ut possent aestimare saeculum, quamquam eius dominum minime invenerint (Conf. 5.3.3)⁴⁷.

The *Wisdom of Solomon* would have appeared in Augustine's "canon" of scripture (La Bonnadière, 1999: 28). He quotes from the *The Wisdom of Solomon* throughout the *Confessions*, but this reference is carefully placed. This reference is from *Wisdom* 13:8-9⁴⁸, and part of the apologetic section as discussed above. The proximity of this quotation from *Wisdom* 13 to the quotations from *Rom.* 1:20-25 is not a coincidence. *Wisdom* 13:8-9 is used by Augustine in his discussion of *Rom.* 1:18-23 in the *exp. prop. Rom.* 3, and later used in opposition to *curiositas* and astrology (O'Donnell, 1992b: 287). Given that *Rom.* 1:21-25 and *Wisdom* 13 are both apologetic texts, it can be argued that Augustine, in linking these two texts directly, is aware of the apologetic nature of the texts.

Christian apologetic was not new to Augustine's time. Before Augustine, Minucius Felix, Tertullian and Cyprian all wrote apologetic works between the second and third centuries AD (Price, 1999: 107). In Augustine's own time, Arnobius of Sicca

⁴⁷ "And since I had read many [books] of the philosophers, and having ruminated on them, had retained them in my memory, and I was comparing certain points of those books with those tedious stories of the Manichaeans, and as far as I was concerned, those things which the others had said seemed more probable, who had the potential to be strong enough to be able to measure the world, although they could not find the Lord [of the world] at all."

⁴⁸ According to O'Donnell's reconstruction: *iterum autem nec his debet ignosci: si enim tantum potuerunt valere ut possent aestimare saeculum, quomodo eius dominum non facilius invenerunt* (O'Donnell, 1992b: 287).

and Lactantius, both Africans, wrote apologetic works (Edwards, 1999: 198). The Christian apologetic writers were very conscious of the tradition in which they were working. Tertullian refers to Josephus' apologetic works in his *Apology*, and not at all as an outsider but as one that "must be consulted" (Price, 1999: 116). Augustine's use of a Hellenistic Jewish apologetic text, just as Paul's reference to the Hellenistic Jewish apologetic tradition, is not unlikely. Augustine's readers would have been familiar with *The Wisdom of Solomon* via the Septuagint.

The subject of *Conf.* 5.3.5 may cause some confusion. A careful analysis shows that the subject of what is quoted earlier determines the subject of the rest of *Conf.* 5.3.3-5. When Augustine writes *mihi probabiliora ista videbantur quae dixerunt illi qui tantum potuerunt valere* (*Conf.* 5.3.3), the *illi* refers not to the Manichaeans, referred to at the beginning of *Conf.* 5.3.3, but to the philosophers. The rest of *Conf.* 5.3.3-5 deals with Augustine's criticism of the philosophers and (seemingly) not of the Manichaeans. But why include an apologetic against the philosophers embedded within a passage dealing specifically with the shortcomings of the Manichaeans? I think it is too simple to read the section *Conf.* 5.3.3-5 as merely an excursus against the philosophers. I shall demonstrate that this passage may indeed be speaking to a Manichaean audience, via a careful use of the reference to *Rom.* 1.21-25.

The use of Rom.1:21-25 in Conf. 5.3.5

The parts of *Rom.* 1:21-25 which Augustine quotes are not in the same order that they appear in their original position in *Rom.* 1:21-25. Below I have arranged the quotations as they appear in *Conf.* 5.3.5, numbered in the order they appear in *Rom.* 1:21-25:

2. obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum

1. cognoscentes deum non sicut deum honorant aut gratias agunt, et evanescunt in cogitationibus suis,

3. et dicunt se esse sapientes

4. et immutantes gloriam incorrupti dei in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis et volucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium,

5. et convertunt veritatem tuam in mendacium, et colunt et serviunt creaturae potius quam creatori

The reference *obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum* is inserted before its natural position within Rom.1:21-25. This first reference should receive some attention.

non noverunt hanc viam, et putant se excelsos esse cum sideribus et lucidos, et ecce ruerunt in terram, et obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum (Conf. 5.3.5)

The word *obscuratum* can be seen as standing in antithesis to the *sideribus et lucidos*, referring to either astrology or astronomy, practiced by the philosophers and the Manichaeans. In Conf. 5.3.4 it is not astrology but astronomy that is specifically mentioned, namely in the prediction of eclipses. This was something the Manichaeans also participated in, but was not their primary activity (O'Donnell, 1992b: 289).

It is also possible to interpret “*et putant se excelsos esse cum sideribus et lucidos, et ecce ruerunt in terram*” as a reference to Manichaean cosmology. The phrase forms an *antitheton*⁴⁹ in a parallel structure in the form a b a' b': *putant se excelsos esse* (a) is a verbal phrase; *cum sideribus et lucidos* (b) is a prepositional phrase; *ecce ruerunt* (a') is a verbal phrase; *in terram* (b') is a prepositional phrase. The verbal forms *excelsos esse* and *ruerunt* are of opposite meaning, as well as the nouns *sideribus et lucidos* and *terram*. This parallelism is connected to the Manichaean cosmology, namely the dualism of light and dark as opposing elements (Chilton, 2000: 235). The mention of *terra* in this passage can also be seen as contra-Manichaean, since they insisted in the denial of anything concerning the flesh (Chilton, 2000: 236). Both Jewish and

⁴⁹ “*Antitheton* is the opposition of two *res* of contrasting content” (Lausberg, 1998: 349).

Christian traditions ascribed *terra* to flesh, via the creation story in *Gen. 2:7*⁵⁰, a creation story the Manichaeans did not subscribe to, as they rejected most of the Old Testament (Teske, 1999: 211). The shift of the *obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum* out of its natural position suits Augustine's rhetorical purpose here. Augustine may be deliberately highlighting the Manichaean cosmology in order to attract the attention of a potential Manichaean audience.

The word *insipiens* may also call up the image of Wisdom, being the negative form of *sapiens*. Wisdom plays a strong role in this short passage. It is mentioned four times in *Conf. 5.3.5* in the forms *sapientiae*, *sapientia*, *insipiens* and *sapientes*. This is also significant given Augustine's discussion about the philosophers, themselves seekers of wisdom. During this part of Augustine's life he was actively searching for this wisdom, and it was the lack of any wisdom that estranged him from the Manichaeans. The quotation from *Rom. 1:21-25* is used to describe the "failings of secular wisdom in the domain of theology" (O'Donnell, 1992b: 291). Another criticism Augustine makes against them is *non pie quaerunt, et ideo non inveniunt* (*Conf. 5.3.5*). Of course this conjures the oft quoted *Matt. 7:7* into mind⁵¹, but it may also be an allusion to *Wisdom 13:6: sed tamen adhuc in his minor est querella et hii enim fortassis errant Deum quaerentes et volentes invenire*⁵². The search for wisdom and the search for God are inextricably linked, according to Augustine.

The apologetic character of Conf. 5.3.5 and Augustine's purpose

Both *Wisdom 13:8-9* and *Rom. 1.21-25* can be described as apologetic texts, existing in or relying on a Hellenistic Jewish apologetic tradition. Yet there are several

⁵⁰ *formavit igitur Dominus Deus hominem de limo terrae et inspiravit in faciem eius spiraculum vitae et factus est homo in animam viventem* (*Gen 2:7*). The text for the Latin Vulgate is Weber (1975).

⁵¹ See my previous chapter for the protreptic use of *Matt. 7:7*.

⁵² According to the Vulgate.

conundrums in *Conf.* 5.3.5 which should be addressed. I have identified the subject of *Conf.* 5.3.3-5 to be the philosophers which Augustine was reading at the time, and mentioned the strong apologetic elements directed at them in this passage, but why would Augustine engage in an apologetic discourse with philosophers, who were mostly pagan? The pagan philosophers would consider the Christian references to be of little value, or to carry little authority. Perhaps this is a veiled apologetic towards the Manichaeans? Even if this is true, given its position after the criticism of Faustus, why would Augustine use these texts in an apologetic towards the Manichaeans, who largely rejected the Old Testament, being part of the Jewish inheritance of Christianity? Furthermore, the content of the quoted passages does not seem entirely appropriate for a contra-Manichaean apologetic. The first three parts⁵³ simply refer to their foolishness and inability to understand, their claiming to be wise, but does not actually touch on any specific doctrine (except the brief, indirect reference to Manichaean cosmology as I have highlighted above), and could as easily refer to the philosophers. The fourth part seems entirely out of place in a contra-Manichaean apologetic, since the Manichaeans would have agreed with *immutantes gloriam incorrupti dei in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis*, but directed at the Catholic Christians. This was one of the many things the Manichaeans accused the Catholic Christians of believing in, namely, a material God, with a physical human form, with hair and nails (Teske, 1999: 209). This was derived from the Manichaean interpretation of *Gen.* 1:26, where God creates man in his image. Therefore the Manichaeans would have agreed wholeheartedly with the criticism raised from *similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis*. Why then would Augustine place this text in a contra-Manichaean apologetic? The issue is further complicated by the rest of the verse, *et volucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium*, which refers to the Gentile (especially Egyptian) worship of animals, which does not apply at all to the Manichaeans. It is possible that Augustine is sensitive to the convention

⁵³ See my numbering on page 26.

of polysyndeton in apologetic when listing the animals (Guerra, 1995: 53), but this fails to explain why Augustine would quote a verse with no direct reference to the Manichaean doctrines. There is also scant textual support that Augustine has the Egyptians in mind in this apologetic discourse. I think a clue to interpreting this strange appearance lies in the rhetorical use of *Rom.1:21-25* in its own context.

The context of Rom. 1:21-25 and its place in Conf. 5.3.5

In *Rom. 1:21-25*, the Hellenistic Jewish apologetic attack upon “Gentiles” seemed to be out of place itself. The letter was not addressed to non-Christian Gentiles, it was addressed to a mixture of Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. However, by using a form of rhetoric that would have been familiar to his audience and a point they would have understood and wholeheartedly agreed with, Paul brings his audience into a position in which he can minister his message: that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, not just the ungodliness of the Gentiles. A similar tactic, I believe, is employed by Augustine. Augustine’s rhetorical training would have easily allowed him to identify the apologetic force of *Rom. 1:21-25*, since he uses this in an apologetic context in conjunction with a Hellenistic Jewish apologetic text, *The Wisdom of Solomon*. A similar kind of “confusion” is evident in both *Conf. 5.3.5* and *Rom. 1:21-25*. Augustine may be criticizing the Manichaeans indirectly, rather targeting the philosophers, using a text with content that the Manichaeans would have agreed with. Similarly, Paul is expounding the vices of the Gentiles, when his audience has already been converted to Christianity, and therefore, would have subscribed to what Paul was saying.

When Augustine introduces the start of his walk with the Manichaeans he says: *incidi in homines superbe delirantes, carnales nimis et loquaces* (*Conf. 3.6.10*). It is not until *Conf. 3.10.18* that the word *manichaeus* is used. According to O’Donnell, while it is possible to infer who these people were from what is said of their doctrines,

there would have been people who would not have recognized these *homines* as Manichaeans (1992b: 196). A careful reading of *Conf.* 5.3.3-6 shows that the only mention of the Manichaeans is Faustus as a *manichaeorum episcopus* and the *manichaeorum longe fabulis* (*Conf.* 5.3.3). At the conclusion of his apologetic discourse at the end of *Conf.* 5.3.6, he directly compares the writings of Mani with what he had read in the books of the philosophers, and finds Mani's writings wanting. *Conf.* 5.3.3-6 starts and ends with mention of the Manichaean writings, and in between we have the criticism of the philosophers' writings. Yet Augustine remains more convinced of the philosophers' writings: *ibi autem credere iubebar, et ad illas rationes numeris et oculis meis exploratas non occurrebat, et longe diversum erat* (*Conf.* 5.3.6)⁵⁴. *Exploro* is a carefully chosen verb for this passage. *Exploro* can mean "to search out, seek to discover" and is synonymous with *quaero* (Lewis & Short, 1879: 696). This may be used in a similar way to *quaero* as it occurs in the often quoted *Matt.* 7:7. According to Kotzé (2004, 134) "describing the *Confessions* as a quest is common. That the idea of this quest and its successful completion may be expressed by the verbs *quaerere* and *invenire* among others is to be expected". I would argue that the *exploratas* here marks this theme of a quest. In the context of *Conf.* 5.3.3ff., this quest involves a critical analysis of the philosophers, and by extension, identifying the errors within the Manichaean doctrines. This critical mindset, which Augustine has only begun to develop at the point of the narrative in *Conf.* 5.3.3-5, will come to fruition in the intellectual conversion in *Conf.* 7.9.13-15.

The use of *et volucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium* may also be a marker. Augustine often uses such quotations in order to link certain passages together. According to Knauer, "diese Art der Verknüpfung von Zitaten hat wohl auch darauf eingewirkt, die vielen 'Zitatnester' in den Konfessionen hervorzurufen, in denen

⁵⁴ "Yet there I was commanded to believe, and it did not agree with the reasoning of numbers nor with the examinations of my own eyes; rather it was completely different."

Wortbeziehungen von einem Zitat zum anderen und zum dritten weiterleiten” (1955: 114). The use of various parts of *Rom.* 1:21-25 is just such a ‘Zitatnest’. This passage recurs in later parts of the *Confessions*. The link created by the phrase *et volucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium* and the reference to the Egyptian religion will be significant in Book 7⁵⁵. At this point the link is not obvious, as this is the first occurrence of the quotation, but the significance of this link will become more apparent in subsequent uses of the quotation, which I will treat in the course of this study.

In summary, Augustine begins *Conf.* 5.3.3 by introducing Faustus, but the rest of the chapter until nearly the end of *Conf.* 5.3.6 deals (at first glance) entirely with the philosophers. Augustine considered the philosophers to be more credible than the Manichaeans, yet still criticizes the philosophers, saying *non pie quaerunt*. If the philosophers receive such an indictment from Augustine, it implies he considers the Manichaeans to have been less “dutiful” in their search for truth and wisdom. Therefore *Conf.* 5.3.3-5 may be seen as an indirect apologetic towards the Manichaeans. Augustine uses the same technique employed by Paul in *Rom.* 1:21-25, by diverting the audience’s attention to a group they would have readily perceived as sinful or wrong, and turning the table to show that they are equally guilty. Augustine may be sensitive to apologetic texts, particularly *The Wisdom of Solomon*, and employs a variety of apologetic techniques in order to strengthen his argument. Furthermore, the critical mindset that Augustine employs in the narrative of *Conf.* 5.3.3-6 serves as a prelude to a greater conversion, namely, the intellectual conversion in *Conf.* 7.9.13-15.

⁵⁵ This will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Augustine's use of *Romans* in his first conversion

In the previous chapter, I showed how the apologetic context of *Rom.*1:21-25 may influence the interpretation of the *Conf.* 5.3.5. In *Conf.* 7.9.14 and *Conf.* 7.9.15, Augustine again quotes from *Rom.*1:21-25. While the majority of quotations in the *Confessions* occur as a single verse or verse fragment, quoted once, there are a few, significant occurrences when Augustine uses more than one verse from the same biblical chapter, spread out relative closely together in the text. The use of *Rom.* 1:21-25 in *Conf.* 5.3.5, as well as the use of the same verses in *Conf.* 7.9.14-15, demonstrates this phenomenon. Below I have underlined the parts that Augustine quotes from *Rom.*1:21-25.

etsi cognoscunt deum, non sicut deum glorificant aut gratias agunt, sed evanescunt in cogitationibus suis et obscuratur insipiens cor eorum; dicentes se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt. (*Conf.* 7.9.14)⁵⁶

et ideo legebam ibi etiam immutatam gloriam incorruptionis tuae in idola et varia simulacra, in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis et volucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium, videlicet Aegyptium cibum quo Esau perdidit primogenita sua, quoniam caput quadrupedis pro te honoravit populus primogenitus, conversus corde in Aegyptum et curvans imaginem tuam, animam suam, ante imaginem vituli manducantis faenum. inveni haec ibi et non manducavi. placuit enim tibi, domine, auferre opprobrium diminutionis ab Iacob, ut maior serviret minori, et vocasti gentes in hereditatem tuam. et ego ad te veneram ex gentibus et intendi in aurum quod ab Aegypto voluisti ut auferret populus tuus, quoniam tuum erat, ubicumque erat. et dixisti Atheniensibus per apostolum tuum quod in te vivimus et movemur et sumus, sicut et quidam secundum eos dixerunt, et utique inde erant illi libri. et non attendi in idola Aegyptiorum, quibus de auro tuo

⁵⁶ This quotation is the last sentence of *Conf.* 7.9.14. The text from *Conf.* 7.9.15 follows directly afterwards in the text.

ministrabant qui transmutaverunt veritatem dei in mendacium, et coluerunt et servierunt creaturae potius quam creatori. (Conf. 7.9.15)⁵⁷

The quotations presented here are the exact same portions of *Rom.1:21-25* which Augustine quoted in *Conf. 5.3.5*, except for very small omissions or changes. The first visible change is the inclusion of *stulti facti sunt* in *Conf. 7.9.14*. This portion of *Rom.1:22* is not quoted in *Conf. 5.3.5*, while the first part, *dicentes se esse sapientes*, is⁵⁸. The second is the addition of *in idola et varia simulacra* in the middle of the quotation from *Rom.1:23*. This does not feature in either Augustine's quotation of the same

⁵⁷ "Although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but became dark in their thoughts and their foolish hearts are hidden; although they say they are wise, they have become foolish.

And so I also read there that your incorruptible glory was changed into idols and various forms, in the likeness of corruptible man and flying creatures and four legged creatures and crawling creatures, namely that Egyptian food for which Esau gave away his birthright, because your first born people honoured the head of a four legged animal instead of you, turning with their hearts to Egypt and bowing your image, your spirit before the image of a bull chewing on hay. These I found there and I did not ruminate on them. For it pleased you, Lord, to take away the shame of minority from Jacob, so that the elder would serve the younger, and you called the nations into your inheritance. And I had come to you from the nations and I intently sought for the gold which you wished your people to bring from Egypt, because it was yours, wherever it was. And you said to the Athenians through your apostle that in you, we live and move and are, so they say according to some, and surely these books originated from there. And I did not seek after the Egyptian idols which they worshipped with your gold, they who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator."

⁵⁸ While I do not wish to overemphasize such an omission in *Conf. 5.3.5*, one possible interpretation is that Augustine deliberately omitted the harsh *stulti facti sunt* in *Conf. 5.3.5* so as not to estrange the potential Manichaean audience. As discussed in the previous chapter, *Conf. 5.3.5* contains apologetic elements and in order to emphasize the protreptic aim of his apologetic, he "censors" Paul's quotation so as to highlight the errors, but not to attack.

verse in *Conf.* 5.3.5, or in the original source of the quotation⁵⁹. The final variation is the order in which the sections of the quotation are presented. While in *Conf.* 5.3.5, *obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum* occurs first, in *Conf.* 7.9.14 it occurs after *cognoscunt deum... cogitationibus suis*, as it does in the original source⁶⁰.

In my previous chapter, I showed how the original context of *Rom.*1:21-25 may affect the interpretation of *Conf.* 5.3.5. If that is so, it is reasonable to assume a similar effect on the interpretation of *Conf.* 7.9.14-15. I have already dealt with the context of *Rom.*1:21-25 in my previous chapter. In the following, I address the context of *Conf.* 7.9.14-15.

The context of Conf. 7.9.14-15 and its rhetorical structure

Book 7 contains an account of Augustine's intellectual conversion. In *Conf.* 7.9.13-15, Augustine narrates how he was exposed to⁶¹ the books of the Platonists and he details the essence of what he read in those books⁶². *Conf.* 7.9.13-15 is an intense and conflicted passage as it contains both a profound praise for what Augustine had found in the books of the Platonists, but also an acute criticism of what he did not find there. Furthermore, it is a prelude to his discovery of Paul described in *Conf.*

⁵⁹ I do not consider this addition too remarkable, merely a clarification of what is meant by *similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis et volucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium*, and to contextualize the quotation specifically in the context of the story of the Israelites and the golden calf.

⁶⁰ I provide a possible reason for the shifting of *obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum* in *Conf.* 5.3.5 in my treatment of the passage in my previous chapter. The "change" in *Conf.* 7.9.14 is not remarkable otherwise.

⁶¹ It is not Augustine who discovers, but God who provides: *procurasti mihi... quosdam platonicorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinam versos* (*Conf.* 7.9.13).

⁶² Who the *platonici* might be has been debated in scholarship for some time. Plotinus, Iamblichus and Porphyry are mentioned in Augustine's works. O'Donnell observes that Augustine left their identity out consciously, and that should itself be an indication that the identity is less important than the value of discovering their works (O'Donnell, 1992b: 421).

7.21.27 and his spiritual conversion in Book 8. I summarize the structure of *Conf.* 7.9.13-15 below:

1. 7.9.13

- a. Discovery (*procurasti mihi... quosdam platoniorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinam versos*).
- b. Augustine reads (*et ibi legi*) and discovers similarity to scripture: quotation of John 1:1-5 (*quod in principio erat verbum... et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt*).
- c. Augustine continues reading and repeats what he found in the books of the Platonists⁶³ (*et quia hominis anima... in hunc mundum*).
- d. Augustine continues reading and quotes from John 1:10 (*et quia in hoc mundo erat... et mundus eum non cognovit*).
- e. Augustine quotes from John 1:11-12 (*quia vero in sua propria venit... credentibus in nomine eius*), this Augustine does not read in the books of the Platonists (*non ibi legi*).

2. 7.9.14

- a. Augustine reads (*item legi ibi*) and quotes from John 1:13 (*quia verbum, deus, non ex carne... sed ex deo natus est*).
- b. Augustine quotes from John 1:14 (*sed quia verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis*), this Augustine does not read in the books of the Platonists (*non ibi legi*).
- c. Augustine discovers similarities to scripture in the books of the Platonists (*indagavi quippe in illis litteris varie dictum et multis modis*), quotation of Phil 2:6 (*quod sit filius in forma patris, non rapinam arbitratus esse aequalis deo*).

⁶³ The portion noted here does not contain any direct scriptural references. Since Augustine is reporting what he read in the Platonists, this can be interpreted as a paraphrase of the Platonists works in discussion. Outler identifies similarities with Plotinus' Fifth Ennead (2002: 115).

- d. Augustine quotes *Phil 2:7-11* (*quia naturaliter idipsum est... in gloria est dei patris*), this Augustine does not find in the books of the Platonists (*non habent illi libri*).
- e. Augustine quotes from *John 1:16* and *Wisdom 7:27* (*quod enim ante omnia tempora... sapientiae renovantur ut sapientes sint*), this he discovers in the books of the Platonists (*est ibi*).
- f. Augustine quotes from *Rom. 5:6* and *Rom. 8:32* (*quod autem secundum tempus pro impiis... pro nobis omnibus tradidisti eum*), this he does not find in the books of the Platonists (*non est ibi*).
- g. Augustine stops reading from the books of the Platonists and now quotes from scripture directly, *Matt 11:25, 11:28-29, Ps. 24:9, 24:18, Matt 11:29, Rom. 1:21-22* (*abscondisti enim haec... dicentes se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt*).

3. 7.9.15

- a. Augustine continues reading (*et ideo legebam ibi etiam*) and quotes from *Rom. 1:23* (*immutatam gloriam incorruptionis tuae... et volucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium*).
- b. Augustine creates a metaphor of idolatry by comparing the books of the Platonists to the golden calf in the Old Testament account in Exodus (*videlicet Aegyptium cibum... ante imaginem vituli manducantis faenum*). This Augustine finds in the books of the Platonists, but he does not heed it (*inveni haec ibi et non manducaui*).
- c. Augustine expands his metaphor by comparing how Jacob gained Esau's birthright to how the Gentiles received the gospel (*placuit enim tibi, domine, auferre opprobrium diminutionis ab Iacob... vocasti gentes in hereditatem tuam*).

- d. Augustine narrates that he discovered the Egyptian gold, representing Platonism (O'Donnell, 1992b: 432) (*et ego ad te veneram ex gentibus et intendi in aurum... quoniam tuum erat, ubicumque erat*).
- e. Augustine quotes God speaking through the apostle Paul from *Acts* 17:28 (*et dixisti Atheniensibus per apostolum tuum... et utique inde erant illi libri*).
- f. Augustine confesses that he did not worship this Egyptian "idol", and quotes from *Rom.* 1:25 (*et non attendi in idola Aegyptiorum... et coluerunt et servierunt creaturae potius quam creatori*).

This section (*Conf.* 7.9.13-15) follows a consistent chiastic or frame composition. In 1b above, Augustine reads (α) and quotes from scripture (β). In 1c he quotes a principle from the Platonists (γ) and in 1d he quotes a similar principle from scripture (γ'). In 1e he quotes from scripture (β') and concludes by saying that he did not read this in the Platonists (α'). An *antitheton* is formed by the contrast of the positive (*et ibi legi*) and negative (*non ibi legi*), which results in an isocolon⁶⁴. This forms a chiastic frame structure. The narrative begins with Augustine reading (*et ibi legi*) (α) and ends with him not reading (*non ibi legi*) (α'). This *antitheton* forms the frame (α and α') and creates a sense of tension in the structure⁶⁵. Within this frame, Augustine quotes from scripture, first what he found in the Platonists and finally what he did not find there (β and β'). In the core of the frame structure (γ and γ'), Augustine refers to both the Platonists themselves and to scripture.

In 2a, Augustine reads (α) and quotes from scripture (β). In 2b, he quotes from scripture (β') but does not read this verse in the Platonists (α')⁶⁶. Similarly, in 2c, he discovers similarities to scripture in the Platonists (α) and quotes from scripture (β).

⁶⁴ "With all variants of antitheton the tendency towards equality of the elements (isocolon...) may be observed" (Lausberg, 1998: 350).

⁶⁵ "The accentuation of tension results in the division of the whole into two mutually antithetical parts" (Lausberg, 1998: 209).

⁶⁶ Once again, forming an *antitheton*.

In 2d, he quotes from scripture (β') but he does not find these ideas in the Platonists (α'). In 2e and 2f, Augustine breaks the pattern, preferring a parallel structure. In 2e, he first quotes from two scriptural sources (β), and confirms he found them in the Platonists (α). In 2f, again he quotes from two scriptural sources (β') but confirms he did not find them in the Platonists (α'). Augustine then moves away from reading in the Platonists (2g) and quotes several verses from scripture, including *Matt* 11:25-29, *Ps.* 24:9, 24:18 and finally *Rom.* 1:21-22. *Conf.* 7.9.14 is concluded with *stulti facti sunt*, the part of the quotation which Augustine did not quote in *Conf.* 5.3.5.

The pattern in *Conf.* 7.9.13 is basically an $\alpha \beta \gamma \gamma' \beta' \alpha'$ chiastic frame structure. A similar chiastic structure occurs in *Conf.* 7.9.14, namely, an $\alpha \beta \beta' \alpha'$ composition for the first two instances. The next pair of isocola uses a directly parallel composition, namely $\beta \alpha \beta' \alpha'$. In this instance, the isocola are stacked one against the other, which heightens the tension in both pairs, whereas in the chiastic structures, the tension was far stronger between the outer isocola (α and α' in both examples in *Conf.* 7.9.13 and 7.9.14 above) than the inner isocola (β and β' in both *Conf.* 7.9.13 and 7.9.14, as well as γ and γ' in *Conf.* 7.9.13). This change from a more to a less tense structure may pre-empt the change of tone in *Conf.* 7.9.15, where Augustine breaks from the chiastic structure. The paragraph begins with a quotation from *Rom.* 1:23 and ends with a quotation from *Rom.* 1:25. In between these quotations, Augustine develops the metaphor of Egyptian gold as representing Platonism. This can be represented as $\alpha \beta \alpha'$. This three-part form, with the quotations from *Romans* acting as isocola, reinforces the expression of completeness⁶⁷, in contrast to the tension of the previous two paragraphs.

⁶⁷ "The completeness of the whole finds its regular minimal expression in the three-part form" (Lausberg, 1998: 210). The division of a whole can have two motivations: tension or completeness (Lausberg, 1998: 209).

The purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate how, on a structural level Augustine guides his readers through his own intellectual conversion. As shown above, Augustine begins by stating that he read and then he quotes. When Augustine encounters something he does not find, he first quotes it, and then he tells us that he did not find it. The effect that is achieved with this is coupling the first quotation with that which follows. In most cases above, the text Augustine did not find follows the text he did find. Furthermore, the parallel structures in this passage focus the attention of the reader on the use of the passages from *Rom.* 1:21-25. *Conf.* 7.9.15 begins and ends with a quotation from *Rom.* 1:23-25. The feeling of tension conveyed through the use of *antitheta* in *Conf.* 7.9.13-14 may suggest Augustine wrestling with the books of the Platonists, particularly in identifying what was lacking. The sudden change towards a more complete structure⁶⁸ in *Conf.* 7.9.15 suggests a shift in Augustine's own mind towards a more critical attitude towards textual interpretation. He differentiates what he reads in the Platonists into two categories, determined by their proximity to scripture. At this point of the narrative, Augustine's knowledge of scripture is debatable (he did know of scripture, but was not a keen student thereof). Within the narrative, this scene can be interpreted as Augustine starting to grasp ideas which are prevalent in scripture and learning to discard ideas that may be false. This shift is the step Augustine needs to take before he can hope to achieve his spiritual conversion, which will take place in Book 8. The prominence of *Rom.* 1:23-25 in *Conf.* 7.9.15 and the more complete structure suggests this quotation has an important role to play in the intellectual conversion. In the following, I discuss the narrative structure of *Conf.* 7.9.13-15 in light of its role in Augustine's conversion narrative.

⁶⁸ See footnote 72.

Parallels with the conversion narrative in Conf. 3.4.7-8

Conf. 7.9.13-15 is not Augustine's first conversion narrative in the *Confessions*. A similar story occurs in *Conf. 3.4.7-8*, where Augustine relates his discovery of Cicero's *Hortensius*. The *Hortensius*, a text unfortunately surviving only in brief fragments, was an exhortation to philosophy (O'Meara, 1980: 58). The conversion narrative in *Conf. 3.4.7-8* is not the same as *Conf. 7.9.13-15*, but contains certain elements that can be compared. A comparison of these elements also highlights this stage of his conversion, namely the intellectual conversion. Whereas in *Conf. 3.4.7-8* Augustine identifies both author and the work he had read, in *Conf. 7.9.13-15* both the author and work remain anonymous. When Augustine discovers the *Hortensius*, he says *et usitato iam discendi ordine perveneram in librum cuiusdam Ciceronis* (*Conf. 3.4.7*)⁶⁹. The verb *perveneram*, while active, nonetheless conveys a sense of chance. The specifically articulated phrase *usitato discendi ordine* stresses that Augustine was not specifically looking for something. This finding of the *Hortensius* is different to *Conf. 7.9.13*. In *Conf. 7.9.13*, Augustine received the books of the Platonists through divine agency⁷⁰. Here, God is the subject of the verb *procurasti*, whereas it is Augustine who is the subject of *perveneram* in *Conf. 3.4.7*. The fact that the divine agency is missing in *Conf. 3.4.7* only becomes visible when we compare it with *Conf. 7.9.13*.

In *Conf. 3.4.8*, Augustine reports what he found in the *Hortensius*, by quoting from *Col. 2:8-9*, also a Pauline text. This is where the conversion narratives start to show similarities. After finding such wisdom in the *Hortensius*, Augustine laments, saying *et hoc solum me in tanta flagrantia refrangebatur, quod nomen Christi non erat ibi*⁷¹. In similar pattern to *Conf. 7.9.13*, he first mentions what he finds in the book, quoting

⁶⁹ "In the regular course of my studying, I came across a book of a certain Cicero."

⁷⁰ *procurasti mihi*.

⁷¹ "Only this checked me against such ardor, that the name of Christ was not there" (*Conf. 3.4.8*).

directly from Scripture, then explains what he did not find. Indeed, the dissimilarities between these passages number greater than the similarities, but perhaps the pattern⁷² found in *Conf.* 3.4.7-8 could serve as the blue print for subsequent conversion narratives. The verb *quaererem* occurs in *Conf.* 3.4.8: *sed ipsam quaecumque esset sapientiam ut diligerem et quarererem et adsequerem et tenerem atque amplexarer fortiter, excitabar sermone illo et accendebar et ardebam*⁷³. The verb *quaererem* recalls *Matt.* 7:7, particularly its use in *Conf.* 1.1.1, and brings to mind the converted Augustine⁷⁴. According to O'Donnell, with regards to the *quaererem* in *Conf.* 3.4.8, "there has been no antecedent *praedicatio*, hence [there is] no accurate knowledge of what [Augustine] was seeking" (1992b: 169). The imperfect tense employed here in all the verbs suggests a sense of incompleteness or continuation in the action⁷⁵. These elements may contribute to what O'Meara describes as an "abortive conversion" (1980: 59). The significance of this episode in Augustine's life is undisputed and is emphasized by the emotive vocabulary Augustine employs. Yet the brevity of the account, the single quotation of scripture, the lack of the *praedicatio* all suggest something incomplete, especially when we compare it to the conversion narrative in *Conf.* 7.9.13-15. These elements would suggest that Augustine emphasises that his first conversion in *Conf.* 3.4.7-8 is less important than his intellectual conversion in *Conf.* 7.9.13-15. Furthermore, the use of scripture is a key

⁷² Read from the text, quote from Scripture, find what is missing.

⁷³ "But to love and to seek and to pursue and to hold and to vigorously embrace wisdom itself, whatever kind of wisdom it might have been, I was roused by that speech and I was set on fire and filled with ardor." Note that *ipsam sapientiam* can be taken as the object of any or all of the subsequent verbs in the subordinate clause, and Augustine's conscious placement of the object before the conjunction suggests he intended it to be read with all. This cannot be elegantly rendered in an English translation.

⁷⁴ See my first chapter for my treatment on *Matt.* 7:7.

⁷⁵ According to Kennedy, "the Imperfect expresses what was continued or repeated in past time, as opposed to the completed or momentary past" (1987: 158).

to how Augustine describes his conversion narratives and therefore close attention must be given to the use of such quotations in these narratives.

Rom. 1:21-22 and the conclusion of Conf. 7.9.14

The quotation of *Rom. 1:21-22* is the first quotation from *Rom. 1:21-25* to appear in the conversion story in *Conf. 7.9.13-15*. It is placed at the end of *Conf. 7.9.14*. It would be difficult to judge whether it is significant that this quotation occurs at the end of *Conf. 7.9.14*, since we are unsure as to whether Augustine had divided his book into paragraphs as we have⁷⁶. However, I will attempt to show that the placement of *Rom. 1:21-22* in *Conf. 7.9.14* is significant, and more importantly, should be read apart from the quotation of *Rom. 1:23* which follows.

It should first be noted what Augustine reports he read and what he did not read. As I have shown in my overview of *Conf. 7.9.13-15*, there are times when Augustine says he is reading from the books of the Platonists (often represented by quotes from scripture) and times when the narrative stops and he delivers commentary. The first time he stops to make comment occurs at the end of *Conf. 7.9.14* (2g in my overview). This commentary is largely a cluster of scriptural quotations. The break from the reading narrative to commentary is very subtle, particularly amongst the dense arrangement of scriptural quotations when Augustine reports reading from the Platonists. However, there can be no doubt that Augustine breaks from his reading when he says *abscondisti enim haec a sapientibus et revelasti ea parvulis*⁷⁷ (*Conf. 7.9.14*). The quotation from *Rom. 1:21-22* is the last in the series of quotations Augustine uses in his commentary at the end of *Conf. 7.9.14*.

⁷⁶ According to O'Donnell, "the 'chapters' go back to Amerbach and the 'paragraphs' to the Maurists" (1992a: lxi), referring to earlier editors of the text.

⁷⁷ "For you have hidden these things from the wise and you reveal them to children", quotation from Matt 11:25.

At the beginning of *Conf.* 7.9.15, Augustine starts with *et ideo legebam ibi etiam*. The *etiam* combined with the imperfect tense in *legebam* reinforces the effect of starting again, that is, beginning after the commentary has ended. The text Augustine reads is represented by a quotation from *Rom.* 1:23. Therefore, the quotation from *Rom.* 1:21-22 at the end of *Conf.* 7.9.14 should be read separately. The quotation of *Rom.* 1:23 at the beginning of *Conf.* 7.9.15 should not be read as merely a continuation of this quotation at the end of *Conf.* 7.9.14.

What, then, is the significance of the specific placement of the quotation of *Rom.* 1:21-22 in *Conf.* 7.9.14? The end of *Conf.* 7.9.14 does indeed serve as a conclusion, or rather a turning point in the narrative of the conversion. As shown above, the break from the reading narrative to commenting is significant. It breaks the pace of the narrative and marks the turning point. In my rhetorical analysis, I argued that the chiasmic structures found in *Conf.* 7.9.13-14 demonstrated a sense of tension and conversely, *Conf.* 7.9.15 demonstrated completeness. In between these sections lies Augustine's commentary, ending with the quotation from *Rom.* 1:21-22. As the quotation from *Rom.* 1:21-22 is the last of the series of quotations⁷⁸ in Augustine's commentary, it could be interpreted as the climax of these quotations.

If the quotation of *Rom.* 1:21-22 is indeed the climax of this commentary, what is the significance of this quotation in the context of the commentary? *Rom.* 1:21-22 deals specifically with natural theology, i.e. the ability to know God. In the previous chapter, I dealt with this aspect in Hellenistic Jewish apologetic. However this concept is equally central to Platonism. The conception of God according to Paul and according to the Platonists is compatible. According to Guerra, Paul employs a

⁷⁸ In order as Augustine quotes them: *Matt.* 11:25, *Matt.* 11:28-29, *Ps.* 24:9, *Ps.* 24:18, *Matt.* 11:29, *Rom.* 1:21-22.

negative theology in *Rom.* 1:18-32, stressing the negative aspects of God, including his invisible nature (τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ), his eternity (ἄϊδιος) and immortality (ἄφθαρτος θεός) (Guerra, 1995: 51). According to Palmer (1983: 251), the greatest source for this kind of negative theology, as developed in apologetic writing, is Middle Platonism. The negative theology, especially as employed by the apologists, was used as an argument against pagan gods, defining God in terms directly opposed to the pagan gods (Palmer, 1983: 251). This negative theology was also present in Neoplatonism. According to Edwards, Augustine's early conception of the Platonist God was "a transcendent being, free and incorporeal" (1999: 589). Plotinus' concept of the One, which Augustine may have equated with the Word in John 1:1, was that it is "Formless, Unmeasured and Infinite" (Wallis, 1972: 57). It is this conception that Augustine inherits. In *Conf.* 7.9.14, in his use of *Rom.* 1:21-22, Augustine is not so much criticising philosophy to the extent he was in *Conf.* 5.3.5, but rather identifying concepts which are shared by Paul and the Platonists. However, Augustine does provide a caveat: *stulti facti sunt*. As mentioned above, this portion of *Rom.* 1:22 is left out in *Conf.* 5.3.5. I argue that Augustine's inclusion of this phrase is significant.

On a rhetorical level, *dicentes se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt* contains an *antitheton* in a chiasmic structure⁷⁹: *dicentes se esse* is a verbal phrase (a), *sapientes* is an adjective (b), *stulti* another adjective (b') and finally *facti sunt* forming the final verbal phrase (a'). The structure a b b' a' forms a chiasm. The *antitheton* is clearest in the core of the chiasm (i.e. b b'), where the words *sapientes* and *stulti* are clearly opposite in meaning and are placed directly after one another. However the frame of the chiasm also contains an *antitheton*, namely a contrast between saying (*dicentes*) and doing or

⁷⁹ An interesting observation is that the rhetorical analysis I give of this phrase is not valid in the Greek: φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν. The rhetorical figures as pointed out are unique to the Latin.

making (*facti*). A further contrast can be seen in the active *dicentes* and the passive *facti sunt*. Augustine's use of the chiasmic structure was a way to guide the reader through the narrative of his reading of the Platonists. Augustine ends off *Conf.* 7.9.14 with a warning: do not think yourself wise. Augustine is keenly aware of the dangers of false wisdom. *Conf.* 7.9.13 starts off with the reiteration of *quam resistas superbis, humilibus autem des gratiam*. This quotation of *Prov.* 3:34 first occurs in *Conf.* 1.1.1, right at the beginning of Augustine's confession. In *Conf.* 1.1.1, Augustine omits the final part of the quotation, *humilibus autem des gratiam*, whereas it is included in *Conf.* 7.9.13. The chiasmic *antitheton* structure as found in the quotation of *Rom.* 1:22 in *Conf.* 7.9.14 also occurs here: *resistas (a) superbis (b), humilibus (b') autem des gratiam (a')*.

The use of *dicentes se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt* and *quam resistas superbis, humilibus autem des gratiam* have another function in the *Confessions*. The use of *dicentes se esse sapientes* in *Conf.* 5.3.5 as well is not coincidence. As I postulate in my previous chapter, while the grammatical subject of *dicentes* is the philosophers which Augustine had read at the time of the events in *Conf.* 5.3.5, there are elements of protreptic in *Conf.* 5.3.5 which are aimed at the Manichaeans. Furthermore, when Augustine mentions his first encounter with the Manichaeans in *Conf.* 3.6.10, he calls them *homines superbe delirantes*. Augustine's primary criticism here is not against specific doctrines, but rather their pride. Augustine does not go lightly on himself either. In *Conf.* 3.5.9, right after he reports the discovery of the *Hortensius* and before his meeting of the Manichaeans, he tells of his decision to read the Scriptures: *et ecce video rem non compertam superbis neque nudatam pueris, sed incessu humilem, successu excelsam et velatam mysteriis* (*Conf.* 3.5.9)⁸⁰. The present tense in *video* may serve to convey the historic present, but we may also interpret it as a true

⁸⁰ "And look, I see a matter not disclosed entirely to the proud nor uncovered to children, rather a matter that is humble in [its] tread, yet exalted in [its] approach and covered in mysteries."

present, as Augustine, having already undergone his conversion at the time of writing (or at the time of reading), has come to the point where he can appreciate the Scriptures⁸¹. Augustine's use of *compertam* is interesting. *Comperio* means to "disclose wholly, lay open" or "to find out with certainty" (Lewis & Short, 1879: 388). The negative formulation *non compertam* would translate "not disclosed in its entirety", which suggests that some form of disclosure has occurred. This is not unlike Paul's own confirmation that the Gentiles could and did know something about God. However, it is their pride, according to Augustine, that prevents them from understanding completely. The use of *dicentes se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt* and *quam resistas superbis, humilibus autem des gratiam* could also be an indication that Augustine may have the Manichaeans in mind in *Conf.* 7.9.13-15. The criticism leveled is not unique to the Manichaeans, and Augustine is less interested in specific doctrinal errors than in the source of such errors, namely a flawed mindset.

In *Conf.* 7.9.14, Augustine used *Rom.* 1:21-22 to demonstrate the negative theology present in both Paul's writing and the Platonists. In *Conf.* 7.9.15, Augustine narrates that he read from the books of the Platonists, quoting from *Rom.* 1:23 to represent its contents. Augustine develops a complex metaphor from this verse, in which Egypt is a central element.

The Egyptian gold metaphor and Rom. 1:21-25

Augustine's metaphor of Egyptian gold is dependent upon *Rom.* 1:21-25, on a basic literal level and on a deeper, philosophical level. The metaphor develops out of the phrase *similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis et volucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium* which Augustine quotes from *Rom.* 1:23. Worship of animals is a prominent characteristic of Egyptian religion. In *Conf.* 7.9.15, Augustine likens Esau's willingness to sell his birthright for a bowl of lentil stew, the so-called

⁸¹ O'Donnell confirms the latter interpretation (1992b: 171).

Aegyptium cibum, to the Israelites' decision to erect the golden calf. In this way, the chosen people willingly rejected God's covenant with them and consequently it was offered to the Gentiles. It is not without significance that Augustine identifies himself with the Gentiles, saying *veneram ex gentibus* (*Conf.* 7.9.15). O'Donnell goes as far as to argue that by identifying himself as a Gentile, Augustine "was paradoxically less vulnerable to the seductions of idolatry than the Jews had been" (O'Donnell, 1992b: 432). Augustine himself confesses this in *Conf.* 7.9.15, saying *inveni haec ibi et non manducavi*. This again recalls the *Aegyptium cibum* that Esau was so eager to purchase from Jacob out of hunger, the act which would strip him of his birthright. Augustine implicitly warns against such hunger for philosophy, and recommends the use of discernment before "chewing" on it.

Rom. 1:21-25 is essential to understanding what Augustine is propagating in his conversion story. Augustine's conversion depends upon a natural theology as developed in *Rom.* 1:21-25. Paul himself inherits this from the Hellenistic Jewish wisdom tradition⁸² (Fitzmyer, 1993: 280). The basis of this natural theology is that God can be known by means of observation of his works i.e. creation. This means that the Gentiles could also know God through perception of creation. Paul himself implies that the Gentiles did manage "a vague, unformulated knowledge or experience of God" (Fitzmyer, 1993: 281). Because of this, Augustine is able to discover Christian scriptural elements in a pagan philosophical book. Augustine affirms this justification by quoting from *Acts* 17:28, a passage often linked to *Rom.* 1:21 for the very reason that it displays Paul's concept of natural theology. Augustine himself refers to *Acts* 17:28 when commenting on *Rom.* 1:21-23 in his *exp. prop. Rom.* 3 (O'Donnell, 1992b: 432). In *Acts* 17:23, Paul notes the Athenians have an altar to an "unknown god"⁸³. He links this unknown god directly to the God of the

⁸² As I have shown in my previous chapter, by comparing *Rom* 1:21-25 with *Wisdom* 13:1-9.

⁸³ ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ.

Jews and the Christians. Paul also quotes from Aratus' *Phaenomena* in *Acts* 17:23 with the selfsame effect, to show how a pagan work corresponds to a Christian belief.

What Augustine had discovered in the books of the Platonists was not universally accepted in the Christianity of his time. Tertullian was one of the chief proponents of the idea that all pagan literature should be rejected in fear of being corrupted by pagan society (Herzman, 1997: 49-50). Augustine's description of the content of the Platonists' books is therefore not merely an inventory of what was in the Platonists' books and what was not, but also a constructed argument that firstly, the pagan philosophers could and did have partial knowledge of God and secondly, that they did in fact convey such wisdom via the texts that they produced.

Egypt should not be neglected, as far as pagan philosophy and wisdom is concerned. In biblical literature, the image of Egypt evokes the Exodus and the Egyptian influence upon the Israelites in the desert, particularly the incident of the golden calf. However, Egypt also represents philosophy, via the learning centre at Alexandria. Many prominent philosophers came from Egypt, particularly two who could possibly have influenced Augustine and Paul: Philo of Alexandria and Plotinus. I have briefly mentioned Philo in my discussion of Hellenistic Jewish apologetic⁸⁴. Plotinus is of particular interest in the matter at hand; he is often identified as a possible candidate for one of the Platonists that Augustine could

⁸⁴ Philo is also a Middle Platonist, and while his influence on Augustine is not the subject of this study, certain Middle Platonist influences are evident in Paul's writing, particularly his natural theology.

have read⁸⁵. O'Donnell mentions three possibilities why Augustine would regard the *libri Platoniorum* as coming from Egypt: the metaphor of Egyptian gold, brought by the Israelites from Egypt; the belief that Plato himself encountered Jewish scripture in Egypt, and was taught by Jeremiah⁸⁶; and the belief that Plotinus himself came from Egypt (O'Donnell, 1992b: 434)⁸⁷.

It is perhaps fit to pause a moment and discuss the possibility of Plotinus being one of the Platonists that Augustine had read. Augustine's equation of *John* 1:1ff to the Platonists he read is often cited as evidence that Plotinus was one of the Platonists in question. Plotinus envisages the Intellect as a Meditating Principle which can be equated to the Word in *John* 1:1ff (Brown, 1967: 98). It is also possible that Plotinus' philosophy could be Augustine's answer to the question of the origin of evil. It was this question that had initially prompted Augustine to join the Manichaeans. The answer he received as a Manichaean was a radically dualistic one: Evil was an "active and polluting force", while Good "was essentially passive" (Brown, 1967: 99). Plotinus is said to have written against Christian Gnostics, who had similar ideas to the Manichaeans, and Augustine's exposure to Plotinus would have revealed possibilities radically different to the preconceptions he had fostered as a Manichaean (Brown, 1967: 100). Besides the philosophical similarities between

⁸⁵ According to Stock, Plotinus and Porphyry, Plotinus' student, were his main sources of Neoplatonism (1998: 65). O'Meara discusses the scholarly debate on this issue, but concludes that both Plotinus and Porphyry must have been read by Augustine (1980: 133).

⁸⁶ This belief is influenced by Hellenistic Judaism, and it is also significant as it is evidence of Jewish thinkers trying to synthesize pagan thought, but needing to justify the origin of that thought (O'Donnell, 1992b: 433).

⁸⁷ O'Donnell considers the last argument to be the weakest of the three, but does also mention that many of the older prominent Augustinian scholars such as Courcelles were convinced of this last argument, particularly when Augustine condemns the worship of Isis in *Conf.* 8.2.3 (O'Donnell, 1992b: 434).

Augustine and Plotinus, and allure of Plotinus's philosophy, there are also a few practical arguments which support the theory that Plotinus was among the Platonists that Augustine had read. Firstly, Marius Victorinus' Latin translation of the *Enneads*, the collection of Plotinus' treatises, was available when Augustine had read the Platonists, and this may refer to the *quosdam platoniorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinam versos* (Conf. 7.9.13). Augustine also specifically mentions Victorinus' translation in Conf. 8.2.3: *commemoravi legisse me quosdam libros platoniorum, quos Victorinus... in latinam linguam transtulisset*⁸⁸. Bowery argues that the works published after his conversion such as the *De ordine* and the *Soliloquia* contain explicit influence by Plotinus' philosophy (1999: 655). Augustine also explicitly mentions Plotinus in *City of God*, which means that he had (eventually) come to read his works. Plotinus' influence on Augustine is most evident in Possidius' report that Augustine's final words on his death bed were "He is not to be thought great who thinks it strange that wood and stones should fall and mortals die" (v. Aug. 28.11), a quote from Plotinus' *Ennead* 1.4.7 (Brown, 1967: 425-6). As a curious side note, on Plotinus' death bed, a serpent is said to have slithered under the bed and into a hole, at which time Plotinus died (O'Meara, 1980: 134). This conjures up the image of the *similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis et volucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium* into mind, which still presents us with an ambiguous image of the pagan philosopher.

In *Romans*, the themes of *Aegyptium cibum* and Egypt are prominent. In *Rom.* 9:12, the story of Jacob is related, and may indirectly be the source of Augustine's quotation of *ab Iacob, ut maior serviret minori*, which is quoted by Paul⁸⁹ from *Gen.* 25:23. In *Rom.* 9:17, Pharaoh is told, εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἐξηγειρά σε ὅπως ἐνδείξωμαι

⁸⁸ "I recalled that I had read certain books of the Platonists, which Victorinus... had translated into Latin."

⁸⁹ ὁ μείζων δουλεύσει τῷ ἐλάσσονι (*Rom.* 9:12).

ἐν σοὶ τὴν δύναμιν μου καὶ ὅπως διαγγελῇ τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ⁹⁰. God uses a pagan king in such a way that it fulfills his purpose. Pagans are not separate from God's influence and can therefore also fulfill God's will to a lesser degree. The metaphor of Egypt in *Romans* is far denser than initially meets the eye. Egypt is a symbol of God's direct influence on the pagan world, in Paul's thought. Simultaneously, it is also a symbol of zoolatry, and by extension, idolatry. In Augustine's thought, this idolatry is not merely limited to actual idols made of gold, but any act or thought which would satisfy his indictment of *transmutaverunt veritatem dei in mendacium, et coluerunt et servierunt creaturae potius quam creatori* (*Conf.* 7.9.15)⁹¹.

The message Augustine wishes to convey is this: that God can be known through creation, and that at times people worship that creation or aspects thereof instead of seeking the immaterial, invisible, transcendent God who created it. This is evidenced by Augustine's use of Paul's own natural theology, as presented in *Rom.* 1:21-25. Augustine's reading of the Platonists shows him firstly identifying that there is indeed truth in such works, but only so far as they conform to the truth as expounded by scripture. While Augustine does identify the similarities in the Platonists' books to scripture, he is equally concerned with their limitations. An important aspect of *Conf.* 7.9.13-15 is Augustine's critical analysis of the Platonists. The success of Augustine's intellectual conversion was less the philosophy that he had read, than the critical mindset that it had begun to develop.

⁹⁰ "I raised you up for this very purpose, so that I can display my might through you and so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth."

⁹¹ "...who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator."

The original context of *Romans* is essential to the understanding of the metaphorical content of this passage. This passage also associates *Rom.* 1:21-25 with Augustine's intellectual conversion. This association is utilized and expanded in the spiritual conversion in Book 8.

Chapter 4: Augustine's encounter with Paul and the reading of *Romans*

Augustine's intellectual conversion in *Conf.* 7.9.13-15 serves as a stepping stone to his ultimate conversion in Book 8. His mind has been made ready by his study of the Platonists, and he is now equipped to read the scriptures, something he was not ready to do in *Conf.* 3.5.9, despite having read the *Hortensius*. The philosophical conversion in *Conf.* 3.4.7-8 and the intellectual conversion in *Conf.* 7.9.13-15 are both followed by Augustine reading the scriptures. While the reading after the philosophical conversion proved to be a disappointment to Augustine, the reading of scripture after the intellectual conversion is presented in far more vivid terms, which in itself forms a conversion of its own, namely, the scriptural conversion. This parallel also emphasizes that there was nothing in the content of the scriptures that disappointed Augustine, rather, it was Augustine's lack of understanding that caused the disappointment. As Augustine phrases it, *lectis platonicorum illis libris, posteaquam inde admonitus quaerere incorpoream veritatem, invisibilia tua per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspexi* (*Conf.* 7.20.26)⁹². The use of *incorpoream* and *invisibilia* once again recalls the negative theology as established by Paul in *Rom.* 1:21-25 and Augustine's insistence that the knowledge of these "invisible qualities" is necessary for the understanding of God. But his journey is not yet complete; something is still missing. Augustine declares, *garriebam plane quasi peritus et, nisi in Christo, salvatore nostro, viam tuam quaererem, non peritus sed periturus essem* (*Conf.* 7.20.26)⁹³. Furthermore, he says, *ubi enim erat illa aedificans caritas a fundamento humilitatis, quod*

⁹² "Once I had read those books of the Platonists and afterwards was urged to seek the incorporeal truth, I saw that your invisible qualities are understood through that which you have made."

⁹³ "I simply babbled on as if I was an expert, and if I had not sought your way in Christ, our saviour, I would not have been experienced, but rather destroyed."

est Christus Iesus? aut quando illi libri me docerent eam? (Conf. 7.20.26)⁹⁴. Augustine identifies the limitations of the books of the Platonists, and in so doing identifies them with the philosophers of *Rom.* 1:21-25, and by extention, the limits of secular wisdom (O'Donnell, 1992b: 473). This limitation prompts Augustine to continue his search in another place, namely the scriptures.

Augustine explicitly states that Paul was foremost in his reading of the Bible⁹⁵. It is therefore not surprising that a reference to *Romans* would be found in this description of his reading of the Bible. Below I underline the sections he quotes from *Rom.* 7:22-25:

et coepi et inveni, quidquid illac verum legeram, hac cum commendatione gratiae tuae dici, ut qui videt non sic gloriatur, quasi non acceperit non solum id quod videt, sed etiam ut videat (quid enim habet quod non accepit?) et ut te, qui es semper idem, non solum admoneatur ut videat, sed etiam sanetur ut teneat, et qui de longinquo videre non potest, viam tamen ambulet qua veniat et videat et teneat, quia, etsi condelectetur homo legi dei secundum interiorem hominem, quid faciet de alia lege in membris suis repugnante legi mentis suae et se captivum ducente in lege peccati, quae est in membris eius? quoniam iustus es, domine, nos autem peccavimus, inique fecimus, impie gessimus, et gravata est super nos manus tua, et iuste traditi sumus antiquo peccatori, praeposito mortis, quia persuasit voluntati nostrae similitudinem voluntatis suae, qua in veritate tua non stetit. quid faciet miser homo? quis eum liberabit de corpore mortis huius, nisi gratia tua per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum, quem genuisti coaeternum et creasti in principio viarum tuarum, in quo princeps huius mundi non invenit quicquam morte dignum, et occidit eum? et

⁹⁴ Where, then, was that love which builds on the foundation of humility, which is Christ Jesus? When would those books teach it to me?"

⁹⁵ *prae ceteris apostolum Paulum* (Conf. 7.21.27).

*evacuatum est chirographum quod erat contrarium nobis. hoc illae litterae non habent. (Conf. 7.21.27)*⁹⁶

Similar to his encounter with the books of the Platonists, Augustine does not give us specific details on the text he encountered. He barely gives us details as to the authors, only that Paul was the one he spent the most time with. From the text itself, it is impossible to ascertain the precise Pauline text that Augustine read, but Courcelle suggests that he had not finished reading *Romans* by the time of conversion in Book 8, when Augustine says “*et ignorabam quid sequeretur*” (*Conf.* 8.12.29) (Courcelle, 1968: 199). This could suggest that Augustine was busy reading *Romans* at the time of the events of the spiritual conversion. This is further strengthened by the fact that Augustine quotes *Rom.* 7:22-25 here. Nevertheless, *Rom.* 7:22-25 is significant not only because it is quoted in a similar way as Augustine’s quotation of *Rom.* 1:21-25 in *Conf.* 5.3.5 and *Conf.* 7.9.14-15, but also

⁹⁶ “I began and found that every truth I had read in those books (the Platonists) was mentioned together with the recommendation of your grace, that he who sees should not boast so, as if he did not receive not only that that which he sees but also the ability of sight (for what does he have that he did not receive?) and that he is not only urged to see you, who are always the same, but also to be healed so that he can hold you, and he who cannot see you from afar can nonetheless walk the road whereupon he may come and see and hold, for although man may be delighted in the law of God according to his inner man, what will he do about the other law in his limbs which fights against the law of his own mind and leads himself captive under the law of sin, which is in his limbs? For you are just, Lord, while we have sinned, we have acted unjustly, we have behaved wickedly, and your hand weighs down over us, and we are rightly handed over to the ancient sinner, the lord of death, for he persuaded our wills to become a likeness of his own will, which did not stand in your truth. What shall a wretched man do? Who will free him from his dead flesh except your grace through Jesus Christ our Lord, whom you brought forth coeternal and made in the beginning of your ways, in whom the prince of this world did not find anything worthy of death, yet killed him? And the handwriting that was against us was cleared. These books did not have this.”

because it will appear again (together with a quotation from *Rom.* 1:21-25) in Book 8⁹⁷.

The many laws and the ἐγώ of Rom. 7:7-25

One of Paul's preoccupations in *Romans* is the significance of the law for Christians, whether Jewish or Gentile. The law in this context is the Mosaic law of the Pentateuch. In *Rom.* 7:1-6, Paul explains that Christians are freed from the constraints of the law by Christ's sacrifice. In *Rom.* 7:7-13, Paul defends the law, saying that it is not itself evil, but rather is used by sin in order to create sin. In *Rom.* 7:17-25, Paul effectively establishes the cause for evil:

νυνὶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγὼ κατεργάζομαι αὐτὸ ἀλλὰ ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία. οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ οἰκεῖ ἐν ἐμοί, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου, ἀγαθόν· τὸ γὰρ θέλειν παράκειται μοι, τὸ δὲ κατεργάζεσθαι τὸ καλὸν οὐ· οὐ γὰρ ὁ θέλω ποιῶ ἀγαθόν, ἀλλὰ ὁ οὐ θέλω κακὸν τοῦτο πράσσω. εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ θέλω [ἐγὼ] τοῦτο ποιῶ, οὐκέτι ἐγὼ κατεργάζομαι αὐτὸ ἀλλὰ ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία. εὐρίσκω ἄρα τὸν νόμον τῷ θέλοντι ἐμοὶ ποιεῖν τὸ καλὸν ὅτι ἐμοὶ τὸ κακὸν παράκειται (*Rom.* 7:17-20)⁹⁸

The law itself, i.e. Mosaic law, is not mentioned at all in this short analysis⁹⁹. Rather, Paul is more concerned with the will of man, using no less than five forms of θέλω. The will is capable of identifying what is right and what is wrong, but is unable to

⁹⁷ The quotation from *Rom.* 1:21-25 occurs in *Conf.* 8.1.2. The quotation from *Rom.* 7:22-25 occurs in *Conf.* 8.5.12.

⁹⁸ "But now it is no longer I who do this, but the sin that dwells in me. For I know that good does not live in me, that is, in my flesh. The desire for good lies in me, but the ability to carry it out does not. For I do not do the good I wish, but I do the evil I do not wish. But if I do what I don't want, it is no longer I that do it, but the sin that lives in me. So I discover this principle, when I want to do good, that evil lies in me."

⁹⁹ I follow the suggestion of Fitzmyer to translate τὸν νόμον in verse 20 as "principle", in a generic sense, rather than the Mosaic law, which is used in other places (Fitzmyer, 1993: 475).

carry it out (κατεργάζεσθαι). From this explanation of the cause of evil, he presents two laws struggling against each other¹⁰⁰:

συνήδομαι γὰρ τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον, βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου ἀντιστρατευόμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου (*Rom.* 7:22-23)¹⁰¹.

The law of God here refers to the Mosaic law, but less the actual letter of the law, than a spiritual law, as referred to in *Rom.* 7:14¹⁰². This law is opposed by the law of the limbs, that is, the sin that is inherent to the flesh. The νόμος τοῦ θεοῦ is equated to the νόμος τοῦ νοός, emphasizing the will (and by implication knowledge) to do what is right, but the inability to exercise it, as a result of the νόμος τῆς ἁμαρτίας.

This failed struggle against a seemingly indomitable enemy causes Paul to cry in anguish: ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος· τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου; (*Rom.* 7:24)¹⁰³. This sentence reminds one of the fact that this and the previous sentences were narrated in the first person. The word ἐγὼ occurs seven times¹⁰⁴ in *Rom.* 7:7-25. The identity of this ἐγὼ has been the subject of debate since the beginning of scriptural exegesis¹⁰⁵. The possibility of an autobiographical

¹⁰⁰ The underlined sections in the quoted passage from *Rom.* 7:22-23 are the ones quoted by Augustine in *Conf.* 7.21.27.

¹⁰¹ "For I rejoice in God's law according to my inner man, but I see another law in my limbs battling against the law of my mind and it takes me prisoner by the law of sin that exists in my limbs."

¹⁰² οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ νόμος πνευματικός ἐστιν.

¹⁰³ "O wretched man that I am! Who will save me from the body of this death?"

¹⁰⁴ A text variant may add an eighth instance of ἐγὼ (Aland & Aland, 2001: 421).

¹⁰⁵ Fitzmyer lists five possible interpretations, namely autobiographically (Paul's youth as a Jew), psychologically (as a Jewish boy), as Adam (the first man), as a Christian (i.e. Paul's own experience as a new convert), or in a cosmic-historical sense, as experience common to all human beings. Augustine interpreted this ἐγὼ as Paul as a Christian (Fitzmyer, 1993: 464).

interpretation is intriguing, in light of the fact that this discussion intends to show the significance of *Rom.* 7:21-25 in the *Confessions*, itself an autobiographical work, but it is not without some problems. For one, the account presented here contradicts Paul's own testimony of his experience as a Jew, particularly in *Phil.* 3:5-6 and *Gal.* 1:13-14, where he describes himself as totally obedient to the law (Fitzmyer, 1993: 464). An autobiographical interpretation is, in my opinion, not sufficient to explain the identity of the ἐγώ. Tobin insists that this ἐγώ is a speech-in-character, that is, where the writer adopts the character of a different person (2004: 227). This figure of speech is similar to the interlocutor found in diatribes. According to Tobin, this technique would have been "standard fare of an ancient rhetorical education", given its prominence in certain rhetorical handbooks and would have been learnt by Paul (2004: 227). From this, it could also be argued that Augustine would have been familiar with this technique, given his rhetorical training. Tobin argues, by drawing on several parallels in Classical literature, that the identity of this persona that Paul is adopting is a Gentile Christian in Rome¹⁰⁶ (2004: 237). One strong argument he presents to support this is *Rom.* 7:9: ἐγώ δὲ ἔζων χωρὶς νόμου ποτέ¹⁰⁷. This would accurately describe a Gentile Christian before he knew of the law of Moses. After becoming a Christian and learning about the law of Moses, the Gentile Christian becomes subject to the very sins the law forbids.

This speech-in-person section (*Rom.* 7:7-25) is divided into two parts, determined by the tenses of the verbs: in *Rom.* 7:7-13 the past tenses are used, while in *Rom.* 7:14-25, the verbs occur in the present. The first section is considered to be a confession, as it

¹⁰⁶ Tobin lists several arguments to support his argument (see Tobin, 2004: 228-238), but these arguments are not the focus of this study. His arguments are very convincing, but I confess my timidity towards accepting it in its entirety, as the academic debate surrounding *Romans* regarding, amongst others, its potential audience, is ongoing and far from resolved. I will, nonetheless, identify aspects of his arguments that are relevant to my discussion.

¹⁰⁷ "But there was a time when I lived without the law."

is written in the past tense (Fitzmyer, 1993: 463). The confession is both an admission that the speaker is unable to fulfill the commands of the law, as well as an identification with the plight of Gentile Christians. Since they have come to learn about the law, they are so much more aware of their propensity to sin. Fitzmyer argues that the second section, in the present tense, is an apology for the law (1993: 473). The focus of the second part is less on the limits of the law, than on the failure of human will to uphold it.

Throughout this persona's confession, there are several paradoxes that enhance the sense of an intense struggle. First sin is described as death (ἁμαρτία νεκρά, *Rom.* 7:8), then in the very next verse it is said to come alive after the persona had come under the law (ἡ ἁμαρτία ἀνέζησεν, *Rom.* 7:9). As a result, the persona dies (ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπέθανον, *Rom.* 7:10). He summarizes this paradox in verse 10: καὶ εὐρέθη μοι ἡ ἐντολὴ ἢ εἰς ζωὴν αὕτη εἰς θάνατον¹⁰⁸. This struggle is concluded with the cry of despair: ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος. This figure of speech is called an *exclamatio* and is a figure directed at the audience for emotive effect (Orton & Anderson, 1998: 358). If we accept Tobin's argument that this is spoken through a Gentile Christian persona, the Gentile Christian audience would be affected by a similar despair in reading such an exclamation. The persona then cries out: τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου; The call is to an outside agency, not any strength present in the self. The answer is voiced in a similar exclamation: χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. ἄρα οὖν αὐτὸς ἐγὼ τῷ μὲν νοῦ δουλεύω νόμῳ θεοῦ, τῇ δὲ σαρκὶ νόμῳ ἁμαρτίας (*Rom.* 7:25)¹⁰⁹. The final confession still retains the strong paradox present throughout *Rom.* 7:7-25, indicated by the use of

¹⁰⁸ "The very commandment that was meant for life for me was also found to be for death." (*Rom.* 7:10b).

¹⁰⁹ "Thanks to God! [It is achieved] through our Lord, Jesus Christ. Then I myself am a slave to the law of God in my mind, but a slave to the law of sin in the flesh."

νοῦ and σαρκί, νόμῳ θεοῦ and νόμῳ ἁμαρτίας, but this time there is hope. While the persona is still subject to the law of sin in his flesh, his mind (τῷ νοῦ) is now a slave to the law of God. The implication is that the mind is subject to the law of God through Jesus is able to resist the sin of the flesh, which was not possible before.

The main themes in *Rom.* 7:7-25 are the struggle of the mind against sin and the helplessness it causes for a believer. I will now show how these themes in *Rom.* 7:7-25 may affect the interpretation of *Conf.* 7.21.27.

Conf. 7.21.27 and the use of *Rom.* 7:22-25

The first quotation of *Rom.* 7:22-25 occurs at the very end of the first, and rather lengthy, sentence. While it is almost a direct quotation from the original¹¹⁰, there is a small change which must be noted. The original sentence in *Rom.* 7:22-23 is spoken in the first person, whereas in *Conf.* 7.21.27, Augustine opts to use the third person, supplying *homo* as the subject of the verb. This should strike us as somewhat strange, not so much that Augustine would change the verse, as this was common in Latin literature in order to fit a quoted phrase into a sentence, but that Augustine narrates most of the *Confessions* in a first person, and chooses not to use the original first person in *Rom.* 7:22-23. Furthermore, directly after the quotation of *Rom.* 7:22-23, Augustine returns to the first person, although this time in the plural. This merits some investigation. One possible interpretation is the deliberate juxtaposition of God and man: *homo legi dei* presents man separated from God, with the law standing between them. But what does Augustine understand by *homo*? This itself could be the subject of a dissertation, but I think it is possible to limit the search for the answer to this question to the *Confessions* itself.

¹¹⁰ As reconstructed by O'Donnell (1992b, 478): *condelector enim legi dei secundum interiorem hominem; (23) video autem legem aliam in membris meis, repugnantem legi mentis meae et captivantem me sub lege peccati quae est in membris meis.*

The first mention of *homo* in the *Confessions* is, not surprisingly, in *Conf.* 1.1.1: *et laudare te vult homo, aliqua portio creaturae tuae, et homo circumferens mortalitatem suam, circumferens testimonium peccati sui et testimonium quia superbis resistis; et tamen laudare te vult homo, aliqua portio creaturae tuae*¹¹¹. In this introduction, man is reduced to just “another part of [God’s] creation” and man’s mortal and sinful nature is emphasized. I have discussed the use of *superbis resistis* in my first chapter, but it can also be mentioned that its use may indicate that Augustine conceives of man having an inherent propensity towards *superbia*. According to O’Donnell, Augustine does not intend this *homo* to refer to a *homo quidam*, but rather “speaks directly of himself, his own act of attempted praise in the first lines” (1992b: 11). Further evidence for this equation of Augustine as the third person *homo* can be found in *Conf.* 1.7.11: *exaudi, deus. vae peccatis hominum! et homo dicit haec, et misereris eius, quoniam tu fecisti eum et peccatum non fecisti in eo*¹¹². In *Conf.* 7.1.1, Augustine also describes himself as a *homo*: *et conabar cogitare te, homo et talis homo*¹¹³. From this evidence, it is possible to (tentatively) assign Augustine to the identity of the *homo* in *Conf.* 7.21.27.

However, the word *homo, hominis* is not solely used to indicate man as a corrupt entity. In *Conf.* 7.18.24, Augustine discusses the importance of Christ in the process of his conversion: *nec inveniebam donec amplecterer mediatorem dei et hominum, hominem Christum Iesum*¹¹⁴. The mention of the mediator between God and man, and

¹¹¹ “Man, just some part of your creation, wants to praise you, and carries his mortality around, carries the evidence of his own sin and the evidence that you resist the proud; and yet man, just some part of your creation, wants to praise you.”

¹¹² “Listen, God. O woe for the sins of men! A man says these things, and you pity him, for you made him and did not make the sin within him.”

¹¹³ “And I, a man, such a man, tried to reflect upon you...”

¹¹⁴ “I did not find it until I embraced the mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ.”

the reference to Jesus as a man is a quotation from *1 Tim.* 2:5, another Pauline letter. Here, Jesus is unquestionably being described as human. As a Manichaean, Augustine would not have believed in the humanity of Christ. Augustine's original conception of Christ as a Manichaean was that he was purely spirit, entirely separated from and incompatible with flesh (Mallard, 1999: 464). In *Conf.* 5.10.20, Augustine explains exactly what he thought of Christ while he was a Manichaean: *talem itaque naturam eius nasci non posse de Maria virgine arbitrabar, nisi carni concerneretur. concerni autem et non inquinari non videbam, quod mihi tale figurabam*¹¹⁵. This conception of Christ has changed drastically in *Conf.* 7.19.25: *quia itaque vera scripta sunt, totum hominem in Christo agnoscebam, non corpus tantum hominis aut cum corpore sine mente animum, sed ipsum hominem, non persona veritatis, sed magna quadam naturae humanae excellentia et perfectiore participatione sapientiae praeferri ceteris arbitrabar*¹¹⁶. It is clear from this evidence that Augustine's conception of Christ at the time of the events of Book Seven is that Christ is man, a perfect man, but nonetheless a man. Does this seemingly inconsistent interpretation of the state of humanity affect the interpretation of *Conf.* 7.21.27?

At the time of the events of *Conf.* 7.21.27, Augustine does not consider humanity to be a completely corrupt and irredeemable quality, as he would have thought as a Manichaean. Rather, I would argue that Augustine's conception of the state of humanity is influenced by the presentation of the human condition in *Rom.* 7.7-25. Humanity is divided, according to Paul, into two "laws", the law of the mind which

¹¹⁵ "Therefore, I thought that such a nature as is his could not be born from the virgin Mary, unless it was mixed in flesh. But I did not see how it could be mixed and not be corrupted, as I imagined it for myself."

¹¹⁶ "Therefore, because these were written as truth, I recognized the whole humanity in Christ, not just a body of a man, or a soul with a body without a mind, but I considered him a true man, better than the rest, not just the personification of truth, but also his great excellence of human nature, because of his most perfect sharing of wisdom."

is capable of understanding the law of God and willing to follow it, and the law of the flesh, which is incapable of submitting to the law of the mind, and therefore incapable of fulfilling the requirements of God's law. Augustine mentions these laws as well, when he quotes from *Rom.* 7:22-23: *legi dei; alia lege in membris suis; legi mentis; lege peccati*. The law of God and the law of sin are diametrically opposed, and seem to exist separate from or are different to the other laws. The law in the limbs and the law of the mind are opposed to each other, and these two laws make up the human condition. But Augustine's conception of this struggle of the laws is not as simple as presented by Paul in *Rom.* 7:22-23. In *Conf.* 8.5.10, Augustine discusses his reaction to two conversion stories told by Ponticianus. This prompts a struggle with himself to understand the inner struggle of the will against sin. It is no surprise that *Rom.* 7:22-25 is quoted again here when Augustine makes clear how he interprets Paul's words. I will postpone the discussion of this passage for the next chapter, as it will deal with Augustine's final conversion narrative. However, it should be noted that Augustine's use of *Rom.* 7:22-25 in *Conf.* 7.21.27 anticipates its use in *Conf.* 8.5.10 and the struggle that will occur.

The confessions of Augustine and Paul

The use of the words *coepi et inveni* at the near beginning of *Conf.* 7.21.27 is interesting in this context. When Augustine says that he is "beginning" when he read Paul, it would suggest that before that time, he had not yet begun. The intellectual conversion in *Conf.* 7.9.13-15, while indeed an important part of the conversion process, is not considered the true beginning of his conversion towards the state of conversion that he established in *Conf.* 1.1.1. Only when he reads Paul, with a mind capable or receptive to the content is he able to "begin". The use of *inveni* too recalls its use (often as a quotation from *Matt.* 7:7) in *Conf.* 1.1.1, *Conf.*

5.3.5, *Conf.* 7.9.15¹¹⁷ and suggests that this might be the counterpart to the *quaerere* which often precedes the *invenire*.

This passage also contains a confession. For Augustine, the term *confessio* meant an “accusation of oneself; praise of God” (Brown, 1967: 175) In *Conf.* 7.21.27, Augustine confesses: *quoniam iustus es, domine, nos autem peccavimus, inique fecimus, impie gessimus*. This confession can be seen as a positive confession (praise of the just nature of God) and a negative confession (of the sinful nature of man and self accusation). The phrase is sharply divided by the *autem*, enforcing this eternal separation between God and man. The positive confession stands as a simple complementary verbal phrase, equating God as just, as well as a vocative, indicating his status as Lord. The negative confession, on the other hand, occurs as a tricolon connected asyndetically. The omission of the conjunctions here has the effect of “pathos-reinforcing intensification” (Orton & Anderson, 1998: 315). The use of asyndeton, with the three verbal phrases is known as *disiunctio*¹¹⁸, as can be seen in *nos... peccavimus, inique fecimus, impie gessimus*. When used with cola that are synonymous, as is the case here, it results in *amplificatio*, which is “a grade enhancement of the basic given facts by artistic means” and “an emotional phenomenon” (Orton & Anderson, 1998: 118). This may also be a reflection of a similar use of asyndeton in *Rom.* 1:29: *πεπληρωμένους πάσῃ ἀδικίᾳ πονηρίᾳ πλεονεξίᾳ κακίᾳ*¹¹⁹. It is possible that Augustine recalls the strong emotional use of asyndeton to emphasize the evil, fallible nature of man. The confession is also

¹¹⁷ These are, of course, not the only occurrences of *invenire* in the *Confessions*, however, in my previous chapters I do highlight the significance of this word in the contexts they appear.

¹¹⁸ “The *disiunctio* consists in the composing of cola of synonymous predicates and further clause elements (subjects, objects, adverbial designations) which are semantically different and correspond with each other syntactically” (Lausberg, 1998: 328).

¹¹⁹ “...filled with every injustice, wickedness, arrogance and evil.”

uttered in the first person plural, which need not be significant, as Augustine does sometimes use the first person plural to indicate himself alone, but given the use of *homo* in *Conf.* 7.21.27, it could be that Augustine intends to include the audience and, by extension, all humanity, in his confession.

After this confession, Augustine states that man is subject to the punishment of God as a result of our sinfulness: *et iuste traditi sumus antiquo peccatori*¹²⁰. The *antiquus peccator* here is the devil, and the way in which Augustine expresses the condemnation of mankind is rather frightening. Firstly, we are handed over to him, but who does the handing over is not explicitly mentioned. Is it God? This would seem the case, especially as it is mentioned right after *et gravata est super nos manus tua*¹²¹, but is this consistent with Augustine's own conception of God's wrath? I propose that *Romans* might help us to understand this part more accurately.

In *Rom.* 1:24, Paul phrases the damnation of man in a similar way to Augustine: Διὸ παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ¹²². The verb παρέδωκεν is *tradidit* in Latin¹²³ and would therefore correspond to the *traditi sumus* in *Conf.* 7.21.27. This would suggest that Augustine does indeed understand God as the agent of this verb. But what should we understand under the verb παρέδωκεν/*traditi sumus*? According to Fitzmyer, "[God] gives human beings up to their sin, withdrawing his blessing and allowing moral degradation to pursue its course in sin that disgraces humanity and disturbs human society" (1993: 284). In other

¹²⁰ "And we are rightly handed over to the ancient sinner..."

¹²¹ "And your hand weighs down over us..."

¹²² "So God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to the impurity for degrading their bodies with one another."

¹²³ Vulgate: *propter quod tradidit illos Deus in desideria cordis eorum in immunditiam ut contumeliis adficiant corpora sua in semet ipsis* (*Rom.* 1:24).

words, Paul does not mean God actively “hands mankind over” to their destruction, but rather, by withholding his grace from humanity, by their own human nature, it results in their destruction. Augustine’s understanding of *Romans* would suggest that this is the interpretation we should follow in *Conf.* 7.21.27. Firstly, the use of *traditi sumus* connects this passage to Paul’s account of the wrath of God in *Rom.* 1:24, as well as softening God’s involvement in the matter, through the use of the passive without an agent. Secondly, Augustine’s own conception of humanity without grace, derived from *Rom.* 7:7-25, implies their own destruction in sin. This *antiquus peccator* does not represent an eschatological destruction, but rather present temptation and sin, as implied by *quia persuasit voluntati nostrae similitudinem voluntatis suae*¹²⁴ (*Conf.* 7.21.27). The use of the perfect tense in *persuasit* is remarkable. One would expect that Augustine would understand the threat of sin and temptation to be ever present, but the context of this sentence must be considered. It occurs within a confession of man’s propensity for sin, before submitting to the grace of God. The very act of confession seems to stop time, putting the devil in the past. The tense of the confession changes; first it is in the perfect tense¹²⁵. When Augustine cries out “*quid faciet miser homo?*” the tense is future, and anticipates a future event. When Augustine says “*quis eum liberabit de corpore mortis huius?*” he uses also the future. This may represent a similar transition as can be seen in *Rom.* 7:7-25. The first part, *Rom.* 7:7-13, which Fitzmyer (1993: 463) calls the confession, is in the past tense (in this case, aorist and imperfect). *Rom.* 7:14-25 occurs in the present tense, concluding with the future in the final cry τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου; (*Rom.* 7:25). The sections in the past tense in both *Conf.* 7.21.27 and *Rom.* 7:7-13 represent man or the confessor recognizing his sinful past, or rather, his life without grace. The confession is spoken, silently or aloud, in the present (i.e. in the present moment of the narrative),

¹²⁴ “For he persuaded our wills to become a likeness of his own will...”

¹²⁵ *fecimus, gessimus, gravata est, traditi sumus, persuasit, stetit.*

and the implied present exclamation ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος. A call is made for a future salvation, in the form of a question, τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου; and *quis eum liberabit de corpore mortis huius*? The use of a question to call for salvation is significant in the *Confessions*. As I have mentioned, the quotation of *Matt. 7:7*, specifically the *quarere* and *invenire* pair is found throughout the *Confessions*. The cry for salvation in a question may represent the *quarere*, which creates the expectation of an impending *invenire*. In the case of both *Conf. 7.21.27* and *Rom. 7:25*, this is found in the next section of the sentence: *nisi gratia tua per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum, quem genuisti coaeternum et creasti in principio viarum tuarum, in quo princeps huius mundi non invenit quicquam morte dignum, et occidit eum*¹²⁶? This passage may also serve as a confession of the nature of Christ, who is a central figure to the conversion narrative in the *Confessions*. It is interesting that Augustine stresses the mortality of Jesus by emphasizing his death as caused by the *princeps huius mundi*, or the devil, and further points out that Jesus was not worthy of death. Jesus represents the paragon man, whose will is able to combat the stubborn nature of the flesh, subject to the devil.

Augustine seems to be aware of the confessing nature of *Rom. 7.7-25*, but how does Augustine interpret the ἐγώ/ego in Paul's writing? We are fortunate that Augustine wrote two commentaries dealing specifically with *Romans*, namely the *expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistola ad Romanos* (*exp. prop. Rom.*) and the *epistolae ad Romanos inchoata expositio* (*Rom. inch. exp.*), as well the *de diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum* (*div. qu. Simp.*) in which he addresses certain questions posed by

¹²⁶ The use of *gratia* in the Latin differs from the use of χάρις as I have presented it here. In the Greek, the expression would translate "Thanks to God! [It is achieved] through our Lord, Jesus Christ." In Augustine's adaptation it would translate, "Who will free him from his dead flesh except your grace through Jesus Christ our Lord." This difference is most likely caused by a variant reading in the Greek, namely, ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ, which is found (in translation) in the Vulgate (Fitzmyer, 1993: 477).

Simplicianus (a meeting with whom Augustine describes in Book 8). The first book of the *div. qu. Simp.* deals entirely with *Rom.* 7:7-25. The commentaries were written in the period between AD 394 and AD 395, and the treatise was Augustine's first work as a Bishop. The three commentaries all predate the publication of the *Confessions*, written in AD 397. A comparison of the similarities between these early works and the *Confessions* may help in understanding Augustine's interpretation of *Rom.* 7:7-25.

As I have shown, in *Rom.* 7:7-25, Paul used ἐγώ and the first person, but an autobiographical interpretation does not agree with Paul's own testimony. Augustine's own interpretation is best seen in the *div. qu. Simp.* The first question Augustine deals with is *lex ad quid data*. Augustine quotes a number of verses from *Rom.* 7:7-25 to support his response, specifically *Rom.* 7:24. Here Augustine presents his interpretation of the identity of the *ego*: *quo loco videtur mihi Apostolus transfigurasse in se hominem sub lege positum, cuius verbis ex persona sua loquitur*¹²⁷. It would seem that Tobin's argument of the identity of the ἐγώ is compatible with Augustine's use of *ego* in *Conf.* 7.21.27: Tobin (2004: 227) identified this as a speech-in-character, and Augustine's interpretation of *ex persona sua* seems to match that. Tobin postulated that the identity could be further narrowed to that of a Gentile. Augustine does not give any further clarification, other than *sub lege positum*, which would agree in part with Tobin's interpretation. In *Conf.* 8.5.12, the identity of the *ego* is not a distant *ex persona sua*, but Augustine himself.

Who is confessing in *Conf.* 7.21.27? Augustine? As the author here, this is not consistent with Augustine's own situation, as Augustine has already been converted and has already partaken in the grace mentioned in this passage. Perhaps it is the

¹²⁷ "Here it seems to me that the apostle expresses himself as a man who is placed under the law, in whose words it is spoken, out of his own character" (*div. qu. Simp.* 1.1.1).

pre-conversion Augustine? This would be consistent if we compare Augustine's use and own understanding of *Rom.* 7:22-25.

According to O'Donnell, *Conf.* 7.21.27, in particular, the quotation of *Rom.* 7:24, contains the programme for Book 8 (1992b, 480). *Conf.* 7.21.27 serves as a foretaste of the story that will unfold in Book 8. The introduction of scripture, especially the works of Paul, and, it could be argued, specifically *Romans* directs Augustine towards the ultimate conversion in Book 8, by its introduction of the figure of Christ. At the point of the narrative in *Conf.* 7.21.27, Augustine has read this but it has not made an impact on his life. The confessions uttered in *Conf.* 7.21.27 represent the words of a man in a transition, moving from a life in servitude to the sin inherent to the flesh to a life submitted to Christ, who, as a mortal man managed to conquer the sin in the flesh.

This chapter once again illustrates how the passages in the *Confessions* may be illuminated through a careful consideration of the quotes from *Romans*. Of particular importance is the identity of the *ego* in Augustine's cry in *Conf.* 7.21.27. The *ego* in *Conf.* 7.21.27 seems to conform to a speech-in-character as found in *Rom.* 7:22-25. The identity of this *ego* changes significantly in Book 8 of the *Confessions*. Furthermore, the association of *Rom.* 7:22-25 (and, by extension, the entire narrative of *Rom.* 7:8-25) with Augustine's scriptural conversion. This connection, and all the connections with the other conversion narratives will come together in Book 8, culminating in Augustine's spiritual conversion.

Chapter 5: Augustine's use of *Romans* in the conversion narrative in Book 8

In *Conf.* 7.21.27, Augustine presents a glimpse of things to come. *Conf.* 7.21.27 creates the expectation of the spiritual conversion in Book 8. The process, however, is gradual and is presented throughout Book 8. Throughout this book, Augustine quotes from *Romans*. These quotations form a discernable pattern (O'Donnell, 1992c: 3):

<u>Confessions</u> ¹²⁸	<u>Romans quotation</u>
8.1.2	1:21-22
8.4.9	4:17
8.5.11	7:16-17
8.5.12	7:22-25
8.10.22	7:17, 20
8.12.29	13:13
8.12.30	14:1

Two things should be noted: firstly, the *Romans* quotations are presented in a linear order, that is, in the order that they appear in *Romans*¹²⁹. This is, in my opinion, good evidence to support the thesis that Augustine is consciously using *Romans* in the course of the description of his conversion, and that these quotations form an essential part of the conversion narrative. According to O'Donnell, "the whole of [Book] 8 is a record of reading Paul, particularly *Romans*" (1992c: 7). Secondly, two of those quotations, namely that of *Rom.* 1:21-22 and *Rom.* 7:22-25 have both been used in earlier conversion narratives, namely the intellectual conversion in *Conf.*

¹²⁸ The data is reproduced from a table in O'Donnell's commentary (O'Donnell, 1992c: 3).

¹²⁹ The quotation in *Conf.* 8.10.22, namely, that of *Rom.* 7:17, 20, is the only one that occurs out of sequence. However, Augustine still maintains the sequence in terms of chapter order. Therefore the quotation of *Rom.* 7:17, 20, although out of sequence in verse number, does follow the sequence in terms of chapters. Furthermore, *Rom.* 7:7-25 forms a unit and therefore the quotations of *Romans* chapter 7 should be taken together, rather than separate occurrences.

7.9.14-15 and the scriptural conversion in *Conf.* 7.21.27 respectively¹³⁰. I will limit my analysis to *Conf.* 8.1.1-2, 8.5.10-12 and finally 8.12.29-30, the account of his spiritual conversion.

Conf. 8.1.1-2: *Introduction to the conversion*

Conf. 8.1.1 starts off in a similar way to *Conf.* 1.1.1, with a confession of praise. The presence of the verb *confitear* emphasizes the act of confession in Book 8. Augustine's intellectual and scriptural conversions have already taken place. The result of this Augustine states clearly: *nec certior de te sed stabilior in te esse cupiebam* (*Conf.* 8.1.1)¹³¹. Augustine's intellectual and scriptural conversions have firmly established a coherent and satisfying conception of God. He now seeks steadfastness, not certainty.

The events of *Conf.* 8.1.1 move the narrative on, by introducing Augustine to Simplicianus: *et immisisti in mentem meam visumque est bonum in conspectu meo pergere ad Simplicianum, qui mihi bonus apparebat servus tuus et lucebat in eo gratia tua*¹³². The importance of this meeting can be deduced from the mention of the divine agency in *immisisti*. The agency of God was also involved in Augustine's discovery of the books of the Platonists (*Conf.* 7.9.13). At the beginning of Book 8, Augustine gives us a brief summary of where he is in his journey and where he came from, quoting *Rom.* 1:21-22, which I have underlined:

¹³⁰ I would argue that Augustine's use of *Rom.* 1:21-25 in *Conf.* 5.3.5 is also essential to the understanding of the use of this verse in relation to the conversion narrative. Augustine's break from the Manichaeans is essential in the process of the conversion narrative. One could perhaps describe this passage as an "aversion" narrative rather than a conversion narrative.

¹³¹ "Nor did I desire to be more certain of you, but rather more steadfast in you."

¹³² "And you sent it into my mind, and it seemed good in my own considering, to go to Simplicianus, who appeared to me to be your good servant and your glory shone in him."

vani sunt certe omnes homines quibus non inest dei scientia, nec de his quae videntur bona potuerunt invenire eum qui est. at ego iam non eram in illa vanitate. transcenderam eam et contestante universa creatura inveneram te creatorem nostrum et verbum tuum apud te deum tecumque unum deum, per quod creasti omnia. et est aliud genus impiorum, qui cognoscentes deum non sicut deum glorificaverunt aut gratias egerunt. in hoc quoque incideram, et dextera tua suscepit me et inde ablatum posuisti ubi convalescerem, quia dixisti homini, 'ecce pietas est sapientia,' et, 'noli velle videri sapiens, quoniam dicentes se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt.' (Conf. 8.1.2)¹³³

In this passage, there are several elements which would suggest that Augustine is trying to link this passage to several others in his *Confessions*. The first is the *Zitatnest* that recall their use in previous passages in the *Confessions* (Knauer, 1955: 114). The way in which Augustine describes the *vani homines* is exactly the same way that Paul does in *Rom.* 1:19-25. Augustine emphasizes that God's nature can be established through the experience of creation, a concept he inherits from Paul, which was dealt with in *Rom.* 1:19-20¹³⁴. This is used in conjunction with a quotation from *Rom.* 1:21-22, which criticizes those who have been able to identify God

¹³³ "Surely all men are empty for whom there is no knowledge of God, and who were not able to find him who is from the good things which are seen. But at that point I was no longer in that emptiness. I had crossed over it, and through witnessing the whole of creation, I had found you, our creator and your word with you, God, and together with you as one God, through which you created all. And there is another kind of wicked people, who although they know [you] as God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks. Into these I had also fallen, and your right hand raised me up and after I was taken from there you put me where I could heal, for you said to mankind, 'Behold, wisdom is the fear of the Lord,' and 'Do not desire to seem wise, for those who claim to be wise are made foolish'."

¹³⁴ This is discussed in Chapter 2.

through the experience of creation, but who do not follow the ethical responsibility of that knowledge, that is, glorifying and thanking God.

The use of this specific quotation also recalls its use in the criticism of the philosophers and the Manichaeans in *Conf.* 5.3.5, as I have described in my second chapter. The connection with the criticism of the Manichaeans is further strengthened by the fact that Augustine says *in hoc quoque incideram*, using the very same verb he used to describe his initiation into the Manichaeism. The use of *hoc* may indicate that Augustine is trying to bind *Rom.* 1:21-22 to the Manichaeans, and by extension, the use of this verse throughout the *Confessions*. Furthermore, on a narrative level, this passage can be seen as a parallel to the account in *Conf.* 5.3.3-5, if we consider Simplicianus to be a parallel to Faustus. In both accounts, Augustine went to these men with a serious issue that he was wrestling with. Both men were, before Augustine had met with them, reputed to be pre-eminent among their peers and both were in high standing in their respective congregations. These parallels make the respective conclusions of their meetings all the more dramatically different and emphasize the failings of Faustus and the strengths of Simplicianus.

The quotation of *Rom.* 1:21-25 found in *Conf.* 7.9.14-15 is also evoked in the same way. In *Conf.* 7.9.13, Augustine equates the contents of the books of the Platonists to the opening chapter of the *Gospel of John*. The mention of *verbum tuum apud te deum tecumque unum deum, per quod creasti omnia* may be an allusion to *John* 1:1-3¹³⁵ and therefore recalls Augustine's comparison of *John* to the books of the Platonists. Its significance also impacts on *Conf.* 8.2.3, the very next chapter, where Simplicianus congratulates Augustine: *quod non in aliorum philosophorum scripta incidissem plena*

¹³⁵ As reconstructed by O'Donnell: *in principio erat verbum, et verbum erat apud deum, et deus erat verbum. hoc erat in principio apud deum. omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil. quod factum est* (1992b: 426).

*fallaciarum et deceptionum secundum elementa huius mundi, in istis autem omnibus modis insinuari deum et eius verbum*¹³⁶.

In the course of the narrative, Augustine's linking of these passages becomes important. Augustine not only reminds us here that, as a Manichaean, he had lost the way, he more importantly reminds us, by making a link to the previous passages, how he overcame these failures.

Conf. 8.5.10-12: The will to conversion

In *Conf. 8.2.3* to *8.2.5*, Augustine tells how Simplicianus narrated the conversion story of Victorinus, the author who translated the *Enneads* into Latin. *Conf. 8.3.6-8.4.9* is a meditation on this conversion story. In *Conf. 8.5.10*, Augustine makes comment on the purpose of Simplicianus' conversion story: *sed ubi mihi homo tuus Simplicianus de Victorino ista narravit, exarsi ad imitandum: ad hoc enim et ille narraverat*¹³⁷. Augustine is aware that Simplicianus' story was told so that he may imitate it. It can be argued that Augustine's purpose in recounting these conversion stories, as well as his own, is in order to instill the desire for imitation in the audience. As for Augustine's own spiritual conversion, listening to the conversion story of Victorinus sets him on fire to do the same, but at the same time, he feels torn in two: *ita duae voluntates meae, una vetus, alia nova, illa carnalis, illa spiritalis, confligebant inter se atque discordando dissipabant animam meam*¹³⁸. The language used

¹³⁶ "...because I had not fallen into the writings of the other philosophers which were so full of lies and deceptions according to the principles of this world, but into those (the Platonists) who in all ways caused one to arrive at God and his Word."

¹³⁷ "But when your man, Simplicianus told me that story about Victorinus, I burnt to imitate [it]: for he had told it for this very reason."

¹³⁸ "Therefore my two wills, one old, the other new, the one of the flesh, the one of the spirit, were in conflict against each other and through the chaos they scattered my soul."

here is the same kind found in *Rom.* 7:14¹³⁹ and *Rom.* 7:23¹⁴⁰. Augustine substitutes Paul's two νόμοι with the *duae voluntates*, but otherwise a similar description for this "will" is evident: the one is of the flesh (σάρκινός/*carnalis*) and the other (πνευματικός/*spiritalis*). The result is a battle or conflict (ἀντιστρατευόμενον/*confligebant*). According to Stark, "Augustine has identified his old will with Paul's 'law of the members' and his new will with the 'law of the mind'" (1989: 354). The conflict causes great anguish for Augustine and he reaches again for Paul's words to express it. I underline the sections quoted from *Rom.* 7:22-25:

frustra condelectabar legi tuae secundum interiorem hominem, cum alia lex in membris meis repugnaret legi mentis meae et captivum me duceret in lege peccati quae in membris meis erat. lex enim peccati est violentia consuetudinis, qua trahitur et tenetur etiam invitus animus eo merito quo in eam volens inlabitur. miserum ergo me quis liberaret de corpore mortis huius nisi gratia tua per Iesum Christum, dominum nostrum? (*Conf.* 8.5.12)¹⁴¹.

This quotation does evoke its use in *Conf.* 7.21.27, but there are differences. In *Conf.* 7.21.27, Augustine reports that he read this quotation in the scriptures he had discovered. The quotation in *Conf.* 7.21.27 is also in the 3rd person, referring to a person in the state of anguish. In *Conf.* 8.5.12, there is no confusion as to who is the

¹³⁹ οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ νόμος πνευματικός ἐστίν· ἐγὼ δὲ σάρκινός εἰμι, πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν.

¹⁴⁰ βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου ἀντιστρατευόμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου.

¹⁴¹ "In vain I delighted in your law according to my inner man, since the other law in my limbs battled against the law in my mind and led me as a slave to the law of sin which is in my limbs. For the law of sin is the ferocity of habit, whereby the soul is dragged and held, even against its will, as just punishment, because it willingly slips into it. So who will free wretched me from the body of this death, if not your grace through Jesus Christ, our lord?"

subject of the verbs of the quotation: it is Augustine. When Augustine cries *miserum ergo me quis liberaret de corpore mortis huius*, it is his cry.

The cry recorded in *Conf.* 8.5.12 marks a significant point in the conversion narrative, that is, Augustine's realization of the consequences of submission to the law. In Augustine's works prior to the writing of the *Confessions*, he established four stages of human history or *gradus* which essentially describe mankind's progress towards salvation¹⁴². The four *gradus* are *ante legem* (before the law), *sub lege* (under the law), *sub gratia* (under grace) and finally *in pace* (in peace). According to Babcock, in the stage *sub lege*, "the person (or mankind) knows that sin is prohibited and acknowledges the demand of the good... yet he is finally unable to resist his own desires and so, vanquished by the inertial force of his habitual orientation of thought and will (*consuetudo*), he is drawn by his desires in spite of his wishes to the contrary" (1979: 59). But when, in these conversion narratives, did Augustine submit to the law? I would argue that Augustine gives us the answer through his careful placement of the quotations from *Rom.* 7:22-25. In *Conf.* 7.21.27, Augustine only refers indirectly to a man that utters such a cry in realization of the conflict of law and sin, but does not identify with that man directly. This occurs in the passage where Augustine reports that he started reading Paul and the other scriptures. I would argue that the moment that Augustine read the scriptures and accepted their authority, he acknowledged himself as *sub lege*. The quotation of *Rom.* 7:22-25 in *Conf.* 7.21.27 marks this point, and also marks the point where the consequences of the state of *sub lege* begin to affect Augustine. The struggle of the law of the flesh and the law of the mind begins at this point. However, it is only during the events in *Conf.* 8.5.12 that Augustine himself realizes the consequences of his scriptural conversion. Furthermore, Stark (1989: 354) argues that "Augustine is

¹⁴² These *gradus* are mentioned in the *div. qu. Simp.* 66.3 and the *exp. prop. Rom.* 13-18 (Babcock, 1979: 59).

prompted to his deeper analysis of the will by his conversion experience”, which will be the subject of the rest of the book.

Conf. 8.12.29-30: Rom. 13.13-14 at the conversion of Augustine

The account of the spiritual conversion of Augustine is an unusual and challenging passage in the *Confessions*. I say this for many reasons. Firstly, it is short. Conf. 8.12.28-30 is generally identified as the conversion narrative¹⁴³, but the actual conversion is only discussed in Conf. 8.12.29. Of course, the conversion narrative is indeed a culmination of all the events up to that point, but in comparison with the other conversion narratives, namely, his discovery of philosophy in Conf. 3.4.7-8, his intellectual conversion in Conf. 7.9.13-15, and his scriptural conversion in Conf. 7.20.26-7.21.27, Augustine does not elaborate or comment at all upon this momentous event in his life. On the contrary, Augustine merely reports the events as they happened, with little or no discussion or commentary. The voice of Augustine the author and commentator seems to vanish in this passage and is replaced with Augustine as he was then, in the garden at Milan. This can be deduced from the use of tense at the start of the actual conversion: *et ecce audio vocem de vicina domo cum cantu dicentis et crebro repetentis, quasi pueri an puellae, nescio: 'tolle lege, tolle lege'*¹⁴⁴ (Conf. 8.12.29). The verb *audio* is in the historic present, the first occurrence in the *Confessions*¹⁴⁵, which not only makes the action far more vivid (Kennedy, 1987: 157), but casts Augustine as an actor in the action and less the author or commentator. Unlike the other quotations discussed, the quotation of Rom. 13:13-14 is reported to be read from the original source, that is, Augustine

¹⁴³ O'Donnell identifies this as a unit (1992c: 3).

¹⁴⁴ “And suddenly I hear a voice from the neighbouring house, like that of a boy or a girl, I’m not sure which, speaking in a song like voice and repeating again and again, ‘Pick it up and read, pick it up and read’.”

¹⁴⁵ According to Ferrari (1980: 7).

picking up the book of *Romans* and reading it there. I quote the passage, underlining the quotation of *Rom.* 13:13-14:

itaque concitus redii in eum locum ubi sedebat Alypius: ibi enim posueram codicem apostoli cum inde surrexeram. arripui, aperui, et legi in silentio capitulum quo primum coniecti sunt oculi mei: `non in comessationibus et ebrietatibus, non in cubilibus et impudiciis, non in contentione et aemulatione, sed induite dominum Iesum Christum et carnis providentiam ne feceritis in concupiscentiis.' nec ultra volui legere nec opus erat. statim quippe cum fine huiusce sententiae quasi luce securitatis infusa cordi meo omnes dubitationis tenebrae diffugerunt (Conf. 8.12.29)¹⁴⁶.

Augustine then reports that he told Alypius of the effect that the reading had on him. Alypius, at that point, was going through a similar inner struggle and asked to see the verse, and then reads further. The verse that brings about Alypius' conversion is *Rom.* 14:1, the verse that follows immediately after *Rom.* 13:14. I underline the quotation of *Rom.* 14:1:

at ille quid in se ageretur (quod ego nesciebam) sic indicavit. petit videre quid legissem. ostendi, et attendit etiam ultra quam ego legeram. et ignorabam quid sequeretur. sequebatur vero: `infirmum autem in fide recipite.' quod ille ad se rettulit mihiq[ue] aperuit (Conf. 8.12.30)¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴⁶ "And so, after I was stirred, I returned to that place where Alypius was sitting: for I had placed the book of the apostle there when I had stood up from there. I took it, I opened and I read, in silence, the chapter where my eyes first fell upon: 'Not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery or shamelessness, not in fighting and jealousy, but rather put on the Lord Jesus Christ and do not make provision of the body for desires.' I did not wish to read more, and I did not need to. For immediately with the end of this sentence it was as if a light of calmness was infused in my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished."

¹⁴⁷ "So he revealed what had been going on in himself (which I did not know). He had asked to see what I had read. I showed him, and he went even further than I had read. I did not know what

Both Augustine and Alypius are suddenly converted by a reading from *Romans*, specifically two verses right next to each other. In both instances, there is no commentary or meditation on these events; there is merely an account of the reading and the initial reaction and effect of the passage upon the reader. The use of the quotations of *Rom.* 13:13-14 and *Rom.* 14:1 in *Conf.* 8.12.29 differs from all the other quotations of *Romans*. But what is the significance of this occurrence then, or to rephrase the question, what was the significance of *Rom.* 13:13-14 (and perhaps *Rom.* 14:1) to Augustine?

The *Confessions* was one of Augustine's earlier works, but he completed several works before the *Confessions*, including the short commentary on select passages in *Romans* (*exp. prop. Rom.*). Given the profound effect *Rom.* 13:13-14 had on Augustine as person that day in Milan, one would think that this verse would have an impact on Augustine as an author, at least in the places where he comments on the book of *Romans*. Strangely, this is not the case. According to Ferrari, there is only a single reference to *Rom.* 13:13-14 in the works written in the period between his conversion and the writing of the *Confessions* (1980: 12). The passage in question is in the *exp. prop. Rom.* 77, and I have underlined the quotation of *Rom.* 13:14:

quod autem ait: et carnis providentiam ne perfeceritis in concupiscentiis, ostendit non esse culpandam carnis providentiam, quando ea providentur quae ad necessitatem salutis corporalis valent. si autem ad superfluas delectationes atque luxurias, ut quisque in his gaudeat, quae carne cupit, recte reprehenditur, quia providentiam carnis in concupiscentiis facit, quoniam qui seminat in carne sua, de carne metet corruptionem, id est, qui delectationibus carnalibus gaudet ¹⁴⁸.

followed. In fact, this followed: 'But receive him that is weak in faith'. This he applied to himself and disclosed it to me."

¹⁴⁸ "Now he says, 'Do not make provision for the body in desires', he means that there is no fault in the provision for the body, when what is provided are those things that are of value for the necessity

This is all that is mentioned of that passage which drove Augustine to such a dramatic conversion. The analysis Augustine gives in *exp. prop. Rom.* 77 does not even specifically deal with the *cubiles et impudicitia*, that is, the sexual desire which Augustine was struggling with during the time of the conversion recorded in *Conf.* 8.12.29. Rather, Augustine's analysis seems to be more concerned about *superfluas delectationes atque luxurias*, which refers to any kind of excess, not specifically or limited to sexual excess. Ferrari rightly asks the question, "But where... in the above commentary from the *Expositio*, is the slightest trace, if not of the harrowing struggle, then at least of the claim implicit in the description of the *Confessions*, that the earlier reading of [Rom. 13:13-14] had forever after changed Augustine's spiritual life?" (1980: 13). There is none. On the contrary, far more is said of the other verses he quotes so frequently in the *Confessions*, specifically the ones I have identified in this study, namely *Rom.* 1:21-25 and *Rom.* 7:22-25, both in the *exp. prop. Rom.* and in other works before the *Confessions* (Ferrari, 1980: 11). How can we explain such a strange lack of attention to the verse that directed Augustine to chastity and continence? This seeming inconsistency of the importance of *Rom.* 13:13 in Augustine's writing before the *Confessions* causes Ferrari to doubt the historicity of the conversion narrative in *Conf.* 8.12.29 (1980: 17). This is a question that has been debated for many years, and a survey and evaluation of all the arguments could itself fill an entire thesis on its own. It is not the purpose of this thesis to address this issue in depth, so I rely on Ferrari's article, which gives a broad overview of the main arguments for and against the historicity of the narrative, and presents a new argument to the debate¹⁴⁹. He views the inconsistencies I have

of the health of the body. If, however, [this provision] is for the superfluous delights and extravagance, so that he delights in these things that he desires of the flesh, he is rightly rebuked, because he makes provision for the body in desires, because he who sows in his own flesh, that is, who delights in pleasures of the flesh, will gather corruption from his body."

¹⁴⁹ Ferrari (1980).

mentioned above as an indication that the conversion narrative presented in *Conf.* 8.12.29 is a fictional rather than a historical account. He summarizes his findings thus:

Considering the supreme importance imputed to those particular texts in the conversion scene of the *Confessions*, one can only conclude that those particular texts¹⁵⁰ did *not* function in the real conversions of Augustine and Alypius after the manner in which these are depicted in the *Confessions*. Rather would it seem that those textual encounters are artistic embellishments added later in Augustine's carefully constructed portrayal of their conversion. The *tolle lege* episode would thus be a fiction of Augustine's genius. (Ferrari, 1980: 17)

If we accept Ferrari's findings, we are presented with a problem: how do we interpret Augustine's use of *Rom.* 13:13-14 and *Rom.* 14:1 when Augustine does not seem to use it in the same way he has used other *Romans* quotations? While in the *Confessions* he describes the effect of the text as life changing, the view presented by his own writings seems to indicate otherwise. Rather, his earlier works show far more investigation and attention to other frequently quoted verses, particularly *Rom.* 7:22-25, which forms part of the first book of the *div. qu. Simp.* Little can be said about the context of *Rom.* 13:13-14 and its impact on *Conf.* 8.12.29, as there is little other than the obvious impact in the original context of *Rom.* 13:13-14, and Augustine does not say enough on the matter for us to justify any impact. I propose that this scene should not be read in isolation, but rather that the use of *Romans* throughout Book 8 and even the previous seven books of the *Confessions* will assist in an interpretation of this challenging conversion narrative.

¹⁵⁰ That is, *Rom.* 13:13 and *Rom.* 14:1.

The use of Romans in the conversion narratives in the Confessions and its impact on the spiritual conversion of Augustine

Throughout this study, I have shown how Augustine displays a sensitivity for the context of the quotations of *Romans* he employs in the *Confessions*. I have also shown that two passages in particular, *Rom.* 1:21-25 and *Rom.* 7:22-25 are used in conversion narratives and occur again in Book 8. I propose that the reuse of these key passages in the eighth book may help to unravel the problem of the use of *Rom.* 13:13-14 in *Conf.* 8.12.29.

As I have noted earlier, Augustine quotes from *Romans* several times throughout Book 8. Interestingly, these quotations occur in the order they appear in *Romans* and Augustine uses quotations of passages he has mentioned before, namely *Rom.* 1:21-22 and *Rom.* 7:22-25. One could also include the quotations of *Rom.* 7:16-17 and *Rom.* 7:17, 20 here, as the context of *Rom.* 7:7-25 join all these passages together. They all form part of the ἐγώ narration, as I have explained in chapter 4. These quotations, especially the order in which they occur, may direct us to an answer to this question.

If Book 8 is a record of Augustine's reading of *Romans*, as O'Donnell argues, then there are some interesting observations regarding his conversion that can be discerned. The fact that the book of *Romans* lay on the table in the garden at Milan would point strongly to the assumption that Augustine was busy reading *Romans* during this time. This is not entirely unlikely as Augustine did state, in *Conf.* 7.21.27, that he started reading books of the Bible, the most prominent being those of Paul. Augustine may have known *Romans* in part via the Manichaeans before actually seizing upon the works of Paul (Brown, 1967: 105). If Augustine was indeed in the process of reading *Romans* at that time, it is safe to assume that he would have reached *Rom.* 13:13-14 at some point during his study. The conversion story is

therefore not extraordinary because Augustine read *Rom.* 13:13-14, since he would have gotten to it eventually, but rather because Augustine was receptive to the message of the scripture. This observation may explain the lack of attention Augustine gives to *Rom.* 13:13-14 in his other writings between his conversion and the writing of the *Confessions*. The use of *Rom.* 13:13-14 contains no other special message other than the fact that it was exactly the message that Augustine personally needed, that is, the call to chastity and continence. It is not Augustine's claim that chastity and continence should be universally applied. In *Conf.* 8.1.2, Augustine states *audieram ex ore veritatis esse spadones qui se ipsos absciderunt propter regnum caelorum, sed 'qui potest,' inquit, 'capere, capiat'*¹⁵¹. This is a reworking of *Matt.* 19:12. The use of *sed* emphasizes the option, as opposed to the obligation, in this sentence. This *sed* does not occur in the original source of the quotation and is Augustine's own addition. The message of *Rom.* 13:13-14 is significant for Augustine alone and only at this point of his life. Once he has read it and internalized it, it no longer needs to be read. As Stock puts it, "[t]he message is a confirmation of what he already knows, since Paul is in his thoughts... it is an authoritative reminder" (1998: 109). This could explain the lack of attention to this verse in Augustine's writing. The verse's significance is for Augustine's own situation.

If no significance can be gleaned from the use of *Rom.* 13:13-14, other than its specific significance for Augustine at that point of his life, what exactly is the purpose of the recollection of the event, especially in such an extraordinary fashion (if we accept that this is a fictional account)? As I have argued, Augustine was in the process of reading *Romans* during the time of the conversion narrated in *Conf.* 8.12.29. This is also reflected by the use of *Romans* quotations in Book 8. The

¹⁵¹ "I had heard from the mouth of truth that there are eunuchs who have cut themselves off for the kingdom of heaven, but he said 'he who is able to receive, let him receive.'"

quotations of *Romans* follow in sequence according to book order, which may give the impression of Augustine working through *Romans* as the events of Book 8 progresses. Augustine also uses very familiar quotations, which he has used on more than one occasion, and are therefore also familiar to the audience at the point of the narrative in Book 8. The audience's familiarity with the quoted verses not only links the individual quotations together, and, by extension, recalls past uses of the quotations, but it also indirectly familiarizes the audience with that verse, to the same extent as Augustine would have been at the time of the events of Book 8.

The use of these quotations to link this passage with earlier conversion narratives may also help us to understand the significance of the use of *Rom. 13:13-14* in Book 8. While these conversion narratives are not as extraordinary as the one presented in *Conf. 8.12.29*, they are no less important. On the contrary, I would argue, Augustine's intellectual and scriptural conversions carry more importance relatively than his final conversion.

Firstly, without these conversions, the final conversion would not have happened. The intellectual conversion gave Augustine his conception of an invisible, immaterial God. The scriptural conversion gave Augustine the understanding of the grace of Christ. These are two essential factors in the Christian faith. His spiritual conversion did indeed direct Augustine to become a baptized member of the church (*Conf. 9.6.14*), but I would argue that his previous two conversions set him on a path that would lead that way anyway, much in the same way he would have read *Rom. 13:13-14* at some point during his stay in Milan.

However, it is not my argument that the account of his spiritual conversion should be disregarded. Augustine himself puts great emphasis on this event, if only by the extraordinary circumstances surrounding it (fictional or not, it remains an emotive

and memorable scene). I would also argue that it is indeed the climax of the conversion narrative. It is possible to argue that his baptism in Book 9 would be a logical place to assign as the climax (O'Donnell, 1992c: 56). I would argue that the baptism in Book 9 is implied or at the very least anticipated by the events of Book 8. O'Donnell argues that the scene in the garden at Milan is central to the *Confessions*: "It is in the garden that Christ enters Augustine's life. The want felt and described at [Conf.] 7.18.24 is *now* filled" (1992a: xxxvi). Augustine's conversion in the garden of Milan could be described as the transformation of the intellectual and scriptural conversion into a spiritual conversion. It is perhaps for this reason that the quotations of *Rom.* 1:21-22 and *Rom.* 7:22-25 appear in Book 8: they recall the respective conversion narratives where they were quoted before, bringing the importance of those two events into the narrative of Book 8 and emphasizing that they also form part of Augustine's spiritual conversion. It is not without significance that Augustine quotes from *Rom.* 7:7-25 on three separate occasions¹⁵² in Book 8, whereas he only quotes from *Rom.* 1:21-22 once¹⁵³. This would suggest that, by quoting from the same section of *Romans* he referenced in his scriptural conversion, Augustine places this conversion on a higher level than his intellectual conversion.

In both the case of Augustine's intellectual conversion in *Conf.* 7.9.13-15 (where he quotes *Rom.* 1:21-25) and his scriptural conversion in *Conf.* 7.21.27 (where he quotes *Rom.* 7:22-25), his conversion is triggered by reading¹⁵⁴, in the former, the Platonists, in the latter, scripture with emphasis on Paul. His spiritual conversion is also triggered by reading. If Book 8 is a record of Augustine's reading of *Romans*, as

¹⁵² *Rom* 7:16-17 in *Conf.* 8.5.11, *Rom.* 7:22-25 in *Conf.* 8.5.12 and *Rom.* 7:17, 20 in 8.10.22.

¹⁵³ In *Conf.* 8.1.2.

¹⁵⁴ While not significant specifically in this context, it should also be noted that the philosophical conversion is also triggered by reading, and what I have called the "aversion" narrative in *Conf.* 5.3.3-5 is also triggered, in part, with Augustine's reading of the philosophers. Reading is one aspect that all the conversion narratives share.

O'Donnell describes it, then perhaps we can look further and see reading as the link between the conversion narratives. According to Stock (1998:111), the *Confessions* contains, in effect, the history of Augustine as a reader, from learning how to read, to his exposure to Latin and Greek literature, to his exposure to Cicero and by extension, philosophy, his exposure to the Platonists and finally his exposure to scripture. As Stock phrases it:

Every understanding, therefore, is a reading of ourselves, every genuine insight, a rereading until, progressing upwards by revisions, we have inwardly in view the essential source of knowledge, which is God. Reading, though not an end in itself, is a means of gaining higher understanding (1998: 111).

This progression is evident throughout the *Confessions*, in terms of how Augustine progresses from learning how to read, to learning philosophy, to learning scripture. Augustine reaches the culmination of this progress in *Conf.* 8.12.29. In the garden scene, when Augustine has finished reading *Rom.* 13:13-14, he comments *nec ultra volui legere nec opus erat* (*Conf.* 8.12.29)¹⁵⁵. In the very next chapter, Augustine reports *codicem clausi* (*Conf.* 8.12.30)¹⁵⁶. The act of closing the book is symbolic of Augustine attaining that “higher understanding”, as much as it was necessary for him to open it to obtain it. The purpose of Augustine’s progression of reading has been fulfilled.

If this is so, then the quotations of *Romans* acquire special significance. Augustine’s use of *Romans* in the conversion narratives throughout the *Confessions* serve not only as links, recalling the previous conversion narratives, but taken together in Book 8, represent the culmination of his progress as a reader.

¹⁵⁵ “I did not want to read further, and it was not necessary.”

¹⁵⁶ “I closed the book.” Of course, Augustine does not close it permanently, but places his finger so as to mark the passage. This is necessary so that Augustine can show Alypius the passage, and thereby spark Alypius’ conversion too.

Conclusion

If I have shown anything in this study, it is that Augustine is first and foremost a master of Latin and a cunning rhetorician. Augustine's use of *Romans* in the *Confessions* demonstrates an acute sensitivity for the original context of the quotations. Augustine does not simply reuse the rhetorical devices inherited from Paul via the quotations he uses from *Romans*, but rather builds upon the rhetorical effect and directs it to his own purpose.

From the beginning of the *Confessions*, Augustine tells us what the work is about: the progress to conversion. In *Conf.* 1.1.1, Augustine employs the style of the diatribe through a quotation of *Romans* in order to draw those who may oppose his views, namely the Manichaeans and others with similar resistance to faith. Augustine also established the image of himself in a converted state, which is essentially the goal of the conversion narratives in the *Confessions*. In *Conf.* 5.3.5, the "aversion" narrative, Augustine truly shows his rhetorical training by appropriating the apologetic force of *Rom.* 1:21-25, and, in conjunction with another apologetic work in the same fashion, namely *The Wisdom of Solomon*, uses them with protreptic effect. In the intellectual conversion found in *Conf.* 7.9.13-15, Augustine helps the audience understand the process of sifting through a pagan philosophical work. In employing rich use of scriptural quotations, particularly *Romans*, Augustine affirms that knowledge of God can be achieved by such pagan philosophers, but scripture remains the criterion for determining its value. In *Conf.* 7.21.27, Augustine preempts his final conversion through the use of *Rom.* 7:22-25 as he discovers scripture. The struggle of law and sin in *Rom.* 7:7-25 directs Augustine inevitably to his final conversion.

In Book 8, Augustine brings his conversion narratives together. The book is seasoned with conversion narratives of other people and throughout there are references to passages already quoted in the previous conversion narratives. In the eighth book, Augustine constantly reminds us of his progress towards conversion which he presents in the entire first seven books. The use of *Rom.* 7:7-25 is particularly significant. In *Conf.* 7.21.27, the quotation represented the cry of an unknown man, whereas in Book 8, it becomes the cry of Augustine himself, demonstrating the vast change in his life.

Finally, Augustine's use of *Romans* in Book 8 reveals far more about the climax of the book. The conversion narratives of Augustine were inspired by reading. The act of *tolle lege* does not merely represent the one single occurrence in the garden of Milan, but recalls the entire history of Augustine as a reading man. The reading of *Rom.* 13:13 is not a chance encounter, but the inevitable result of Augustine's progress, which is documented in the conversion narratives throughout the *Confessions*. All these conversion narratives share two things: reading and *Romans*.

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