

## *Augustine's Deer Visits the Ophthalmologist: Exercising the Eyes of Faith in Enarrat. Ps. 41*

GERALD P. BOERSMA  
ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY

*Abstract* — Augustine's exposition of Ps 41[42] is an exploration of the deer's "holy longing" to see God. I suggest that in *Enarrat. Ps. 41* Augustine proposes a series of spiritual exercises—a program of rehabilitation—in order to train the soul to see God. Thus, Augustine's theological interpretation of the psalm develops an anagogical spirituality, acclimatizing the inductee to the vision of God. The bishop guides his congregants through this training regimen to sharpen their inner vision so that their longing to see God may be fulfilled. But *Enarrat. Ps. 41* remains a psalm of groaning—at the conclusion of the exercises the soul still cannot see God. Although God remains unseen, Augustine suggests the psalm holds out hope: an ecclesially mediated, sacramental vision of God obtains in this life; it is a vision that anticipates, and, indeed, participates in the eschatological vision of God.

*Key Words* — *Augustine*, *Enarrationes in Psalmos, Ps 41 (42)*, *exercitatio*, *vision of God*, *pilgrimage*, *sacrament*, *eyes of faith*, *faith*, *hope*

"What calls for all our efforts in this life," maintains Augustine, "is the healing of the eyes of our hearts, with which God is to be seen."<sup>1</sup> The temporality and materiality of finite existence occlude the fullness of this vision this side of the eschaton. As such, the emphasis of Augustinian spirituality falls on the desire and restless longing that mark beings in time. One of the bishop's most-quoted scriptural citations is from the book of Wisdom: "The corruptible body weighs down the soul" (Wis 9:15).<sup>2</sup> It is especially in expositing the Psalter that Augustine is attentive to the "voice" of the

1. *Serm.* 88.5. I have used Edmund Hill's translation of *Serm.* 88 found in *Sermons 51–94*, WSA 3/3 (New York: New City Press, 1991).

2. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.17; cf. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.10. I have used Maria Boulding's translation of *Enarrat. Ps.* 41 found in *Exposition on the Psalms 33–50*, WSA 16 (New York: New City Press, 2000).

“weighted body” of the church longing and groaning to see the object of its desire. In his essay, “An Ecclesiology of Groaning,” Michael McCarthy notes the preponderance of the term *groan* (*gemens*) in the *Enarrationes* (47 appearances). McCarthy writes, “The frequent tone of lament in the psalms gives rise to Augustine’s recurring reference to the present reality as one in which it is only appropriate to groan. While Augustine himself may rejoice in the hope of things to come, here and now he groans.”<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the most evocative image in the Psalter of this groaning is the opening line of Ps 42 (*sicut cervus*): “As a deer longs for springs of water, so does my soul long for you, O God.”<sup>4</sup> Augustine’s exposition of this psalm is an exploration of the deer’s “holy longing” to see God. *I suggest that, in Enarrat. Ps. 41, Augustine’s theological approach to interpretation allows him to propose a series of spiritual exercises—a program of rehabilitation—in order to train the soul to see God.* Thus, Augustine’s theological interpretation of the psalm develops an anagogical spirituality, acclimatizing the inductee to the vision of God. The bishop guides his congregants through this training regimen to sharpen their inner vision so that their longing to see God may be fulfilled. But *Enarrat. Ps. 41* remains a psalm of groaning—at the conclusion of the exercises the soul still cannot see God. Although God remains unseen, Augustine suggests the psalm holds out hope: an ecclesially mediated, sacramental vision of God obtains in this life; it is a vision that anticipates, and, indeed, participates in the eschatological vision of God.

### THE MALADY OF THE GROANING DEER

The sermon begins with Augustine expressing his “longing” (*desiderat*) to respond through the psalm to his congregants’ own “longings” (*desiderio uestro*).<sup>5</sup> Typical of his prosopological exegesis, Augustine initiates the exposition by asking who is voicing the deer’s holy longing for springs of water: “Who is it saying that?”<sup>6</sup> Perhaps it is the “voice of our catechumens”?

3. Michael McCarthy, “An Ecclesiology of Groaning,” in *The Harp of Prophecy: Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms*, ed. Brian Daley and Paul Kolbet (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2015), 247. Likewise, Pasquale Borgomeo maintains that, for Augustine, groaning is the predominant “voice” of the church while on pilgrimage (*L’Église de ce temps dans la prédication de saint Augustin* [Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1972], 178).

4. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.1*. I have italicized Augustine’s quotations of Scripture.

5. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.1* (CCSL 38 459).

6. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.1* (CCSL 38 460). Augustine’s hermeneutics finds its origin in the method of interpreting classical texts such as Homer or Virgil that he learned as a schoolboy, namely, prosopological exegesis. This standard practice of grammatical and rhetorical training involved approaching a text with the question: Who here is the speaker? The answer is not always immediately apparent. Most ancient texts did not have punctuation marks or spacing between paragraphs, lines, or even words (*scriptio continua*). The first task of the exegete, then, was to disentangle reams of text and locate the identity of the person speaking. Hence the term *prosopological* (derived from the Greek word *prosōpon*, “face”). Discovering the

After all, this would make sense: they are the ones “hurrying toward the holy, grace-giving bath.”<sup>7</sup> But Augustine is not convinced that the deer’s “holy longing” refers to the catechumens’ desire for baptism. Baptism, after all, cannot really quench the intense “holy longing” of the deer. If anything, baptism only serves to enkindle a greater longing (*ardentius inflammantur*). Baptism is but the first step in the catechumens’ “pilgrimage”—their true longing is for the land “to which they must cross over.”<sup>8</sup>

Instead, the longing deer gives voice to a universal spiritual condition. Seeds of longing have been “sown widely in the Lord’s field all over the world.” And while the condition is universal, it is one deer that longs. While many people “long,” it is one “single, united Christian voice that sings, *As a deer longs for springs of water, so does my soul long for you, O God.*” Augustine explains this unity: “Remember, though, that the speaker is not a lone individual, but a single body: the Church which is the body of Christ.”<sup>9</sup> To whom, then, does the voice (*vox*) of the speaker belong? It belongs to the whole body of Christ: “Well then, brothers and sisters, catch my eagerness, share my longing. Let us love, all of us together; let us burn together with thirst; let us run together to the fountain of understanding. Let us long for it as a hart yearns for a spring.”<sup>10</sup> The “fountain of understanding” is

“face” or *persona* (identity) of the speaker in any text is the critical first step to understand its meaning. Cf. Marie-Josèphe Rondeau, *Les commentaires patristiques du Psautier: (IIIe-Ve siècles)*, vol. 2, *Exégèse prosopologique et théologie* (Rome: Pontifical Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1985); Hubertus Drobner, *Person-Exegese und Christologie bei Augustinus: Zur Herkunft der Formel una persona* (Leiden: Brill, 1986); idem, “Grammatical Exegesis and Christology in St. Augustine,” *StPatr* 18 (1990): 49–63; Robert Kaster, *Guardians of Language, The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Matthew W. Bates, *The Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation: The Center of Paul’s Method of Scriptural Interpretation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012).

Elsewhere in the *Enarrationes* Augustine writes, “[Christ] prays for us as our priest, he prays in us as our Head, he is prayed to by us as our God” (*Enarrat. Ps.* 85.1). Helpful material devoted to the theology animating Augustine’s prosopological exegesis includes Michael Fiedrowicz, *Psalmus Vox Totius Christi: Studien zu Augustins “Enarrationes in Psalmos”* (Freiburg: Herder, 1997); A. D. Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), s.v. “Enarrationes in Psalmos,” by M. Cameron; Jason Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Michael Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine’s Early Figurative Exegesis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 165–212. For an analysis of Augustine’s christological reading of the Psalms (from which this overview draws), see Gerald P. Boersma, “Augustine’s Psalter as *Vox Totius Christi*,” *Citbara* 55 (2015): 27–34.

7. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.1 (CCSL 38 460). This psalm was customarily sung as the catechumens were led to the baptistery at the Easter vigil. Cf. Ambrose, *De Sacramentis* 4.2.7 and *De mysteriis* 8.43 where Ambrose references baptism and quotes the second part of Ps (42 [43]), which was prayed while approaching the altar.

8. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.1 (CCSL 38 460).

9. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.1 (CCSL 38 460).

10. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.2 (CCSL 38 461): *eia, fratres, auditatem meam capite, desiderium hoc me cum communicate, simul amemus, simul in hac siti exardescamus, simul ad fontem intellegendi curramus.*

not the baptismal font, insists Augustine; rather the fountain of which the psalmist speaks is God himself: “For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light do we see light” (Ps 35:10 [36:9]). Human desire is to be illuminated not by a bodily or external light, but by an “inward radiance.” This requires special vision, special eyes: “Your inner eye is being prepared to see that light, and your inner thirst is burning ever more fiercely for that fountain.”<sup>11</sup> Psalm 41[42], it turns out, is about faith. It is about the faith required of the deer on pilgrimage burning with “holy longing” for the land to which he must cross over. The eyes of faith are being sharpened, “prepared,” to see eternal, immaterial light.

Augustine reminds his congregants that the “voice” of the deer in this life remains a voice of longing. Although established in faith, the deer “does not yet see the object of that faith and yearns to understand what he loves, this deer has to endure other people who are not deer at all, people whose understanding is darkened . . . they jeer at the believer who cannot yet point to the reality in which he or she believes: *Where is your God?*”<sup>12</sup> The deer is thirsting, parched, and exhausted: “When shall I reach him and appear before the face of God?” “I am thirsty on my pilgrimage, parched in my running, but will be totally satisfied when I arrive. But *when shall I reach him?*”<sup>13</sup> The journey is long, the vision of faith is dim, and the spiritual challenges of the journey are exacerbated by the taunt of the enemy who prods with the same question with which the deer often reproaches himself: *Where is your God?*

Groaning is the requisite disposition *in hac lacrimarum valle*. Tears have been the psalmist’s bread day and night (Ps 41:4 [42:4]). This is how “I run my course,” insists Augustine, “as I am still on the way, not yet arriving, not yet appearing there.”<sup>14</sup> The deer is parched with thirst, but his tears do not become a drink to quench his thirst. Rather, the salty tears only increase the deer’s thirst. The deer eats his tears both day and night, which is to say, all the time there is groaning and unfulfilled longing. Day and night also suggest times of prosperity (day) and times of misfortune (night). In either case, the thirst for the fountain of understanding—to see the face of God—is not slaked: “Even if things are going well by worldly standards

*desideremus ergo uelut ceruus fontem*. Rowan Williams notes that, for Augustine, praying and singing the Psalms means “learning what it is to inhabit the body of Christ and to be caught up in Christ’s prayer” (“Augustine and the Psalms,” *Int* 58 [2004]: 19–20).

11. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.2* (CCSL 38 461): *cui lumini uidendo oculus interior praeparatur, cui fonti hauriendo sitis interior inardescit. curre ad fontem, desidera fontem*.

12. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.5* (CCSL 38 462): *talis ergo ceruus in fide constitutus, nondum uidens quod credit, cupiens intellegere quod diligit, patitur et contrarios non ceruos, obscuratos intellegentia . . . insuper insultantes et dicentes homini credenti, et quod credit non ostendenti: ubi est deus tuus?*

13. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.5* (CCSL 38 463).

14. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.6* (CCSL 38 463).

they are bad for me, until I appear before the face of God.”<sup>15</sup> In all prosperity and success, one still eats tears.<sup>16</sup>

The constant taunt of the pagan reaches a feverish crescendo: “Every day I hear the taunt, Where is your God?” (Ps 41:4[42:4]). His repeated, biting question begins to find an echo deep within the deer’s own heart; with tremulous cadence the deer begins to reproach himself with the same question. The deer has nothing to say in response to the taunts or to assuage his own fear: “I cannot retort, ‘What about you? Where is *your* God?’ because the pagan can point to his God.” The pagan can point to his stone idol, or the sky, or the sun. “He has found something he can demonstrate to my bodily eyes,” explains Augustine. “For me it is different, not because I have nothing to demonstrate, but because he lacks the kind of eyes to which I could demonstrate it.”<sup>17</sup> Augustine addresses the challenge of communicating the mysterious quality both of this inner vision and the object seen. The deer sees with the eyes of faith, which is to say he sees poorly, or better, dimly.

The taunt of the pagan resonates acutely with the deer because there is nothing the deer longs for more than to see the face of God. The deer presents himself to Augustine as to an ophthalmologist by explaining his malady:

I pondered day and night on this question hurled at me, *Where is your God?* Even as I came to wonder if it was possible for me not merely to believe in my God, but even to see something of him (*non tantum crederem, sed aliquid et uiderem*). I see the things my God has made, but my God himself, who made them, I do not see. Yet like a deer I long for the springs of water, and the fountain of life is with him . . . what shall I do to find my God?<sup>18</sup>

We can imagine Augustine, the ophthalmologist, furrowing his brow on hearing of this complex diagnosis. The deer’s lugubrious brown eyes longing to see haunt him. The eye doctor proposes a series of exercises to improve vision: “I call it an *exercitatio mentis*,” explains the doctor. “My deer have had some success with this in the past.”<sup>19</sup> The aim of the exercises

15. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.6* (CCSL 38 463): *et cum in mundo bene est, mihi male est, antequam apparebo ante faciem dei.*

16. Augustine writes, “Is prosperity not a deceiver? Is it not labile, unsteady, mortal? Is it not ephemeral, fleeting, transient? . . . It is true, indeed, that even if the happiness of this world bathes us in its light, as long as we are in the body we are still on our journey and absent from the Lord” (cf. 2 Cor 5:6). *Enarrat. Ps. 41.6* (CCSL 38 463).

17. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.6* (CCSL 38 463–64): *ego autem non quasi non habeam quem ostendam, sed non habet ille oculos quibus ostendam.*

18. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.7* (CCSL 38 464).

19. The *locus classicus* of how *exercitatio mentis* functioned in Greco-Roman spirituality remains Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Michel, 2002).

is “a training in modes of thinking increasingly interior, and increasingly free from images, a gradual intellectual movement from the material to the immaterial.”<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, the *exercitatio* aims to reorder human affections from finite reality to God himself.<sup>21</sup>

#### THE OPHTHALMOLOGIST’S *EXERCITATIO*

In *Enarrat. Ps.* 41, we can see the deer working through a classical regimen of *exercitatio mentis*, as if working through a therapy prescribed by the soul’s ophthalmologist.<sup>22</sup> First, the deer looks at the beauty of the world around him (“the beauty of earth’s many faces”): the immensity of the sea, the sky with its sun, moon, and stars. All of this points to the artist who made it, exclaims Augustine, with a reference to Rom 1:20 (“the invisible realities of God are seen and understood through things that are made”).<sup>23</sup> However astounding, material beauty is not the face of God. Still, the question remains: Where is your God?

Next, the deer turns to think about himself: How and why does he love the beauty of the world around him? “So I return back into myself (*redeo ad meipsum*), and examine who I am, I who can ask such questions.”<sup>24</sup> The deer realizes that if he was enraptured by external material beauty, he is in even greater shock by the inner soul that perceives such beauty. The *exercitatio mentis* by which the “eyes” are being trained to ascend to see the face of God shift focus from the physical sight of creation’s beauty to contemplating how it is that the soul appreciates such beauty. It turns out that the deer is “seeing” the world around him with two sets of eyes, those of the body and those of the soul. Unless both sets of eyes are engaged, the sea, sky, stars, sun, and moon are simply not seen: “The eyes are bodily organs,

Hadot emphasizes that spiritual purgation in classical antiquity aimed at the transformation of both the mortal and the intellectual order. See also Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). The relevance of *exercitatio mentis* in Augustine is considered by John Cavadini, “The Structure and Intention of Augustine’s *De Trinitate*,” *AugStud* 23 (1992): 103–23. For a different reading of *exercitatio* in Augustine, see Lewis Ayres, “The Christological Context of the *De Trinitate* XIII,” *AugStud* 29 (1998): 111–39. See also Marin Claes, *Exercitatio Mentis: Zelfkennis, vorming en therapie bij Augustinus* (Almere: Parthenon, 2011); idem, “Limitations to ‘exercitatio mentis’: Changes in Rhetorical Style in Augustine’s Dialogues,” *Aug* 57 (2007): 387–98.

20. Ayres, “Christological Context,” 114.

21. Cf. *ibid.*, 128. Ayres continues: “The task is both moral and intellectual and is presented as that which will enable us to progress from our obsession with the material to greater contemplation of the presence of the creator” (p. 131).

22. Cf. Paul Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

23. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.7 (CCSL 38 464). Cavadini describes Rom 1:20 as “Augustine’s favorite description of the ascent” (“Structure and Intention,” 116 n. 32).

24. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.7 (CCSL 38 464).

the windows of the mind; it is the inner self that look out through them, and if the mind is preoccupied with some other thought, the eyes are open to no purpose."<sup>25</sup>

The deer comes to realize that his inner eyes are not encumbered by the limitations of space and time. He can "see objects through itself alone."<sup>26</sup> He can perceive colors not actually before him, he can hear music when no sound is made, he can smell and taste and feel when there is no smell, savor, or object to experience. Augustine asks, "See within? How is that?"<sup>27</sup> Justice and beauty cannot be felt, smelled, or tasted, "yet justice is within us, it is beautiful, it moves us to praise, we see it."<sup>28</sup> Seeing immaterial goods without the help of the bodily eye is a higher way of seeing.<sup>29</sup> The regimen that the deer's ophthalmologist has prescribed is bearing fruit. First, the deer looked at the beauty of the world around him, then he realized that to see the world he needed also to look with the eyes of the soul. Next, he started to look at what can be seen only with the soul's eye. This third stage of the *exercitatio mentis* is meant to help the deer learn other ways of seeing, to see immaterial reality (such as concepts of justice and beauty) as more real and enduring than what is empirically present to the senses. The soul can, as John Cavadini puts it, "be 'exercised' in this image-free thought through a process of step-by-step (*gradatim*) 'ascent' from the consideration of physical things, to that of finite spiritual things, to the eventual vision of things eternal."<sup>30</sup> The anagogical movement that Augustine outlines is intended to cultivate an increased sensitivity to spiritual reality.

Contemplating immaterial reality, the deer comes to realize that he is not contemplating an object far removed in some heavenly realm, but a reality that exists in his own soul.

The fourth and final stage of the *exercitatio* is when the deer turns within to discover beauty, justice, truth, and goodness. Augustine writes, "The mind sees itself through itself; it sees itself so as to know itself."<sup>31</sup> At this point, corporeal vision is a distraction. Material loves become "a hindrance and a noisy one."<sup>32</sup> The soul instead "betakes itself to itself that

25. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.7 (CCSL 38 464): *oculi membra sunt carnis, fenestrae sunt mentis; interior est qui per bas uidet; quando cogitatione aliqua absens est, frustra patent.*

26. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.7 (CCSL 38 464): *aliquid etiam per seipsum animus ipse conspiciat.*

27. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.7 (CCSL 38 465): *Quid est, intus uideam?*

28. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.7 (CCSL 38 465).

29. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.7 (CCSL 38 465): "Unquestionably what the mind knows through itself is better than what it comes to know through its servant."

30. Cavadini, "Structure and Intention," 104–5.

31. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.7 (CCSL 38 465): *seipsum enim per seipsum uidet, et animus ipse ut norit se, uidet se.*

32. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.7 (CCSL 38 465).

it may see itself in itself and know itself in its own presence.”<sup>33</sup> The *exercitatio mentis* that the doctor prescribes borrow unmistakably in tenor and substance from Plotinus (particularly *Ennead* I.6, the treatise *On Beauty*).<sup>34</sup> And the final “turn within” finds a particularly clear echo in the *Enneads*:

Let us fly to our dear country. What then is our way of escape, and how are we to find it? . . . Our country from which we came is there, our Father is there. How shall we travel to it, where is our way of escape? We cannot get there on foot; for our feet only carry us everywhere in this world, from one country to another. You must not get ready a carriage, either, or a boat. Let all these things go, and do not look. Shut your eyes, and change to and wake another way of seeing, which everyone has but few use.<sup>35</sup>

Augustine’s deer is urged to follow the ascent mapped out by Plotinus. It is not a journey to a far-off land needing extravagant means of transportation. Rather, the ascent is achieved by turning within. Introspection is the *via* of ascent. Andrew Louth writes, “For Plotinus, the higher is not the more remote; the higher is the more inward: one climbs up by climbing in, as it were. . . . As the soul ascends to the One, it enters more deeply into itself: to find the One is to find itself. Self-knowledge and knowledge of the ultimate are bound up together, if not identified. Ascent to the One is a process of withdrawal into oneself.”<sup>36</sup> How is the soul to ascend? asks Plotinus. “Turn within yourself and look!” The soul in its deepest nature retains something of its divine nature, which needs only to be discovered.<sup>37</sup>

For Plotinus this concludes the *exercitatio mentis*. The soul is now one with its divine self. The subject-object union disappears; there is a union between the beholder and the vision beheld. Not so for the deer. Even at this stage of purified inner vision, when the deer has advanced far by fol-

33. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.7 (CCSL 38 465): *abstrahit se ad se, ut uideat se in se, ut nouerit se apud se.*

34. For a more extensive discussion of how Plotinus’s philosophy of ascent informs Augustine’s thought, see Gerald P. Boersma, *Augustine’s Early Theology of Image* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). See also Jean Trouillard, *La Purification plotinienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), 163–65.

35. *Ennead* I.6.8.16–28: Φεύγωμεν δὴ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα, ἀληθέστερον ἄν τις παρακελεύοιτο. Τίς οὖν ἡ φυγὴ καὶ πῶς; . . . Πατρὶς δὴ ἡμῖν, ὅθεν παρήλθομεν, καὶ πατὴρ ἐκεῖ. Τίς οὖν ὁ στόλος καὶ ἡ φυγὴ; Οὐ ποσὶ δεῖ διανύσαι· πανταχοῦ γὰρ φέρουσι πόδες ἐπὶ γῆν ἄλλην ἀπ’ ἄλλης· οὐδέ σε δεῖ ἵππων ὄχημα ἢ τι θαλάττιον παρασκευάσαι, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα πάντα ἀφεῖναι δεῖ καὶ μὴ βλέπειν, ἀλλ’ οἷον μύσαντα ὄψιν ἄλλην ἀλλάξασθαι καὶ ἀνεγείραι, ἣν ἔχει μὲν πᾶς, χρῶνται δὲ ὀλίγοι.

36. Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 39.

37. Cf. *Ennead* IV.8.8.2–4: “Our soul does not altogether come down, but there is always something of it in the intelligible.” Pierre Hadot comments, “Here we come across Plotinus’s central intuition: the human self is *not* irrevocably separated from its eternal model, as the latter exists within the divine Thought. The true self—the self in God—is within ourselves” (*Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993], 27).



lowing the doctor's orders, he still hears the nagging question: Where is your God? To contemplate one's own soul is not to contemplate God: "To be sure, God can be seen only with the mind, but he cannot be seen as the mind itself can be seen."<sup>38</sup> The mind is finite, unstable, and temporal. Sometimes our minds forget things, and at other times we change our minds. In seeking the face of God, the deer "is seeking unchangeable truth, the substance that cannot fail. But the mind itself is not like that."<sup>39</sup> Unlike Plotinus, the deer is not content with a unitive experience with its true self; rather, it seeks the face of the God who remains wholly other.

This is not to say that the deer's ophthalmologist was mistaken and that the *exercitatio mentis* was fruitless. The ascent via Neoplatonic anagogy has its (penultimate) place.<sup>40</sup> But it is precisely as an *exercitatio* that it is valuable. What the deer discovers in completing his prescribed training regimen is precisely what Cavadini argued is the aim of the entire *De Trinitate*: "The *De trinitate* uses the Neoplatonic soteriology of ascent only to impress it into the service of a thoroughgoing critique of its claim to raise the inductee to the contemplation of God, a critique which, more generally becomes a declaration of the futility of any attempt to come to any saving knowledge of God apart from Christ."<sup>41</sup> This is precisely the realization of the deer at the conclusion of the *exercitatio mentis*: "I sought my God in visible material creatures, and I did not find him. I sought the substance of him in myself (*quaerens eius substantiam in meipso*), as though he were something like what I am, and did not find him there either; so I have become aware that my God is some reality above the soul (*super animam*)."<sup>42</sup> Thus the deer exclaims in the words of the psalmist, "I reflected on these things, and poured my soul above myself."<sup>43</sup> The soul must be poured *above itself* if it is to "touch" God.

The infinite ontological gulf between Creator and creature renders the conclusion of the ascent—of the pilgrimage—impossible in its Plotinian mode. For this reason, the deer still groans. Eating his tears day and night,

38. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.7 (CCSL 38 465): *non quidem uideri deus nisi animo potest, nec tamen ita ut animus uideri potest.*

39. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.7 (CCSL 38 465): *aliquam quaerit incommutabilem ueritatem, sine defectu substantiam. non est talis ipse animus.*

40. Cf. Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris: de Boccard, 1949), 289–327; Frederick Van Vleteren, "Augustine's Ascent of the Soul: A Reconsideration," *AugStud* 5 (1974): 29–72; idem, "The Cassiciacum Dialogues and Augustine's Ascents at Milan," *Mediaevalia* (1978): 29–41; Robert J. O'Connell, "Faith, Reason, and Ascent to Vision in St. Augustine," *AugStud* 21 (1990): 83–126; Goulven Madec, "Ascensio, ascensus," in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, ed. Cornelius Mayer et al., 5 vols. (Basel: Schwabe, 1986–), 1:465–75.

41. Cavadini, "Structure and Intention," 106.

42. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.8 (CCSL 38 465–66).

43. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.8 (CCSL 38 466).

he continues to reproach himself, "Where is your God?"<sup>44</sup> Exercise has certainly improved his inner eyes. First, the deer's vision was limited to the material order. Second, he came to understand that exterior reality is seen with the help of interior vision. Third, he was able to see enduring immaterial concepts. Finally, he sees his own soul. However, he does not yet see God. He only knows now to point "there" (*inde*): "For there, above my soul, is the home of my God; there he dwells, from there he looks down upon me, from there he created me, from there he governs me and takes thought for me, from there he arouses me, calls me, guides me and leads me on, and from there he will lead me to journey's end."<sup>45</sup> The repeated emphasis on the radical "spatial" difference (*inde*) between Augustine and God underscores the "real distinction" between creature and Creator that renders the deer's pilgrimage one of "groaning."

#### SEEING GOD IN HIS TENT

The vast distance (*inde*) between the deer and the "home of my God" might cause despair. Is any relationship possible? Commenting on the distinction between home (*domus*) and tent (*tabernaculum*) in Ps 41:4, Augustine suggests there is cause for hope despite the groaning. Augustine's version of the psalm reads, "*I reflected on these things, and poured my soul above myself, because I will walk into the place of the wonderful tent [tabernacle], even to the home of God by the voice of exultation and praise, the sounds of one celebrating a festival.*" Augustine notes the distinction between "home" and "tent." God has a "secret home" in the highest heaven; that home is the goal of the deer on pilgrimage. But he also has a "tent" on earth.<sup>46</sup> Augustine explains: "His tent is the Church, the Church which is still a pilgrim; yet he is to be sought there, because in this tent we find the way that leads to his home."<sup>47</sup> Here, in a most distilled form, we have Augustine's developed ecclesiology (represented, for example, in the broad trajectory of *De civitate dei*): Augustine probes the continuity and discontinuity between the *ecclesia peregrinans* and the *domus Dei mei*. He is categorical that the vision of God to be had in the "house of God" is known only by sojourning within the *tabernaculum* of the

44. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.8 (CCSL 38 465).

45. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.8 (CCSL 38 466): *ibi enim domus dei mei, super animam meam; ibi habitat, inde me prospicit, inde me creavit, inde me gubernat, inde mihi consulit, inde me excitat, inde me uocat, inde me dirigit, inde me ducit, inde me perducit.*

46. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.9 (CCSL 38 466): *ille enim qui habet altissimam in secreto domum, habet etiam in terra tabernaculum.*

47. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.9 (CCSL 38 466): *tabernaculum eius in terra, ecclesia eius, est adhuc peregrina. sed hic quaerendus est, quia in tabernaculo inuenitur uia, per quam uenitur ad domum.*

church.<sup>48</sup> To leave this “tabernacle” is to wander in *errores*.<sup>49</sup> Inside the “tabernacle” the deer finds the faithful who live virtuous lives.

The deer is utterly amazed when he enters into the tabernacle.<sup>50</sup> The military-like discipline and rigor of the citizens of this tent is inspiring. Nevertheless, a tent is, by definition, provisional shelter; the deer is still on pilgrimage, walking (*ambulo*) and groaning. One thing is particularly burdensome: why does evil so often beset good people while evil people seem only to experience good fortune? The answer, suggests Augustine, is found in another psalm: “*I tried to solve the problem, but it is too hard for me until I enter God's holy place, and understand what the end must be*” (Ps 72[73]:16–17). The “spring of understanding” for which the deer was longing at the outset of the psalm is discovered in God's house. The groans that accompany the question of the problem of evil can only find their answer in the “end” (*fine*), which is to say, God's house. The trials of the just, who are now being exercised (*exercetur*) in the training ground of the *tabernaculum*, will find intelligibility in the “spring of understanding” that accompanies the rest and refreshment of the *domus Dei*.<sup>51</sup>

The contrast between “tent” and “house” is clear. The first belongs to the church, and the second to God. One is seen, while the other is hidden (*secreto domum*). In the tent people exercise and do battle, in the house they rest and delight. Nevertheless, there is also a profound degree of continuity between the “tent” and the “house.” The music that wafts from the tent seems to be an overflow of the music always playing in the house. After all, the psalmist was led to the home of God “*by the voice of exultation and praise, by the sound of one celebrating a festival*” (v. 4). Augustine writes, “He was drawn toward a kind of sweetness, an inward, secret pleasure that cannot be described, as though some musical instrument were sounding delightfully from God's house. As he still walked about in the tent he could hear this inner music; he was drawn to its sweet tones, following its melodies and distancing himself from the din of flesh and blood, until he found his way even to the house of God.”<sup>52</sup>

48. Cf. *Enarrat. Ps.* 26(2).6: Augustine comments on v. 4: “*One thing have I begged of the Lord, and that will I seek after, to live in the Lord's house all the days of my life.*” Commenting on this verse, Augustine develops the same trope found in *Enarrat. Ps.* 41: “This is the one thing, for the place where we will abide forever is called a house or a home. Our dwelling while we are on pilgrimage is sometimes referred to as a house, but it is more correctly called a tent. A tent is where people live who are on the move, those who are engaged in some kind of military service and fighting against an enemy. When, therefore, there is a tent in this life, there must clearly be an enemy. . . . Here in the present, then, we have a tent, but hereafter a home.”

49. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.9 (CCSL 38 466): *nam extra locum tabernaculi errabo quaerens deum meum.*

50. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.9 (CCSL 38 466): *Ecce quanta admiror in tabernaculo!*

51. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.9 (CCSL 38 466).

52. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.9 (CCSL 38 467): *ita perductus est ad domum dei, quamdam dulcedinem sequendo, interiorem nescio quam et occultam uoluptatem, tamquam de domo dei sonaret suauiter aliquod*

When people throw a party, notes Augustine, they will assemble musicians and singers in front of their house to entice those passing by to come in; the music alerts all those who can hear that a party is going on inside. “In God’s home there is an everlasting party,” exclaims Augustine. “The choirs of angels keep eternal festival, for the eternally present face of God is joy never diminished.”<sup>53</sup> The deer on pilgrimage, walking in the tent, can hear (“only if the world’s din does not drown it”) the sweet strains of the music that issues from the house of God. This sound, proleptically experienced while still on pilgrimage, will “drag the deer toward the spring of water.”<sup>54</sup>

Perhaps both the continuity and the discontinuity between the “tabernacle” and the “home of God” is best expressed in Augustine’s word *sacramentum*, a word he uses in many distinct contexts to bespeak divine presence. The concept of *sacramentum* is intelligible within Augustine’s broader Platonic ambit, in which all material reality has a signatory character: temporal finite reality points beyond itself to that which is more real and enduring and in which it already participates. There is thus continuity and discontinuity in *sacramenta*, because they serve both to conceal and to reveal the reality in which they participate. They are (in the classical formula) visible signs of invisible grace.

*Sacramenta* are the provisions of the pilgrim—of the church still groaning—insists Augustine. The music that wafts from the house of God at times resounds—albeit in a manner faint and fleeting—in the tabernacle. Augustine admits, “At times we may in some measure scatter the clouds as our yearning draws us on, and even come within earshot of that melody, so that pressing forward we may conceive something of the house of God.”<sup>55</sup> The church then is the sacrament of the presence of God, the tabernacle in which the face of God is both veiled and unveiled. But a vision of God, even within the tabernacle of the church, is a rare and still dim experience. It is a mystical experience, “an inward, secret pleasure that cannot be described.”

### THE HOPE OF THE VISION OF GOD

The deer’s fleeing, sacramental vision of the face of God experienced while still sojourning in the *tabernaculum* has many resonances in the description we find of Augustine’s own short-lived mystical experiences de-

*organum; et cum ille ambularet in tabernaculo, audito quodam interiore sono, ductus dulcedine, sequens quod sonabat, abstrahens se ab omni strepitu carnis et sanguinis, peruenit usque ad domum dei.*

53. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.9* (CCSL 38 467): *in domo dei festiuitas sempiterna est. non enim aliquid ibi celebratur et transit. festum sempiternum chorus angelorum; uultus praesens dei laetitia sine defectu.*

54. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.9* (CCSL 38 467).

55. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.10* (CCSL 38 467): *etsi utcumque nebulis diffugatis ambulando per desiderium, ad hunc sonum peruenerimus interdum, ut aliquid de illa domo dei nitendo capiamus.*

scribed in the *Confessions*. In the experiences of Milan and Ostia, Augustine gives personal expression to coming “within earshot of that melody.”

In *Conf.* 7, Augustine twice describes catching sight, in a “trembling glance,” of that “which is” (*ad id quod est*).<sup>56</sup> In this mystical experience Augustine comes to realize the real distinction between participating being and participated being, the *discontinuity* between the being that creates and the being of the creatures created.<sup>57</sup> The ecstasy described in *Conf.* 7.10.16 is short lived. Augustine crashes down, unable to sustain the vision of eternal being. He finds himself far from eternity “in the region of dissimilarity” (*regio dissimilitudinis*). In Milan, Augustine came (in the language of *Enarrat. Ps.* 41) “within earshot of that melody,” the clouds did scatter, and he did “conceive something of the house of God.” But this serves only to underscore the infinitely greater discontinuity between temporal being and eternal being. He writes in *Conf.* 7.10.16, “What I saw is Being, and that I who saw am not yet Being.”<sup>58</sup>

The deer on pilgrimage in *Enarrat. Ps.* 41 traverses the *regio dissimilitudinis*. Again quoting Wis 9:15 (“Our corruptible body weighs down the soul, and this earthly dwelling oppresses a mind that considers many things”), Augustine points out that should we experience—ever so briefly—something of the house of God, the “weight” of our weakness pulls us back down. In the language of *Conf.* 7, “My weakness reasserted itself, and I returned to my customary condition.”<sup>59</sup> Augustine writes that, even if we experience the clouds parting and should “come within earshot of that melody,” nevertheless, “under the weight of our weakness we fall back into

56. For a more extensive discussion of the ecstatic experiences of the *Confessions* from which this essay draws, see Gerald P. Boersma, “Monica as Mystagogue: Time and Eternity at Ostia,” in *Wisdom and the Renewal of Catholic Theology: Essays in Honor of Matthew L. Lamb*, ed. Thomas P. Harmon and Roger W. Nutt (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 104–25.

57. *Conf.* 7.10.16 (CCSL 27 104): *Nec ita erat supra mentem meam . . . sed superior, quia ipsa fecit me, et ego inferior, quia factus ab ea.*

58. *Conf.* 7.10.16 (CCSL 27 104): *tu adsumpsisti me ut viderem esse quod viderem, et nondum me esse qui viderem.* In his retrospection of this initial ascent in Book 7, Augustine writes, “And I considered the other things below you, and I saw that neither can they be said absolutely to be or absolutely not to be. They are because they come from you. But they are not because they are not what you are” (*Conf.* 7.11.17 [CCSL 27 104]). A similar (or perhaps the same) experience is described later in *Conf.* 7. Again, the conclusion regarding the vast ontological void between the finite and the infinite is reiterated: “At that point it had no hesitation in declaring that the unchangeable is preferable to the changeable. . . . So in the flash of a trembling glance it attained to that which is (*ad id quod est*)” (*Conf.* 7.17.23 [CCSL 27 107]). Again, Augustine catches sight of being itself. But again he crashes down: “I did not possess the strength to keep my vision fixed. My weakness reasserted itself and I returned to my customary condition” (*Conf.* 7.17.23 [CCSL 27 107]).

59. *Conf.* 7.17.23 (CCSL 27 107). “Groaning” under the ‘weight’ of the body (including a quotation from Wis 9:15) also marks Augustine’s experience in *Conf.* 7: “I was caught up to you by your beauty and quickly torn away from you by my weight. With a groan (*gemitu*) I crashed into inferior things.” (*Conf.* 7.17.23 [CCSL 27 107]).

familiar things, and slide down again into our ordinary way of life.”<sup>60</sup> If “there” (*ibi*) we have reason for joy, “here” (*hic*) we have plenty of things to groan (*gemamus*) about.<sup>61</sup> Only in heaven with the angels who keep eternal festival and remain in “the eternally present face of God” is the vision of God sustained. So the deer continues to eat his tears. The ascent to behold the face of God in this life remains imperfect and very fleeting, concludes Augustine: “[The deer] walked into the admirable tent, and even to the house of God; he was drawn on by the charm of spiritual music, intelligible music until he despised all external things and was rapt by love of what is within. But for all that, he is still a human being, still groaning, still carrying frail flesh.”<sup>62</sup>

As Augustine recounts his own brief ecstatic experiences in the *Confessions*, he recalls the sorrow—the nostalgia—left after his vision disappears. All that remains is his *memory* of the experience: “I carried with me only a loving memory and a desire.”<sup>63</sup> Likewise for the deer, once “the glories he had gone in to see” fade away, all that remains are memories of this sweetness. In a dialogue with himself, the deer asks (in the words of the psalmist), “*O my soul, why are you sorrowful, and why do you disquiet me?*” (v. 5). It is as if he is reproaching himself for his sorrow. After all, does he not remember that “inner sweetness”? Does he not remember how he perceived “something that does not change, even though we could but brush against it for a swift moment?”<sup>64</sup> The deer acknowledges that he did perceive ultimate being. But he is still sorrowful, still disquieted, precisely “because I am not there” (*nisi quia nondum sum ibi*).<sup>65</sup> The soul asks the deer in the inner dialogue, “Can you seriously ask me not to disquiet you, while my place is still in this world, while I am a pilgrim still, and far from God’s house?”<sup>66</sup> But the deer is able to answer the soul that disquiets him: “Hope in God,” says the psalmist. Like the eyes of faith, hope is the necessary provision for the pilgrim longing to see God. Hope is the necessary state “for this in-between time.” (*Interim habita in spe.*)<sup>67</sup>

60. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.10* (CCSL 38 467): *onere tamen quodam infirmitatis nostrae ad consueta recidimus, et ad solita ista dilabimur.*

61. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.10* (CCSL 38 467): *et quomodo ibi inueneramus unde gauderemus, sic hic non deerit quod gemamus.*

62. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.10* (CCSL 38 467–468): *ambulans in locum tabernaculi admirabilis, usque ad domum dei, et ductus interioris et intellegibilis soni iucunditate, ut omnia exteriora contemneret, et in interiora raperetur; adhuc tamen homo est, adhuc hic gemit, adhuc carnem fragilem portat.*

63. *Conf. 7.17.23* (CCSL 27 107).

64. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.10* (CCSL 38 468).

65. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.10* (CCSL 38 468).

66. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.10* (CCSL 38 468): *non uis ut conturbem te posita in saeculo, et peregrina adhuc a domo dei mei?*

67. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.10* (CCSL 38 468).

The emphasis on hope in *Enarrat. Ps.* 41 also has an analogue in the ecstatic experiences of the *Confessions*. The ascent of *Conf.* 7 is marked by a sense of nostalgia and resignation to the unstained and unsustainable vision of eternal being. In contrast, the ascent narrative with Monica of *Conf.* 9.10 is (while equally fleeting) indomitably hopeful. The faith that Augustine now shares with Monica (after Augustine's conversion and sacramental induction into the life of the church in Book 8) infuses a deep and abiding eschatological *hope* to their ascent. After the ecstatic experience in the Ostian garden, Augustine and Monica sigh: "And we sighed (*suspirauimus*) and left behind us 'the first-fruits of the Spirit' (Rom 8:23) bound (*reliatas*) to that higher world."<sup>68</sup> This sighing is the sighing of satisfaction, of rest, of enjoyment. It is the sigh of hope, the sigh of those already participating in the first-fruits of the Spirit whereby they now already sacramentally participate in the fullness to come. The ecstatic experience is hopeful because it is not now over, but proleptically leans into the future. Monica and Augustine remain "bound to that higher world" (*reliquimus ibi reliatas*) in hope, even while they descend back into the distended realm of time "where a sentence has both a beginning and an ending."<sup>69</sup>

Augustine also references Rom 8:23 in describing the hopeful state of the deer. Certainly, the deer continues to be marked by unfulfilled longing and groaning—he is not yet in "God's house," salvation is "not yet fully accomplished." "We do indeed possess the first-fruits of the Spirit, yet we groan within ourselves, waiting the full adoption the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23).<sup>70</sup> There is an accompanying certainty that what one has experienced is a sure pledge that participates in what will be fully revealed. The deer can be confident (in the language of *Conf.* 9.10) of being "bound to that higher world." The deer is (now already!) saved in hope.

Psalm 41[42] remains a psalm of pain and groaning. The face of God, which the deer so ardently longs to see, seems so distant. Former, fleeting experiences when the clouds scattered and the deer came "within ear-shot of that melody" are now a memory. The searing question with which the psalmist reproaches himself and with which his enemies taunt him—"Where is your God?"—is now directed to the Lord himself: "Why have you forgotten me?" (v. 9). While on pilgrimage (*in hac peregrinatione*), the thirsty deer will not find satisfaction, his longing for springs of water will not be sated. The ecstatic experience of former times when he heard the music of God's home clearly perceptible in the tabernacle of the church is now a

68. *Conf.* 9.10.24 (CCSL 27 147): *atingimus eam modice toto ictu cordis; et suspirauimus et reliquimus ibi reliatas primitias spiritus.*

69. *Conf.* 9.10.24 (CCSL 27 147): *remeauimus ad strepitum oris nostri, ubi verbum et incipitur et finitur.*

70. *Enarrat. Ps.* 41.11 (CCSL 38 468).

vaticum in the form of a memory for the most arid part of his journey.<sup>71</sup> However, faith and hope are an assurance that the God who seems distant has not abandoned him: “*I will say to God, You are my protector; why have you forgotten me?*” (v. 9). Although the deer struggles here (*hic laboro*) as if abandoned and forgotten, he is assured that God will be faithful to his promise and is now training him (*tu autem exerces me*) to receive the vision of God. The ascent is not fully successful, but is an *exercitatio mentis*. Precisely because the vision of God is not achieved in this life, the “voice” (*vox*) of the deer remains one of groaning.

Most significantly, the deer is not abandoned, because even his prayer of abandonment (“*Why have you forgotten me?*” [v. 9]) is said in union with the cry of dereliction of the Head. God in Christ reaches out to the fullest extent of human isolation, fear, and abandonment. In his passion, Christ assumed the limits of human weakness and misery—“even to death on a cross.” The theology driving Augustine’s prosopological exegesis is the “marvelous exchange” (*mira commutatio | admirabile commercium*) of humanity’s unitive redemption in Christ. This marvelous exchange also effects an exchange of voices: Christ took our voice, our *prosopon*, in this psalm of suffering, with its voice of longing and groaning. But he also gives humanity his resurrected, powerful, victorious, words.<sup>72</sup> Augustine writes, “Just as our head cries out in our voice, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Ps 21:2[22:1]; Matt 27:46), so too *I will say to God, You are my protector, why have you forsaken me.*”<sup>73</sup> Thus the deer on pilgrimage keeps “longing for the good,” “thirsting,” “laboring,” his soul “disquieting.” Nevertheless, “my soul makes the same confession; it reiterates its hope yet more strongly: You are *the salvation of my countenance my God.*”<sup>74</sup>

71. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.17* (CCSL 38 472): *Recordans dulcedinem uocis illius qua ductus sum per tabernaculum usque ad domum dei.*

72. Cf. *Enarrat. Ps. 30.2.3*: “But in fact he who deigned to assume the form of a slave, and within that form to clothe us with himself (*nos uestire se*), he who did not disdain to take us up to himself (*assumere nos in se*) did not disdain either to transfigure us into himself (*transfigurare nos in se*), and to speak in our words, so that we in turn might speak in his.” Williams also notes that the atonement involves an exchange of voices so that, for Augustine, we are “given the right to speak with [Christ’s] divine voice” (“Augustine and the Psalms,” 20). McCarthy writes, “Augustine’s most distinctive and original contribution to the history of psalm exegesis lies precisely in the conception witnessed here: that the psalm (and indeed the entire Psalter) represents in its language, its verbal prayer, the very heart of the Christian mystery—the exchange of God and humanity in the Word-made-flesh, still abiding in the *totus Christus*” (“An Ecclesiology of Groaning,” 237).

73. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.17.*

74. *Enarrat. Ps. 41.19*: *suspirans ad bona, sitiens et laborans, non uis ut conturbem te? spera in deum, quoniam adhuc confitebor illi. dicit ipsam confessionem: repetit spei confirmationem: salutare uultus mei et deus meus.*



## CONCLUSION

In *Enarrat. Ps. 41* Augustine explores the occluded vision of God this side of the eschaton. The deer longing for springs of water gives voice to the pilgrim's longing to see the face of God. Augustine's anagogical interpretation of the psalm offers a mode of exercise to train the eyes of the heart in order that the soul's "holy longing" might find fulfillment. The ascent and purgation of inner vision follows a schema of Plotinian *katharsis* by which one's vision is recalibrated; the eyes' focus is realigned from the exterior to the interior and from the material to the immaterial. However, at the contemplative height of the ascent, when the soul is, at last, able to "turn within" to see itself, the face of God is not yet revealed. The deer still groans on pilgrimage, hearing the nagging question, "Where is your God?"

At this point the deer enters the "tabernacle" of the sojourning church. Here he comes to experience—provisionally, proleptically, and sacramentally—something of the vision of God. God's "tent" on earth—the church—participates in the *domus Dei*. In the tent, the deer can hear the sweet melody issuing from the house of God. Within the tent the clouds (at times) part and the sounds of the heavenly festival are heard. Much like Augustine's own experiences recounted in the *Confessions*, these sacramental, mystical experiences are short-lived. They are a foretaste of the eschatological vision of God now treasured as memory. But it is precisely these experiences, mediated in the tabernacle of the church, that offer the hope and faith necessary to continue the pilgrimage to the *domus Dei*.