

Article

# Articuli Temporis: St. Augustine and Phenomenology on the Temporal Syntax of God's Self-Disclosure

Scott Roniger

Philosophy Department, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA 90045, USA; scott.roniger@lmu.edu

**Abstract:** In this essay, I articulate an Augustinian “philosophy of history” by highlighting some important texts sprinkled throughout St. Augustine’s writings, especially his *City of God*. I concentrate on Augustine’s claim that there are “joints of time” that structure God’s self-disclosure to us through sacred history, and I develop these Augustinian insights with the help of Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology. While Augustine enables us to see that God’s revelation is achieved in a sacred history that illuminates the deepest structure and order of the temporal flow of human events, Husserl’s phenomenology can be used to show that the structure and order of sacred history is fitting for our natural human mode of encountering being through successive stages of presence and absence. Husserl’s descriptions of the ways in which the identical thing is given to us in grades of fulfillment sheds light on the mystery of God’s revelation by highlighting the temporal dimension of our grasping of the being of things. Throughout the essay, I make use of Robert Sokolowski’s writings in the areas of Husserlian phenomenology and the theology of disclosure.

**Keywords:** St. Augustine; *The City of God*; sacred history; salvation history; revelation; time; philosophy of history; phenomenology; presence and absence; graded and additive fulfillments; Edmund Husserl; Robert Sokolowski; theology of disclosure

“Ista revelatio, ipsa est attractio . . . Videte quomodo trahit Pater: docendo delectat, non necessitatem imponendo. Ecce quomodo trahit. *Erunt omnes docibiles Dei: trahere Dei est. Omnis qui audit a Patre et didicit, venit ad me: trahere Dei est.*”<sup>1</sup>

St. Augustine, Homily on the Gospel of John

In his opening address for the Second Vatican Council on 11 October 1962, Pope Saint John XXIII said that “history is the teacher of life”. History, according to Pope John, is not merely a random heap of chance events, as it is for many, nor is it an ever-accelerating progress toward social and political enlightenment and utopia, as it was for Marx and J.S. Mill, nor is it an eternal recurrence, an endless repetition of the same cycles one after the other, as it was for Aristotle and Nietzsche. Rather, John XXIII stressed that “in fact it is Christ Jesus who always occupies the central position of history and of life” (Pope John XXIII 1962, 2.5; 4.2). The temporal events captured in history have their own structure and order, “starting” with the creation of the cosmos and the sins of our first parents, culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and ending with the second coming of Christ.

John XXIII’s bipartite claim—that history is the great teacher of life and that it is Christ who is the focal point of the order of history—reflects his long engagement with the thought of St. Augustine. Beginning in October of 1942 on the Feast of Christ the King, then-Archbishop Angelo Roncalli made his annual retreat in Istanbul. The retreat master for the Apostolic delegate to Turkey and Greece preached on the theme of Isidore of Seville’s depiction of the image of the perfect bishop, which inspired Roncalli to write in his diary, “The Bishop must be distinguished by his own understanding, and his adequate explanation to others, of the *philosophy of history*, even the history that is now, before our eyes, adding pages of blood to pages of political and social disorders. I want to re-read St.



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Augustine's *City of God*, and draw from his doctrine the necessary material to form my own judgment" (Pope John XXIII 1999, pp. 260–61. Emphasis added).

Roncalli's study of Augustine's *City of God* would bear fruit for his project of adding more peaceful passages to the "pages of political and social disorders". In his April 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, he argued that the foundation for a proper conception of human rights is to be found in Augustine's understanding of peace as the tranquility of order.<sup>2</sup> Augustine articulates this definition of peace and its hierarchical instantiations in Book 19 of the *City of God*, where he says:

The peace of the body then consists in the duly proportioned arrangement of its parts. The peace of the irrational soul is the harmonious repose of the appetites, and that of the rational soul the harmony of knowledge and action. The peace of body and soul is the well-ordered and harmonious life and health of the living creature. Peace between man and God is the well-ordered obedience of faith to eternal law. Peace between man and man is well-ordered concord. Domestic peace is the well-ordered concord between those of the family who rule and those who obey. Civil peace is a similar concord among the citizens. The peace of the celestial city is the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God, and of one another in God. The peace of all things is the tranquility of order. Order is the distribution which allots things equal and unequal, each to its own place. (Augustine 1998, *City of God*, Bk. XIX, c. 13, p. 938)

John XXIII would build upon this text to show that human rights cannot be properly understood or achieved except insofar as they participate in the peace that is nothing other than the right ordering of things both to God and within themselves.

In this essay, I wish to take the Augustinian theme of order and apply it, not to a proper sense of peace as fundamental for ethical and social principles as John XXIII did in his 1963 encyclical, but to a proper "philosophy of history" at which he hinted in his 1942 diary entry and which he sketched in his 1962 speech opening the Second Vatican Council. To this end, I will highlight some important texts sprinkled throughout Augustine's writings, especially his *City of God*, and I will develop these Augustinian insights with the help of another, more contemporary phenomenologist: Edmund Husserl.<sup>3</sup> To adapt an Augustinian turn of phrase, I am attempting to take the gold not out of Egypt, but out of Germany and to incorporate it into the service of God in spirit and truth. Our integration of Augustine and Husserl will enable us to show that God's revelation is reflected in a sacred history that illuminates the deepest structure and order of the temporal flow of human events. Further, this structure and order of sacred history is fitting for our natural human mode of encountering being through successive stages of presence and absence in which the identical thing is given to us in grades of fulfillment, a temporal mode of grasping the being of things so well described by Husserl.

### 1. The Theology of Disclosure and the History of Salvation

Before moving to an analysis of Augustine's texts on the structure of history and our Husserlian development of them, two specifications are in order: one concerning our method and another delineating the object encountered through it. Our use of Augustine and Husserlian phenomenology to elucidate the intelligibility of history as illuminated by God's revelation of himself means that we are engaged in what Robert Sokolowski calls the "theology of disclosure". Sokolowski says that the "Christian things" contemplated and studied in theology are those realities "that have been presented to us in biblical and Christian revelation", such as God known as triune, the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, the sacraments, the Church, Christian prayer, and the "history of salvation".<sup>4</sup> According to Sokolowski, the theology of disclosure has the task of describing "how the Christian things taught by the Church . . . come to light. It is to examine how they appear" (Sokolowski 1994, p. 7). In our execution of the theology of disclosure, we are examining the historical dimension of the appearing of Christian things.

Sokolowski situates the theology of disclosure between two other forms of theological reflection: (1) speculative theology, or theology of being, exemplified by St. Thomas Aquinas and other scholastics and (2) positive theology, which focuses primarily on biblical texts and the historical context within which revelation took place and “attempts to show how the articles of faith are found in scripture and tradition”. While speculative theology often makes use of Aristotle’s philosophy, and positive theology utilizes historical, cultural, and linguistic studies, the theology of disclosure allows insights from Husserlian phenomenology to shed light on how the truths of Christian faith present themselves.<sup>5</sup> Sokolowski proposes that the theology of disclosure complements both speculative and positive theology by highlighting aspects of Christian experience and belief that are discussed but not made thematic in the other two forms of theology. He says, “The theology of disclosure differs from speculative theology because it examines the manifestation of Christian things and not, primarily, their nature, definition, and causes; and it differs from positive theology because it is concerned with essential structures of disclosure, which would hold in all times and places, not with matters of historical fact” (Sokolowski 1994, pp. 7–10). As we will show, the deepest structure of history as revealed by God allows the natures and definitions of Christian things to come to light, and this divine ordering of history is fitting for the essential structures of disclosure of human and divine things, essential structures that are not reducible to matters of historical fact but that are suited to and manifested in history itself as it is ordered to the gift of our union with God in Christ.

The theology of disclosure therefore attempts to manifest, in theological reflection, the manifestation itself of “Christian things”. It attempts to describe the essential structures of appearance involved in the ways that Christian things come to light for the believer, so it is especially well-suited to shedding light on our topic: history as the theater of the self-disclosure of God himself. It is important to note that history so understood refers only to the unfolding of human salvation, as distinct from angelic, and that it excludes all history that is not salvific, or rather it engulfs the details of human history’s patterns of birth, growth, decay, and death within a wider whole. As Augustine shows at the outset of the *City of God*, the history of Rome is not salvific, but it is “encompassed by the history of salvation that stretches from Adam to Christ” (Mansini 2018, p. 25). Thus, we are interested in reflecting upon the structure of what Augustine calls “sacra historia”, which transcends and envelops the “secular history” within which it unfolds.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to *sacra historia*, Augustine uses the phrases “divina historia”, “nostrae religionis historia”, and “prophetica historia” to designate primarily the scriptures of the Catholic Church and to distinguish the historical events announced in these canonical books from the narratives put forth in the history books of the pagans. As R.A. Markus says, “Sacred history is simply what is in the scriptural canon. It is history written under divine inspiration and endowed with divine authority, presenting, under this inspiration, its historical material within a perspective which transcends that of the secular historian, for it is throughout conceived as part of the pattern of God’s redemptive work” (Markus 1970, p. 16).<sup>7</sup> Sacred history is the inspired, scriptural articulation of the events in which God has entered into the drama of human history in order to save his creation from sin and death. According to Augustine, all extra-biblical and therefore “secular” history may profitably be studied insofar as it illuminates aspects of sacred history (See Augustine 1996, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book II, 27, 41 through 29, 45, pp. 159–62).

The relationship between secular and sacred history can be more fully seen by juxtaposing two images employed by Augustine. Although time itself is brought into being with God’s creation of mutable and thus temporal things, the events of history begin, strictly speaking, with the sin of Adam and Eve. The history of the world is the history of fallen men and women and of God’s healing salvation of them, so both secular and sacred history take place within the theater of sin and redemption. Thus, Augustine speaks of the “river of human history” and of the sea of the “res humana” that flows through the ages. For, had “Adam had not fallen away from [God], from his veins there would not have flowed that salty sea water, the human race, so deeply active, so swelling in storms, and so restlessly

flowing” (Augustine 1960, *Confessions*, Bk. XIII, c. 20). Yet, Augustine argues that God’s providence governs and harmonizes not only the panoply of being, but also the flow of time. He says, “I saw that all things are in harmony not only with their proper places, but also with their times. I saw that you, who alone are eternal, did not make a beginning to your works after innumerable ages had passed, but all ages, both those which have passed, and those which will come to pass, neither depart nor come to be except by your activity and your abiding presence” (Augustine 1960, *Confessions*, VII, 15). Because God’s providential governance of all things (ontological) and of all times (historical) means that God is both Creator of being and Lord of history, He brings good from evil, salvation and eternal life from sin and death, by acting within the tangled history of his own creatures to refashion their being from within.

Augustine can therefore describe the series calamitatis that is human history as a beautiful song or symphony, “for God would never have created any men . . . whose future wickedness He foreknew, unless He had equally known to what uses He could put them on behalf of the good, thereby adorning the order of the ages (*ordinem saeculorum*) like a most beautiful song (*pulcherrimum carmen*) set off with antitheses” (Augustine 1998, *City of God*, XI, 18; II, 23). The two cities discussed by Augustine, the city of man and the City of God, are therefore tangled together within a salvation history ruled by God and distinct from but related to the various histories of secular kingdoms, for the two cities are mystical types that cannot be identified with any specific political regime. In the middle books of the *City of God*, Augustine sets himself the task of describing “the origin and progress and merited ends of the two cities—that is, of the earthly and heavenly—which . . . are in this present world mixed together and . . . entangled with one another” (Augustine 1998, *City of God*, XI, 1, p. 450). The chaos of the stormy sea of time can therefore be understood as a beautiful symphony because sacred history is revealed as the anchor of man’s existence, which is ordered “musically” toward union with God. The pattern of God’s redemption structures sacramentum historiam and gives a kind of shape to the swelling seas of mankind’s sinful past precisely by being sunk into it. As the “history”—that is, *Confessions*—of Augustine’s own life shows, the musical, divine order brought out of stormy, sinful chaos is not a “onetime event” at the beginning of creation, but God’s ongoing redemptive activity in human history.

Further, a history entails a written account that captures the intelligibility of temporal events for the sake of transmitting those events and their meaning to a wider audience (almost entirely) absent from the events themselves. Therefore, the written text of history “has to be seen as subordinated to the things that it presents, and it must be seen in its relation to the reader and the act of reading” (Sokolowski 1994, p. 144). Augustine argues that in secular history, the pagans speak for themselves by narrating their own activities to all who desire to know them, but there are questions (1) as to who can write sacred history and thus “interpret” the events recorded therein and (2) for whom. And because words present things to interlocutors, to ask the questions of the proper interpretation and audience of sacred history is to ask who can properly recognize and proclaim the events of God’s interventions in human history.

This structure of history—of written word capturing the intelligibility of temporal events and carrying them to potential hearers and readers—is exhibited in a unique way in the biblical text. The history is recorded by God himself through the inspiration of a human author, such that both God and the human writer are each totally the author of the one biblical text, but by different modes of causality. As Guy Mansini says, “Grace and salvation have a history only where God supplies the names and the words that rightly interpret events. Where he has not done so, we are incapable of supplying our own, or saying how the history of India or China fits into the one plan we do know of, the plan whose key is Christ” (Mansini 2018, pp. 25–26).<sup>8</sup> The Bible is God’s own record, given with and through fully active human agents, of God’s own teaching and interventions in the temporal flow of human life leading us to union with God himself. It is God’s word in human speech revealing God’s historical teaching and deeds among men (See Vatican 1965).

Concerning the dative of sacred history, Sokolowski says that the reader of the Bible “is not an isolated individual but the Church in its members, and the paradigmatic act of reading is the one carried out publicly in the prayer and liturgy of the Church”. He concludes that “the saving acts of God are disclosed in the Church through the reading of the biblical text. It is not just words that come to life in such reading, but also the things that the words express, and both of them, words and things, become actively displayed to a dative of manifestation, to the Church and the faithful as readers” (Sokolowski 1994, p. 144). The words of Christ proclaimed by his Mystical Body actively display the interventions of God in our history, bringing “both words and things to life” in his Church so that they may be proclaimed to all the nations.

In our encounter with sacred history, we are all therefore like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, who finally recognized Christ in the breaking of the bread. And just as he did to them, Jesus continues to say to us: “‘Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures” (Lk 24:25–27). In his inimitable symphonic language, Augustine comments, “Jesus appeared. He was seen with their eyes, and was not recognized. The Master was walking with them along the way, and he himself was the way. And they were not yet walking along the way; he found, you see, that they had wandered off the way” (Augustine 1993a, *Sermons*, 235, p. 40).<sup>9</sup> By joining us on the way of human history through his life, death, and resurrection and by teaching us that he is so joined to us, Jesus becomes our Way to the Father through the vicissitudes of human history.

## 2. Augustine on the “Joints of Time”

Our method described and topic specified, we turn now to Augustine’s discussion of the structure of sacred history. We begin with the sixth chapter of John’s Gospel in which Jesus responds to those Jews who were murmuring at his teaching that he is the bread of life come down from heaven. “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him (*helkysē auton*), and I will raise him on the last day. It is written in the prophets: ‘They shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me” (Jn 6:44–45). In his sermon on this passage, Augustine notes the mode in which the Father “drags” (*helkysē*, *trahit*) us to himself through the Son: “Notice how the Father draws; he delights us by his teaching, without imposing force. Notice how he draws: *They shall all be taught by God*—that is how God draws. *Everyone who has heard from the Father and has learned comes to me*—thus is God drawing them” (Augustine 2009, *Homilies on John*, 26.7, p. 455). As we have argued, it is God in Christ who can definitively interpret the scriptures for us by fulfilling them, and the revelation that Christ is truly God, the Son of the Father, is the way in which God the Father attracts us to himself. *Ista revelatio, ipsa est attractio*. God’s mode of drawing us to himself through sacred history is to teach us the truth of who He is and thus who we are as his images defaced by sin and in need of redemption, all without imposing necessity.

This point concerning God’s pedagogy of the human race is deepened by Augustine in the *City of God*, where he highlights the temporal dimension of divine teaching, which is nothing other than the historical plan of God drawing us to himself by revealing himself as the Truth. Augustine says,

The right education of that part of the human race which consists of the people of God has, like that of a single man, advanced through certain joints of time (*articulos temporum*), or ages, so that it might rise upwards from temporal to eternal things, and from the visible to the invisible. Even during the time when only visible divine rewards were promised, however, the commandment was given that only one God is to be worshiped. This was so that the human mind should not acknowledge any other god than the soul’s true Creator and Lord,

even for the sake of the earthly advantages of this transitory life (Augustine 1998, *City of God*, X, 14, pp. 412–13).<sup>10</sup>

Just as the natural life of a man passes through specific stages—infancy, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, mature adulthood, and senescence—so too does sacred history exhibit God’s orderly teaching of human beings so as to bring them into union with himself. Sacred history has “hinges” that open the door to the mystery of God. God therefore teaches us not only by revealing Truth, but by revealing it in a way that is formally structured in keeping both with the truth revealed and the condition of the pupils.

Just as language reveals being through the integration of syntax and lexicon, with the grammatical syntax structuring the words and enabling them to disclose complex states of affairs, so too does God’s revelation comprise historical “joints” through which a “content”, God himself and those truths that flow from and return to him, is disclosed in temporal events. At the very end of the *City of God*, Augustine returns to this theme of the joints of time as structuring the content of the divine education of the human race. Here, however, he relates this divine pedagogy not to the natural stages of maturation of an individual man, but rather to the scriptural account of the six days of Creation insofar as they illuminate the crescendo of sacred history culminating in the eternal rest of the eternal city enjoying God himself. He says, “The nature of this Sabbath will appear to us more clearly if we count the ages as days according to the joints of time (*articulos temporis*) which we see expressed in Scripture; for that Sabbath will then be found to be the seventh of those ages” (Augustine 1998, *City of God*, XXII, 30, p. 1182).<sup>11</sup> He enumerates the seven days, that is, the seven ages as follows: (1) Adam to the Flood, (2) the Flood to Abraham, (3) Abraham to David, (4) David to the Babylonian exile, (5) the exile to the Birth of Christ, (6) Christ’s life, death, and resurrection and the present age of the Church in which we now live, and (7) the final age which will complete history by transcending it in God’s eternal rest in which we participate by grace.

This way of reading scripture and history was not unique to Augustine and would prove to have a long career ahead of it, but even a cursory discussion of that complicated development is beyond the scope of this essay.<sup>12</sup> I wish rather to dwell upon the more fundamental point that there is a temporal structure of God’s revelation, or joints of time, that enable us to identify a kind of hierarchical syntax in sacred history. Augustine shows us that there is a kind of creative and redemptive syntax in God’s revelation, for his providence draws us to himself by articulating the course of time toward an ever-deeper encounter with him through the divine teaching of saving truth.<sup>13</sup> It is this theological insight into the joints of sacred history described by Augustine that can be deepened by turning to Husserl’s descriptions of empty and filled intentions and his distinction between graded and additive fulfillments.

### 3. Husserlian Reflections: Empty and Filled Intentions, Graded and Additive Fulfillments

Our discussion of Husserlian phenomenology will enable us to show that the temporal structure of revelation has a correlate not only in the stages of development of a man, and not only in Genesis’s account of the distinct days of creation, but also in the natural structure of human knowledge as we move progressively from knowing something in its absence to intuiting the same thing in its presence, all while recognizing it as the same thing known in its absence and now grasped in its presence. To this end, we will focus on Husserl’s distinctions between empty and filled intentions and graded and additive fulfillments.<sup>14</sup>

Let us note that Husserl’s use of “intention” or “intentionality” does not refer to our purposes or motivations for acting, as in “It was not my intention to offend you”. Rather, intentionality within phenomenology has a meaning tied primarily to the theory of knowledge, not moral philosophy. Sokolowski says, “The core doctrine in phenomenology is the teaching that every act of consciousness that we perform, every experience that we have, is intentional; it is essentially ‘consciousness of’ or an ‘experience of’ something or other. All our awareness is directed toward objects” (Sokolowski 2000, p. 8).<sup>15</sup> By

concentrating on this sense of intentionality, phenomenology is able to show that “the mind and the world are correlated with one another. Things do appear to us, things truly are disclosed, and we, on our part, do display, both to ourselves and to others, the way things are” (Sokolowski 2000, p. 12). Phenomenology describes both the structure of intentionality itself, of the way human intelligence is correlated with the world, and the many variegated ways in which different realities show up to us.

Two such ways in which realities show up to us are through the use of signals and words. Signals or “indication signs” merely point beyond themselves toward an absent but indicated reality, such as the tracks that an animal’s footsteps leave in the mud or the beeping of a watch to remind someone that it is time to take his medicine. By contrast, expressions, such as words, contain a meaning and exercise a reference to a reality through the speaker’s activity of thinking in the medium of speech. It is precisely in virtue of a speaker’s subjective, meaning-bestowing (*bedeutungsverleihenden*) acts that “the expression is more than a merely sounded word. It means something, and in so far as it means something, it relates to what is objective” (Husserl 2001, *LI*, I, §9, p. 192). In expressions, we must distinguish between the word, the meaning it contains, and the referent of the word, and we must see that words “contain a meaning and exercise a reference because we are signifying through them, and because we realize that *someone else* has signified and referred through them” (Sokolowski 2002, p. 172. *Italics original*). Words mean things whose intelligibility is captured and carried through the mind’s intentional activity of thinking being in the medium of language.

The meaning of a word is therefore the being of the thing named by the word, and Husserl makes a critical distinction concerning the object meant by a word, or a sense-informed expression. He says, “This objective somewhat can either be actually present through accompanying intuitions, or may at least appear in representation, e.g., in a mental image, and where this happens the relation to an object is realized. Alternatively this need not occur: the expression functions significantly, it remains more than mere sound of words, but it lacks any basic intuition that will give it its object” (Husserl 2001, *LI*, I, §9, p. 192). One can have the meaning of the word and thus encounter the intelligibility of the thing named by it even in the absence of the word’s referent, for “a *name* . . . names its object whatever the circumstances, in so far as it *means* that object” (Husserl 2001, *LI*, I, §9, p. 192). Words therefore span presence and absence because the word names its object in the (1) presence or (2) absence of the object itself, which remains itself across its presence and absence to us. Further, as Husserl shows, the object named can be present or intuited by speaker and listener in various ways, a fundamental point we will explore shortly.

With these distinctions in place, we can identify “empty intentions” as “meaning-bestowing acts”, or acts of linguistic intelligence that target being in the absence of the thing articulated in speech. An empty intention captures and carries the intelligibility of being in its absence, and the meaning of an empty intention is nothing other than the being of the thing named as it would be given to us in a direct perception of it in its presence. By contrast, filled intentions are performed when things are intuited in their presence. When one moves from speaking about a thing in its absence to intuiting it, or “taking it in”, in its presence, the empty intention is filled, and as Husserl says, “In the unity of fulfillment, the fulfilling content coincides with the intending content, so that, in our experience of this unity of coincidence, the object, at once intended and ‘given’, stands before us, not as two objects, but as *one* alone” (Husserl 2001, *LI*, I, §14, p. 200). Meaning-fulfilling acts therefore “become fused with the meaning-conferring acts in the unity of knowledge or fulfillment” (Husserl 2001, *LI*, I, §9, p. 192). The same, identical object becomes more manifest to us as “the senses of the empty and filled acts are laminated into one another, onto the object”, an object that is not only the same but also recognized by us as the identical one known in its absence and now intuited in its presence.<sup>16</sup>

Empty, signitive intentions present things in their absence and are ordered, by their very nature, toward completion in filled intentions in the presence of the thing known, and known to be itself in its presence and absence. As Sokolowski says, “Expressions

always keep their teleological ordering toward the way things are, toward the evidencing of things, even when they are just passed back and forth among speakers in the total absence of the things being spoken about. ... The empty intention longs for fulfillment in intuition" (Sokolowski 2002, p. 175–76).<sup>17</sup> Husserl therefore gives us an elegant description of the correlation between subjective activities that constitute, or disclose, their objective correlates and, more specifically, of the unity of these subjective activities and of the identity of the object they manifest. On the subjective side, the signitive acts (empty intentions) and fulfilling acts (filled intentions) are not merely consecutive, isolated episodes of thinking following one upon another, but rather they are fused in a unity of understanding that makes known an object that is the identity across its presence and absence. We have not a mere succession of ideas in consciousness but a unit of intelligibility that includes two (or more) components and that sheds intellectual light upon an object that can be itself, and be recognized to be what it is, in its presence or absence to the speaker and his interlocuter.

The human mind is therefore active and teleological, and its teleology naturally moves from absence to presence. This movement very often occurs in a series of graded or mediate fulfillments that are correlated to, or fitting for, the kind of reality we are coming to know gradually. Husserl observes that "the fulfilling act has a *superiority* which the [empty] intention lacks: *it imparts to the synthesis the fulness of 'self', at least leads it more directly to the thing itself*", and he recognizes that "the relation of fulfillment is of a sort that admits of degrees. A concatenation of such relations seems accordingly possible where the epistemic superiority steadily increases" (Husserl 2001, LI, VI, §16, p. 227). Filled intentions are fused with and perfect empty ones, and such perfection, or fulfilling, admits of degrees of more and less that reaches an apex in the intuition of the object originally intended emptily in its absence, a climax in which we reach "*the adequate self-presentation of the object of knowledge*" (Husserl 2001, LI, VI, §16, p. 227). We have therefore hierarchical "*fulfillment chains built member upon member out of [empty] intentions*" (Husserl 2001, LI, VI, §18, p. 229). In such graded, hierarchical fulfillments, each intermediate stage fulfills what prepared for it and prepares for what lies beyond it until we reach a climax of knowing the thing in its presence. The active teleology of human consciousness, of evidencing, passes through gradations of fulfillment in which the absence of a thing is gradually overcome in ordered stages that present the thing more fully until we reach a culmination in the presence of the thing itself, the same thing that has been known all along in its absence.

In a mediate or graded fulfillment, each stage fulfills what prepared for it and prepares for what will fulfill it, and it is precisely by fulfilling its anticipation that each step in the gradation prepares for what will come after and perfect it. The stages of graded fulfillments are "presentations which present their objects *as objects of other presentations*" (Husserl 2001, LI, VI, §18, p. 230). Further, Husserl shows that both the stages and their order in a gradual, cumulative fulfillment are dictated by the thing that gradually comes to light for us. It is the "*content of the presentations*"—that is, the being of the thing gradually coming to be known—that "*dictates a determinate order of fulfillments*" (Husserl 2001, LI, VI, §18, p. 230). The entity that we are coming to know more fully in a cumulative series of acts determines the hierarchical series through which we pass, and when we reach the apex of fulfillment, we recognize the object as the same one we have intended in all the graded fulfillments that led to this apex of presence. Although we are aware of the acts themselves (and their order) that we have been executing, we have been targeting the same entity in all these blends of presence and absence until the final fulfillment "*sets directly before us*" the entity and allows us to say, "This is the thing *itself*" (Husserl 2001, LI, VI, §16, p. 227). It is the nature of the thing intended that calls for a given series of gradual fulfillments in which we move from absence to presence, for such gradations are nothing other than ways in which the thing can be presented; they are modes of presentation "contained" within the thing we gradually come to know, not psychological quirks or projections on the part of the subject.<sup>18</sup> As Sokolowski says, "Mind is properly named as the minding of things, the having of their presences as well as their absences, in all the complexities this involves" (Sokolowski 1978, p. 156). Husserl's philosophy is a way of contemplating modes of presentation "contained"



in objects and the variegated intellectual “light” that we shed on things, a light in which entities manifest themselves to us as a unity in a manifold of appearances. The mind is the minding of things in their presence and their absence.

In contrast to graded fulfillments, additive fulfillments are simply more of the same kind of intuition of a thing while remaining in its presence. An additive fulfillment “does not lead up to a climax”; it is not a hierarchical order of different kinds of intentionality targeting the same reality, with each kind of intentionality perfecting what came before it and providing a step to a fuller encounter with the thing. Rather, it is an extended activity of exploring or taking in the thing in its presence from different angles. In an additive fulfillment, “we can discover more of the thing itself, but such exploration is not another new stage in graded fulfillment. It is a deepening of our understanding of what we have brought to intuitive presence” (Sokolowski 2000, pp. 39–40). It is not only more of the same (being), but more of the same in the same mode (of encountering that being) in its presence.

The relationship between graded and additive fulfillments can be fleshed out with an example. Let us suppose that someone informs his friend about People’s Park in Berkeley, California. This friend had been unaware of the existence and cultural significance of the park. The friend initially encounters the reality of the park in its absence as he lives through the words and descriptions of his teacher to the thing, People’s Park itself (in its absence). He soon begins to imagine the park, to form vague “images” of its features, and intrigued by its history, he then finds artistic renderings and actual photos of People’s Park. Let us suppose he even watches a documentary with extensive footage of the park. Finally, captivated by the park and desirous to behold the thing itself in its presence, he takes a trip to Berkeley, makes his way to the proper location, and encounters People’s Park itself (in its presence). He spends time walking around the park, viewing it from different angles, smelling the smells and seeing the sights, and talking to its visitors and inhabitants.

In all these activities, our friend gradually fulfills the empty intention of the same park he originally intended in its absence. The ordered, graded series of the initial description, the imagination of our friend, the paintings, photos, and videos, and finally People’s Park itself in its presence show that fulfillment often takes place in stages or degrees *that stretch out over time*. Each of these successive stages is a fulfillment of its prior, more empty intending, but each is a fulfillment of a different kind. Further, each stage in the graded fulfillment anticipates the next stage, and the final stage, the intelligent and informed viewing of the park in its presence, is the best, the perfection and *telos* of the whole affair. In the fullness of presence of the final stage of this gradation, our friend recognizes the park as the identity in all these graded fulfillments; it is recognized that the same park has been spoken about, imagined, pictured, videoed, and painted, even though the identity itself of the park is not thematized by our friend. In the presence of People’s Park, our friend might experience what Dan Jacobson once described as “the sudden solidifying, the factualizing, the fleshing out of a land that had previously been composed only of words and pictures, guesses and speculation” (Jacobson 2005, p. 11). With Jacobson, he might ostend the park while exclaiming, “Oh, so this is what they meant!” Or, if he were philosophical, he might use Husserl’s words to proclaim, “This is the thing itself”, the same thing he has heard about, imagined, and seen pictured and filmed in its absence.

Yet, once he was in the presence of the park, walking around it and soaking up its intelligibility, he was no longer engaged in a graded fulfillment, but rather an additive one. The final step of the graded fulfillment blends into the extended intuition of the additive. In the additive fulfillment, our friend continued the same mode of intentionality, that of intuition, but from different angles and with different features of the park providing complementary targets of his focus. He was experiencing not only more of the park, but more of it in the same mode of encountering it in its presence. For its part, People’s Park, as the intended thing, is the identity in the two modes of presence and absence.

Because the entity itself is of a determinate kind, it “invites” a certain interplay of presences and absences and a particular gradation of fulfillment that occurs over time. The thing itself serves as the rule and measure for how it can be intended and the ways these

intentions can be mediately fulfilled and additively experienced. To continue with our Augustinian metaphor, the thing provides its own hinges that open the door to a fuller encounter with it over time. The interplay of presence, absence, and graded and additive fulfillment is different for a park than it is for a mathematical theorem or a prudential action, and all of these are different from that which obtains in God's revelation of himself to us.

By way of concluding this section, we must stress five aspects of our discussion of Husserl's phenomenology. (a) It is one and the same, identical being that shows itself through the series of graded and additive fulfillments. (b) Not only is the known thing the identity in its various modes of presentation, but we also recognize it as the same as we move through the manifold of presence and absence. (c) It is the nature or being of the entity intended that prescribes how it can be presented and determines the series of graded and additive fulfillments. (d) There is a temporal dimension of our movement up the graded and through the additive fulfillments. (e) Finally, we note the interesting blending of the final stage of the graded fulfillment with the prolonged intuition of the additive.

#### 4. Sacred History's Joints of Time as a Graded Fulfillment

I wish to claim that the "joints of time" in sacred history identified by Augustine can be understood as the structure of a graded fulfillment and that the beatific vision of the eternal city, the eternal rest of the seventh age, can be understood as an additive fulfillment. These graded and additive fulfillments are, however, initiated and sustained by God himself. It is God who creates us and invites us to enter into union with him by leading us up the supernatural graded fulfillment of revelation, it is God who gives us the ability through (nature and) grace to enter increasingly into his presence through the hinges of salvation history, and it is God who grants the gift of himself eternally to those who hear and respond to the historically syntaxed teaching culminating in his Son.

Because God reveals himself in a way fitting for the essential structures of human knowledge, Husserl's reflections on the temporal syntax of the human mind's encounter with the being of things through ordered, hierarchical stages of presence and absence help us to shed light on the mystery of salvation history. Our use of phenomenology helps us to see that in the orders of both nature and grace, "We generally consider presencing to be good, but it does not follow that the absent and the hidden are bad. It may be necessary and good that things go into eclipse. Hiddenness is not just loss; it can also be preservation and protection. Things need their right time to be seen" (Sokolowski 2000, p. 165). Such a position does not anthropomorphize God or subordinate the mystery of revelation to the structures of our created intelligence. Rather, it recognizes the truth that one and the same God creates, redeems, and reveals himself to us. It extends St. Thomas Aquinas's principle that grace imitates nature.<sup>19</sup> Let us show how the five aspects of graded and additive fulfillments identified at the conclusion of the preceding section can help us to encounter more fully the mystery of God's revelation of himself to us.

(A) First and foremost, it is God himself that is the identically same "Object" encountered in this series of gradation. It is one and the same God who in the beginning creates and tells Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, one and the same God who "in times past, . . . spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe" (Heb 1:1–2). It is therefore one and the same God that is encountered in progressively deeper ways through the hinges of salvation history, for "the God of the New Covenant is the same as that of the Old. The Father whom Jesus addresses is not somehow the truth of which Yahweh is only the shadow: the Father by whom and from whom Jesus was sent is Yahweh". In the life and teaching of Jesus, "no new proper name is revealed, but Yahweh is now called Father in a distinctive way; he is called Father instead of being called Yahweh" (Sokolowski 1994, p. 147). To know something of the existence of God through the things he has created, to be taught by this same God to call

him Yahweh, and then to be enabled by Christ to call Yahweh Father is to be drawn up a graded fulfilment that enables us to encounter one and the same God in fuller modes of presence. God is the identity in the manifold of revelation.

Further, the revelation that God is One in a Trinity of Persons and that God the Son becomes incarnate to save us from sin and death means not only that “we must now distinguish between the Father and the Son but that we must now distinguish a deeper sense of the divinity, a deeper sense of the Godhead. It is not another and different God, as Yahweh is other than and different from ‘elohim, from Baal and Moloch and Zeus, but *it is the same God newly understood*” (Sokolowski 1994, p. 147. Emphasis added). Part of what comes to light as we move through the hinges of sacred history is what Sokolowski identifies as the “Christian distinction” between God and the world. He says that within “Christian faith God is understood not only to have created the world, but to have permitted the distinction between himself and the world to occur. He is not established as God by the distinction”. Therefore, “Christian theology is differentiated from pagan religious and philosophical reflection primarily by the introduction of a new distinction, the distinction between the world understood as possibly not having existed and God understood as possibly being all there is, with no diminution of goodness or greatness” (Sokolowski 1995, p. 33 and p. 23, respectively). Because of the revelation of the Christian distinction, we can approach the mystery that God is so infinitely transcendent and distinct from the cosmos he freely creates and redeems that he can be present to us without ceasing to be God and without distorting or destroying the natures of the things he governs (see, inter alia, Isaiah 55:1–11).

In Augustine’s classic formulation, “But you [God] were more inward than my inmost self, and superior to my highest”, and he is so without change on his part and without competing with the creaturely causality that cannot threaten or improve him (Augustine 1960, *Confessions*, III, 6; I, 4). The revelation of the name of Yahweh to Moses (Ex 3:13–15) captures this distinctive Judeo-Christian understanding of God’s fecundating immanence as flowing from his infinite transcendence without change on his part. Yahweh, I am Who I Am, is a deeply mysterious name that can mean both (i) God simply IS his own Infinite, Pure, Eternal, and Perfect Divine Activity with no potency for change (I AM Primum Ens, Ipsum Esse Subsistens), while all other creatures have their being and are textured by various kinds of potency, and (ii) God is eternally faithful, the One who initiates the true covenant with man and who can be believed and trusted because He Is Eternal Love and Fidelity (I AM Faithful to My Covenant), while creatures all too often prove themselves unfaithful in various ways.<sup>20</sup> The mode of revealing the name is thus fitting for the name revealed, for God is so infinite, transcendent, and distinct from his creation that he can be present to the bush without consuming it in the fire of his revealing love, without change or diminution on his part, and without necessitating Moses’s response. This bi-partite understanding given through the divine Name prepares for and culminates in Jesus, who as the eternal Word of God, Son of the Father, repeatedly says “I AM” to the disciples and draws them to himself through the Spirit of Truth. Jesus accomplishes this drawing of men to the Father without ceasing to be God, without corrupting or distorting the human nature he assumes, and without taking away the freedom of his listeners to follow or reject him. Grace does not destroy, but rather heals, elevates, and perfects nature.

(B) As paradigmatic of the Christian response to Jesus, Peter’s act of faith is an act of recognition: “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Mt 16:16). You are the same one who “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn 1:1), the same one who led the Israelites out of Egypt through the desert, for “the rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:4), the same one who sent the prophets to speak about him (Mt 23; Jn 5:39–46). For “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb 13:8). Mansini says that “the Word of God is expressed in the many words of the Old Testament that prefigure and adumbrate the humanity of Jesus, and in the humanity of Jesus itself”, and he concludes that “it is *the recognition* of this fact of the structure of revelation that makes a Christian a Christian, and that turns the Hebrew Scriptures into

the Old Testament. When the Church wrote out her understanding that Moses and the prophets spoke of Christ, or that Christ spoke through them, what was written was what we call the New Testament. The New Testament just is the writing out of the Old Testament read *as* Old Testament, old relative to *the same thing* the New is newly and manifestly about, namely Christ".<sup>21</sup> As John's question to Jesus reveals—"Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another? (Mt 11:3)—the graded fulfillment of sacred history and the recognition of Jesus as the one who is to come are essential to Christian faith.

Christian faith therefore incorporates an act of recognition of the identity of the one true God in the ordered modes of presence and absence through sacred history. The mysterious, deeper sense of God and of the world that comes with Judeo-Christian revelation "can be seen to be anticipated by the Old Testament, but the sense of the anticipation itself is only appreciated in retrospect, when it is fulfilled. . . . [T]he fulfillment does not make the prophecies otiose, because there must be an anticipation of sense if there is to be any manifestation of sense at all. Even when we appreciate the fulfillment now, we understand it as completing an anticipation" (Sokolowski 1995, p. 129; see also Mansini 2018, pp. 9–42). To understand this fulfillment as a fulfillment, we must recognize the one fulfilling as the same identical one who promised and was promised, who enabled us to anticipate and was anticipated. Further, Jesus's response to Peter's confession of faith—"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father" (Mt 16:17)—discloses that both the graded fulfillment itself and our recognition of the identity of God who draws closer to us through the hinges of sacred history are gifts of grace. This recognition essential to Christian faith will be deepened and completed in the final manifestation of Christ at his second coming, when faith is fulfilled in sight. "At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known (1 Cor 13:12).

(C) Because it is always the one true God revealing himself in the graded fulfillment of revelation as the First and highest Truth who both creates and saves us from sin by initiating the covenant, the hierarchical hinges of sacred history are fitting for the disclosure of the "Being" who reveals himself through them. While we must be careful not to impose necessity on God's activity, we do well to note the fittingness and wisdom manifest in this supernatural correlation between Being revealed and its mode of revealing itself. Sokolowski argues that it seems that these Christian truths "could not have come to light simply and directly by themselves; it seems that they had to be manifested as a fulfillment of a prior expectation, as a determination within a context that was set in preparation for them. The profiling of Christian things against the background of the Old Covenant seems to be a presentational necessity and not merely a matter of historical accident" (Sokolowski 1994, p. 145). The truths of creation *ex nihilo*, of God's Trinitarian Life, of the Incarnation of the Son of God and of his salvific death and resurrection, and of God's indwelling presence within us are so exalted and beyond the capacity of human nature that it seems as though they "had" to be presented to us in a graded fulfillment structuring the hinges of a sacred history.

Mansini says that "the *pattern* of revelation in the Old Testament is a sort of *drawing* of Christ, *anticipating* the form of Christ", and he argues that "the *preparation* and the *outlining* are altogether necessary because of the extravagance of the mystery" (Mansini 2018, p. 27).<sup>22</sup> This use of the couplets "drawing–anticipating" and "preparation–outline" to describe the "pattern" or structure of revelation strengthens our presentation of the sacred history of revelation as a kind of graded fulfillment to be understood on analogy with our natural forms of intentionality. If understood together, the double meaning of "drawing" discloses something of the core of Christian revelation. God "draws" us to himself by giving us "drawings" of himself that he gradually fulfills by fleshing out. Such drawings are fitting for the one true God who freely gives himself to us through them, and for us who encounter him in them.

It should also be noted that the structure of promise and fulfillment obtains not only between the Old and New Testaments, but also within the Old Testament itself. The graded

fulfillment truly begins and obtains within the old covenant, for “we do not discover the pattern of promise and fulfillment only when the New fulfills the Old Testament—that would be much too late. We have to have already learned this pattern in simpler and more partial form in the Old Testament, in order to recognize both continuity and novelty with which the New meets us” (Mansini 2018, p. 30).<sup>23</sup> The pattern of graded fulfillment both within the Old Testament and between the Old and the New includes the fact that the words of the Old can prepare the way for Jesus by signifying things, and those things themselves can also function as signs, as “types” calling for fulfillment in the Incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. The words of the Old Testament have a fuller sense pointing to Christ, and the things are types signifying their fulfillment in him. Further, not only words and things, but also the deeds and persons of the Old Testament function as fulfilling anticipations in the sacred history of revelation that culminates in the person of Christ, who is the New Adam (1 Cor 15:45) in whom is achieved a consummation of words, deeds, and the sacred use of things. As Augustine says, “Because Christ himself is the Word of God, the very deed of the Word is a word for us” (Augustine 2009, *Homilies on John*, 24, 2, p. 424; Augustine 1996, *On Christian Doctrine*, I, 2, p. 110).

(D) The graded fulfillment of revelation is not only called for by the Being revealed; it is also fitting for the datives of that revelation. As the structure of revelation identified by Augustine shows, God reveals to us in such a way that the naturally *teleological and temporal* dimensions of human intentionality are gradually taken up into a participation in God’s own life through the historical disclosure of saving truth and grace. The absence of God gradually fulfilled was not, however, the result of his distance from us, but ours from him due to sin and ignorance, and this sinful absence is gradually overcome through the healing achieved by God’s fuller presence to us through revelation that culminates in the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. As Augustine says,

It is not by locomotion through space that she [divine wisdom] is said to have come to us, but by appearing to mortals in mortal flesh. So she came where she already was, because she was in the world, and the world was made through her. But human beings, greedy to enjoy the creature instead of the creator, had taken on the coloring of this world—and so were most aptly called by the name of “the world”; that is why they did not recognize her, and why the evangelist said, And the world did not know him (Jn 1:10). And so it was in the Wisdom of God that the world was unable to come to know God through wisdom. So why did she come, when she was already here, if not because it was God’s pleasure through the folly of the preaching to save those who believe? (Augustine 1996, *On Christian Doctrine*, I, 12, p. 115)

Augustine stresses that God’s Wisdom “came to where she already was” but in a mode that more fully achieved and revealed the presence of God precisely by fulfilling what had prepared for it. The absence of men from God is therefore not merely epistemological, but also ontological and moral, and thus the stages of sacred history reveal the truth that God restores our being and opens to us a path of new life. In Jesus’s teaching to the apostles at the Last Supper, he reveals to us that we must first abide in him and the Father through the friendship he offers so as to be able to observe his commandment to love (Jn 15). We witness a trinitarian coalescence unifying being, its disclosure over time, and our gradually increasing ability through grace to act in accordance with the being disclosed.

The temporality of the graded fulfillment of revelation is therefore fitting for us not only epistemologically, but also ontologically and morally, and we can see this fittingness more clearly by focusing on the role of law in sacred history. Drawing upon Augustine, Aquinas shows that the natural law given in creation, the Old Law revealed to Moses, and the New Law of Christ are three “species” of divine law. They are three fuller manifestations of one and the same eternal law, each preparing for what comes after and perfects it, each given by one and the same legislator (God) in different ways (creation, old and new covenants), each leading to one and the same end (union with God and each other) in greater degrees.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the promulgation, or the revealing of these species of eternal

law, “is accomplished by both the spoken word (*verbum*) and the written word (*scriptum*), and the eternal law has both sorts of promulgation on the part of God who promulgates it. For God’s Word is eternal, and the writing in the book of life is eternal. On the other hand, as far as the creature who hears or reads is concerned, the promulgation cannot be eternal”.<sup>25</sup> While God legislates and promulgates in an eternal and unchanging way, his creatures receive the graded fulfillment of the eternal law in a historical mode fitting for them.

The temporal reception of the gradations of the eternal law reinforces our reflections upon sacred history as initiating us into deeper encounters with the presence of God. Aquinas argues that the natural law “is nothing other than the rational creature’s participation in eternal law” through the natural light of reason. Like the natural world as a whole, the natural law intimates the God who is the source and end of human nature, of the goods perfective of it, and of the natural rule and measure of how we ought to pursue those goods and avoid evils so as to be happy in society with others.<sup>26</sup> As Russell Hittinger has said, “In the natural law, God teaches us, but he does not teach us that he is teaching us”.<sup>27</sup> The pedagogy of the natural law concerning its authoritative source is indirect and suggestive.

The Old Law given to Moses and the Israelites fleshes out the law of nature written on their hearts and enables them to rejoice not only in the way of life contained in it, but primarily in the way it made God more intimately present to them, for God’s teaching in the Old Law includes his teaching that it is he who is teaching the Israelites how to worship him and how to live in harmony with each other. As the Psalmist exclaims, “From your judgments I do not turn, for you have taught me” (Ps 119:102). This revelation of the Old Law and its author enables the nation of Israel to exclaim: “What great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?” (Deut 4:7) Commenting on this passage, Joseph Ratzinger says that “the marvelous closeness of God is seen above all in the law he has given to Israel through Moses. Through the law he makes himself permanently available . . . for the questions of his people. . . . In the law Israel experiences the *close presence of God*; he has, as it were, drawn back the veil from the riddles of human life and replied to the obscure questionings of men of all ages” (Ratzinger 2001, p. 104. Emphasis added).<sup>28</sup> The giving of the Old Law is a step in the graded fulfillment of revelation in which God becomes more fully present to Israel by perfecting the natural law that “prepared” for it.

Our participation in the eternal law reaches its apotheosis in the New Law given by Christ. Aquinas says that “the New Law is principally the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is manifested in faith working through love. Now men attain this grace through the Son of God made man; for grace filled his humanity in the first instance, and from there it flowed to us”.<sup>29</sup> As the grace of the Holy Spirit, the New Law of love not only directs but also renews our being by enabling us “to share in the divine nature” (2 Pt 1:4). The close presence of God achieved in the Torah’s perfection of the natural law now reaches the final stage of the “legal” graded fulfillment, in which we enjoy the supernatural presence of God that is nothing other than a share in his own life and love by grace. The New Law is given by Christ, who teaches us face to face in a fully human nature and who teaches us that we are right to call him the teacher (Jn 13:13). He also teaches us the pattern of this “legal graded fulfillment” when he says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (Mt 5:17).

Thus, we had to be led gradually, not only to the truth of the mystery of God, but also to the way of being and of life in accordance with that truth. In a remarkable passage, Augustine articulates the core of what we have shown:

So what all that has been said amounts to . . . is that the fulfillment and the end of the law and of all the divine scriptures is love (Rom 13:8; 1 Tm 1:5) . . . . *So in order that we might know how to do this and be able to, the whole ordering of time was arranged by divine providence for our salvation . . . .* So if it seems to you that you have understood the divine scriptures, or any part of them, in such a way that by this understanding you do not build up this twin love of God and neighbor, then

you have not understood them (Augustine 1996, *On Christian Doctrine*, I, 35, 39 and 36, 40, pp. 128–29).<sup>30</sup>

The telos and perfection of the ordering of the whole of time by God's providence is the fulfillment of God's revelatory law: our participation in the one true God who is love.

(E) Jesus is God's definitive revelation to men and women; he is the agent and content of revelation, and the telos of revelation is the building up in unity of the "whole Christ", Head and Mystical Body. The emptier senses and partial fulfillments of the Old Law, the prophets, and the writings are laminated into one another, onto Christ. In a way distinct from any natural graded fulfillment, such as encountering a park in a series of progressively fuller manifestations, these Old Testament things can be understood to promise and anticipate God in the Flesh only when God Incarnate fulfills them and teaches us that He is doing so. "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21; cf. 24:44–48). There is a unity of revelation in Christ, who discloses this unity in achieving it.

Because Christ is the summit of revelation who teaches us to read the scriptures in the Church founded upon the apostles, this revelation, in the full sense of the word, ends with the death of the last apostle. Augustine therefore rejects the temptation to extend the revealed pattern of graded fulfillment in sacred history to the subsequent history of the Church. It is a mistake, for example, to claim that the plagues of Egypt somehow point to the persecutions of the early Church.<sup>31</sup> Although the "sixth age" comprises everything from the earthly life of Jesus to his second coming in glory, including the history of the Church up to the present day, Augustine flatly rejects "any attempt to introduce any division derived from sacred history into the history of the age after Christ" (Markus 1970, p. 20).<sup>32</sup> There are no new revelations, no further joints of sacred history before the Parousia (the final being-present of God). God has brought us in Christ to the final stage of the graded fulfillment of divine self-disclosure.

However, this final stage of the supernatural graded fulfillment does mysteriously blend with the eternal additive fulfillment of the beatific vision. Even while Christians are here on Earth, "our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" such that we live even now as "fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God" (Phil 3:20; 2:19). To be a Christian means that "your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory" (Col 3:3–4). As Augustine's magnum opus shows, a Christian is a member here and now of the eternal City of God by way of pilgrimage through the vicissitudes of earthly history. Such a life in the "sixth age" is somehow truly but incompletely a participation in the eternal peace and joy that God and his saints possess fully in the everlasting "seventh day". As Christ says, "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15). Augustine echoes this passage: "That peace which is our peculiar possession . . . is ours even now, with God by faith; and we shall enjoy it eternally with him by sight" (Augustine 1998, *City of God*, XIX, 27, p. 962).

This mysterious blending of the fulfillment of the present age with the eternal rest of the heavenly kingdom is most intensely realized in the Eucharist, where the historical disclosure of God's presence reaches an apex. In the Eucharist, the words of Christ quoted by the priest make Christ himself present as they recapitulate the event of the last supper as a fulfillment of the sacrifices of the old covenant and an anticipation of the passion of Christ, which is re-presented here and now in an unbloody, sacramental manner. The Eucharist "reenacts an event—the sacrificial death and Resurrection of Christ—that truly happens again in a sacramental way, and it gives us a foretaste and promise of the Paschal feast of heaven" (Sokolowski 1994, p. 105). Because God gives himself to us in the Eucharist and so unites us to him and to each other in him, it is the sacrament of love and unity. As Augustine says, "That bread which you can see on the altar, sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. That cup, or rather what the cup 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 your 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 loaf, one body.’ (1 Cor 10:17)” (Augustine 1993b, *Sermons*, 227).<sup>33</sup> The presence of Christ in the Eucharist is so intense that it turns us into what we receive “until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father” (Matthew 26:29).

## 5. Conclusions

We began with John XXIII’s bi-partite claim that history is the teacher of life and that Christ is at the center of all history. We connected this claim to his desire to formulate an adequate “philosophy of history” based upon the study of St. Augustine. In our reflections, we have taken up this crucial task by articulating some of the essential features of sacred history with the help of Augustine’s writings, and we have used the phenomenology of Husserl, especially as developed by Sokolowski, to extend Augustine’s treatment so as to enter more deeply into the mystery of God’s self-disclosure to us. We have therefore attempted to reflect upon the manifestation of “God’s wisdom, mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory. . . . [A]s it is written: ‘What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him,’ this God has revealed to us through the Spirit” (1 Cor 2:7–10). We can do no better than to conclude with the more ancient words of an older John: “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2).<sup>34</sup>

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The Latin texts of Augustine can be found in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (CSEL)*. Berlin: De Gruyter. Available Online: <http://cseel.at/en/publikationen/csel/> (accessed on 13 March 2024).
- <sup>2</sup> For an excellent discussion of this text from Angelo Roncalli/Pope John XXIII and of the Augustinian influence on *Pacem in Terris*, see Hittinger (2024).
- <sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between Augustine’s thought and Husserlian phenomenology, see Engelland (2021). Also relevant is the meaning of phenomenology proposed by Dietrich von Hildebrand, who argues that phenomenology is not simply one specific movement within the history of philosophy, but rather a way of thinking. He says, “[Phenomenology] is neither a reduction of the world to mere phenomena, nor a mere description of appearance or of subjective experiences. . . . [I]t is concerned with the very essence of the object. It is . . . the approach which is at the basis of every great philosophical discovery”. Von Hildebrand names Plato, Aristotle, and St. Augustine as examples of classical thinkers who employed this phenomenological method (von Hildebrand 1960, pp. 222–26). I agree with the general sense of phenomenology proposed by von Hildebrand, but I do not think he is correct in his accusation that the “later” Husserl turned away from a realist philosophy and fell into the trap of idealism.
- <sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the history and meaning of the phrase “salvation history”, see Mansini (2018, pp. 24–27).
- <sup>5</sup> On the relationship between Aristotle and Husserl, see Sokolowski (2012) and Roniger (2022).
- <sup>6</sup> See, inter alia, the second chapter of *The Gospel of Luke*.
- <sup>7</sup> For the phrases in Augustine, see *City of God*, XVIII, 40; XV, 8, 16, and 17; XVI, 2.
- <sup>8</sup> As Markus says, “Salvation continues in history since Christ and is, indeed, being worked out in a hidden manner in all history, but, as there are no properly authorized historians to discern its pattern, its history cannot be written”. Markus (1970, p. 231).
- <sup>9</sup> The Latin reads: “Apparuit Iesus. Videbatur oculis, et non agnoscebatur. Magister ambulabat cum illis in via, et ipse erat via. Et nondum illi ambulabant in via; invenit enim eos exorbitasse de via”.
- <sup>10</sup> “Sicut autem unius hominis, ita humani generis, quod ad Dei populum pertinet, recta eruditio per quosdam articulos temporum tamquam aetatum profecit accessibus, ut a temporalibus ad aeterna capienda et a visibilibus ad invisibilia surgeretur; ita sane ut etiam illo tempore quo visibilia promittebantur divinitus praemia, unus tamen colendus commendaretur Deus, ne mens humana vel pro ipsis terrenis vitae transitoriae beneficiis cuiquam nisi vero animae creatori et domino subderetur.”
- <sup>11</sup> “Ipse etiam numerus aetatum, veluti dierum, si secundum eos articulos temporis computetur qui scripturis videntur expressi, iste sabbatismus evidentius apparebit, quoniam septimus invenitur; ut prima aetas tamquam primus dies sit ab Adam usque



ad diluvium, secunda inde usque ad Abraham, non aequalitate temporum, sed numero generationum; denas quippe habere reperiuntur. Hinc iam, sicut Matthaeus evangelista determinat, tres aetates usque ad Christi subsequuntur adventum, quae singulae denis et quaternis generationibus explicantur: ab Abraham usque ad David una, altera inde usque ad transmigracionem in Babyloniam, tertia inde usque ad Christi carnalem nativitatem. Fiunt itaque omnes quinque. Sexta nunc agitur nullo generationum numero metienda propter id quod dictum est: Non est vestrum scire tempora quae Pater posuit in sua potestate. Post hanc tamquam in die septimo requiescet Deus, cum eundem diem septimum, quod nos erimus, in se ipso Deo faciet requiescere". In addition to these texts from *the City of God*, see [Augustine \(1946, \*De Catechizandis Rudibus \(The First Catechetical Instruction\)\*, XXII\)](#), where he uses the phrase "articuli . . . aetatum". See also the parallel text in *De Trinitate*, IV, 4, where Augustine again uses the phrase "articulos temporum" ([Augustine 1991, \*De Trinitate\*](#)). Finally, see *De Genesi adversus Manichaeos*, I, 23 and 24. ([Augustine 2002, \*De Genesi adversus Manichaeos\*](#)).

12 For discussion of this development, see [Ratzinger \(2020\)](#) and [Lerner \(1976\)](#).

13 See *City of God*, XVI, 12: "Let us now examine the progress of the city of God from that joint of time (*ab illo articulo temporis*) that came about with father Abraham, when our knowledge of it became more evident, and we read of clearer instances of the divine promises we now see fulfilled in Christ". For discussion of Augustine's understanding of the joints of time, see [Hannon \(2016, pp. 163–96\)](#).

14 It should be noted that we are focusing on the temporal aspect of human knowing as it moves "up" graded or mediate fulfillments and "through" additive ones, not on the structure of temporality itself. For Husserl's understanding of temporality, see [Husserl \(1964, 1991\)](#) and [Brough \(1972\)](#). In each stage of a graded fulfillment, perhaps we see a "moving image" of the trinitarian structure of primal impression, retention, and protension.

15 Husserl says, "Conscious processes are also called *intentional*; but then the word intentionality signifies nothing else than this universal fundamental property of consciousness: to be consciousness of something; as a *cogito*, to bear within itself its *cogitatum*" [Husserl \(1999, §14, p. 33\)](#). This section is based upon an earlier essay. See [Roniger \(2021\)](#).

16 I take this phrase from an unpublished lecture given by Robert [Sokolowski \(2014\)](#) at The Catholic University of America in the Spring of 2014. I am grateful for his permission to use it here.

17 Husserl says that "[empty intentions] 'are in need of fulness'" and that "a signitive [or empty] intention merely points to its object, an intuitive [or full] intention gives it 'presence', in the pregnant sense of the word, it imports something of the fulness of the object itself". [Husserl \(2001, LI, VI, §21, p. 233\)](#).

18 Husserl says, "No theory we can conceive can mislead us in regard to the *principle of all principles*: that *every primordial dator Intuition is a source of authority (Rechtsquelle) for knowledge, that whatever presents itself in 'intuition' in primordial form (as it were in its bodily reality), is simply to be accepted as it gives itself out to be, though only within the limits in which it then presents itself*". [Husserl \(2013, §24, p. 92\)](#).

19 For the claim that grace imitates nature, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, ([Aquinas 1988, II-II, q. 31, a. 3](#)). He says, "Grace and virtue imitate the natural order, which has been instituted by God's wisdom". This Thomistic claim and my phenomenological extension of it do not deny or denigrate the ways in which the truths of Christianity often involve a paradoxical inversion of "worldly" understandings of rationality and being. In the words of St. Paul, "The *logos* of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor 1:18–25). In this vein, see [Marion \(2016\)](#).

20 For the former, see [Gilson \(1960\)](#). For a discussion of the unity of these two meanings, see [Ratzinger \(1988, pp. 85–93\)](#). On p. 88, Ratzinger says that the "God who 'is' is at the same time he who is with *us*".

21 I take this excellent formulation from Guy Mansini, OSB, "The Monastic Framework of Catholic Intellectual Life: Reading and Writing the Christ Who Reads and Writes", to appear in a forthcoming collection of essays entitled *Truth and the Intellectual Life* ([Mansini Forthcoming](#)). Emphasis added. I am grateful for Fr. Mansini's permission to quote his text here. For the mysterious "recognition" of Jesus with the "Unknown God" the Athenians attempted to worshipped in ignorance, see Acts 17:16–34.

22 As Jean-Luc Marion says, "Revelation reveals the Trinity and, above all, it reveals it in a *trinitarian way*. . . In a word, the Trinity offers not only the content of the uncovering, but also its mode of manifestation. Or better: the mode of manifestation . . . coincides exactly with that which manifests itself". [Marion \(2016, p. 99\)](#).

23 On this point, see the important text from Augustine at *City of God*, XVII, 3: "When we read a prophecy and its fulfillment in the history of Abraham's seed according to the flesh, we also seek an allegorical meaning which is to be fulfilled in Abraham's seed according to faith".

24 For a fuller treatment of this issue, see [Roniger \(2019\)](#).

25 *St*, I-II, q. 91, a. 1, ad. 2. In the background is Augustine's simpler division of history into the stages before the law (*ante legem*), under the law (*sub lege*), under grace (*sub gratia*), and in peace (*in pace*). For discussion of these texts in Augustine, see [Fredriksen \(1988\)](#).

26 See *St*, I-II, q. 91, a. 2; I-II, q. 94, a. 2.

27 Hittinger made this excellent comment to me in conversation. I thank him for his insight and for his permission to quote his statement here.

- 28 Interestingly for our purposes, Ratzinger claims, “This passage from the Old Testament has found its ultimate expression in the eucharistic presence of the Lord. But its earlier meaning is not thereby abolished, but merely purified and exalted”.
- 29 *St*, I-II, q. 108, a. 1; see also *St*, I-II, q. 106, a. 1.
- 30 For an excellent discussion of Augustine’s understanding of love as it developed throughout his life, see Michael Sherwin, O. P. (Sherwin Forthcoming), *St. Augustine on Love: the Evolution of His Thought*. In *Wisdom, Law, and Virtue: Essays in Honor of F. Russell Hittinger*, edited by Scott J. Roniger. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.
- 31 See Augustine, *City of God*, XVIII, 52.
- 32 He continues: “Since the coming of Christ, until the end of the world, all history is homogeneous, that it cannot be mapped out in terms of a pattern drawn from sacred history, that it can no longer contain decisive turning-points endowed with a significance in sacred history. Every moment may have its unique and mysterious significance in the ultimate divine *tableau* of men’s doings and sufferings; but it is a significance to which God’s revelation does not supply the clues”. Further, “There is no other decisive phase to look forward to, no turning-point to fear or to hope for; only the end. On the map of sacred history the time between Incarnation and Parousia is a blank; a blank of unknown duration, capable of being filled with an infinite variety of happenings, of happenings all equally at home in the pattern of sacred history. None are privileged above others, God’s hand and God’s purposes are equally present and equally hidden in them all. On them all the old prophecies are silent, for their reference is to the Incarnation and to the final fulfillment. The interim is dark in its ambivalence. There is no sacred history of the last age: there is only a gap for it in the sacred history”. Markus (1970, pp. 20–21 and 23). See Augustine, *City of God*, XX, 7 and 9. On the difference between Augustine and Eusebius, see Ratzinger (2020, p. 90).
- 33 In the *Confessions*, Augustine restates Jesus’s Bread of Life discourse: “I am the food of grown men; grow, and you shall feed upon me; nor shall you change me, like the food of your flesh, into yourself, but you shall be changed into me”. VII, 10.
- 34 I wish to thank Russell Hittinger (2023) and Fr. Michael Sherwin, OP for excellent and joyful conversations on Augustine during a seminar on the *City of God* in the summer of 2023.

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