

Augustine's Conception of Sacrifice in *City of God*, Book X, and the Eucharistic Sacrifice

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the tenth book of his monumental work on the *City of God*, Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430) develops a conception of sacrifice that has received considerable attention among theologians, not least in a number of recent scholarly contributions, including an essay by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.¹ This

1 Among the literature, see especially Joseph Lécuyer, “Le sacrifice selon saint Augustin,” in *Augustinus Magister (Congrès International Augustinien, Paris, 21–24 septembre 1954)*, vol. 2 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1954) 905–914; Ghislain Lafont, “Le sacrifice de la Cité de Dieu: Commentaire au *de ciu. Dei*, l. X, ch. I–VII,” in *Recherches de science religieuse* 53 (1965) 177–219; John F. O’Grady, “Priesthood and Sacrifice in ‘City of God,’” in *Augustiniana* 21 (1971) 27–44; Basil Studer, “Das Opfer Christi nach Augustins ‘De Civitate Dei’ X, 5–6,” in *Lex orandi, lex credendi. Miscellanea in onore di P. Cipriano Vagaggini*, ed. Gerard J. Békés and Giustino Farnedi, *Studia Anselmiana*, 79 (Rome: Editrice Anselmiana, 1980) 93–107; Gerald Bonner, “The Doctrine of Sacrifice: Augustine and the Latin Patristic Tradition,” in *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology*, ed. Stephen W. Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 101–117 (reprinted in Gerald Bonner, *Church and Faith in the Patristic Tradition: Augustine, Pelagianism and Early Christian Northumbria* [Aldershot: Variorum, 1996] no. II); Roland J. Teske, “The Definition of Sacrifice in the *De Civitate Dei*,” in *Nova Doctrina Vetusque: Essays in Early Christianity in Honor of Fredric W. Schlatter, S.J.*, ed. Douglas Kries and Catherine Brown Tkacz, *American Universities Studies, Series VII: Theology and Religion*, vol. 207 (New York: Peter Lang, 1999) 153–187; Stéphane Toulouse, “Que le vrai sacrifice est celui d’un cœur pur,” in *Recherches Augustiniennes* 32 (2001) 169–223; Goulven Madec, “Le livre X du *De civitate Dei*: le sacrifice des chrétiens,” in *Lettura del De Civitate Dei Libri I–X. Lectio Augustini XV–XVI–XVII. Settimana Agostiniana Pavese (1999–2001)*, *Studia Ephemeridis*

lively conversation centers on the question of how to interpret Augustine's dense exposition, which, at first sight, would seem to propose an understanding of sacrifice that is entirely interiorized and detached from ritual expression. An initial reading of the text may well recall the third verse of the "Morning Hymn" (*Morgenlied*) by the Lutheran divine Paul Gerhard (1606–1676), written in 1666:

Come ye with singing,
 To God be bringing
 Goods and each blessing—
 All we're possessing—
 All be to God as an offering brought.
 Hearts with love glowing,
 With praises o'erflowing,
 Thanksgiving voices,
 In these God rejoices,
 All other off'rings without them are nought.²

Lovely as it is, this hymn entails a firm rejection of the sacrificial character of the Mass, especially when Gerhard insists, in

Augustinianum, 96 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2003) 235–246; John Joy, "Love and Self-Gift: Sacrifice in St Augustine's City of God," in *Antiphon* 11 (2007) 78–85; Daniel Jones, "The *verum sacrificium* of Christ and of Christians in *De Civitate Dei* 10: Eucharist, Christology, and Christian Identity," in *Celebrating the Eucharist: Sacrifice and Communion. Proceedings of the Fifth Fota International Liturgical Conference, 2012*, ed. Gerard Deighan, Fota Liturgy Series, 5 (Wells: Smeonos Publications, 2014) 135–172; Joseph Ratzinger, "Theology of the Liturgy: A Lecture Delivered during the Journées Liturgiques de Fontgombault, 22–24 July 2001," in *Theology of the Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence* (Joseph Ratzinger Collected Works, 11), ed. Michael J. Miller, trans. John Saward, Kenneth Baker, S.J., Henry Taylor, et. al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014) 541–557.

2 *Paul Gerhardt's Spiritual Songs*, trans. John Kelly (London: Alexander Strahan, 1867) 271. Cf. the German original at http://www.evangeliums.net/lieder/lied_die_gueldne_sonne.html:

Lasset uns singen, dem Schöpfer bringen
 Güter und Gaben; was wir nur haben,
 Alles sei Gotte zum Opfer gesetzt!
 Die besten Güter sind unsre Gemüter;
 Dankbare Lieder sind Weihrauch und Widder,
 an welchen er sich am meisten ergötzt.

literal translation, that “songs of thanksgiving are incense and ram (*Dankbare Lieder sind Weihrauch und Widder*),” and hence the only offering that is holy and pleasing to God.

Gerhard's poetical assertion stands for an interpretation of Augustine that had some currency in the religious upheavals of the sixteenth century. For the Lutheran theologian Martin Chemnitz in his 1566 *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Augustine provided the justification for rejecting the Council's teaching about the sacrificial character of the Mass and for setting against it “the true interior, invisible and spiritual sacrifices of the faithful.”³ Sacrifice is thus disconnected from ritual or symbolic expression and re-conceived as an interior attitude of religious devotion and moral conduct of life.⁴ On the Catholic side, we find among the propositions of the Louvain theologian Michael Baius that were condemned by Pope Pius V in 1567 the following statement: “The sacrifice of the Mass is a sacrifice for no other reason than for that general one by which ‘every work is performed that man may cling to God in holy fellowship’ [*City of God*, X, 5].”⁵

3 Martin Chemnitz, *Examen Concilii Tridentini*, locus VI: De Missa, c. II, art. 1: ed. Eduard Preuss (Berlin: Gustav Schlawitz, 1861) 383.

4 Cf. Johannes Zachhuber, “Modern Discourse on Sacrifice and its Theological Background,” in *Sacrifice and Modern Thought*, ed. Julia Meszaros and Johannes Zachhuber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 12–28.

5 Pius V, Bull *Ex Omnibus Afflictionibus* (1 October 1567), *Errors of Michael Baius on the Nature of Man and Grace*, no. 45: *Enchiridion Symbolorum: Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations of the Catholic Church*, ed. Heinrich Denzinger and Peter Hünermann (43rd ed., San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012) no. 1945. Baius had in fact retracted this thesis even before the papal condemnation. See Marius Lepin, *L'idée du sacrifice de la Messe d'après les théologiens depuis l'origine jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1926) 357–360. Considerable attention to the interpretation of *City of God*, X is given by Robert Bellarmine, *De Sacramento Eucharistiae*, lib. V, cap. 2, in *Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei adversus huius temporis haereticos*, vol. 3 (Venice: J. Malachinus, 1721) 373–377. The interpretation of Augustine was also disputed in Anglicanism, as shown in *An Epistolary Dissertation Addressed to the Clergy of Middlesex, wherein the Doctrine of St. Austin, concerning the Christian Sacrifice, is set in a true Light: By Way of Reply to Dr Waterland's late Charge to them. By a Divine of the University of Cambridge*. The treatise, which is contained in William Cunningham, *S. Austin and His Place in the History of Christian Thought* (London—Cambridge: C. J. Clay and Sons—Cambridge

On the other hand, the vast corpus of Augustine's works is full of sacrificial language with precise and specific references not only to the cross, but also to the Eucharist, both of which he calls "the most true sacrifice" (*uerissimum sacrificium*).⁶ How can these passages be squared with those sections in the *City of God* that would seem to advocate an entirely spiritual concept of sacrifice consisting in any work of mercy done to our fellow human beings for the sake of attaining God, our supreme good? In this article I argue that the hermeneutical key to reading the much-discussed exposition in the *City of God* is the apologetic context of the work. Augustine intends above all to contrast Christian sacrifice with pagan sacrifice and hence to reject the latter. In doing so, he presents a theology of sacrifice that has considerable spiritual depth; far from contradicting the by then traditional understanding of the Eucharist as a sacrifice, Augustine enriches it by exploring it in its Christological and ecclesiological dimensions.

As so often in this prolific and supple thinker, we need to hold various strands in his writings together in order to avoid one-sided interpretations that can easily lead to a fractured vision of the Christian faith, as happened in history with the readings of Augustine on grace, free will and predestination.

2. THE APOLOGETIC CONTEXT OF THE CITY OF GOD

Any analysis of the tenth book of the *City of God* needs to be clear about what Augustine wants to achieve with it. This book

University Press, 1886) 199–276, may have been written by the non-juror George Smith (1693–1756). The question resurfaced in the interpretation of Augustine proposed by Yves de Montcheuil, "L'unité du sacrifice et du sacrement dans l'Eucharistie," in id., *Mélanges théologiques* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1946) 49–70, which prompted the refutation of Guy de Broglie, "La notion augustinienne du sacrifice 'invisible' et 'vrai'," in *Recherches de science religieuse* 48 (1960) 135–165.

6 To list just a few of them: *Confessiones* IX,xii,32 (ed. Martin Skutella, rev. Heiko Jürgens and Wiebke Schaub [Leipzig: Teubner, 1996] 203): "sacrificium pretii nostri" (about Monica's burial); *De Trinitate* IV,xiii,17 (CCL 50:183): "Morte sua quippe uno uerissimo sacrificio pro nobis oblato...;" *De spiritu et littera* 11,18 (CSEL 60:170): "In ipso uerissimo et singulari sacrificio, Domino Deo nostro agere gratias admonemur;" *Sermo 228B* (ed. Germain Morin, in *Sancti Augustini Sermones post Maurinos reperti*, *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, vol. 1 [Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1930] 18–20).

belongs to the first part of a large-scale apology against paganism. As the more recent study of late antiquity has shown, the Christianization of the Empire was a long process that only gradually transformed established customs and practices in society, including religion. The *City of God* is Augustine's response to a particular charge laid on the Christians. The sack of Rome by the troops of Alaric the Goth in AD 410 had a devastating effect on the identity and self-confidence of Roman civilization. Although the occupation of the city lasted only three days and the physical damage remained limited, the event exposed the fragile and vulnerable state of the Empire. This anguish over the fall of the "eternal city" is reflected in Augustine's own preaching at the time.⁷ Some of the aristocratic elite who retained an allegiance to pagan religion, such as the circle of senator Volusianus, saw the disaster of 410 as a consequence of the neglect of the gods, especially by means of the traditional sacrifices that were their due. Ritual sacrifice was an essential element of the contractual relationship between the gods and humankind. Practicing such ritual dutifully and correctly would result in the *pax deorum*, the "peace of the gods" that would ensure divine protection for the welfare and prosperity of Rome.

The religious context of late antiquity provides the background for Augustine's exposition: while the offering of animals and of the land's produce to the gods had been outlawed by the legislation of Christian emperors and was on the wane, it still had a lingering presence in the Mediterranean world. This is fundamentally different from Western societies today, where the success of Christianization over centuries led to the total abandoning of such ritual sacrifice.⁸ Moreover, the memory of the Jewish

7 For instance, *Sermo 81, 105, 296 and 397*; see Jean-Claude Fredouille, "Les sermons sur la chute de Rome," in *Augustin predicateur (395-411): Actes du Colloque International de Chantilly (5-7 septembre 1996)*, ed. Goulven Madec, Collection des Etudes Augustiniennes: Série Antiquité, 159 (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Augustiniennes, 1998) 439-448.

8 The Emperor Julian (reigned 361-363), called the "apostate," because he was brought up in the Christian faith, which he knew well and consciously rejected, wrote in his *Contra Galilaeos*: "Why do you not sacrifice... The Jews agree with the Gentiles, except that they believe in only one god. That is indeed peculiar to them and strange to us; since all the rest we have in a manner in common with them—temples, sanctuaries, altars, purifications, and certain precepts. For as to these we differ

sacrificial system, the abolition of which was contingent upon the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70, was sustained by its presence in the Sacred Scriptures. The thrust of Augustine's argument is apologetic, in continuity with the work of a Justin, Tertullian, or Origen. In the *City of God*, the Bishop of Hippo seeks to unmask pagan sacrifices as a perversion of right worship, because what is owed to God alone is offered to lesser beings. By contrast, he states a limited but real appreciation of the sacrifices of the Old Covenant (against its Manichean detractors).

According to Augustine's own instructions to Firmus on how to have the manuscript of the *City of God* bound, the work can be divided into two parts: the first ten books are primarily dedicated to refuting "the vanity of the impious" and the other twelve to describing and defending the Christian religion, though the two major intentions of the work are present in each part of it. The first part of the *City of God* can be further divided into two sections: books one to five argue "against those who contend that the worship not of gods, but of demons profits the happiness of this life;" books six to ten contend with "those who hold that either such gods or many gods of any kind ought to be worshipped by ceremonies and sacrifices for the sake of the life that is to come after death." Augustine's treatise on sacrifice in book ten thus forms the climax of his apology against classical Roman religion.⁹

Book ten opens with a generally agreed premise: the universal human desire for happiness;¹⁰ how to attain it, however, has been disputed among the philosophers. Augustine singles out the Platonists for their insight that a happy life can only be reached by "clinging with pure and holy love to the one supreme good,

from one another either not at all or in trivial matters." Cited after *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, vol. 3, trans. Wilmer C. Wright, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923) 306.

9 Augustine, *Ep. 1**A,1 (CSEL 88:7-8).

10 "Omnium certa sententia est, qui ratione quoquo modo uti possunt, beatos esse omnes homines uelle;" *De Civitate Dei* X,1,1-2 (CCL 47:271). In this article, the English translation of William Babcock, *The City of God (De Civitate Dei), Books 1-10*, The Works of Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, I/6 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012) is used, with some modifications. Cf. *De Beata Vita* II,10 (CCL 29:70-71) and *De Trinitate* XIII,IV,7 (CCL 50A:387-389).

which is the unchangeable God.”¹¹ Clinging to God in pure and holy love is not simply an interior disposition, but also a matter of right worship, designated by the Greek term *latreia*. Augustine spends some time on the question how to translate *latreia* into Latin and finds no single expression that would convey its full meaning; whether it is rendered *cultus*, *seruitus*, *religio*, or *pietas*, what is intended is the worship due “to that God who is the true God, and who makes his worshippers gods”¹²—a remarkable phrase that resonates with the Greek Christian doctrine of deification.

The pagans, Augustine argues, fell into the error of offering worship—and this means offering sacrifice—to lesser beings and so committed idolatry. Such sacrifices are to be abhorred because what is owed to the one true God is usurped by demons. False worship fails to reach its end, Augustine explains, for

whoever the immortal and blessed beings in their heavenly habitations may be, if they do not love us and do not wish us to be blessed, they are certainly not to be worshipped. If, however, they do love us and want us to be blessed, they clearly want us to attain our blessedness from the same source from which they attain theirs. For how could there be one source of blessedness for them and another for us?¹³

3. TRUE WORSHIP—TRUE SACRIFICE

Latreia is thus owed to God alone, “whether we render it in certain sacred actions (*in quibusque sacramentis*) or in ourselves (*in nobis ipsis*).” Augustine introduces here a distinction between outward and inward worship, external acts and interior dispositions. For visible, external worship he uses the expression *sacramenta*, which should not be translated as “sacraments” in the scholastic

11 “...illi uni optimo, quod est incommutabilis Deus, puritate casti amoris adhaeserit,” *De Civitate Dei* X,1,20–21 (CCL 47:271–272).

12 “...qui uerus est Deus facitque suos cultores deos,” *De Civitate Dei* X,1,95–96 (CCL 47:271).

13 “Quicumque igitur sunt in caelestibus habitationibus immortales et beati, si nos non amant nec beatos esse nos uolunt, colendi utique non sunt. Si autem amant et beatos uolunt, proecto inde uount, unde et ipsi sunt; an aliunde ipsi beati, aliunde nos?” *De Civitate Dei* X,1,96–100 (CCL 47:273–274).

meaning the term acquired in the course of the Middle Ages. In patristic use, *sacramenta* would rather indicate a wider reality of sacred signs that communicate divine grace, and these would include the sacraments in the later theological sense. The reason for the twofold nature of worship lies in the inhabitation of God both in the individual separately and in the community:

...for we are his temple, at the same time all of us together and each one of us, because he deigns to dwell in the concord of all (*omnium concordiam*) and in each individual, being no greater in all than in each, since he is neither expanded nor divided.¹⁴

This passage is crucial for Augustine's argument, because it lays the ground for his essentially ecclesial understanding of Christian sacrifice and hence would seem to preclude the individualistic interpretation that emerged in the Reformation period. This is borne out in the following section, despite its almost pietistic or revivalist tone:

Our heart, when lifted up to him, is his altar; it is with his Only-Begotten One as our priest that we propitiate him; to him we sacrifice bleeding victims when we fight for his truth even unto [shedding our] blood; we honour him with the sweetest incense when, in his sight, we burn with pious and holy love; to him we devote and surrender his gifts in us and ourselves; to him, by solemn feasts and on appointed days, we dedicate and consecrate the memory of his benefits, lest ungrateful forgetfulness creep in through the lapse; to him we offer, on the altar of our heart, the sacrifice of humility and praise, kindled by the fire of love.¹⁵

A closer look at this passage reveals the presence of characteristically liturgical language. The heart (*cor*) rising to God (*ad illum sursum*) would seem to echo the introductory dialogue to the Eucharistic prayer, which in Augustine's North African use had the distinct invitation "*sursum cor*" (rather than "*corda*"). I would even go so far as to suggest that highly rhetorical expressions like "*dona eius... uouemus et reddimus*," "*beneficiorum ... dicamus sacramusque memoriam*," "*sacrificamus hostiam humilitatis et laudis*," exhibiting

14 *De Civitate Dei* X,3,10–14 (CCL 47:275).

15 *De Civitate Dei* X,3,14–23 (CCL 47:275).

typical features of contemporary Latin euchological style,¹⁶ may refer to the Eucharistic prayer used by Augustine, of which we do not know from primary sources but from which we can only gather snippets in his preaching and writing.

It would be anachronistic to read into Augustine a disparity between external liturgical worship, interior religious devotion and moral conduct of life. His concept of *religio* is indebted to the Roman classical tradition and its transformation in the earlier Latin Fathers. The classical understanding of *religio*, as exemplified in Cicero, sees at its center the public and sacrificial worship of the gods, though without ignoring its connection with the moral life.¹⁷ In the eighth book of the *City of God* Augustine speaks of the "true religion, which our faith (*fides nostra*) takes up and defends."¹⁸ *Religio* is thus understood as the form or shape, in which the Christian faith finds its visible expression.

The German liturgical scholar Walter Dürig has shown that in biblical, patristic, and early liturgical texts the use of the terms *pietas* and *pius* for expressing man's relation to God cannot be reduced to an interior attitude or disposition; the outer form, or rite, is not to be neglected. *Pietas* towards God always includes carrying out cultic acts as demanded by divine precepts, and hence can be equated with *religio*, *cultus Dei*, or *cultura Dei*. While man's inner dispositions or convictions are meant to be

16 See U. M. Lang, *The Voice of the Church at Prayer: Reflections on Liturgy and Language* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012) 73–115.

17 See, e.g., Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II,xxviii,71 (trans. Harris Rackham, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956] 193): "But the best and also the purest, holiest and most pious way of worshipping the gods (*cultus deorum*) is ever to venerate them with purity, sincerity and innocence both of thought and of speech." Also *De Domo Sua* xli,107 (trans. Nevile H. Watts, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955] 261): "...and a right fulfillment of duty to the gods (*erga deos pietas*) is impossible without a disinterested conviction as to their designs and purposes, combined with a belief that they grant no petitions which are unjust or unseemly."

18 *De Civitate Dei*, VIII,4,46–47 (CCL 47:220): "...religioni uerae, quam fides nostra suscepit ac defendit." Cf. Ernst Feil, *Religio: Die Geschichte eines neuzeitlichen Grundbegriffs vom Frühchristentum bis zur Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986) 72. Also Bernard Botte, "Pietas," in *L'ordinaire de la messe: Texte critique, traduction et études*, ed. Bernard Botte—Christine Mohrmann, *Études liturgique*, 2 (Paris—Louvain: Cerf—Abbaye du Mont César, 1953) 243.

in harmony with these external act of worship, early Christian *pietas* is liturgical piety, or, to use Dürig's word, "*Kultfrömmigkeit*." Moreover, by being liturgical, *pietas* is never merely the action of the isolated subject; rather, the individual acts as a part of the community, that is, as a member of the Church.¹⁹ Only the later Middle Ages, especially the Gothic period, saw an internalization of man's relationship to God to such an extent that private forms of religious devotion came to be regarded as more important than external acts of worship. This change was not only a characteristic of the Protestant movements but affected early modern Catholicism as well.²⁰

Augustine insists that sacrifice is not limited to its cultic forms (which was a tendency in Roman religion), but embraces every aspect and dimension of life. Through right worship we are cleansed from our sins and evil desires and consecrated to God's name. This in turn enables us to cling to God, who is the "fountain of our happiness" and "the end of all desire."²¹ Such clinging to God is shown very concretely in the observance of

...those two commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind;" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."²²

19 Walter Dürig, *Pietas liturgica: Studien zum Frömmigkeitsbegriff und zur Gottesvorstellung der abendländischen Liturgie* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1958) 220: "Sie ist Kultfrömmigkeit, bei der die innere Gesinnung und der äußere kultische Akt in gleicher Weise wesentlich sind." Cf. *ibid.*, 38, 90, 92, and 94.

20 Cf. Christopher Dawson, *The Dividing of Christendom* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009; originally published in 1965) 33: "...the Post-Reformation period is characterized by the interiorization of religion and the intensive cultivation of the spiritual life." Dawson singles out the flowering of mysticism in Spain and Italy, and the ascetic spirituality as represented in the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*, with their roots in the *devotio moderna*. On the other hand, regarding the late Middle Ages, historians have noticed the sheer materiality of popular religiosity, with its focus on relics, the miraculous and pilgrimages. See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011).

21 "Ipse enim fons nostrae beatitudinis, ipse omnis appetitonis est finis;" *De Civitate Dei* X,3,26–27 (CCL 47:275).

22 *De Civitate Dei* X,3,37–41 (CCL 47:275), quoting Mt 22:37ff.

Love of self comes natural to us (for good or ill), and if it is an informed or intelligent love, then it is governed by that supreme good, which is none other than God. Love of neighbor is enjoined upon us as a commandment, and for Augustine, it consists in doing what we can to commend to our neighbor the love of God. When Augustine adds that “this is the worship of God (*Dei cultus*), this is true religion (*uera religio*), this is right piety (*recta pietas*), this is the service due to God only (*tantum Deo debita seruitus*),”²³ he does not mean to exclude the external cult. This is clear from his train of thought, which right at this point resumes the apologetic against pagan sacrifices. The perversion of the pagans lies not in their observance of external rituals per se but in the fact that their rituals are ordered to lesser creatures rather than the true God. In typical fashion, Augustine pinpoints his argument at the end of the chapter with a biblical quotation: “Whoever sacrifices to any god, save to the Lord only, shall be utterly destroyed” (Ex 22:20).²⁴ In the following chapter, he adds:

And how ancient a part of God’s worship sacrifice is, those two brothers, Cain and Abel, sufficiently show, of whom God rejected the elder’s sacrifice, and looked favourably on the younger’s.²⁵

To sum up, far from rejecting sacrifice as such, Augustine is concerned with true sacrifice, which is, first, owed to the one true God alone and, secondly, not limited to the cultic sphere, but extends to the whole of Christian living.²⁶

4. RESUMING THE PROPHETIC CRITIQUE OF SACRIFICE

As a next step, Augustine’s reinforces his case against pagan worship by applying the Old Testament prophets’ critique of sacrifice to the notion underlying classical Roman religion that the gods are somehow in need of sacrificial offerings to sustain them.

23 *De Civitate Dei*, X,3,47–48 (CCL 47:276).

24 *De Civitate Dei*, X,3,54–55 (CCL 47:276); also *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 135,3 (CCL 40:1959).

25 *De Civitate Dei* X,4,9–13 (CCL 47:276).

26 This section is indebted to the profound discussion of Johannes Nebel, “Von der *actio* zur *celebratio*: Ein neues Paradigma nach dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil,” in *Operation am lebenden Objekt: Roms Liturgiereformen von Trient bis zum Vaticanum II*, ed. Stefan Heid (Berlin: be.bra wissenschaft, 2014) 53–90, esp. 65–67.

Evidently, the one true God is not in need of any material good offered to him. The argument is taken further when Augustine asserts that God has no need even of man's righteousness; the right worship we offer God benefits not him, but us. The images used to illustrate this point are striking: one does not benefit a fountain by drinking from it, nor benefit light by the act of seeing.

The total absence of need in the true God provides Augustine with a hermeneutic to interpret the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament, which were of course no longer continued in his day, but had an enduring presence in the Scriptures: "...their role was to signify what is now done among us, for the purpose of clinging to God and helping our neighbor to the same end."²⁷ In other words, the blood sacrifices of the Old Covenant were genuine expressions of those interior dispositions, which, when translated into the practice of love of God and love of neighbor, enable us to attain union with God. The meaning and purpose of sacrifice does not lie in the actual slaughtering of the animal or the destruction of the victim, but in the right intention of those who offered it. Hence comes Augustine's widely received definition: "Sacrifice, therefore, is the visible sacrament of an invisible sacrifice; that is, it is a sacred sign."²⁸

Augustine finds a warrant for his reading of the sacrifices under the Law in the Old Testament itself, that is, in the prophetic critique of sacrifice, above all Psalm 50(51), from which he quotes extensively: the sacrifice acceptable to God is a contrite and humble heart. Early Christianity (and rabbinical Judaism, though from a different perspective)²⁹ had an ambiguous relationship towards the sacrificial worship practised until the de-

27 "Nec... aliud intellegendum est, nisi rebus illis eas res fuisse significatas, quae aguntur in nobis, ad hoc ut inhaeamus Deo et ad eundem finem proximo consulamus." *De Civitate* X,5,10–14 (CCL 47:276–277). Augustine's positive understanding of sacrifice under the Law is also attested in a short treatise of c. 420 against detractors of the Old Testament, who may have followed the Marcionite tradition. See Roland J. Teske, "Sacrifice in Augustine's *Contra Aduersarium Legis et Prophetarum*," in *Studia Patristica* 33 (1997) 254–259.

28 "Sacrificium ergo uisibile inuisibilis sacrificii Sacramentum, id est sacrum signum est." *De Civitate Dei* X,5,15–16 (CCL 47:277).

29 See Guy G. Stroumsa, *The End of Sacrifice: Religious Transformations in Late Antiquity*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

struction of the Temple, and this ambiguity is brought into sharp relief by Augustine's discussion. He notes that the psalmist, "in the very place where he said that God does not desire sacrifice, he showed that God does desire sacrifice."³⁰ The sacrifice God wants is not the slaughtering of an animal, but humility and contrition for sins. And yet, the sacrifice that, according to the psalm, God does not want *signifies* the sacrifice that he wants. The sacrifices of the Old Law can hence not simply be dismissed as idolatrous, as the Manichees would have it, because they were commanded by God and fulfilled a purpose in his economy of salvation. Their real significance lay not in the external act but in the interior disposition with which this act was performed. Augustine continues:

And the reason why those sacrifices had to be changed, at the opportune and pre-established moment, was precisely to keep people from believing that such sacrifices in themselves, rather than the things they signified, were desirable to God or at least acceptable in us.³¹

A series of biblical quotations follows, which includes Micah 6:6-8 and culminates in Christ's saying, "I desire mercy rather than sacrifice" (Mt 9:13; 12:7), understood "simply to mean that one kind of sacrifice is preferred to another. For the kind of sacrifice that everyone calls sacrifice is a sign of the true sacrifice."³² The sacrifices of the Tent of Meeting or the Temple can therefore be read as signs of the true sacrifice, which is love of God and love of neighbor.

5. THE SACRIFICE OF CHRISTIANS

Augustine proceeds to give a definition of "true sacrifice," which is

...every work done in order that we might cling to God in holy fellowship, that is, every work which is referred to the final good in which we can be truly blessed.³³

30 *De Civitate Dei* X,5,19-22 (CCL 47:277).

31 *De Civitate Dei* X,5,30-33 (CCL 47:277). See also *Contra Faustum* 6,5 and 18,6 (CSEL 25:290-292 and 494-495), where Augustine defends the sacrifices of the Old Covenant as prefiguring the one sacrifice of Christ, which is now commemorated in the Eucharist.

32 *De Civitate Dei* X,5,55-57 (CCL 47:278).

33 *De Civitate Dei* X,6,1-3 (CCL 47:278).

The first thing to note here is the theocentric conception of sacrifice: not every act of mercy towards a fellow human being is a sacrifice but only such that is done for God's sake. A sacrifice, Augustine explains, though being prepared or offered by a human agent, is a "divine matter (*res diuina*).³⁴ This is implied in the Latin expression *res diuinam facere*, "to make a thing sacred," which is often simply shortened to *facere* in the sense of "to sacrifice" and puts an emphasis on consecration, which is an act of handing over to God. The consecrated reality is no longer under human control but in the ownership of God.³⁴ This can refer not only to objects, but also to persons; hence a consecrated person who dies to the world in order to live for God alone, can be himself or herself a sacrifice.³⁵

Not every good work or work of mercy or act of renunciation is a sacrifice; rather, it is its purpose of finality that makes it a sacrifice. That finality is to cling to God, our supreme good and fountain of happiness, "*in sancta societate*." This last phrase is often rendered as "in holy fellowship," but this would seem too broad to convey the ecclesial implications of *societas* in the context of the *City of God*. The "holy society" can be identified with that commonwealth, whose citizens are totally formed by love of God.

Augustine goes on to quote extensively from Romans 12, where the Apostle urges his readers "by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service" (v. 1). Augustine reads "body" here not only in the literal sense that would suggest an exhortation to the ascetic life, but also in an ecclesiological sense. The sacrifice holy and pleasing to God is that of the whole body of Christ, which is the communion of saints, and it is offered through Christ the head, Christ the high priest:

...the whole redeemed city (*ciuitas*), that is, the congregation and society of the saints (*congregatio societisque sanctorum*), is of-

34 Cf. "Sacrifice, Roman," in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (3rd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 1345–1346, at 1345. While sacrifice thus clearly implies setting a thing apart and making it "sacred," the expression *sacrum facere*, from which *sacrificare* and *sacrificium* are derived, is better translated generically as "to perform a religious ceremony."

35 Teske, "The Definition of Sacrifice in the *De Civitate Dei*," 158, observes that for Augustine "consecrated by God's name" can connote baptism, in *Ep. 23,4* (CSEL 34/1:67) and *Sermo 352* (PL 39,1551).

ferred to God as a universal sacrifice through the great priest, who, in his passion, offered himself for us in the form of a servant, to the end that we might be the body of such a great head. For it was this servant form that he offered, and it was in this form that he was offered, because it is according to this form that he is the mediator, in this form that he is the priest, and in this form that he is the sacrifice.³⁶

One thing would seem very clear now: for Augustine the sacrifice to which Christians are called can never be reduced to the individual believer's interior religious devotion and personal moral conduct. Rather, as the Bishop of Hippo comments with reference to Romans 12: "This is the sacrifice of Christians: we, being many, are one body in Christ."³⁷ And this offering is made possible only in and through of the supreme act of mercy, which is the sacrifice that Christ, the mediator and high priest, offered "in the form of a servant" (Phil 2), that is, in his humanity, on the cross. Finally, Augustine makes the link with the sacrifice of the Mass, when he concludes:

This is also the sacrifice that the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar (which is well known to the faithful), where it is made plain to her that, in the offering she makes, she herself is offered.³⁸

This Eucharistic turn concludes what the noted Augustinian scholar Gerald Bonner has acclaimed as "an astonishing piece of theological exposition." His appraisal renders justice to the subtlety of this discussion and is worth being quoted in full:

36 *De Civitate Dei*, X,6,33–39 (CCL 47:279).

37 *De Civitate Dei*, X,6,52–53 (CCL 47:279). Here Augustine would seem to be indebted to Cyprian of Carthage, *De Dominica Oratione*, 23–24 (CSEL 3,284–285). Cyprian comments on the petition of the Lord's Prayer, "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" and emphasizes the need for peace and reconciliation in the unity of God's people: "Sic nec sacrificium Deus recipit dissidentis et ab altari revertentem prius fratri reconciliari iubet [cf. Mt 5:23], ut pacificis precibus et Deus possit esse placatus. Sacrificum Deo maius est pax nostra et fraterna concordia et de unitate Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti plebs adunata."

38 *De Civitate Dei* X,6,53–55 (CCL 47:279).

The complexity of construction of the argument of this passage is remarkable, even by Augustine's standards. Starting from his premise that a sacrament is every act which is designed to unite us to God in holy fellowship, he argues that acts of compassion are sacrifices, and immediately applies this conception to the Eucharist, in which Christ, the priest, offers his Body, which is at one and the same time the human body which suffered on Calvary; the bread and wine on the altar, which are offered by the Faithful; and the Faithful themselves.³⁹

Bonner argues that Augustine's theological conception of the Eucharistic sacrifice is traditional and rooted in the Latin Fathers, above all Cyprian's widely received *Letter 63*. There are in fact plenty of passages in Augustine's work where he affirms the sacrificial and propitiatory character of the Eucharist, and he does so at a later stage in book ten of the *City of God*. This passage comes after a long hiatus, when Augustine returns to the main apologetic thrust of the book, which is his argument against false worship that is exemplified in sacrifices offered to lesser beings and not to the one true God.

After this lengthy treatment Augustine resumes his earlier definition of sacrifice and introduces an analogy between acts of sacrifice and words of prayer and praise:

...these visible sacrifices are signs of invisible sacrifices in the same way that spoken words are signs of things. Therefore, just as in the case of prayer and praise we direct to God words that signify and offer to him the things in our hearts that are signified by our words, so also we should understand that, in the case of sacrifice, visible sacrifice is to be offered only to God and that, in our hearts, we should present our very selves as an invisible sacrifice to him.⁴⁰

The passage is reminiscent of the theory of signs, which Augustine develops in *De doctrina christiana*.⁴¹ Just as the spoken words of

39 Ibid., 109–110. Lafont, “Le sacrifice de la Cité de Dieu,” speaks of the “sacrifice triforme,” a notion that is explored at length by Jones, “The *verum sacrificium* of Christ and of Christians in *De Civitate Dei* 10.”

40 *De Civitate Dei* X, 19, 4–10 (CCL 47:293).

41 See Robert A. Markus, “St. Augustine on Signs,” and B. Darrell Jackson, “The Theory of Signs in St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*,” in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert A. Markus (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1972) 61–91 and 92–147.

prayer and praise reveal the invisible thoughts and sentiments of our hearts, so the external actions of sacrifice are meant to express the interior act of offering ourselves to God. This theory provides a hermeneutic for understanding the daily sacrifice⁴² offered by the Church as a sacrament of Christ's supreme and true sacrifice. What follows is hailed by Bonner as "the finest short statement of Augustine's thought in the whole of his writings:"⁴³

In the form of God, then, the true mediator — since, by taking the form of a servant, he became the mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ — receives sacrifice together with the Father, with whom he is one God. In the form of a servant, however, he chose to be a sacrifice rather than to receive sacrifice, and he did so in order to keep anyone from thinking that sacrifice should be offered even in this case to any creature at all. At the same time, he is also the priest, himself making the offering as well as himself being the offering. And he wanted the sacrifices offered by the Church to be a daily sacrament of his sacrifice, in which the Church, since she is the body of which he is the head, learns to offer her very self through him. The sacrifices of the saints of old were the manifold and varied signs of this true sacrifice, for this one sacrifice was prefigured by many, just as one thing may be expressed by a variety of words, in order to recommend it highly but not monotonously. To this supreme and true sacrifice all false sacrifices have now given way.⁴⁴

6. CHRIST THE HIGH PRIEST AND SACRIFICE

The apologetic perspective of the *City of God* may obscure the Christocentrism in Augustine's theology of sacrifice:⁴⁵ the acts of

42 While this passage would imply a daily offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice, Augustine is aware that this was not generally observed; see *Ep. 54,2* (CCL 31:227). It is not entirely clear from his writings whether there was a daily celebration of Mass in Hippo.

43 Bonner, "The Doctrine of Sacrifice," 107.

44 *De Civitate Dei* X,20 (CCL 47:294); cf. X,31,33–38 (CCL 47:309): "They [the angels] do not command us to offer sacrifice except to him alone, whose sacrifice—as I have often said, and as must be said again and again—we ought to be, with them, in our very selves. This sacrifice is to be offered through the priest who, in the humanity he assumed and in accord with which he also willed to be a priest, lowered himself to become a sacrifice for us, even to the point of death."

45 Cf. Bonner, "The Doctrine of Sacrifice," 101, and Teske, "The Definition of Sacrifice in the *De Civitate Dei*," 158, who objects to the

mercy, through which we cling to God, our supreme good, in a holy society, are made possible only through Christ, the true mediator, who offered himself on the cross in his humanity (in the form of a servant) and also received this sacrifice as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity (in the form of God). Hence the self-offering of Christ, accomplished once for all on Calvary, is an eternal reality and is made present in the Holy Eucharist, as Augustine elucidates in one of his sermons:

So Christ our Lord, who offered by suffering for us what by being born he had received from us, has become our high priest for ever, and has given us the order of sacrifice which you can see (*sacrificandi dedit ordinem quem uidetis*), of his body that is to say, and his blood... Recognize in the bread what hung on the cross, and in the cup what flowed from his side.⁴⁶

The doctrine of Christ the one and true eternal High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, following the Letter to the Hebrews, was a particularly strong element in North African Christianity, as is evident from Tertullian and Cyprian of Carthage, but it is also found in Ambrose of Milan.⁴⁷ The diffusion of this teaching is attested in the Roman Canon of the Mass, as cited by Ambrose at the end of the fourth century,⁴⁸ and not least in the artistic representations of Melchizedek's offering of bread and wine as a type of the Eucharistic sacrifice in the central nave of the Roman Basilica of Saint Mary Major, dating from the pontificate of Sixtus III (432-440), and in the sixth-century churches of Ravenna.⁴⁹

reading of O'Grady, "Priesthood and Sacrifice in 'City of God'," that it precisely misses this Christocentric matrix of Augustine's thought, which in the *City of God* also has anti-Pelagian connotations. A lucid presentation of this topic is given by Jones, "The *verum sacrificium* of Christ and of Christians in *De Civitate Dei* 10."

46 Augustine, *Sermo 228B* (ed. Morin, 18-19), trans. Edmund Hill, *Sermons III/6 (184-229) On the Liturgical Seasons*, The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1993) 261-262. The centrality of Hebrews in Augustine's understanding of sacrifice is shown by Lécuyer, "Le sacrifice selon saint Augustin."

47 See the lucid presentation of Bonner, "The Doctrine of Sacrifice," 105-108.

48 See Lang, *The Voice of the Church at Prayer*, 60-66.

49 H. Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom* (2nd ed., Regensburg: Schnell und Steiner, 2005) 184.

Augustine's emphasis on Christ the High Priest also highlights that the true sacrifice is not simply constituted by the fact of Jesus being put to death (or, to use classical sacrificial language, by the immolation of the victim), but in his voluntary act of offering himself to the Father for the salvation of the world. Thomas Aquinas is acutely aware of this, when in the *Summa Theologiae* he discusses the question whether the Passion of Christ operated by way of sacrifice. In the third objection to this proposition it is claimed that "whoever offers sacrifice performs some sacred rite, as the very word 'sacrifice' shows. But those men who slew Christ did not perform any sacred act, but rather wrought a great wrong. Therefore Christ's Passion was rather a malefice than a sacrifice."⁵⁰ Aquinas's response departs from *Ephesians* 5:2 ("He gave himself up for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness") and quotes Augustine's definition of true sacrifice as "every work done in order that we might cling to God in a holy society, that is, every work which is referred to the final good in which we can be truly blessed." The sacrifice is offered in Christ's "voluntary enduring of the Passion," and this was "most acceptable to God, as coming from charity."⁵¹ Likewise, Robert Bellarmine argues that the Passion of Christ is a sacrifice properly and strictly speaking, because Christ has the freedom and the power to offer his life. One of the scriptural passages Bellarmine cites to support this point is John 10:17–18, "I lay down my life... No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord." This sovereign freedom distinguishes the death of Christ from that of the martyrs, who are entirely passive in their suffering; hence martyrdom can be called a "sacrifice" only in a loose sense according to Bellarmine.⁵²

Early modern Catholic theology on the sacrificial character of the Eucharist in response to the Protestant challenge largely focussed on the *victima* and its immolation in the sacrificial act. From an Augustinian-Thomist perspective the essence of sacrifice

50 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III q48 a3 obj3; the English version is taken, with modifications, from the Online Edition of the translation by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, available on www.newadvent.org/summa/.

51 *ST* III q48 a3 co. See also the discussion of Zachhuber, "Modern Discourse on Sacrifice," 18–24, which includes a discussion of the early Protestant theory of Christ's "priestly office" (*munus sacerdotale*).

52 Bellarmine, *De Sacramento Eucharistiae*, lib. V, cap. 3 (p. 377).

lies not so much in the destruction of the victim as it does in the interior act of offering. Hence comes the definition, which has been so widely received in the Christian tradition and at the same time has spurred much controversy, that sacrifice properly understood is the visible sacrament of an invisible sacrifice.

By insisting that the interior act of offering is the true sacrifice, Augustine does not reject the sacrificial character of the visible sign by which this true sacrifice is signified. The faithful are joined to the sacrifice of Christ the High Priest precisely in the ritual offering of his sacrifice in the Eucharist. While Augustine provides a brilliant theological rationale for the interiority of sacrifice, which is a characteristic of early Christianity as such, he would not be content with the claim, often found in modern discussions of the subject, that the visible sacrifice (the sacred sign) is called a sacrifice only in a metaphorical sense.⁵³

At this point, however, the question may be asked what makes the Eucharist a *visible* sacrifice, which according to the Council of Trent is demanded by human nature?⁵⁴ The most convincing answer is I believe found in the Thomist tradition, which holds that the essence of the Eucharistic sacrifice consists in the double consecration of bread and wine and hence in the mystical separation of Christ's body from his blood, which signifies his death on the cross. According to Aquinas, the sacrifice is offered to God in the consecration of the Eucharist.⁵⁵ I should like to argue that

53 Cf. Teske, "The Definition of Sacrifice in the *De Civitate Dei*," 155–156: "When Augustine says that the true sacrifice is what is signified by the visible sacrifice, he is, then, not denying that the visible sacrifice is a sacrifice in the proper sense, but stressing that it is the interior act which in the pregnant sense realizes the proper meaning in a full or richer way and that in the typological sense the term 'sacrifice' which properly applies to the visible sign is transferred to the realities symbolized. Though Augustine does not, as De Broglie has shown, deny that the visible sacrifice—'what everyone calls sacrifice'—is properly a sacrifice, he clearly does place the emphasis upon the interior act of the one who offers sacrifice rather than upon the external and visible sign."

54 Council of Trent, Session XXII (17 September 1562), *Doctrine and Canons on the Sacrifice of the Mass*, ch. 1: Denzinger-Hünemann, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, no. 1740.

55 Thomas Aquinas, *ST III* q82 a10 co. and ad1; see also III q74 a1 co. and q76 a2 ad1. Cf. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Reality—A*

this is a legitimate development from Augustine's own position. In a remarkable sermon on Easter Sunday, dated between 412 and 417, the Bishop of Hippo explains to neophytes the sacrament of the Eucharist:

That bread which you can see on the altar, sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. That chalice, or rather what the chalice contains, sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ. It was by means of these things that the Lord Christ wished to present us with his body and blood, which he shed for our sake for the forgiveness of sins. If you receive them well, you are yourselves what you receive. You see, the apostle says, *We, being many, are one bread, one body* (1 Cor 10:17). That is who he explained the sacrament of the Lord's table: one bread, one body, is what we all are, many though we be.⁵⁶

Later in the same sermon Augustine, having commented on the introductory dialogue of that part of the Eucharistic prayer we commonly call "Preface," he returns to the "sanctification of the sacrifice of God" (*sanctificatio sacrificii Dei*), which refers to the consecration of bread and wine by means of the word of God, that is, the words of Eucharistic Institution. Characteristically, Augustine unites the sacrifice of Christ the Head with that of Christ the Mystical Body, when he elaborates:

Then, after the sanctification of the sacrifice of God, because he wanted us to be ourselves his sacrifice, which is indicated by where that sacrifice was first put [*sc.* on the altar], that is the sign of the thing that we are...⁵⁷

This passage is fraught with some difficulties and possibly corruptions in the received text, but it is clear enough in affirming Augustine's sacrificial understanding of the Eucharistic consecration. It is again characteristic of his thinking that he does not dwell on the presence of Christ in the Eucharistic species, but is rather interested in the grace signified and effected

Synthesis of Thomistic Thought, trans. Patrick Cummings (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1950) 254.

⁵⁶ Augustine, *Sermo 227* (SC 116:234–236); trans. Hill, *Sermons III/6*, 254 (slightly modified).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* (SC 116:240); trans. Hill, *Sermons III/6*, 255 (slightly modified).

in the sacrament. In medieval terms, his exposition focuses not on the *res et sacramentum*, the reality signified by the sacramental sign, but on the *res tantum*, the grace ultimately conferred by the sacrament.

7. CONCLUSION

Any interpretation of the *City of God* needs to be guided, first, by an awareness of the religious-historical background and, secondly, by the apologetic character of the work. In the first place, blood sacrifice constituted the essence of religious worship in the ancient world, both Jewish and pagan. One of the most momentous religious transformations of late antiquity was the interiorization and spiritualisation of sacrifice, which was achieved in early Christianity through Christ's once-for-all sacrifice of the cross, and in rabbinical Judaism as a consequence of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70. Still, it was taken for granted that some kind of sacrifice had to be offered to God and that this sacrifice had to be carried out in an external, ritual form of worship.

In the second place, the *City of God* is a monumental apologetic treatise "against the pagans," and this context conditions Augustine's exposition in a significant way. As Roland Teske notes, the emphasis on the "interior and spiritual character of true sacrifice" is "part of his strategy to convert contemporary Platonists to Christianity and specifically to the worship of the Christian God in the Church." The aim is not to present a complete doctrine of Christian sacrifice, but rather presentation in such terms that "a Platonist exploring the possibility of becoming a Christian would not necessarily find anything off-putting or incompatible with Platonic spirit and listen at its best."⁵⁸ This is borne out, for instance, by the remarkable similarity, with obvious differences, between Augustine's account of the spiritual nature of sacrifice and that of Porphyry's *Letter to His Wife Marcella*.⁵⁹

The apologetic framework is not a limitation, however, at least not when the contender in debate is the Platonic philosophical tradition, and it has generated what Gerald Bonner has praised as "one of the most profound discussions of the nature

58 Teske, "The Definition of Sacrifice in the *De Civitate Dei*," 158.

59 See Stroumsa, *The End of Sacrifice*, 59–60.

of sacrifice in Christian literature”⁶⁰—a discussion that even after centuries of reflection continues to generate interest among contemporary theologians and liturgists.

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60 Bonner, “The Doctrine of Sacrifice,” 105.