

THE REFORM OF THE DIVINE IMAGE IN AUGUSTINE'S *DE TRINITATE*

THE REFORM OF THE DIVINE IMAGE IN AUGUSTINE'S

DE TRINITATE

By

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Abstract:

In this thesis I provide a critical exposition of the theme of the reform of the image of God in human beings (Gen. 1:26) in Augustine's *De Trinitate*, a theme that has hitherto been neglected in Augustinian scholarship. I argue that this reform is a trinitarian process in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit seek to remedy the defects in their image in the human mind -- defects that Augustine believes were introduced by original sin. I emphasize the psychological character of this process of reform, focusing on how Augustine argues the persons of the Trinity improve the operations of the human mind in order to make it fit for the knowledge of God (*sapientia*), which he believes is the source of well-being for the divine image. Insofar as Augustine believes the divine image is reformed through the knowledge of God, my thesis also criticizes the opinions of some modern interpreters of Augustine's theology who argue that his method for coming to understand the Trinity in the *De Trinitate* departs from the external economy of salvation through what they believe is his excessive focus on introspection as a means to the knowledge of God. Against these scholars, I argue that for Augustine human beings are always dependent on divine grace and faith to advance in their understanding of God, even at the most seemingly introspective level. I also contend that for Augustine the reform of the divine image, although focused on the individual, incorporates the interests of the community through his emphasis on the necessity of the love of God and the neighbour (Matt. 22:36-40) for this reform.

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Introduction

In Book XIV of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine, commenting on the significance of Eph. 4:23 — “Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new man who was created according to God” — writes that in this verse “‘created according to God’ means the same as ‘to the image of God’ in another text,” referring to Gen. 1:27. He then goes on to explain that the reason Paul exhorts his readers to put on this new man created according to God is because “by sinning man lost justice and the holiness of truth, and thus the image became deformed and discolored; he gets those qualities back again when he is reformed and renovated.”¹ Elsewhere, commenting on 2 Cor. 3:18 — “But we with face unveiled, looking at the glory of the Lord in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord” — Augustine explains that

we are being changed from form to form, and are passing from a blurred form to a clear one. But even the blurred one is the image of God, and if image then of course glory, in which men were created surpassing the other animals. . . . And when this nature, the most excellent of created things, is justified by its creator from its godlessness, it is transformed from an ugly form into a beautiful one.²

¹ Augustine, *The Trinity: (De Trinitate)*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park (N.Y.): New City Press, 1991), XIV.5.22:388. “Quod ait, ‘secundum Deum’ creatum; hoc alio loco dicitur, ‘ad imaginem Dei’ (Gen., I, 27). Sed peccando, iustitiam et sanctitatem veritatis amisit; propter quod haec imago deformis et decolor facta est: hanc recipit, cum reformatur et renovatur” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*: 2. *Les Images*, trans. P. Agaësse, Oeuvres de Saint Augustin, vol. 16 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1955), 404).

² Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.3.14:406. “de forma in formam mutamur, atque transimus de forma obscura in formam lucidam; quia et ipsa obscura, imago Dei est; et si imago, profecto etiam gloria, in qua homines creati sumus, praestantes caeteris animalibus. . . . Quae natura in rebus creatis excellentissima, cum a suo Creatore ab impietate justificatur, a deformi forma formosam transfertur in formam” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 458).

These are just two of many places in the *De Trinitate* where Augustine speaks of the image of God (*imago Dei*) in human beings, its deformity (*deformatas, immunditia, obscuritas*) on account of sin, and the need for it to be reformed (*reformare, transformare, mutare, transire, renovare*) in order to regain its likeness (*similitudo*) to God. Although in the *De Trinitate* Augustine is primarily concerned to investigate the Trinity in itself, he devotes a significant portion of the work to discussing its image in human beings, the harmful effects of sin on this image, and how it is reformed, as he says following Paul (Col. 3:10), in the recognition of God.³

John Edward Sullivan and Gerhart B. Ladner have both surveyed the theme of the reform of the divine image in human beings in Augustine's thought as a whole, giving some attention to the *De Trinitate*.⁴ Guido Maertens and Kenneth B. Steinhauser have also studied the theme of human beings as the image of God in Augustine's *Confessions* (but not with a focus on the reform of this image).⁵ However, to date no one has produced a detailed study on the theme of the reform of the divine image in human beings as it is presented specifically in Augustine's *De Trinitate*.

Accordingly, in this thesis I shall fill this gap in the study of Augustine by investigating the theme of the reform of the image of God in human beings in his *De Trinitate*. Through my research I shall bring to light important features of Augustine's thinking on the reform of the divine image exhibited in this work that have been overlooked in the extant surveys of this idea in Augustine's thought. These original features consist of the psychological changes that Augustine argues a human being undergoes in the process of reform and how

³See Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.1.5:399.

⁴John Edward Sullivan, *The Image of God: The Doctrine of St. Augustine and Its Influence* (Dubuque: Priory Press, 1963); Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); idem, "St. Augustine's Conception of the Reformation of Man to the Image of God," *Augustinus Magister* 2 (1954): 867-78.

⁵Guido Maertens, "Augustine's Image of Man," in *Images of Man in Ancient and Medieval Thought*, ed. F. Bossier et al. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1976); Kenneth B. Steinhauser, "Creation in the Image of God According to Augustine's *Confessions*," *The Patristic and Byzantine Review* 7.2-3 (1988): 199-204.

these changes are effected distinctly, but jointly by the persons of the Trinity. Thus, no scholar has discussed in detail Augustine's arguments in the *De Trinitate* concerning how sin damages the faculties of knowing and willing in a human being or how he argues that the actions of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on the mind, the seat of the divine image, gradually mend these faculties, making them fit again for the contemplation of God. That is, scholars have not given sufficient attention to the trinitarian and psychological aspects of the reform of the divine image in Augustine's thought. In order to remedy this oversight, my thesis will focus particularly on bringing to light these aspects of the idea of reform as it appears in Augustine's *De Trinitate*.

Given that no one has thoroughly studied the theme of the reform of the divine image in the *De Trinitate*, this thesis will be in the first place expository in nature. I will discuss in what sense for Augustine human beings are created in the image of God, what he believes the effects of original sin on this pristine image are, as well as the repercussions of these effects for the reform of the image. Then I will show how according to Augustine the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together indivisibly, but distinctly to restore their image in human beings through the gifts of faith, hope, and charity. Finally, I will discuss the contribution that Augustine maintains human beings make to the process of reforming the divine image within themselves by growing in the love and knowledge of God.

One aspect, however, of the theme of reform of the divine image in the *De Trinitate* has already been thoroughly studied by Sullivan and Ladner. This is how the various images of the Trinity, discussed in books IX-XV of the *De Trinitate*, concretely function to reveal aspects of the trinitarian processions.⁶ For this reason, I will not focus on this topic; I refer the reader to these two excellent studies. My focus will be on Augustine's development of the overall process of the reform of the divine image in human beings through the knowledge of God in the *De Trinitate*. That is, I will bring to light what according to Augustine

⁶See Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 115-62; Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 185-203.

the necessary steps are for human beings to pass from being a blurred image of God to a clear image.

In the course of my exposition of Augustine's thinking on the reform of the divine image in human beings, I will also criticize Catherine Mowry LaCugna's interpretation of two aspects of Augustine's thought in the *De Trinitate* that are related to the reform of the image. Since, as I will show,⁷ Augustine thinks that human beings reform the divine image within themselves by progressing in the knowledge of God — what he refers to as *sapientia* — a study of this process of reform is also a study of how he thinks human beings can know God. In her book *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, in which LaCugna explores the roots of contemporary Trinitarian doctrine in the Church Fathers and in medieval theology, she argues that in the *De Trinitate* Augustine's theology of the Trinity departed from the “external economy of salvation by the reflexive and anagogical method pursued in books 8-15” of this treatise.⁸ According to LaCugna, when in the *De Trinitate* Augustine discussed how human beings can know God through an investigation of his image in their mind — by understanding how their memory, understanding, and will work together distinctly, but jointly — he set forth a method for knowing the Trinity independent of God's economy. As she goes on to explain:

If the soul of every human being contains the vestiges of the Trinity, then we need only look within ourselves to discover God and God's oikonomia. In his early works Augustine admitted the possibility of knowledge of the Trinity apart from the Incarnation. He even attributed some knowledge of the Trinity to Platonic philosophers such as Plotinus. If it is possible to know the Trinity without Christ, then the economy, by this time used as a synonym for the Incarnation, is irrelevant to a theology of God. In Augustine's theology, the true economy is that of the individual soul, whose interior structure discloses the reality of the Trinity.⁹

⁷See pp. 13 ff. below.

⁸Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 91.

⁹*Ibid.*, 101.

Throughout this thesis I will argue that this interpretation of Augustine's method of coming to know the Trinity in the *De Trinitate* is false.¹⁰ I will show that according to Augustine the very possibility for human thought about God depends on God's prior gift of grace to human beings and their justification through Christ. Moreover, I will show that for Augustine progress in the knowledge of God depends on the nourishment of faith disclosed in the economy and the gifts of hope and charity that human beings receive from the persons of the Trinity. Finally, I will argue that even in the introspection of the mind's memory, understanding, and will as a means to understanding the Trinity — what would seem to be the most purely philosophical kind of understanding of God — Augustine believes that human beings are still dependent on faith. The kind of philosophical self-ascent that characterizes the Neo-Platonic ascent to God in Plotinus does not accurately describe Augustine's theology of the reform of the divine image through the knowledge of God in the *De Trinitate*. For Augustine there is, strictly speaking, no natural understanding of the Trinity; human beings are always dependent on God's assistance in their efforts to understand him. Secular philosophy, for Augustine, is not a means for human beings to grow in likeness to God. One of the ways that I will demonstrate this point is by comparing aspects of Augustine's thinking on the reform of the divine image with the Neo-Platonic understanding

¹⁰Although I single out LaCugna for criticism in this thesis and engage directly only with her, her evaluation of the *De Trinitate* as a philosophical work in which Augustine departs from the divine economy in his efforts to understand the Trinity is not original. It is a recent statement of a well-established view of Augustine among some scholars in the history of theology. As R.D. Crouse has pointed out, the influential historians of dogma Adolph von Harnack and R. Seeberg, as well as Olivier du Roy, have all argued that "the chief defect of the *De trinitate* is that it is too philosophical. . . . According to this view, it was St. Augustine's experience of Neoplatonism which enabled him to come to an understanding of the Trinity, quite apart from the revelation of the divine nature in the Incarnate Word, and therefore his doctrine of the Trinity represents the conclusions of philosophical speculation rather than the product of theological mediation upon the revealed mystery" (R.D. Crouse, "St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*: Philosophical Method," in *Studia Patristica*, vol. 16, pt. 2, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985), 501-02). Michel René Barnes, moreover, has pointed out LaCugna's significant debt to Olivier du Roy's influential book *L'intelligence de la foi en la trinité selon saint Augustin*. See Michel René Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 244. Since in this thesis I am directly critical of the interpretation of Augustine's theological method that these scholars share with LaCugna, I am also indirectly involved in a critical dialogue with them through my dialogue with her.

of the soul's *regressus ad Deum*. Given that the philosophical theology of Plotinus, likely transmitted through the works of Marius Victorinus, is one of Augustine's sources in the *De Trinitate*,¹¹ I will show how although he took over some aspects of this theology, he ultimately diverged from it.

LaCugna, among others, has also argued that in the *De Trinitate* Augustine blurs "any real distinctions among the divine persons" in the Trinity and that for him the Trinity "has only *one* relation to the creature, even though the taxonomy of redemptive history, as attested in the Bible, is threefold."¹² According to her, for Augustine the "Triune God's relationship to us is unitary."¹³ While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to refute this claim definitively (to do so would require a book-length study concerning this one topic), I hope that my discussion of the distinct roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the reform of their image in human beings will assist other scholars in doing so. In particular, my discussion in Chapter 3 concerning the absolutely distinct relationship between the Son and human beings in the process of the reform of the divine image is, I think, a powerful exception to LaCugna's assessment of Augustine's trinitarian theology.¹⁴

Finally, Rowan Williams has pointed out that among some contemporary interpreters of Augustine his "concern with the self-relatedness of the divine essence (on the analogy of

¹¹See Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 83; Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 1:80-81; Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 5-10; Maertens, "Augustine's Image of Man," 176-79; Hill, introduction to *The Trinity*, 38.

¹²LaCugna, *God for Us*, 86, 99. Lewis Ayres has written an excellent short review of this trend among scholars, and particularly among Orthodox theologians, in the interpretation of the *De Trinitate*. See Lewis Ayres, "The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine's Trinitarian Theology," in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (London: Routledge, 2000), 51-53. As Michel René Barnes points out, scholars often unfavourably compare Augustine's theology of the Trinity, which they argue has its starting point in the unity of the Godhead, with Cappadocian trinitarian theology, which they think takes better account of the plurality in the Trinity. In this comparison, Augustine's theology is understood as characteristic of the Latin theological tradition, and the Cappadocians as characteristic of the Greek tradition. Barnes, who thinks that this opposition is not particularly helpful, ultimately traces its source to Theodore de Régnon's book *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*. See Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," 237-50.

¹³LaCugna, *God for Us*, 99.

¹⁴See pp. 71 ff. below.

self-perception and self-assent of the human subject) is seen as one of the primary sources of that pervasive Western European obsession with the individual's sense of him- or herself which has led, in the wake of Kant, to the fundamental illusion of modernity, the notion that the private self is the arbiter and source of value in the world." Williams writes that these scholars accuse Augustine "of collaborating in the construction of the modern consciousness . . . a hugely inflated self-regard, fed by the history of introspection," in which they assign him a central role. In short, these scholars understand Augustine's approach to trinitarian theology in the *De Trinitate* as a forerunner of modern individualism and subjectivism because they believe he asserts that human beings can know God by themselves, through themselves, which they argue establishes him as a proponent of a proto-Cartesian method of introspection.¹⁵ As John C. Cavadini explains, "if" for Augustine "God is visible first and foremost to the individual soul in an introspective moment of Neoplatonic ascent, then the attention of the individual seeking God seems irretrievably propelled away from the human community as locus of the economy of God's self revelation. The individual is left almost as a self-sufficient, or self-constituting, subject, the 'alone seeking the alone,' to quote a Plotinian tag."¹⁶ Both Williams and Cavadini have argued against this interpretation of Augustine's thought in the *De Trinitate*. In my thesis I will add to their arguments by showing how Augustine's insistence on the unceasing dependence of human beings on grace and faith in the process of coming to know God undermines an interpretation of his theology as subjective and individualistic. Furthermore, following Williams I will argue that Augustine's emphasis on the necessity of concretely loving the neighbour

¹⁵Williams identifies John Zizioulas's book *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church* and Colin Gunton's book *Enlightenment and Alienation* as two sources of this interpretation of Augustine. Rowan Williams, "Sapientia and the Trinity: Reflections on the *De Trinitate*," in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Mélanges T.J. Van Bavel*, vol. 1, ed. Bernard Bruning et al. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 317-18.

¹⁶John C. Cavadini, "The Quest for Truth in Augustine's *De Trinitate*," *Theological Studies* 58 (1997): 430.

for having God present to human beings in order to participate in his *sapientia* undermines an interpretation of his theology as asocial or egotistical. According to Augustine, in the reform of the divine image self-interest necessarily includes the interests of others.

This study will shed new light on the thought of one of the most influential Christian theologians on the theme of the soul's return to God, which is an important topic in the history of Christian thought.¹⁷ A presentation of Augustine's views on the reform of the divine image in the *De Trinitate* will also contribute to the history of Christian thought on the economic Trinity and how it functions to reveal the immanent Trinity to human beings. Moreover, insofar as this study will undertake a detailed investigation of the idea of the reform of the divine image specific to the *De Trinitate*, it will bring to light Augustine's views on the trinitarian dimensions of this reform, which have been marginalized in extant studies on the history of Christian thought in favour of a strict focus on his understanding of the role of the Son in this process. In particular, this study will shed light on Augustine's understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in this process, which, with some notable exceptions,¹⁸ has not received adequate attention from scholars.¹⁹ Consequently, this study will contribute to the history of Christian trinitarian thought — a topic that, as Gerald O'Collins has pointed out, is of great interest in the contemporary study of Christian theology.²⁰

Furthermore, insofar as Augustine understands the reform of the divine image to be, in part, a psychological process, this study will also provide insights into the history of Chris-

¹⁷On Augustine's significance in the history of theology, see Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age*, (Downers Grove (Ill.): InterVarsity Press, 1992), 16.

¹⁸Namely, Congar's *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* and Rowan Williams's article "Sapientia and the Trinity".

¹⁹See Gerald O'Collins, "The Holy Trinity: The State of the Questions," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 1. O'Collins also mentions that the connection between the economic and immanent Trinity is a current topic of debate in Christian theology (19-21).

tian thinking on psychology. Since, as I will show, Augustine develops his views on the reform of the divine image in human beings principally from biblical (especially Pauline) texts, this thesis will also contribute to the study of patristic exegesis of scripture. This thesis will also be significant from the standpoint of the history of Christian philosophy, since in it I bring to light Augustine's understanding of the limits of purely secular philosophy as a means to knowing God, as well as his understanding of how secular philosophy differs from Christian philosophy.

A study of Augustine's views on the reform of the divine image specific to the *De Trinitate* may also be valuable as a point of comparison for future Augustinian scholars who would wish to trace the development of this theme in Augustine's other works, such as the Anti-Pelagian writings (e.g. *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*). Finally, more than one scholar has noted that while there is no lack of secondary literature on Augustine, there are surprisingly few works that focus on the *De Trinitate* "as a particular work with its own special structure and movement."²¹ Sullivan has also noted that many treatises exist on the reform of the divine image in the works of the Eastern Church Fathers, but "the teaching of the Latin Fathers about the divine image in man has not attracted as much recent interest as the teaching of their eastern counterparts, and, in particular, the doctrine of St. Augustine, the greatest of the Fathers, has been somewhat slighted."²² Consequently, with this study of the *De Trinitate* I will help fill this void in the field of Augustinian studies.

²¹D. Juvenal Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity: A Study in the Development of Aquinas' Teaching* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990), 13. See also, Neil Ormerod, "Augustine's *De Trinitate* and Lonergan's Realms of Meaning," *Theological Studies* 64 (2003): 774; Cavadini, "The Quest for Truth in Augustine's *De Trinitate*," 429.

²²Sullivan, *The Image of God*, viii. Ladner also remarks that "there is a vast amount of theological, psychological, and historical literature on conversion and there are dogmatic, canonistic, liturgical, and historical works on the sacraments of baptism and of penance and on pre-Christian ideas of spiritual regeneration or rebirth. But little has been written on the religious roots of the idea and reality of reform, except in so far as it is treated as a part of the doctrine of justification and sanctifying grace in Catholic dogmatics" (*The Idea of Reform*, 33).

An Outline of the Theology of the Divine Image in the *De Trinitate*

Before proceeding to a careful analysis of the idea of the reform of the image of God in human beings in Augustine's *De Trinitate*, it is first necessary to point out the main features of this idea in the treatise in order to determine what it means, according to Augustine, for the human being to be reformed in the image of the Trinity: reformed in terms of what, for what reason, and by what means? By setting forth these point at the outset, I will provide a clearer idea of the object of this thesis's investigation. I will then build upon this preliminary sketch of the theme of the reform of the divine image in the *De Trinitate* in the following chapters.

The Genesis of the Idea: Human Beings are the Image of the Trinity

The origins of Augustine's idea that the human being must be reformed in the image of God lie in the Book of Genesis and the letters of Paul. In Gen. 1:26, God says, "Let us make humankind to our image" (NRSV).¹ In Book VII of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine sets out to determine who the "us" and "our" are that this verse refers to. He writes:

'Let us make' and 'our' are in the plural, and must be understood in terms of relationships. For he did not mean that gods should do the making, or do it to the image and likeness of gods, but that the Father and the Son and the Holy

¹Incidentally, the gender neutral language of the NRSV in this instance is appropriate to Augustine's understanding of the nature of the human image, for he argues in Book XII that on account of Gen. 1:27 — "God made man to the image of God; he made him male and female" — one must understand that the text "does not exclude the female from the image of God that is meant." See Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.3.10:327.

Spirit should do it; do it therefore to the image of Father and Son and Holy Spirit, so that man might subsist as the image of God; and God is three.²

The reason that the verse speaks of creating humankind to “our image,” according to Augustine, is that humankind is created in the image of the Trinity.

Augustine specifies, however, that humankind is not the image of God in the same way that the Son of God is the image of God, equal to the Father, who “being in the form of God did not think it robbery to be equal to God” (Phil. 2:6).³ He explains that “we too are the image of God, though not the equal one like him; we are made by the Father through the Son, not born of the Father like that image; we are image because we are illuminated with light; that one is so because it is the light that illuminates.”⁴ The created status of human beings sets them apart as images of God from the uncreated and eternally begotten Son, the image of God. It is for this reason, Augustine argues, that Gen. 1:27 added that humankind was created “to the image” of God, “because of the disparity of his likeness to God . . . not equal to the trinity as the Son is equal to the Father.”⁵ Thus, Augustine’s exegesis of Gen. 1:26-27 in Book VII of the *De Trinitate* reveals that, to his understanding, humankind

²Augustine, *The Trinity*, VII.4.12:231. “‘Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram’ (Gen., I, 26). Et ‘faciamus’, et ‘nostram’, pluraliter dictum est, et nisi ex relativis accipi non oportet. Non enim ut facerent dii, aut ad imaginem et similitudinem deorum; sed ut facerent Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, ad imaginem Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti, ut subsisteret homo imago Dei. Deus autem Trinitas” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII): I. Le Mystère*, trans. M. Mellet and TH. Camelot, Oeuvres de Saint Augustin, vol. 15 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1955), 550). See also XII.2.6 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine makes the same point about the significance of the word “our” (325).

³A verse that Augustine often quotes in support of the Son’s equality with the Father. See I.2.7-I.4.31 of *The Trinity* (69-90).

⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, VII.2.5:223. “et nos imago Dei sumus: non quidem aequalis, facta quippe a Patre per Filium, non nata de Patre sicut illa. Et nos, quia illuminamur lumine; illa vero, quia lumen illuminans” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 522).

⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, VII.4.12:231. “Sed propter imparem, ut diximus, similitudinem dictus est homo ‘ad imaginem’: et ideo ‘nostram’, ut imago Trinitatis esset homo; non Trinitati aequalis sicut Filius Patri, sed accedens, ut dictum est, quadam similitudine” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 550). Augustine’s distinction here between the image of God in humankind and the Son’s status as the image of God probably stems from Paul. As Gerhart B. Ladner points out, in 2 Cor. 4:4 and Col. 3:10 “St. Paul makes . . . an important distinction between Christ, who is the image of God, and man who is reformed (as he was created) only according to or in the image of God, a distinction which . . . was lasting” in subsequent Christian thought. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 55.

is the image of the triune God — inferior in likeness to the uncreated image of God, but an image none the less.⁶

Through an exegesis of two passages from the letters of Paul, Augustine goes on to show that human beings are the image of God specifically in virtue of their rational mind. In Eph. 4:22-24 the apostle writes: “You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (NRSV). Similarly, in Col. 3:9-10 the apostle writes: “Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator” (NRSV). From these two passages in the Epistles, Augustine infers that

if then we are being renewed in the spirit of our mind, and if it is this new man who is being renewed for the recognition of God according to the image of him who created him, there can be no doubt that man was not made to the image of him who created him as regards his body or any old part of his consciousness, but as regards the rational mind, which is capable of recognizing God.⁷

Since, Augustine argues, Paul describes the self as being “renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator” (Col. 3:10), and he commands that the self carry out this renewal

⁶Augustine’s assertion that human beings are the image of the Trinity sets his understanding of the divine image apart from, e.g., that of Clement and Origen, who asserted that human beings are the image of the Image of God, the Son, and not of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For their understanding of the nature of the divine image in human beings, see Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 85-89.

⁷Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.3.12:329. “Si ergo spiritu mentis nostrae renovamur, et ipse est novus homo qui renovatur in agnitionem Dei secundum imaginem ejus qui creavit eum; nulli dubium est, non secundum corpus, neque secundum quamlibet animi partem, sed secundum rationalem mentem, ubi potest esse agnitio Dei, hominem factum ad imaginem ejus qui creavit eum” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 234). Augustine also identifies the “inner nature” that is “being renewed day by day” in 2 Cor. 4:16 with the rational mind (XII.3.13:329). See also XIV.1.5:373-74 of *The Trinity* where Augustine remarks on the need to find in the “rational or intellectual soul . . . an image of the creator which is immortally engrained in the soul’s immortality.” As John Edward Sullivan explains, for Augustine “the outer man is simply that life in man which remains on the sense level, whether external or internal sense. The inner man, site of the image, is the specifically human life, that is rational and intellectual life in man” (97).

in the spirit of its mind (Eph. 4:23), the original dwelling place, so to speak, of the self's image of God must be in the rational mind, for it is in the mind that one makes progress in the image.⁸ That is, in order for the self to be renewed in the spirit of its mind according to the image of its creator, it must have this image already in the mind. Thus, according to Augustine, human beings in the process of reforming themselves in the image of God are being reformed in respect of their rational mind, which is the image of God.⁹

Reform and the Knowledge of God

The human mind is renewed, Augustine argues again from an exegesis of Paul, through the knowledge of him of whom it is an image. In 1 Cor. 11:7, the apostle writes that "a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man." Augustine explains that in this enigmatic verse the head refers metaphorically to the human mind. Since the mind is the image of God in the human being, Augustine argues that the apostle wished to convey that it should not be checked (or "veiled") as it reaches out towards the eternal, for "the more it reaches out toward what is eternal, the more it is formed thereby to the image of God, and so it is not to be curbed or required to moderate or restrain its exertions in this direction, and therefore the man ought

⁸cf. Augustine's understanding of the location of the divine image with Ambrose's notion that Paradise, whence human beings fell, "is an altogether spiritual entity, the abode of virtues in the principal, the rational, part of the soul" (Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 145-46). Kenneth B. Steinhauser has argued that Augustine's location of the image of God in the rational mind in the *Confessions*, written a little prior to the *De Trinitate*, is influenced by Manichaean ideas concerning the tension between the human soul and its "self," which is the image of God. He writes that a "trace of Manichaean dualism remains" in Augustine's thinking on the nature of the divine image, since "only the spiritual characteristics of the human beings are in the image of God." See Steinhauser, "Creation in the Image of God According to Augustine's *Confessions*," 199-204.

⁹I shall touch upon Augustine's view of the nature of the rational *mens* as distinct from the *anima* and the significance of this distinction in the faculties of the soul for the reform of the image of God in human beings in Chapter 4 (see pp. 114 ff.). However, for a more thorough overview of Augustine's understanding of the rational mind, see Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 46-49. See also Edmund Hill's insightful foreword to Books IX-XIV of *The Trinity* (258-69).

not to cover his head.”¹⁰ It is by reaching out to eternal things, then, that the human mind is formed to the likeness of God.¹¹

This is so, moreover, because, as Augustine explains in Book IX of the *De Trinitate*, “all positive knowledge of quality is like the thing which it knows. . . . So the consciousness has some kind of likeness to the positive quality known, either when it takes pleasure in it or when it is displeased with the lack of it.” From this statement Augustine goes on to assert that it “follows that insofar as we know God we are like him.”¹² Thus, the mind — the image of God in the human being — is reformed to the image and likeness of God by knowing him of whom it is an image, for the more it knows God, the more it becomes like him.¹³ Accordingly, Augustine writes that “when we know God, we are indeed made better ourselves than we were before we knew him, especially when we like this knowledge and appropriately love it and it becomes a word and a kind of likeness to God.”¹⁴ Similarly,

¹⁰ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.3.10:328. “Et quoniam quantumcumque se extenderit in id quod aeternum est, tanto magis inde formatur ad imaginem Dei, et propterea non est cohibenda, ut se inde contineat ac temperet; ideo vir non debet velare caput” (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres VIII-XV), 230).

¹¹ cf. Augustine’s interpretation of the “climbers” ascending to the heavens on Jacob’s ladder in Gen. 28:12. They are, he writes, “those who are making progress toward an understanding of spiritual things” (Augustine, *Exposition of the Psalms*, trans. M. Boulding (New York: New City Press, 1990-2003), 5:500).

¹² Augustine, *The Trinity*, IX.2.16:279-80. “Sed omnis secundum speciem notitia, similis est ei rei quam novit. . . . Habet ergo animus nonnullam speciei notae similitudinem, sive cum ea placet, sive cum ejus privatio displicet. Quocirca in quantum Deum novimus, similes sumus: sed non ad aequalitatem similes, quia nec tantum cum novimus, quantum ipse se” (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres VIII-XV), 104).

¹³ As Sullivan writes, for Augustine “the gradual growth in divine likeness is nothing other than a gradual deepening of knowledge, and the gradual strengthening of love, of God” (61, see also pp. 146-47). The knowledge of God and the love of God are intimately related in Augustine’s thinking on the process of the reform of the divine image in the *De Trinitate*. I shall discuss the connection between the two in Chapter 4, where I examine the role of reason and the role of love in the reform of the divine image in human beings. Yves Congar has argued that the idea that human beings become like God to the extent that they know him and love him serves as one of the motives for Augustine’s extensive discussion of theophanies and the divine missions in books II and IV of the *De Trinitate*: “Augustine’s thoughts about the theophanies in the first place and then about the divine missions were guided on the one hand by the affirmation of the unity and consubstantiality of God and, on the other, by his related desire to deepen and intensify the image of the *Deus-Trinitas* in the souls of believers. The soul is more God’s image when, because of the knowledge that the Word communicates to it and the love that the Spirit places in it, it makes present the resemblance to the one of whom it is the image. The missions make possible an increase in faith and love” (Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3:84).

¹⁴ Augustine, *The Trinity*, IX.2.16:280. “ita cum Deum novimus, quamvis meliores efficiamur quam er-

Augustine writes that “when we live according to God our mind should be intent on his invisible things and thus progressively be formed from his eternity, truth and charity.”¹⁵

Furthermore, according to Augustine, to grow in the knowledge, and therefore likeness, of God is to become wise. On the basis of what he believes to be the biblical distinction between wisdom (*sapientia*) and knowledge (*scientia*) in 1 Cor. 12:8 and Job 28:28, Augustine defines wisdom as the “contemplation of eternal things.”¹⁶ Thus, in becoming like God by reaching out to eternal things, the human mind comes to possess wisdom. In Augustine’s theology, however, the possession of wisdom is something more than cognitive knowledge of the divine. It is an “actual sharing (*participatione*) in God himself,”¹⁷ who is the “wisdom by whose imitation we are formed.”¹⁸ As Augustine says, a “soul becomes wise by participating in wisdom.”¹⁹ To be wise, and thus to imitate Wisdom itself, human beings must participate in that same Wisdom; they must have God present to them in order to be in him and to have him in themselves.²⁰

The movement in the process of the reform of the divine image that Augustine has in mind could be expressed as follows: the more the image knows him of whom it is an image, the more it images him. Admittedly, this expression is confusing; nevertheless, it does

amus antequam nossemus, maximeque cum eadem notitia etiam placita digneque amata verbum est, fitque aliqua Dei similitudo illa notitia” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 104).

¹⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.3.21:333. “Apostolus virum dixit imaginem et gloriam Dei, mulierem autem gloriam viri (*I Cor.*, XI, 7); apparet tamen cum secundum Deum vivimus, mentem nostram in invisibilia ejus intentam, ex ejus aeternitate, veritate, charitate, proficenter debere formari” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 248, 250).

¹⁶Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.4.22:334; idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 250, 252.

¹⁷Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.1.5:399. “In quarto decimo autem de sapientia hominis vera, id est, Dei munere in ejus ipsius Dei participatione donata . . . disputatur” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 432).

¹⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, VII.2.4:222. “ipse sapientia . . . cujus imitatione formamur” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 518).

¹⁹Augustine, *The Trinity*, VII.1.2:220.

²⁰cf. Augustine’s exposition of Ps. 122:4, where he writes that in order to become like God a human being must become “Israel” — a name that he argues refers to one who sees God — for a “human being truly is when he sees God. He is when he sees Him Who Is, for in seeing Him Who Is, the creature too comes to be in his measure” (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 6:22).

correspond to how Augustine thinks of the process of imaging the divine in human beings. John E. Sullivan notes that this confusion arises because Augustine tended to conflate the terms 'image' (*imago*) and 'likeness' (*similitudo*), as opposed to other writers, such as Origen and Jerome, who preserved a careful distinction between the two terms. However, as Sullivan also notes, the terms are not identical for Augustine; rather, the imperfect 'image' of the Creator grows in 'likeness' towards him.²¹ 'Image' thus stands for the ideal to which human beings are tending in the process of reform, an ideal that they are currently short of and that they grow in 'likeness' towards. Human beings are the image of God, then, in the same sense that one refers to children as images of their parents,²² i.e., imperfectly and in potency.²³ Augustine's commentary on Ps. 50:1, where he explains in what sense human beings will become "gods" for whom God is the "God of gods", may help to clarify this distinction between image, image in potency, and likeness:

'See,' saith the Apostle, 'what love God hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and be, the sons of God.' And in another place, 'Dearly beloved, we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.' We are therefore [gods] in hope, not yet in substance. 'But we know,' he saith, 'that when He shall have appeared, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' The Only Son is like Him by birth, we like by seeing. For we are not like in such sort as He, who is the same as He is by whom He was begotten: for we are like, not equal: He, because equal, is therefore like.'²⁴

²¹Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 11-12. For one instance where Augustine seems to note the distinction, see XII.16, where he writes: "Honor enim hominis verus est imago et similitudo Dei" (Augustine, *La Trinité* (*Livres VIII-XV*), 240). See also VII.12, quoted above on p. 5. For the history of the distinction between image and likeness in Greek patristic thought on the reform of the divine image in human beings, see Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 83-89, 95.

²²This analogy is apt, for Ladner points out that, in the *Questions on the Heptateuch* and *On Diverse Questions*, Augustine restricts the use of the term image to a likeness that is genetically derived from its archetype: "In order to become an image, similitude must originate from that which it resembles; the image relationship requires that the image is somehow produced or begotten by that which is reproduced in it — as the reflection in a mirror by the object which is reflected, the portrait by its model, a son by his father, Christ by God" (*The Idea of Reform*, 185-86).

²³In this respect, Augustine's understanding of the relationship between image and likeness is similar to Clement and Origen's, who did carefully distinguish between the two terms, and unlike Athanasius's, who identified the likeness of God with the content of the divine image. See Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 85-89.

²⁴Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, trans. A. Cleveland Coxe, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene*

Therefore, human beings are the image of God because they have the potential to become like God. In this respect they, as images of God, differ from Christ, the image of God, who is substantially identical with God in actuality.²⁵ Human beings, then, are created in the image of God. However, this image grows in them as they grow in likeness to God, and they become superior images of God the more that they know him.

Knowledge of the divine, therefore, brings about a change in human beings' manner of existence. As I will argue in Chapters 3 and 4, for Augustine coming to know God involves more than obtaining a propositional understanding of him: it is a process that involves a change in the whole outlook of a person that can be summed up in the perfection of the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love.²⁶ Nevertheless, he sets the end of these three virtues in the knowledge of God, and it is this end that guides his discussion of the reform of the image of God in human beings throughout the *De Trinitate*.

Sin and the Necessity for Reform

Granted that human beings are the image of God in virtue of their rational mind, why does Paul, and Augustine following him, think that this mental image is in need of reform? According to Augustine, it is because of the transgression of Adam and Eve — and the penalty that they and all their descendants paid for that transgression — that the mental image has fallen from its original glory and is now “worn out (*obsoletam*) and distorted (*deformem*).”²⁷ Augustine writes that “by sinning man lost justice and the holiness of truth, and thus the image became deformed and discolored,”²⁸ and consequently is in need

Fathers: First Series, vol. 8, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody (Mass.): Hendrickson, 2004), L.2:178.

²⁵cf. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 188. See also Augustine, *The Trinity*, VII.2.5:223, quoted above on p. 11. See the discussion on sin below, pp. 17 ff.

²⁶Ladner makes this same point in *The Idea of Reform* (196).

²⁷Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.3.11:379; idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 374.

²⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.5.22:388. “Sed peccando, justitiam et sanctitatem veritatis amisit; propter quod haec imago deformis et decolor facta est” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 404).

of reform. Original sin generated lasting defects in the image of God in human beings that would have to be overcome in the process of reform. The sinful condition that sin established in humankind, Augustine thinks, altered human beings for the worse both physically and mentally. In fact, he argues that the physical death that human beings must suffer on account of sin so affected humanity that it can no longer properly think of spiritual things. If human beings become like God insofar as they know him, then sin, by hindering their ability to think about him, thrust them far from his likeness.

The root of sin, for Augustine, is pride, for it was on account of their pride that the devil was able to persuade the first humans to godlessness, the first death of the sinner.²⁹ Moreover, Augustine argues that the relentless preference on the part of human beings for power over justice is part of the reason why they became unlike God and no longer able to contemplate him. As the quotation above shows, according to Augustine the image of God in human beings became deformed when they forsook justice and truth in sin. He argues that the first humans lost justice when, imitating the devil, they refused to be subject to God and instead sought power so that they might rule themselves as gods. As he writes, “our first parents could not have been persuaded to sin unless they had been told, *You will be like gods* (Gn 3:5).”³⁰ However, the image and likeness of God in human beings can only be preserved, Augustine says, “when facing him from whom its impression is received. And so the less love he has for what is his very own the more closely can he cling to God.”³¹ Consequently, when the human being loves itself and its own power rather than God, it “slides away” from him, who is the “whole” into “the part which is its own private property,” namely, “its own body, which is the only part it has a part-ownership in.”³² Thus,

²⁹ Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.3.15:163, XII.3.14:330.

³⁰ Ibid., XI.2.8:310. See also XIII.5.23:362.

³¹ Ibid., XII.3.16:331. “Honor enim hominis verus est imago et similitudo Dei, quae non custoditur nisi ad ipsum a quo imprimitur. Tanto magis itaque inhaeretur Deo, quanto minus diligitur proprium” (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres VIII-XV), 240).

³² Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.3.14:330.

when Adam, because of “a distorted appetite for being like God,” ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil “out of greed to experience his own power,”

he tumbled down at a nod from himself into himself as though down to the middle level. And then, while he wants to be like God under nobody, he is thrust down as a punishment from his own half-way level to the bottom, to the things in which the beasts find their pleasure. And thus, since his honor consists in being like God and his disgrace in being like an animal, *man established in honor did not understand; he was matched with senseless cattle and became like them* (Ps 49:12).³³

Thus it was precisely because Adam wanted to be like God, and not subject to him, that he became unlike God.³⁴

Augustine makes clear that this thrusting down was a punishment from God, but he also shows that it is a natural consequence of human pride. Since for Augustine, as I pointed out above, the body is the only part over which human beings can exercise power (since it is the only part they have ownership of), when they love that power they seek out bodily things. As a result, he argues that the human mind becomes so preoccupied with bodily things that “it wraps itself in their images which it has fixed in the memory. In this way it defiles itself foully with a fanciful sort of fornication by referring all its business to one or other of the following ends: curiosity, searching for bodily and temporal experience through the senses; swollen conceit, affecting to be above other souls which are given over

³³Ibid., XII.3.16:331. “Cupiditate vero experiendae potestatis suae, quodam nutu suo ad se ipsum tanquam ad medium proruit. Ita cum vult esse sicut ille sub nullo, et ab ipsa sui medietate poenaliter ad ima propellitur, id est, ad ea quibus pecora laetantur: atque ita cum sit honor ejus similitudo Dei, dedecus autem ejus similitudo pecoris, ‘homo in honore positus non intellexit; comparatus est jumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est eis’ (Psal., XLVIII, 13)” (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres VIII-XV), 240, 242).

³⁴cf. Augustine’s exposition of the phrase “Do not let my foot be dislodged” in Ps. 121:3-4: “If you rely on yourself, your foot has slipped already; and if your foot has slipped, you will be deceived into thinking you have already mounted to some particular step. You will fall off it, if you are proud. The humble person in the valley of weeping prays, *Do not let my foot be dislodged.*” Augustine makes clear that the proud person falls away from God, for the one who falls away is “the one who tries to be a light to himself and will not have the Lord for his light: this is the one who falls out of the light that enlightens him” (Augustine, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 5:513, 5:526).

to their senses; or carnal pleasure, plunging itself in this muddy whirlpool.”³⁵ By taking these images into itself, and striving ardently to hold on to them, the mind falls farther and farther away from God because, Augustine writes, it is only by enjoying things in God — i.e., as subject to God — that it can remain with God. However, since the mind wants to claim these things for itself, rather than enjoy them in God — i.e., to exert its power over them, rather than to enjoy them in another — “it turns away from him and slithers and slides down into less and less which is imagined to be more and more.” As the mind does this, “it becomes excessively intent on its own actions and the disturbing pleasures it culls from them.”³⁶ This increased egotism on the part of the mind means that it becomes less and less like God, insofar as God’s image is only preserved in human beings when they are intent on him. Human beings, Augustine argues, cannot be like God if they are intent only on themselves.³⁷

Furthermore, Augustine argues that in the exercise of pride, Adam and all human beings become unlike God, since in this exercise they imitate the devil. As he writes in Book XIII of the *De Trinitate*:

The essential flaw of the devil’s perversion made him a lover of power and a deserter and assailant of justice, which means that men imitate him all the more thoroughly the more they neglect or even detest justice and studiously devote themselves to power, rejoicing at the possession of it or inflamed with desire for it.³⁸

Since human beings allowed the devil to persuade them towards the “proud” and “malig-

³⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.3.14:330.

³⁶Ibid., X.2.7:292.

³⁷See also pp. 119 ff. below.

³⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.4.17:356. “Sed cum diabolus vitio perversitatis suae factus sit amator potentiae, et deservitor oppugnationis justitiae; sic enim et homines eum tanto magis imitantur, quanto magis neglecta, vel etiam perosa justitia, potentiae student, ejusque vel adeptione laetantur, vel inflammantur cupiditate” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 134). See also IV.3.14:162 of *The Trinity*. In the exposition of Ps. 121:3-4, Augustine also asserts that the devil fell from his angelic nature through pride and boldly declares that pride “alone causes someone to lose his foothold and come crashing down. Charity moves us to walk and make progress; pride pushes us into a fall” (idem, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 5:513).

nant” desire to be gods, Augustine argues that they became his associates. As a result, the devil drew human beings down from the divine heights to the depths of godlessness and made certain that their proud desires, directed away from God and towards themselves, would “load down the soul with weights of vice to sink with, and insure that the higher the soul considers itself to be borne up, the heavier its collapse will be.”³⁹ Through imitating the devil, then, human beings turn away from their Creator, and so fall away from his image and likeness.

Godlessness in spirit was not the only damage that sin brought about in the human likeness to the divine image. In persuading human beings to sin, Augustine writes that the devil also became the mediator of their physical death, which, as I will argue below, had a profound impact on their ability to image the divine. Following Rom. 5:12, Augustine argues that the devil with his single spiritual death of godlessness brought about in human beings a double death: first, the death of the spirit in turning away from God and, second, the “wholly just death” of the body as a “retribution” for turning away from him.⁴⁰ God imposed this penalty not only on the first sinners, but Augustine argues that all their descendants have also been tied up “in a kind of hereditary evil” because of the sin of Adam.⁴¹ Thus, he writes:

For us the road to death was through sin in Adam; *by one man sin entered the world and by sin death, and so it passed into all men insofar as all sinned* (Rom 5:12). The devil was the mediator of this road, persuading to sin and

³⁹Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.3.15:163.

⁴⁰Ibid., IV.3.15:163.

⁴¹Ibid., XIII.5.21:360. “Proinde quoniam propter unum illum tenebat diabolus omnes per ejus vitiatem carnalem concupiscentiam generatos” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 326). See also XIII.4.16 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine, following Eph. 2:1-3, writes that through the sin of the first humans all human beings came under the power of the devil, since the penal debt of the “first parents” of humankind “passes by origin to all who are born of the intercourse of the two sexes. . . . Thus all men are by origin under *the prince of the power of the air who works in the sons of unbelief* (Eph 2:2). And when I say ‘by origin’ I mean the same as the apostle when he says that he too was ‘by nature’ like the rest, by nature of course as bent by sin, not as created straight in the beginning” (355). The only human being excluded from this debt of sin, according to Augustine, is Christ, who was not born by sexual intercourse (n. 35, 367).

hurling down into death; he too brought his own single death to bear in order to operate our double death. By godlessness he died in spirit, though he did not die of course in the flesh; but he both persuaded us to godlessness and insured that because of it we should deserve to come to the death of the flesh.⁴²

For Augustine, the death of the body that sin introduced is a dramatic change for the worse in human nature. Had the first humans “remained upright” as they were made, they would not have experienced mortality. In their original created state, the immortal Spirit of God rested in human beings, but now that they have turned away from him they have become Earth and will go into the earth (Gen. 3:19). Augustine explains that in this verse, “Earth you are” signifies that human nature was “changed for the worse” through the mortal penalty of sin insofar as the Spirit of God does not abide in corruptible flesh (Gen. 6:3). This mortal penalty is indicated by the second half of the verse: “into earth you shall go.” As created, human beings are the immortal subjects of God; through sin and mortality they become the subjects of the devil, for Augustine points out that God said to the serpent, “You shall eat earth” (Gen. 3:14).⁴³ Since it is part of human nature to be the image of the Trinity, by becoming Earth this image was also changed for the worse in human beings.

Augustine shows in what way mortality has damaged the image of God in the human mind by looking at the effects of death on the human mind. He argues that mortality has caused human beings to become excessively preoccupied with bodily integrity and, as a result, their will and the attention of their mind is directed to physical objects in order to serve and preserve the body. As Augustine says, on account of the penalty of sin human beings

were more inclined to avoid the death of the flesh which they could not avoid, than the death of the spirit; that is they shrank more from the punishment than

⁴²Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.3.15:163.

⁴³Ibid., XIII.4.16:355. “quod vero viventi ait, ‘Terra es’; ostendit totum hominem in deterius commutatum. Tale est enim, ‘Terra es’; quale istud, ‘Non permanebit Spiritus meus in hominibus istis quoniam caro sunt’ (Id. [Gen.], VI, 3). Tunc ergo demonstravit eum ei traditum, cui dictum fuerat, ‘Terram manducabis’” (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres VIII-XV), 306, 308).

from what deserved the punishment. Few, after all, care — or care very much — about not sinning; but they make a great fuss about not dying, though it is in fact unobtainable.⁴⁴

Although death is a physical change in human nature, this change had adverse affects on the human mind through the change in capacities and affections it brought about. The mind,

by forsaking the one above itself with regard to whom alone it could keep its strength and enjoy him as its light, . . . became weak and dark, with the result that it was miserably dragged down from itself to things that are not what it is and are lower than itself by loves that it cannot master and confusions it can see no way out of.⁴⁵

In seeking to obtain the unobtainable — to stave off death by focusing on the needs of the body — the mind has become weak and dark because of its interest in, and resulting familiarity with, bodily things. Although these bodies are outside the mind, it takes their images into itself through its longstanding familiarity with them and becomes like them, insofar as the mind becomes like that which it knows.⁴⁶ Concerning the connection between the will, bodies, and the mind, Augustine writes:

Yet such is the force of love that when the mind has been thinking about things with love for a long time and has got stuck to them with the glue of care, it drags them along with itself even when it returns after a fashion to thinking about itself. Now these things are bodies which it has fallen in love with outside itself through the senses of the flesh and got involved with through a kind of long familiarity.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.3.15:163.

⁴⁵ Ibid., XIV.4.18:385. “tamen superiorem deserendo, ad quem solum posset custodire fortitudinem suam, eoque frui lumine suo, . . . sic infirma et tenebrosa facta est, ut a se quoque ipsa, in ea quae non sunt quod ipsa, et quibus superior est ipsa, infelicius laberetur per amores quos non valet vincere, et errores a quibus non videt qua redire” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 394).

⁴⁶ See p. 14 above.

⁴⁷ Augustine, *The Trinity*, X.2.7:293. “tanta vis est amoris, ut ea quae cum amore diu cogitaverit, eisque curae glutino inhaeserit, attrahat secum etiam cum ad se cogitandam quodam modo redit. Et quia illa corpora sunt, quae foris per sensus carnis adamavit, eorumque diuturna quadam familiaritate implicata est” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 134, 136).

Because the mind is so intent on bodies in order to serve the interests of the body, Augustine argues that it starts to confuse itself with the images of the bodies it takes in. It “joins itself” to the images of these bodies in it “with such extravagant love that it even comes to think it is itself something of the same sort,” with the result that it becomes “conformed to them in a certain fashion.”⁴⁸ The conformity of the mind to bodies, Augustine points out, is the *deformity* that Paul speaks against in Rom. 12:2 — the same deformity that he urges his listeners to rid themselves of in reforming their minds.⁴⁹ Thus, according to Augustine when one conforms one’s mind to its worldly interests, one deforms it, and since the mind is the image of God in human beings, one deforms this image too. The problem here, Augustine thinks, stems in the first place from the will that seeks objects that are harmful to human beings. Because of this weak and misguided will, the mind also becomes weak and the image of God in it is obscured. Augustine will argue that if human beings do not desire the right things — if they do not know what it is right to love — then they will not make progress in reforming the image and likeness of God in them.⁵⁰

Augustine argues, furthermore, that when the mind is so intent on bodily realities that it confuses itself with them, it can then no longer properly think of spiritual realities. For Augustine, the mind that thinks of itself as a body cannot think of a spiritual God. This is why such a mind loses the likeness of God, for it cannot know him as he is, but only insofar

⁴⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, X.3.8:293. “Errat autem mens, cum se istis imaginibus tanto amore conjungit, ut etiam se esse aliquid hujusmodi existimet. Ita enim conformatur eis quodam modo, non id existendo, sed putando” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 136). As Augustine writes in Book X of the *De Trinitate*, the mind has become so used to “loving sensible, that is bodily things” that it is now “unable to be in itself without their images” (idem, *The Trinity*, X.3.11:295). “Sed quia in iis est quae cum amore cogitat, sensibilibus autem, id est corporalibus, cum amore assuefacta est, non valet sine imaginibus eorum esse in semetipsa” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 142).

⁴⁹Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.5.22:388. “Qui vero commemorati convertuntur ad Dominum ab ea deformitate, qua per cupiditates saeculares conformabuntur huic saeculo, reformantur ex illo, audientes Apostolum dicentem, ‘Nolite conformari huic saeculo, sed reformamini in novitate mentis vestrae’ (*Rom.*, XII, 2)” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 404).

⁵⁰See the section on the role of charity in reforming the divine image in human beings in Chapter 4, pp. 98 ff. below.

as it is capable of thinking of him. Several times in the *De Trinitate* Augustine likens the effect of the body on the mind to an oppressive weight that loads it down, preventing it from rising up to the contemplation of God. For example, Augustine writes that when the mind excessively intent on bodies drags their images into it, and “plays about with them in idle meditation,” it comes to a point where “it cannot even think of anything divine except as being such [i.e., bodily], and so in its private avarice it is loaded with error and in its private prodigality it is emptied of strength.”⁵¹ When human beings “hanker after knowledge through experience of the changeable, temporal things,” their consciousness becomes “overweighted with a sort of self-heaviness” such that they forsake the eternal for the temporal to the extent that they cannot “go back up again.”⁵²

Augustine recognizes, however, that human beings must have knowledge of bodily and temporal things in order to live and function from day to day. After all, one cannot even go to celebrate the eucharist at church if one does not know the physical location of the church. Bodily and temporal knowledge, then, is not inherently bad for human beings according to Augustine. Whether this knowledge is harmful or not depends, rather, on how human beings use it; that is, how they love it. It is only when human beings set this knowledge as an end in itself (i.e., when they love it sinfully) that they begin to slide away from the eternal.⁵³ Thus, identifying the higher reason devoted to understanding spiritual truth with the male and the lower reason devoted to knowledge of temporal things with the female, Augustine writes:

But through that reason which has been delegated to administer temporal af-

⁵¹Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.3.15:330.

⁵²Ibid., XII.3.16:331. “Cum enim neglecta charitate sapientiae, quae semper eodem modo manet, concupiscitur scientia ex mutabilium temporaliumque experimento, inflat, non aedificat (*I Cor.*, VIII, 1): ita praegravatus animus quasi pondere suo a beatitudine expellitur, . . . nec redire potest effusis ac perditis viribus” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 242).

⁵³On the right use of temporal knowledge, see the section on the role of faith in reforming the divine image in human beings in Chapter 4, pp. 110 ff. below.

fairs he may slide too much into outer things by making unrestrained advances; and in this the active reason may have the consent of her head; that is to say the reason which presides as the masculine portion in the control tower of counsel may fail to curb her. In such a case the inner man grows old among his enemies, demons and the devil their chief who are jealous of virtue, and the sight of eternal things is withdrawn from the head himself as he eats the forbidden fruit with his consort, so that the light of his eyes is no longer with him.⁵⁴

To the extent, then, that human beings sinfully delight without reserve in bodily and temporal things, when it comes to the pursuit of knowledge of spiritual things they are “wrapped in a penal darkness and burdened with a corruptible body that weighs down the soul.”⁵⁵ According to Augustine, human beings are in the dark when it comes to the perception of spiritual truth because of the “the thick clouds of body likenesses which never cease to loom up in front of human thoughts.”⁵⁶ It is these bodily likenesses that obscure the likeness of God in human beings.

The mind that has mixed itself up with bodies, Augustine thinks, cannot conceive of something wholly spiritual, and so when it does begin to think about God it misses the mark, for it thinks of him in bodily terms. This is particularly the case insofar as bodies are many, but the knowledge of God is one; by clinging to the many, the mind falls short of the knowledge of God.⁵⁷ In order to know itself, and to know God through the image

⁵⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.3.13:329-30. cf. XIV.4.18, quoted above on p. 23, where Augustine describes the consequence of the mind having forsaken God, at the end of which he quotes Ps. 38:10: “From these depths it now cries in repentance in the psalms as God takes pity on it, *My strength has forsaken me and the light of my eyes is no longer with me*” (385).

⁵⁵Ibid., XV.6.44:429.

⁵⁶Ibid., XV.Epilogue.50:435. cf. Augustine in *On Christian Teaching*, where he writes of the necessary preparation for perceiving the divine light: “When he beholds this light (as far as he is able to), shining as it does even into remote places, and realizes that because of the weakness of his vision he cannot bear its brilliance, he is at the fifth stage — that is, in the resolve of compassion — and purifies his mind, which is somehow turbulent and in conflict with itself because of the impurities accumulated by its desire of what is inferior” (idem, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 34-35).

⁵⁷Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.2.11:160. Linda Darwish has suggested that Augustine’s notion of sin as dividedness has its roots in Neo-Platonic thought, “the One being identified . . . as the highest good while evil is associated with ‘the disharmony of the many with the one’” (Linda Darwish, “The Concept of the Mediator in Augustine’s Understanding of the Trinity,” *Didaskalia* 13, no. 1 (2001): 66). If Darwish is

of him that it has in itself, Augustine argues that the mind must “draw off what it has added to itself” — namely, those bodily images it has mixed itself up with.⁵⁸ Accordingly, Augustine interprets Ps. 5:5 — “In the morning shall I stand before you and contemplate” — to signify that it is only when Christ has come and, by removing the darkness of human mortality and corruption, lighted up the things hidden in the darkness (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5) that human beings will know God.⁵⁹

Thus, Augustine explains the consequences of sin and pride for the divine image in human beings both theologically and psychologically. Theologically, humanity becomes unlike God as a divine punishment. Psychologically, human beings through their obsession with the object of their power become like that object. They seek to serve the body and so become “bodily,” so to speak, and therefore unlike God.⁶⁰ From the desire for power, the human being becomes thoroughly immersed in the carnal, the sensual, the bestial — that which is precisely opposed to the spiritual God. If human beings become like God to the extent that they know God, then the bodily preoccupation that the penalty of sin set up in human beings has caused them to become unlike him, for they cannot think of him. Just as God lies beyond the thick clouds of bodily likenesses in the mind, so too has the mind, on account of sin, become a cloudy likeness to God — a likeness in need of reform.

correct, then Augustine’s solution to the problem that sin poses for the mind as the image of God, which I shall discuss in Chapter 3, is a solution to a philosophical as well as a religious concern.

⁵⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, X.3.11:295.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, I.3.17:77.

⁶⁰This is not to imply that Augustine understands the psychological cause for the sinful condition to be unrelated to the theological cause; rather, it is to point out two emphases in his analysis of the cause of the sinful state of mind in human beings. Augustine does not in the *De Trinitate* treat the question of the precise degree to which God acts as the direct agent of humankind’s punishment for original sin. It is conceivable that the theological cause of sin is secondary in terms of immediacy, and the psychological primary. It should be noted, however, that Augustine does not explicitly distinguish the psychological from the theological in his thinking on the effects of sin in the *De Trinitate*, but I think that it is helpful to note that these two processes are at work together in his thought on sin. In the downfall of the divine image through sin, human beings, on account of their motivations and patterns of thought, play a role alongside God in their punishment.

Progress and Reform

Augustine's conception of progress in the reform of the image of God in human beings as a continual and gradual process is essential to understanding his detailed analysis of how the human being proceeds from an obscure likeness to God in sin to a clear image of God in the afterlife. It is important to establish this point at the outset of this investigation, moreover, for, as Ladner points out, the notion of progress has many connotations for the modern reader:

The idea of progress can be part of many different world views. There can be progress, alternating with decline, in a cyclical and deterministic conception of history. But freedom, spiritual ascent, and the return of creatures to God can also be conceived as progressive steps. In this sense as well as in other more material respects the idea of reform is an idea of progress. Since the Enlightenment, however, and especially since its alliance with the biological idea of evolution in the nineteenth century, the idea of progress has acquired connotations of continuity, irresistibility, and all-inclusiveness which are lacking in the concept of reform.⁶¹

In the next chapter I shall discuss Augustine's rejection of the Neo-Platonic teaching of the pre-existence of the soul and the doctrine of knowledge as recollection. This rejection would seem to rule out a cyclical understanding of progress in the image, wherein the soul would repeatedly descend into a fallen body and rise up again to its Creator.⁶² The Enlightenment understanding of progress does not describe Augustine's thinking on progress in the reform of the divine image accurately either, for he argues that one cannot ever completely grasp the object human beings are striving for in the process of reform — God through his image in them. Augustine takes his starting point for this argument from Ps. 105:3-4 — “Let the heart of those who seek the Lord rejoice; seek the Lord and be strengthened; seek

⁶¹Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 30-31.

⁶²See p. 35 below.

his face always.” He explains that the Psalm says that one must seek the face of God — i.e., the knowledge of God — “always” because

that is indeed how incomprehensible things have to be searched for, in case the man who has been able to find out how incomprehensible what he is looking for is should reckon that he has found nothing. Why then look for something when you have comprehended the incomprehensibility of what you are looking for, if not because you should not give up the search as long as you are making progress in your inquiry into things incomprehensible, and because you become better and better by looking for so great a good which is both sought in order to be found and found in order to be sought? It is sought in order to be found all the more delightfully, and it is found in order to be sought all the more avidly. This is how we might also take the words of Wisdom in the book of Ecclesiasticus: *Those who eat me will be hungry still and those who drink me will be thirsty still* (Sir 24:29). They eat and drink because they find, and because they are hungry and thirsty they still go on seeking.⁶³

Because the object of inquiry in the process of reform is the eternal God, human beings cannot make relentless progress towards him, for as eternal and infinite God can never be completely circumscribed within a human understanding of him. However much human beings may come to know God, they will still fall short of comprehending him, and so they must go on seeking. They make progress towards him, but will never completely attain him in this life. As Augustine says, one “does not approach God by moving across intervals of place, but by likeness or similarity, and one moves away from him by dissimilarity or unlikeness.”⁶⁴ It is not a straight path from A to B that Augustine has in mind when he writes of human beings making progress in the divine image, but rather a continual process of imaging that comes to rest only in the beatific vision of the divine essence in the afterlife, as I will show in Chapter 4.⁶⁵

⁶³Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.Prologue.2:395-96. See also IX.Prologue.1, where Augustine writes: “*Look for God, it says, and your souls shall live; and in case anyone should be too quick to congratulate himself that he has got there, look for his face, it goes on, always* (Ps 105:4)” (270).

⁶⁴Ibid., VII.4.12:231. “Non enim locorum intervallis, sed similitudine acceditur ad Deum, et dissimilitudine receditur ab eo” (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres I-VII), 550).

⁶⁵See pp. 122 ff. below.

Therefore, it is the second view that Ladner puts forth that most accurately describes Augustine's understanding of progress in the image. Human beings make progress in reforming the image of God in their minds by progressive steps. As Augustine writes, the renewal of the mental image of God does not happen "in one moment of conversion," as in baptism, in which one obtains the immediate forgiveness for all sins, but one makes progress with respect to the image steadily, day by day. He uses the analogy of a person recovering from an arrow wound to explain that it is one thing to remove the arrow from the wound — this is accomplished in a moment as a preliminary matter to recovery — but another to heal from the wound itself. One achieves the latter only gradually and over time. Augustine takes this notion of a gradual renewal of the fallen mental image of God in man from 2 Cor. 4:16: "Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day."⁶⁶ Thus Augustine writes that if human beings wish to attain the perfection of the image in happiness — i.e., eternal life, which is to know God (John 17:3) —⁶⁷ they must construct a "ladder" of "straight wishes or wills" for themselves, "to be negotiated by definite steps." They must, along with the Psalmist, sing the song of *steps*

⁶⁶Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.5.23:389. "Sane ista renovatio non momento uno fit ipsius conversionis, sicut momento uno fit illa in Baptismo renovatio remissione omnium peccatorum: neque enim vel unum quantulumcumque remanet quod non remittatur. Sed quemadmodum aliud est carere febribus, aliud ab infirmitate, quae febribus facta est, revalescere; itemque aliud est infixum telum de corpore demere, aliud vulnus quod eo factum est secunda curatione sanare: ita prima curatio est causam remo vere [*sic*] languoris, quod per omnium fit indulgentiam peccatorum; secunda ipsum sanare languorem, quod fit paulatim proficiendo in renovatione hujus imaginis: quae duo demonstrantur in Psalmo, ubi legitur, 'Qui propitius fit omnibus iniquitatibus tuis'; quod fit in Baptismo: deinde sequitur, 'Qui sanat omnes languores tuos' (*Psal.*, CII, 3); quod fit quotidianis accessibus, cum haec imago renovatur. De qua re Apostolus apertissime locutus est, dicens: 'Et si exterior homo noster corrumpitur, sed interior renovatur de die in diem (*II Cor.*, IV, 16)'" (idem, *La Trinité* (*Livres VIII-XV*), 408, 410). Guido Maertens points out that Augustine had achieved this insight already in 386 C.E. in Milan: "In book VIII [of the *Confessions*] Augustine had, however, acknowledged his human weakness; the knowledge of God can no longer be a matter of a momentary revelation. It was less a matter of ecstasy than a gradual evolution in a man's life. It needed *time*." In coming to this realization, Maertens argues, Augustine had rejected the Plotinian view of human progress in the knowledge of God as a kind of sudden ecstasy ("Augustine's Image of Man," 182-83, 189).

⁶⁷For Augustine's argument establishing eternal life as the essence of happiness (*beatitudo*), see XIII.2.6-XIII.3.12:346-53 of *The Trinity*; idem, *La Trinité* (*Livres VIII-XV*), 276-300. For Augustine's use of John 17:3 to connect eternal life and divine wisdom, see, for example, XIV.5.25:391.

(Ps. 120-134) in order to rise from their fallen likeness to a clear likeness to God.⁶⁸

Conclusion: The Object of the Investigation

Now that I have surveyed the central features of Augustine's idea of the reform in the *De Trinitate* — that human beings are created in the image of the Trinity; that they reform this image through the knowledge of God; that there is a need to reform it on account of the grave damage done to their bodies, wills, and minds by the effects of sin; and that they must progressively and continually strive to reform this image — and brought to light their basis in scripture, I have sketched the object of this thesis's investigation and hinted at how I shall approach it. What I shall examine in the following chapters is Augustine's elaboration from scriptural sources of a continual and gradual process of reform in which human beings — created in the image of God in virtue of their rational minds, but now fallen away from likeness to God through sin — seek with the assistance of the Trinity to reform this image through the knowledge of God.

⁶⁸Ibid., XI.3.10:312.

The Beginning of Reform

For Augustine, the dilemma facing human beings is that they have lost the likeness of God that they once had before pride and sin deformed his image in them. Although the effects of sin greatly obscured the divine image in human beings, Augustine argues that it was not utterly destroyed. Insofar as human beings were created in the image of God in virtue of their rational minds, as long as they are able to experience truth, they are able to recall God, and so they retain his image. However, sin so damaged the image that they retain of God that human beings lack the strength to return by themselves to their former likeness to God. For the perfection of the divine image in them, Augustine argues, human beings are entirely dependent on God's free gift of grace. Because human beings are dependent on God for this, the first move that Augustine thinks that human beings must make towards reforming the divine image is to humble themselves before God: they must, he argues, acknowledge the debilitating effects of sin on them and exchange pride in their own capacities for obedience to God and faith in Christ.

The Status of the Divine Image After Sin

According to Augustine in the *De Trinitate*, human beings begin the reform of the divine image within themselves from the imperfect likeness they retain of it after sin. By sinning human beings did not lose the divine image, but they did lose the likeness to God that they had formerly enjoyed. However, Augustine insists that as long as human beings have the

potential to recall their God they retain an imperfect image of him within themselves.

As Sullivan notes, in the early part of Augustine's life his thinking on the effects of sin tended towards the view that sin had completely destroyed the divine image in human beings.¹ At one point in the *De Trinitate*, Augustine seems to continue to uphold this view. Discussing the role of memory in learning, he writes that when the human mind turns to the inspection of eternal realities it reaches back into its memory of them and, like a cow, brings them forth to chew them "in the cud" in order to "transfer what it has learnt into its stock of learning." However, he continues, even if the mind's memory of these eternal realities "is erased by total oblivion, it will be possible under the guidance of science to recover what had completely lapsed and to discover it again exactly as it was before."² If Augustine is here alluding to the mind's memory of God, then it would seem that human beings have completely lost this memory and the knowledge of God built upon it. Since the mind is the image of God insofar as it knows him, in this case the mind would cease to be the image of God.

Augustine's other statements on the status of the divine image after sin in the *De Trinitate*, however, show that this view is false. Human beings can never completely forget their Creator, Augustine will argue, for insofar as they are capable of truth in virtue of their rational minds, they are capable of recalling God who is identical with truth. It is true that human beings may have lost all memory of the God of Abraham, but Augustine believes they cannot fail to remember him as the God of truth, and thus they retain his image, however faintly.

If, as I argued above, to grow in likeness to God is to become wiser, then Augustine

¹Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 42. Tarsicius J. van Bavel also notes that in his earlier works Augustine argued that sin had destroyed the divine image in human beings. Tarsicius J. van Bavel, "The Anthropology of Augustine," trans. Katherine Romanik, *Milltown Studies* 19-20 (1987): 34. Here in the *De Trinitate*, then, is a development of Augustine's thinking on the reform of the divine image.

²Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.4.23:335. "Quod si fuerit omnimoda oblivione deletum, rursus doctrina duce ad id venietur quod penitus exciderat, et sic invenietur ut erat" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 256).

affirms that sinners retain some small likeness to God, for following Prv. 9:8 he writes that a sinner can still be wise.³ When speaking about the image of God in human beings after the Fall, Augustine writes that one is not speaking about “God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,” but “about this disparate image, yet image nonetheless, which is man.”⁴ Although the human mind, through sinning, lost its participation in God, Augustine asserts that “it still remains the image of God, even though worn out and distorted.”⁵ Through sinning, the image of God in human beings became “deformed and discolored,” but they never completely lost his image.⁶ As Augustine says, even a “blurred” image is still an image of God.⁷

It must be the case that human beings retain, in some sense, the memory of God, and therefore his image, for Augustine argues that if they did not then they could not even be reminded of him, since he asserts that no one can recall something he has completely forgotten.⁸ However, according to Augustine, scripture indicates that those who have “forgotten” God have not completely forgotten him, for it says that they can be reminded of him. Although it is written in Ps. 9:17 “Let sinners turn back to hell, all the nations that forget God,” Augustine points out that shortly after we read that “All the ends of the earth will be reminded and turn back to the Lord” (Ps. 22:27). From this passage in the Psalms,

³Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.4.23:335, XIV.1.2:371.

⁴Ibid., IX.1.2:271. “Nondum de supernis loquimur, nondum de Deo Patre et Filio et Spiritu sancto; sed de hac impari imagine, attamen imagine, id est homine” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 76).

⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.3.11:379. “Diximus enim eam etsi amissa Dei participatione obsoletam atque deformam, Dei tamen imaginem permanere” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 374).

⁶Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.5.22:388. “Sed peccando, justitiam et sanctitatem veritatis amisit; propter quod haec imago deformis et decolor facta est: hanc recipit, cum reformatur et renovatur” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 404).

⁷Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.3.14:406. “‘Transformamur’ ergo dicit [2 Cor. 3:18], de forma in formam mutamur, atque transimus de forma obscura in formam lucidam; quia et ipsa obscura, imago Dei est; et si imago, profecto etiam gloria, in qua homines creati sumus, praestantes caeteris animalibus” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 458). See also Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 188-89, who makes the same point concerning Augustine’s understanding of the status of the image after sin from an analysis of a number of Augustine’s other works, but not the *De Trinitate*.

⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.4.16:384.

Augustine concludes that “these nations had not so forgotten God that they could not even remember when reminded of him.”⁹ Human beings, then, retain in some sense the memory of God, and so retain his image in them.

Augustine is careful, however, to clarify that human beings do not retain the memory of God, and thus his image, in a Neo-Platonic sense. It is not the case, Augustine argues, that the human mind remembers God “because it knew him in Adam, or anywhere else before the life of this body, or when it was first made in order to be inserted into this body.” He does not think that the mind or the soul apart from the body has knowledge that precedes its concrete existence in the body. The human mind, he is clear, was not at some time in contact with the divine forms, which it then recollects once it is joined to the body. The mind, Augustine says, “does not remember any of these things at all; whichever of these may be the case, it has been erased by oblivion.”¹⁰ It is in some other sense, then, that Augustine argues that human beings retain the memory of God and are able to recall him.

Human beings are able to remember God, Augustine argues, because God always is. God is “all of him everywhere, and therefore the mind lives and moves and is in him, and for this reason is able to remember him.”¹¹ For Augustine, God is everywhere because he is truth, and insofar as the mind experiences truth, it experiences God and is thus able to recall him.¹² Augustine explains that the mind

is reminded to turn to the Lord, as though to the light by which it went on being touched in some fashion even when it turned away from him. It is in virtue of this light that even the godless can think about eternity, and rightly praise and blame many elements in the behavior of men.¹³

Augustine identifies this light with the light of truth, which, he argues, must be external to

⁹Ibid., XIV.4.17:384.

¹⁰Ibid., XIV.4.21:387.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²cf. Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 140.

¹³Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.4.21:387.

human beings since as they are able to know how they ought to live and yet not live like that themselves. According to Augustine, if truth existed in the human mind, then human actions would be in accordance with their knowledge of it. Since this is not the case — for, as he points out, human beings often praise a just person although they are unjust — the standards by which human beings recognize justice in the just person (i.e., the standards of truth) must lie outside the mind:

And by what standards, I ask you, do they judge, if not by ones in which they see how a man ought to live, even though they do not live like that themselves? Where do they see these standards? Not in their own nature, since there is no doubt they see them with the mind, and we all agree that their minds are changeable, while anyone who can see this sort of thing can see that these standards are unchangeable [*Ubi eas vident? Neque enim in sua natura, cum procul dubio mente ista videantur, eorumque mentes constet esse mutabiles, has vero regulas immutabiles videat, quisquis in eis et hoc videre potuerit*]. Nor do they see them in the attitude of their own minds, since these are standards of justice, while it is agreed that their minds are unjust. Then where are these standards written down, where can even the unjust man recognize what being just is, where can he see that he ought to have what he does not have himself? Where indeed are they written but in the book of that light which is called truth, from which every just law is copied, and transferred into the heart of the man who does justice, not by locomotion but by a kind of impression, rather like the seal which both passes into the wax and does not leave the signet ring?¹⁴

Although human beings may not be with God, insofar as God is truth he never ceases to be with them, for even the godless are able to judge rightly the behaviour of human beings and think of eternal things.¹⁵ As Augustine explains, after sin “we were exiled from this unchanging joy [i.e., God], yet not so broken and cut off from it that we stopped seeking eternity, truth, and happiness even in this changeable time-bound situation of ours — for we do not want, after all, to die or to be deceived or to be afflicted.”¹⁶ Because human beings

¹⁴Ibid.; idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 402.

¹⁵Though, as I will show, Augustine’s evaluation of the capabilities and results of purely secular philosophy is quite poor. See pp. 107 ff. below. Nevertheless, Augustine does here plainly assert that the human mind, even when it believes itself to be independent of God, can attain truth.

¹⁶Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.1.2:153.

continue to seek truth and are capable of attaining it, they, wittingly or not, remember God, who is truth, and thus retain his image in them. For Augustine, the memory of God in the godless, it seems, is something that they do not know that they know; yet, they do know it and under the guidance of a teacher drawing their attention to this knowledge, they may come to know that they know it.¹⁷ That is, the potential for the mind to experience truth is the basis for its ability to recall God, and it is in virtue of this potency that it retains the image and “memory” of God. Hence, Augustine writes:

Though the reason or understanding in it [the mind] may appear at one moment to be in a coma, at another to be small, at another to be great, the human soul is never anything but rational and intellectual. And therefore if it is with reference to its capacity to use reason and understanding in order to understand and gaze upon God that it was made to the image of God, it follows that from the moment this great and wonderful nature begins to be, this image is always there, whether it is so worn away as to be almost nothing, or faint and distorted, or clear and beautiful.¹⁸

The mind — in virtue of its rational nature that, as experience shows and Augustine asserts, is preserved through the Fall — is the image of God “insofar as it is capable of him and can participate in him; indeed it cannot achieve so great a good except by being his image.”¹⁹ It is capable of him, as I have shown above, because it is capable of truth, and since it never

¹⁷Ibid., XIV.2.9:377. “Sed unde diu non cogitaverimus, et unde cogitare nisi commoniti non valemus, id nos nescio quo eodemque miro modo, si potest dici, scire nescimus. Denique recte ab eo qui commemorat, ei quem commemorat dicitur: Scis hoc, sed scire te nescis; commemorabo, et invenies te scientem quod te nescire putaveras” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 368).

¹⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.2.6:374. “ita quamvis ratio vel intellectus nunc in ea sit sopitus, nunc parvus, nunc magnus appareat, nunquam nisi rationalis et intellectualis est anima humana; ac per hoc si secundum hoc facta est ad imaginem Dei quod uti ratione atque intellectu ad intelligendum et conspiciendum Deum potest, profecto ab initio quo esse coepit ista tam magna et mira natura, sive ita obsoleta sit haec imago, ut pene nulla sit, sive obscura atque deformis, sive clara et pulchra sit, semper est” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 356, 358).

¹⁹Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.3.11:379. “Diximus enim eam etsi amissa Dei participatione obsoletam atque deformem, Dei tamen imaginem permanere. Eo quippe ipso imago ejus est, quo ejus capax est, ejusque particeps esse potest; quod tam magnum bonum, nisi per hoc quod imago ejus est, non potest” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 374).

loses this potential for truth, it never loses its potential to image God.²⁰

Again, Augustine thinks that scripture justifies his view that, despite sin, human beings never lose the image of God in them, for Ps. 39:6 says that “Although man walks in the image,” he can still fall victim to the sin of vanity.²¹ Thus, according to Augustine, sin and the divine image in human beings are not mutually exclusive categories. It is true, however, that his principal arguments for human beings’ preservation of the divine image are primarily philosophical — resting on an analysis of the human experience of truth and memory — rather than scriptural. Nevertheless, Augustine does consciously seek out a scriptural basis for his view, and, in the *De Trinitate* at least, he takes God’s identity with truth as an axiom from scripture rather than taking the time to offer a philosophical argument for this identity.²² In any case, it is clear that Augustine’s thinking on the status of the memory of God, or the divine image, in human beings is far from Neo-Platonic, for he explicitly rejects the doctrine of recollection. Here then is one instance where Augustine has not followed Neo-Platonic philosophy in his thinking on the reform of the image, but rather has developed a distinct theological — if not entirely scriptural — position concerning the status of the divine image in human beings after sin.

What human beings gain in the reform of the image of God in their minds, then, is not something entirely new, but something that builds upon the remnants of that image in them. However, human beings do not retain a sort of pre-existent knowledge of God. In this sense they are created with a blank slate. Nevertheless, from the moment of their creation, in virtue of their rational minds, human beings are able to recall God, because they are able to experience truth, which is identical with God. It is in this sense that they retain his

²⁰As Sullivan explains, “rational nature as it exists after the sin of Adam . . . renders possible the participation in the life of God. . . . Man is *capax Dei* radically, because he retains the image of God in his soul always” (53). See also pp. 51-52.

²¹Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.2.6:374.

²²See, for example, VIII.1.3 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine quotes 1 John 1:5 to establish God’s identity with truth (242-43).

memory and his image.

Sullivan has argued that the remnants of the divine image in human beings after sin consist in the “the habitual (*quasi*) trinity consisting in self-memory, self-knowledge, self-love.”²³ It is true that Augustine argues that the mind cannot ever cease to recall, know, and love itself, and that in these three activities it bears a likeness to the trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.²⁴ However, Augustine draws a distinction in Book XIV between something that bears a likeness to the Trinity, and the sense in which human beings are the image of the Trinity.²⁵ Sullivan’s assertion above obscures that distinction. The memory, understanding, and will of the mind do, for Augustine, resemble the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but they are only the image of the Trinity when, in remembering itself, the mind remembers its God — something intimate with itself, yet not identical with itself. What this means exactly I shall discuss in detail when I come to Augustine’s views on self-knowledge as the path to the knowledge of God;²⁶ however, it is sufficient to note for now that it is in remembering something that is, strictly speaking, other than itself that the mind is the image of God.²⁷ In Book XIV, Augustine is speaking about the image of God in human beings at an advanced stage of progress, but this distinction holds for the image in its initial deformed state.

In light of what I have argued above, it cannot be the case that when the mind recalls,

²³Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 143.

²⁴See XIV.2-3:374-82 of *The Trinity*.

²⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.4.15-21:383-87.

²⁶See pp. 114 ff. below.

²⁷However, E.G.T. Booth has observed that for Augustine in the *De Trinitate* self-knowledge is the temporally prior condition of the consciousness of objects outside the self. E.G.T. Booth, “St. Augustine’s *de Trinitate* and Aristotelian and neo-Platonist Noetic,” in *Studia Patristica*, vol. 16, pt. 2, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985), 488. In this sense, the fallen image pre-supposes the existence of the trinity of self-knowledge and, hence, one might suppose it is the most basic image of God left to human beings; nevertheless, Augustine makes clear that human beings only preserve God’s *image* when they look beyond themselves to God (i.e., the truth) and the trinity of self-knowledge remains for him at best an indelible likeness to the divine Trinity rather than its abiding image in human beings.

knows, and loves itself it retains the imperfect image of God, for the mind is not identical with God. This is rather the bare (and imperfect) likeness to the Trinity that it has in its nature. However, since the mind with its memory, understanding, and will is able to experience truth — an external light shining within it, identical with God — it is able to retain his image. Human beings begin their process of recalling God not from an inward knowledge of self, then, but from an outward knowledge of truth.

The Necessity of Grace for the Knowledge of God

Although human beings retain, in a qualified sense, the memory and image of God in their minds, Augustine is clear that what they do retain is, although very precious, also very little. That is, although human beings retain the image of God in them, as I have shown above, this image is deformed and blurred — so much so that human beings cannot by themselves restore its former likeness to God. To do this, they require the grace of God. Thus, for Augustine, it is God, through his gift of grace, who makes the first move in the reform of his image in human beings.

Some people, Augustine writes, “think that they can purify themselves for contemplating God and cleaving to him by their own power and strength of character.”²⁸ Because, he writes, they have succeeded in understanding some truths, they believe that they can grasp at the whole of truth (and therefore God) without any assistance from him. However, these people, Augustine asserts, make the same mistake that Adam and Eve did when they succumbed to the serpent’s temptation and sought to be their own masters. That is, “they are thoroughly defiled by pride,” and Augustine writes that

no vice is more vehemently opposed by divine law, no vice gives a greater right of control to that proudest of all spirits, the devil, who mediates our way to the depths and bars our way to the heights, unless we avoid his hidden ambushes

²⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.4.20:167.

and go another way; or unless his open assaults by means of a 'falling people,' which is what Amalek means, disputing the passage to the promised land, are overcome by the Lord's cross, which was prefigured by the outstretched arms of Moses.²⁹

If human beings proceed in the process of reforming the divine image in them on the assumption that they can raise themselves from the depths to which they have sunk because of sin — from the deformed image of God to a clear likeness to him — then, Augustine argues, they will fail in their attempts to become better. Only when human beings “climb aboard the wood” of the cross will they be carried from their current, debased state to a better one.³⁰ Augustine says explicitly that the image of God in human beings “cannot reform itself in the way it was able to deform itself.”³¹ Reform, he believes, is contingent upon accepting the cross and having faith. I shall discuss Augustine's understanding of the role of faith in the reform of the divine image at length in Chapter 4,³² for now I shall only note Augustine's belief in its necessity for this reform.

However, according to Augustine, for human beings to be able to have faith in the first place is contingent on another prior action of God — his free gift of grace, which, he thinks, human beings are entirely dependent upon for their progress in the reform of the divine image. Augustine argues that scripture provides evidence of the dependence of human beings on divine grace for assistance in reforming the image of God in them. The most striking passage is perhaps John 15:5, where God says, “Without me you can do nothing.” Augustine uses this passage to make the point that the success of human beings in “being renewed in the recognition of God . . . depends on divine assistance.”³³ Augustine

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid. Hill explains that Augustine is here following Wis. 10:4 and that he thus associates the wood of the cross with Noah's ark (playing on the use of *lignum* in scripture for both the ark in the OT and the cross in the NT), which acts as a vehicle to God. See n. 67, p. 182.

³¹Ibid., XIV.5.22:388. “Non enim reformare se ipsam potest, sicut potuit deformare” (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres VIII-XV), 404).

³²See pp. 110 ff. below.

³³Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.5.23:389. “In agnitione igitur Dei, iustitiaque et sanctitate veritatis, qui de

also quotes 2 Cor. 3:18 to make this same point. Human beings are being transformed into the image of God from glory to glory, Augustine notes, “as by the Spirit of the Lord.” These concluding words, he argues, “indicate that the good of such a desirable transformation is conferred on us by God’s grace.”³⁴ A passage in the Psalms also suggests the dependence of human beings on God for their reform. Concerning Ps. 68:9, Augustine explains that God

dealt with us in such a way that we could progress rather in his strength; he arranged it so that the power of charity would be brought to perfection in the weakness of humility. This is the meaning of the psalm where it says, *O God, you are setting apart a voluntary rain for your inheritance, and it has been weakened; but you have perfected it* (Ps 68:9). What he means by voluntary rain is nothing other than grace, which is not paid out as earned but given gratis; that is why it is called grace. He was not obliged to give it because we deserved it; he gave it voluntarily because he wished to. Knowing this, we will put no trust in ourselves, and that is what to be weakened means.³⁵

Thus it is only when human beings — the inheritance of God — become weak and trust in the shower of grace that God has provided rather than in themselves (i.e., “their own power and strength of character”),³⁶ that they will be perfected. This seems to be what Augustine is suggesting in the quote above.³⁷ Furthermore, quoting John 1:12, Augustine notes that it

die in diem proficiendo renovatur, transfert amorem a temporalibus ad aeterna. . . . Tantum autem facit, quantum divinitus adjuvatur. Dei quippe sententia est: ‘Sine me nihil potestis facere’ (*Joan.*, XV, 5)” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 410).

³⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.3.14:406. “Quod vero adjunxit, ‘tanquam a Domini Spiritu’; ostendit gratia Dei nobis conferri tam optabilis transformationis bonum” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 458).

³⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.1.2:153-54.

³⁶See p. 40 above.

³⁷Thus Sullivan writes that the “re-formed trinitarian image presupposes the renewal of the image in the mind by grace and the accompanying gifts” (143). Linda Darwish also boldly asserts that “There is no question that Augustine believes that man is helpless to change his condition by his own efforts. . . . The only way for this cleansing to take place, Augustine affirms, is by ‘the blood of the just man and the humility of God’” (65). Furthermore, Tarsicius J. van Bavel has argued that for Augustine human beings are creatures dependent on God by nature, not only by condition (26-28). See my remarks on the necessity of humility for the reform of the divine image in human beings on pp. 46 ff. below and pp. 58 ff. on the role of Christ as the mediator between human beings and God in the process of reform.

was God who “gave us the right to become sons of God,” and when human beings become sons of God their “substance changes for the better.” This shows, Augustine argues, that God “begins to be our Father when we are born again by his grace,” since it is God that gives human beings this right.³⁸ Once again, therefore, progress in the reform of the divine image in human beings depends on divine grace. Finally, when discussing the grounds he has for asserting that God is immutable and invisible — i.e., the grounds for his knowledge of God — Augustine quotes Wis. 9:17, “As for your mind, who could learn it unless you granted wisdom, and sent your Holy Spirit from on high?” Following this text, Augustine argues that his knowledge of God’s invisibility and immutability derives from “the Spirit of God sent us from on high, and by his grace bestowed on our minds.”³⁹ Thus, as Augustine believes scripture to show, for human beings to know God, he must first grant them wisdom — that is, he must make them a gift of his grace. Since it is in terms of the knowledge of God that human beings make progress in reforming the divine image within themselves,⁴⁰ here is another passage that Augustine quotes that implies that this progress depends on divine assistance.

In addition to scripture, Augustine argues that the human experience of learning shows the inability of human beings to reform themselves through the knowledge of God, and he concludes that, for this reason, they are dependent on him in this venture. How, Augustine asks, can human beings expect to reform the image of God in themselves through the knowledge of him, when they have so many difficulties in learning much less complex truths? He points out that “we find ourselves unequal, except with much difficulty, to achieving a scientific comprehension of what is accessible to our bodily senses or of what

³⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, V.4.17:201. “Sic et pater noster esse incipit, cum per ejus gratiam regeneramur, quoniam dedit nobis potestatem filios Dei fieri (*Joan.*, 12). Substantia itaque nostra mutatur in melius, cum filii ejus efficimur; simul et ille pater noster esse incipit, sed nulla commutatione suae substantiae” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 466).

³⁹Augustine, *The Trinity*, III.3.21:140.

⁴⁰See p. 13 above.

we ourselves are in the inner man.”⁴¹ Both external phenomena and the data of internal consciousness are, he thinks, exceedingly difficult for the human mind to grasp unassisted. Since this is the case, for human beings to claim that they can come to know God when they cannot even know themselves without his assistance is, for Augustine, “effrontery” and shows that they have an “arrogant” and misguided confidence in the powers of their mind.⁴²

However, “provided the mind is fired by the grace of our creator and savior,” Augustine asserts that there is nothing presumptuous in the human desire to know God.⁴³ It is only when human beings think that they can know God on their own that they fall victim to the vice of pride, that vice so opposed to divine law.⁴⁴ Thus, Augustine concludes that “when the mind truly recalls its Lord after receiving his Spirit, it perceives quite simply — for it learns this by a wholly intimate instruction from within — that it cannot rise except by his gracious doing.”⁴⁵ I have already shown above that for the mind to recall its Lord is for it to experience the divine light of truth;⁴⁶ hence, it is because of this light that the mind realizes its dependence on God in order to know him. That is, when the mind realizes the truth of its own limitations and so recalls its Lord in this way, it realizes within itself — in the light of truth — that it must rely on the source of this light, God, in order to rise to him. This is not to say that the mind realizes the truth of its dependence on God prior to

⁴¹ Augustine, *The Trinity*, V.Prologue.2:189.

⁴² Ibid., V.Prologue.2:189-90.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ See p. 41 above. I shall take up this theme in Augustine’s thinking on the process of reform again, and in much more detail, below when I discuss his views on the limits of unassisted human reason in philosophy and the necessity of faith. My discussion there will also further clarify the reasons underlying the dependence of human beings on divine assistance in coming to know God — namely, how sin has weakened the human mind so that it must rely on faith to know God and how the nature of the mind itself precludes a knowledge of God independent of his assistance. See pp. 107 ff. below.

⁴⁵ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.4.21:386-87. “Quando autem bene recordatur Domini sui, Spiritu ejus accepto, sentit omnino, quia hoc discit intimo magisterio, nonnisi ejus gratuito affectu posse se surgere, nonnisi suo voluntario defectu cadere potuisse” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 400).

⁴⁶ See p. 35 above.

relying on his assistance. On the contrary, Augustine makes clear that even this realization is dependent on God's prior action of sending his Spirit to the mind.⁴⁷

Augustine's belief in the necessity of grace for the knowledge of God and, consequently, for the reform of his image in human beings is also evident in his own remarks on his method in the *De Trinitate*. In the prologue to Book III, Augustine writes that in "undertaking ... to investigate and discuss ... the trinity, the one and supremely good God, I have only followed the same God's invitation and relied on his assistance."⁴⁸ Elsewhere, he advises his readers that they and he must "beseech God as devoutly and earnestly as we can to open our understandings and temper our fondness for controversy, so that our minds may be able to perceive the essence or being of truth without any mass, without any changeableness," and that they must discuss this truth only "as far as the wonderfully merciful creator may assist us."⁴⁹ When Augustine turns to the investigation of the image of God in the mind in search of an understanding of the Trinity, he does so, he remarks, "with the help of him who made us to his own image," without which "we cannot safely investigate these matters or discover anything to do with the wisdom that comes from him."⁵⁰ Moreover, whatever merit human beings might acquire in this search, or in any of their activities, Augustine attributes ultimately to "the grace of him whose reward will be its happiness."⁵¹

Perhaps the clearest demonstration of Augustine's belief in the total dependence of human beings on divine grace for coming to know God and reforming his image in them is

⁴⁷I shall discuss the role of the Holy Spirit and of charity in the process of reforming the image of God in human beings in Chapter 3. See pp. 87 ff.

⁴⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, III.Prologue.1:127-28.

⁴⁹Ibid., VIII.Prologue.1:241-42.

⁵⁰Ibid., XIV.2.6:374-75. "Quaeramus igitur in hac imagine Dei quamdam sui generis trinitatem, adjuvante ipso qui nos fecit ad imaginem suam. Non enim aliter possumus haec salubriter investigare, et secundum sapientiam quae ab illo est aliquid invenire" (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres VIII-XV), 358).

⁵¹Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.4.21:386.

his prayer at the conclusion of the *De Trinitate*. In the prayer, he urges God:

Do you yourself give me the strength to seek, having caused yourself to be found and having given me the hope of finding you more and more. Before you lies my strength and my weakness; preserve the one, heal the other. Before you lies my knowledge and my ignorance; where you have opened to me, receive me as I come in; where you have shut to me, open to me as I knock. Let me remember you, let me understand you, let me love you. Increase these things in me until you refashion me entirely.⁵²

God, Augustine writes, causes himself to be found. It is not the case that human beings find him unexpectedly, so to speak, but rather that he shows himself to them. In their search for him, God must preserve human beings' strength and cure their weakness. The knowledge of God does not depend in the first place on human effort, but on God's revelation of himself to human beings. The ignorance of God is also not primarily a failure of human effort, but a failure to ask God to reveal himself — a failure to seek out his help. Finally, it is God, not human beings, who will refashion his image in them entirely.⁵³

From what I have argued thus far, it would seem that, for Augustine, human beings are almost entirely passive in the process of reform, acting only as conduits of divine grace. As I will show when I discuss the role that human beings play in the process of reform in Chapter 4, this is not an accurate understanding of the role of divine grace in the reform of the image. Human beings do have a role to play in their own reform, but whatever actions they take in this process will always have been preceded by God's dispensation of divine grace. According to Augustine, while human beings contribute to the reform of the divine image, on account of the effects of sin and the limitations of the human mind, this cannot ever be a "do-it-yourself" project.⁵⁴

⁵²Ibid., XV.Prayer.51:435. "Tu da quarendi vires, qui invenire te fecisti, et magis magisque inveniendi te spem dedisti. Coram te est firmitas et infirmitas mea; illam serva, istam sana. Coram te est scientia et ignorantia mea: ubi mihi aperuisti, suscipe intrantem; ubi clausisti, aperi pulsanti. Meminerim tui, intelligam te, diligam te. Auge in me ista, donec me reformes ad integrum" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 564).

⁵³I shall discuss the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the process of reform in Chapter 3.

⁵⁴cf. Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.4.20:167.

Here again we see that Augustine has developed the Neo-Platonic sources for his thinking on personal reform in accordance with Christian beliefs.⁵⁵ As Sullivan notes, in Augustine's thinking on the renewal of the image of God in human beings, grace — i.e., external divine assistance — is required at all times. Augustine's notion of reform is not, as in Plotinus, a "self-propelled ascent."⁵⁶ For Plotinus and the Neo-Platonic tradition, "the process of consciousness leads in itself to salvation. . . . Salvation is obtained by way of knowledge, and the process of conversion takes place on the highest level, i.e., the level of intelligibility."⁵⁷ In Neo-Platonic thought, human beings rise up to God through their own efforts, without external assistance.⁵⁸ Compare, for example, what I have said about Augustine's emphasis on the necessity of divine assistance in the reform of the divine image with the following passage from the *Enneads*. Here Plotinus briefly describes how the soul becomes a "perfect work":

Withdraw into yourself and look. And if you do not find yourself beautiful yet, act as does the creator of a statue that is to be made beautiful: he cuts away here, he smooths there, he makes this line lighter, this other purer, until a lovely face has grown upon his work. So do you also: cut away all that is excessive, straighten all that is crooked, bring light to all that is overcast, labour to make all one glow of beauty and never cease chiselling your statue, until there shall shine out on you from it the godlike splendour of virtue, until you shall see the perfect goodness surely established in the stainless shrine.

When you know that you have become this perfect work . . . , when you find yourself wholly that only veritable Light which is not measured by space, not narrowed to any circumscribed form nor again diffused as a thing void of term . . . when you perceive that you have grown to this, you are now become very vision: now call up your confidence, strike forward yet a step — you need a guide no longer — strain, and see.⁵⁹

⁵⁵For an excellent study of how Augustine uses 'Platonic' texts in his theology of the Trinity (though not specifically of the trinitarian image), see Ayres, "The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine's Trinitarian Theology," 53-59.

⁵⁶, *The Idea of Reform*, 59.

⁵⁷Maertens, "Augustine's Image of Man," 180-81.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 183-84.

⁵⁹Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna and B.S. Page (Chicago: William Benton, 1971),

Human beings in the process of reform here are, in contrast to Augustine's thinking, actively working for their own perfection. They are not being shaped into a perfect work, but rather they are shaping themselves into perfection, even leaving behind the guidance of Plotinus once they have achieved a certain level of progress. Augustine's emphasis in the *De Trinitate* on human beings' total dependence on grace in the process of growing in likeness to God is clearly opposed to this view.

However, as Guido Maertens notes, Augustine had achieved this insight before he began writing the *De Trinitate*. The *Confessions*, he argues, show definitively that Augustine had by the end of the fourth century rejected the "intellectual self-sufficiency" of Plotinus because of his awareness of his own failure to reform himself by his intellect alone.⁶⁰ The *Confessions*, then, provide an argument from Augustine's own experience for the necessity of grace in the process of reforming the image of God in human beings that he upholds in the *De Trinitate*.

Augustine's awareness of his own limitations in reforming himself and his understanding of the necessity of divine grace, Maertens goes on to argue, went hand in hand with his nascent understanding of the role of the Incarnation in human lives.⁶¹ I shall return to the question of how Augustine went beyond his Neo-Platonic sources in his thinking on reform when I discuss the role that Christ plays in reforming the image of God in human beings.⁶² Building on what I have established here, I shall go on to argue in connection with Christ's role in the process of reform (as well as the Holy Spirit's) that LaCugna's criticism of the *De Trinitate* as a work that undermines the necessity of the divine economy

I.VI.9:25.

⁶⁰Maertens, "Augustine's Image of Man," 181, 183-84. See Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), VII.xxi(27):130-32, for his criticism of the idea of self-ascent in the books of the Platonists and his insistence on the necessity of grace to reach the "homeland of peace."

⁶¹Maertens, "Augustine's Image of Man," 183-84.

⁶²See pp. 65ff. and pp. 119 ff. below.

for the knowledge of God — and, consequently, for the perfection of the image of God in human beings — is an inaccurate assessment of Augustine's thought in this treatise.

Humility and Reform

Granted that human beings are, according to Augustine, dependent on divine grace for their progress in the reform of the divine image in them, the first action human beings must take (following God's gift of grace) in the process of reform is to acknowledge the weakness on account of which they require divine assistance. They must acknowledge that they cannot achieve this reform on their own and then open themselves to divine assistance through faith. That is, Augustine believes that human beings must become humble before they have any hope of making progress in the divine image. The proud, Augustine repeatedly asserts, will not become like God. However, when human beings become humble, they imitate the incarnate Son, who humbled himself for human beings, and Augustine argues that, like Christ, for them this act of humility precedes their ascent to God.

As I have shown above, for Augustine one of the primary causes of the deformity of the image of God in human beings is pride, the root of sin and of the darkening of the divine image. In overcoming pride and submitting themselves to God, Augustine writes, human beings overcome that first fault on account of which they became debased and retained only the imperfect likeness of God in them. According to Augustine, they will grow in likeness to God only as long as they face him and do not regard themselves.⁶³ As Augustine explains, "the more we are cured of the tumor of pride, the fuller we are of love. And if a man is full of love, what is he full of but God?"⁶⁴ Overcoming pride is therefore essential to the reform of the image of God in human beings for Augustine, since he thinks

⁶³See p. 18 above.

⁶⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, VIII.5.12:253. "Quanto igitur saniores sumus a tumore superbiae, tanto sumus delectione pleniores: et quo, nisi Deo plenus est, qui plenus est dilectione?" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 62).

that they will only be filled with his likeness once they have ceased to esteem themselves.

For this reason Augustine explains that in Christ “God became man for us as an example of humility,” since this “humility thanks to which God was born of a woman, and led through such abuse at the hands of mortal men to his death, is a medicine to heal the tumor of our pride and a high sacrament to break the chains of sin.”⁶⁵ In order to break free of sin and pride and to begin to be reformed in the image and likeness of God, human beings must imitate Christ’s humility.⁶⁶ This is why, Augustine argues, in Matt. 11:29 Christ urges his listeners to learn of him because he is “gentle and humble in heart” (NRSV): for human beings to make progress in the image, Augustine explains, a “down-to-earth lowliness is stronger and safer than a wind-swept *hauteur*.”⁶⁷ For Augustine, pride drives human beings away from God. Humility, on the other hand, brings them back to him.

Augustine further explains the role of humility in bringing human beings back to God in the *De Trinitate* by comparing the actions of the devil with those of Christ. He writes that “just as the devil in his pride brought proud-thinking man down to death, so Christ in his humility brought obedient man back to life.” Because the devil “grew high and mighty, he fell, and pulled down man who consented to him.” However, because Christ “came humble and lowly, he rose, and raised up man who believed in him.”⁶⁸ I shall discuss the details of how, according to Augustine, Christ’s “humiliation” in the Incarnation restored human beings to a just relationship with the Creator in the following chapter;⁶⁹ however, it is sufficient for now to note that Augustine seizes upon the humble aspect of these actions

⁶⁵ Augustine, *The Trinity*, VIII.3.7:247.

⁶⁶ Basil Studer, although he makes no mention of the reform of the divine image, argues that for Augustine the path to “righteousness,” the return to the love of God, is through humility, of which Christ offered the supreme example. Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*, trans. Matthias Westerhoff, ed. Andrew Louth (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993), 181.

⁶⁷ Augustine, *The Trinity*, VIII.5.11:253. “Potentior est enim et tutior solidissima humilitas, quam ventosissima celsitudo” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 62).

⁶⁸ Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.3.13:162.

⁶⁹ See pp. 58 ff.

as an essential quality that human beings must possess to grow in likeness to God. Only by being “obedient” and by believing in Christ rather than in their own power can human beings rise with Christ to God. To rise with him, they must first have descended like him. However, human beings do not descend from God — it is precisely him that they want to rise to. Rather, Augustine argues that they must descend from their belief in their own might, which, like the devil’s, pulls them away from God. They must instead acknowledge their weakness and rely on Christ’s strength, so that this strength might be perfected in weakness.⁷⁰

Weakness and humility, then, precede strength and the restoration of the image of God in human beings. This strength is the strength of faith,⁷¹ and, for Augustine, it is only the humble person who has faith. Those who pride themselves on their own intellectual achievements, he writes, may have attained a small measure of truth, but in attaining this they have only succeeded in gazing “from afar on the home country across the sea.” That is, they may have some intimation about the greatness of truth, which for the Christian is identical with God, but it remains only an intimation as long as they rely on their own powers. If they are “ashamed to climb aboard the wood,” to live out of faith in the crucified Christ (Rom. 1:17), they will not succeed in arriving at the truth that they desire. However, in contrast to the proud, Augustine asserts that the humble person who lives out of faith — though he may not have been sharp enough to attain some insight into the truth with his own power — “is coming to” that country across the sea “nonetheless on the wood the other disdains to be carried by.”⁷² If faith is the vehicle that carries human beings to God,

⁷⁰See Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.1.2:153-54, quoted above on p. 42. Commenting on Rom. 5:8 and 8:31, Augustine writes: “Now what is proclaimed to us as already having being achieved was also shown to the just men of old as still to be achieved, in order that they too might be made weak through being humbled by the same faith as we and once weakened might be perfected” (IV.1.2:154).

⁷¹I shall discuss the role of faith in the process of the reform of the divine image in human beings in Chapter 4. See pp. 110 ff. below.

⁷²Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.4.20:167.

then humility is the fare required in order to board that vehicle. Augustine writes that the person who has “woken up to God . . . has become cheap in his own estimation; and being eager yet unable to go in to him, he has taken a look at himself in God’s light . . . and realized that his own sickness cannot be compounded with God’s cleanness.” For this reason

he finds it a relief to weep and implore him over and over again to take pity and pull him altogether out of his pitiful condition, and he prays with all confidence once he has received the free gratuitous pledge of health through the one and only savior and enlightener granted us by God. Well, such a man . . . has valued knowledge above knowledge; he has put knowledge of his own weakness above knowledge of the *walls of the world* [*praeposuit enim scientiam scientiae, praeposuit scire infirmitatem suam, magis quam scire mundi moenia*], the foundations of the earth and the pinnacles of the sky; and by *bringing in* this *knowledge* he has *brought in sorrow* (Eccl 1:18), the sorrow of exile stirred by longing for his true country and its founder, his blissful God.⁷³

Thus, it is only the person who prefers knowledge of his own weakness to all other knowledge that will make progress in the likeness of God. Such a person recognizes this weakness within himself, and realizes that the strength to become perfect must come from outside himself: from God’s free gift of grace.

Augustine finds support for the necessity of humility for progress towards God in several passages in scripture. I have already discussed two that he brings forth in the *De Trinitate* in support of his position: Matt. 11:29 and Ps. 68:9. However, one of the most significant scriptural passages that, Augustine thinks, indicates the necessity of humility for human beings is Ps. 84:5-6. Augustine’s comments on the meaning of the “valley of weeping” in this passage are found in the context of his exposition of Ps. 119, one of the “Songs of Ascents”. Augustine wrote his commentary on the Psalms at roughly the same time as the *De Trinitate*, and so he may have had Ps. 84 in mind when discussing the role that humility plays in the process of reforming the image of God in human beings.

⁷³Ibid., IV.Prologue.1:152; idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 336.

“God arranges ascents in his heart, in the valley of weeping, to the place he has appointed” (Ps. 84:5-6). This Psalm, Augustine explains, speaks of people ascending to their ultimate happiness — to God. The steps required for them to reach God have been arranged within them, in their heart, the valley of weeping. “This closed-in valley,” Augustine writes, “symbolizes humility, as a mountain stands for height.”⁷⁴ Thus, in order to rise to God, he argues, human beings must first lower themselves in their own estimation. They must adopt a humble disposition within them — i.e., in their heart. It is for human beings who have this humble disposition that God has arranged the steps of ascent to him.

Human beings rise out of this valley of weeping, Augustine goes on to explain, by climbing up the mountain that is Christ, “a height of the spirit.” Christ, Augustine goes on to say, “made himself into a valley of weeping for you in his passion; and he is the mountain of your ascent because he remains where he has always been.”⁷⁵ As in the *De Trinitate*, in his comments on this Psalm Augustine correlates the necessity of humility for human beings to ascend to God with the Son’s humiliation in the Incarnation. This may be further evidence that Augustine had this Psalm in mind when making his remarks on the necessity for humility in the process of reforming the divine image in human beings in the *De Trinitate*.

Augustine explains that it is because Christ condescended to die on the cross for human beings that they are able to rise with him to God, and he argues that they do so by imitating the humility that his actions for them evidence. This is why, Augustine explains, when two disciples wanted to sit at the right and the left side of Christ, he admonished them saying “Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” (Matt. 20:22):

The Lord saw that they were getting things back to front and thinking about honours prematurely, for they should have been learning first of all how to

⁷⁴ Augustine, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 5:498.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

be humbled in order to be exalted. . . . He was destined to drink the cup of suffering in the valley of weeping; but they, paying no heed to Christ's humility, wanted to seize the high dignity of Christ. He recalled them to the way like lost travellers, not because he meant to refuse them what they wanted but in order to show them how to reach it.⁷⁶

According to Augustine, the way that Christ taught human beings to become exalted, as evidenced by this Psalm and Christ's own words, was first to humble themselves. As he writes, "The Lord himself taught us that there can be no ascent except from the valley of weeping. For our sake he graciously willed to be humbled even to death on a cross and to suffer. Let us not neglect his example."⁷⁷

Augustine also points out that in Isaiah it is written that the delight of human beings is the "fear of the Lord" (11:3; NRSV). This, he explains, is because Christ descended from his wisdom to fear (i.e., to union with a human being), so that human beings must, in consequence, "ascend from fear to wisdom" if they want to make progress towards wisdom. This is why the Psalm says that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10; cf. Prov. 1:7, 9:10; Sir. 1:16).⁷⁸ Here, then, Augustine appears to equate the idea of the fear of the Lord with humility, insofar as both involve a similar descent and corresponding ascent. As I have shown above, for Augustine progress towards wisdom is growth in likeness to God.⁷⁹ Therefore, the fear of the Lord — humility — is the *sine qua non* of progress in the reform of the divine image in human beings.⁸⁰

⁷⁶Ibid., 5:498-99.

⁷⁷Ibid., 5:510.

⁷⁸Ibid., 5:500-01.

⁷⁹See p. 15 above.

⁸⁰Augustine also remarks in his commentary on Ps. 122:3-4 that the tribes that are ascending to Jerusalem, the city that shares in Being itself (i.e., God), are the true Israel, the one who sees God. He notes that a "proud person is not Israel, for, instead of sharing in Being-Itself, the proud person wants to be his own absolute being." The genuine Israel, who shares in God, is one "who confesses that he is not what God is and that he holds from God whatever good he can claim to have, that of himself he is nothing but sin and that he possesses righteousness only as a gift from God such a person is one in whom there is no guile. What did the Lord say on catching sight of Nathanael? *Look, there is a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile* (Jn 1:47)"

Augustine's emphasis on the need for humility in the reform of the divine image in human beings, as I noted above, is closely related to his understanding of their total dependence on God's gift of grace for their perfection.⁸¹ Therefore, this aspect of Augustine's thinking on the reform of the divine image carries with it the same criticisms of the Neo-Platonic view of reform as a self-propelled ascent as his insistence on the necessity of grace for this reform implies.⁸²

Conclusion: The Reform of the Divine Image is a Top-Down Process

Human beings, according to Augustine, never lose the image of God in which they were created. However bad the effects of sin are, they are not so powerful as to destroy God's image in human beings. Since human beings are, even in spite of sin, still rational creatures, they are still capable of recalling God, because they are capable of reaching truth. The light of truth is a light that never stops touching them. Though they may not be at all times turned towards it, they are, nevertheless, able to turn towards it. For this reason, Augustine argues that they retain the image of God in them.

However, the image of God that human beings retain after sin is a paltry likeness to him. This image has become so degraded in human beings that they lack the strength to grow in the knowledge of God, and thereby return to their former likeness to him. Consequently, Augustine believes that to become like God human beings are entirely dependent on his free gift of grace. They must rely on God's strength rather than their own to ascend to him. For Augustine, this means that human beings must overcome pride — their exaggerated confidence in their own strength — and humble themselves by seeking the assistance of

(Ibid., 6:21-22). Therefore, humility is essential to the vision of God, by which human beings become like God. On the significance of "seeing" and the name "Israel" for the reform of the image of God in human beings, see p. 15 above and the section on the perfection of the image in the beatific vision below, pp. 124 ff.

⁸¹ See p. 49.

⁸² See p. 46 above.

God in order to become like him.

Thus, Augustine's conception of the beginning of the process of the reform of the divine image in human beings is thoroughly dominated by God's downward movement to human beings. He clearly gives priority to the descent of God to human beings in the Incarnation over their ascent to him. In this respect, Augustine's thinking on the reform of the divine image takes a significant departure from his Neo-Platonic sources, which focus on the human ascent to God independent of external assistance. In contrast to the Neo-Platonic view, in the *De Trinitate* human ascent is always preceded by a divine descent. I shall demonstrate the truth of this claim again and again in the following chapters. For Augustine, human beings have an active role in the reform of the divine image, but their actions are always dependent on a prior action of God. Thus, I shall turn next to the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in my examination of the process of the reform of the divine image in human beings.

The Operations of the Trinity in the Reform of the Divine Image

In Book IV of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine writes: "I will say . . . with absolute confidence that Father and Son and Holy Spirit, God the creator, of one and the same substance, the almighty three, act inseparably."¹ It should be no surprise, then, that for Augustine the process of reforming the divine image within human beings is trinitarian. The members of the Trinity work distinctly but inseparably to restore their likeness in human beings. According to Augustine, human beings return to the perfect likeness of God the Father through the Son and the Holy Spirit's conjoint efforts for them.²

The Son: Redeemer, Mediator, Doctor

In the *De Trinitate*, Christ, the incarnate Word of God, plays a central role in Augustine's thinking on the reform of the divine image in human beings; thus I shall discuss his role in this process first. According to Augustine, without Christ's death on the cross, the reform of the divine image would not even be possible,³ for what human beings lost in sin they could not reclaim on their own. They required a mediator between themselves and God. The Son of God, co-equal with God, by becoming incarnate in Jesus Christ fulfilled this role for them, and thus set them on the path of their return to God and the recovery of his likeness in them. Furthermore, according to Augustine, Christ not only sets human

¹ Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.5.30:175.

² On this topic, see also the brief, but very insightful summary in Sullivan, *The Image of God*, ix, xi, 59.

³ Ladner has pointed out that Christ's redeeming act is the condition of possibility for the reform of the divine image in the renewal ideologies of all the Fathers, Greek and Latin (*The Idea of Reform*, 79).

beings on their way along the path of reform, but acts as their guide along this path through faith in him and by following his example. Finally, Augustine believes that it is Christ who will in the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God and the Father (1 Cor. 15:24), disclose the vision of God in his fullness to human beings and thus bring his likeness in them to its perfection.⁴

In the first chapter, I noted that for Augustine human beings lost their clear likeness to God because they lost justice.⁵ That is, they became the enemies of God because “sins are the enemies of justice,” and so they parted ways with God. These “hostilities,” as Augustine writes, could only come to an end when the sins of human beings were forgiven, when they regained the just relationship with the just one — God.⁶ Thus, according to Augustine a rift exists between God and human beings. Human beings created this rift in sin, on account of which they lost their just relationship with God and, consequently, the likeness of him whose image they still retained after sin. Therefore, to regain that likeness, human beings would have to restore a just relationship with God.⁷

However, Augustine makes clear in the *De Trinitate* that human beings could not restore this relationship with God by themselves. He says explicitly that the human soul “cannot give itself the justice which it lost and no longer has. It received it when man was created and lost it of course by sinning.”⁸ Not even the so-called just person who lives by faith (Rom. 1:17) is able to act with sufficient virtue to overcome the effects of sin on her

⁴For an overview of the significance of Christ for Augustine’s theology as a whole, with some references to the *De Trinitate*, see Basil Studer, *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo: Christocentrism or Theocentrism?*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), 39-65.

⁵See p. 17 above.

⁶Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.5.21:360. See also IV.1.4 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine writes that for human beings to be reconciled to the just God their justice had to match up with his (154-55).

⁷cf. Darwish, “The Concept of the Mediator,” 64.

⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.4.21:386.

relationship with God.⁹ As Augustine writes, “so unclean were we through sin” that “we were absolutely incapable of . . . participation” in the divine light “and quite unfit for it.”¹⁰ Given that human beings become like God to the degree that they participate in his wisdom,¹¹ the gravity of their sin has rendered them incapable of this likeness. Hence, by losing justice through sin human beings deformed the image of God in themselves to such an extent that they cannot reform it themselves.¹²

Augustine writes, moreover, that human beings are not able to restore their relationship with God and reform his image in themselves since by sinning they ceased, in a qualified sense, to be justly ruled by God. As a consequence of sin, Augustine argues that God permitted human beings to be legitimately handed over into the power of the devil. In choosing to imitate the devil’s perverse preference for power over justice in sinning, human beings, having chosen him for their example,¹³ unwittingly ended up in thrall to him. As Augustine explains:

By a kind of divine justice the human race was handed over to the power of the devil for the sin of the first man, which passes by origin to all who are born of the intercourse of the two sexes, and involves all the descendants of the first parents in its debt. This handing over was first intimated in Genesis when the serpent was told *You shall eat earth* (Gn 3:14), and the man was told *Earth you are and into earth you shall go* (Gn 3:19).¹⁴

⁹Ibid., XIII.6.26:365. “Nunc librum istum ita claudimus, ut admoneamus quod justus ex fide vivit (*Rom.*, I, 17): quae fides per dilectionem operatur (*Galat.*, V, 6), ita ut virtutes quoque ipsae quibus prudenter, fortiter, temperanter, justeque vivitur, omnes ad eandem referantur fidem: non enim aliter poterunt verae esse virtutes. Quae tamen in hac vita non valent tantum, ut aliquando non sit hic necessaria qualiumcumque remissio peccatorum” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 342).

¹⁰Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.1.4:155. “Huic autem participationi prorsus inhabiles, et minus idonei eramus, propter immunditiam peccatorum” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 344).

¹¹See p. 15 above.

¹²Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.5.22:388. I referred to this passage in the section on the necessity of grace for the reform of the divine image in human beings on p. 41 above.

¹³See p. 20 above.

¹⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.4.16:355. For my remarks on the significance for Augustine of these biblical quotes for the effects of sin on the human body, see p. 22 above.

In addition to the Book of Genesis, Augustine argues that Paul indicates the subjection of human beings to the power of the devil in Ephesians. There Paul writes, “You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient” (Eph. 2:1-2; NRSV). This ruler and spirit Augustine identifies with the devil, under whose power all human beings are born on account of sin.¹⁵

Note that Augustine describes the handing over of human beings to the devil as an act that God permits. That is, in handing over human beings to the devil, God does not lose his own “jurisdiction” over them, because, as Augustine writes, even the devil is under God’s jurisdiction. God’s subjection of human beings to the devil is not an unjust usurpation of his power by the devil.¹⁶ What is important to note here, is that servitude to the devil is a penalty that God imposes upon human beings *in accordance with his justice*. This has two important consequences for Augustine’s thinking on the possibility of the reform of the fallen image. First, since God subjected human beings to the devil by his own “just wrath” over their transgression of his justice, only his “kindly reconciliation” can bring them back to subjection to him,¹⁷ the necessary condition for preserving the likeness of God in them.¹⁸ Second, to be restored to a just relationship with God, human beings would have to be justly ransomed from their servitude to the devil, since they were justly delivered to him in the first place. In short, the devil must be given his due. This, according to Augustine, is the

¹⁵Ibid., XIII.4.16:355. See also IV.3.17 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine writes that the devil “acquired full property rights over” human beings because they “yielded to his seduction” (165). In the *City of God* Augustine remarks that demons dwell in the air because they have been cast down from the upper heights of heaven thither, to a middle-position between heaven and earth, for their own transgressions on account of which they are “completely alien from any kind of justice” (idem, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (Middlesex: Penguin, 1972), VIII.13-14:317-18, VIII.22:329-30).

¹⁶Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.4.16:355. “Nec hominem a lege suae potestatis amisit, quando in diaboli potestate esse permisit: quia nec ipse diabolus a potestate Omnipotentis alienus est, sicut neque a bonitate. Nam et maligni angeli unde qualicumque subsisterent vita, nisi per eum qui vivificat omnia?” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 308, 310).

¹⁷Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.4.16:355.

¹⁸See p. 18 above.

nature of the justice that human beings could not give themselves on account of sin. They required someone who had not been weakened by sin, who had not been made subject to the devil, to deliver justice to them. They needed God to justify them before they could again become like him.

According to Augustine, this is what the Incarnation does for human beings. By joining God to man in himself and dying on the cross, Christ reconciles human beings to God through himself. He ransoms them from the devil with a fair (or, for Augustine, perhaps more than fair) price and restores the just relationship with God that they lost. In doing this, Christ makes possible their return to God.¹⁹

As Augustine writes, the remission of sins on account of which human beings are in thrall to the devil and in exile from God, “is only achieved by him who conquered the author of sins with his blood.”²⁰ This blood was the price of the redemption of human beings from servitude to the devil, but rather than enriching the devil, it “caught and bound” him “so that we might be disentangled from his toils.”²¹ Christ’s blood was able to do this, according to Augustine, because it was not the blood of an ordinary man. The blood of an ordinary, sinful man would have enriched the devil, for, as God decreed, he had sovereignty over sinners and thus claimed their lives as his right. However, when it came to Christ’s crucifixion, the devil tried to claim something that he had no right to — the blood of a just and innocent man. As Augustine explains, Christ was not born of the lust of human beings, which begets human beings in a state of original sin, but of a virgin who conceived through faith in the Holy Spirit. As such, Christ was born without the imperfection of sin and thus

¹⁹cf. Darwish, “The Concept of the Mediator,” 79-80.

²⁰Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.6.26:365.

²¹Ibid., XIII.5.19:359. “In hac redemptione tanquam pretium pro nobis datus est sanguis Christi, quo accepto diabolus non ditatus est, sed ligatus: ut nos ab ejus nexibus solveremur” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 318). The word that Hill has translated as “toils” above (*nexum*) has the connotations of an obligation between a debtor and a creditor and of slavery for debt. *Lewis and Short: A Latin Dictionary* (1879), s.v. “nexus.” Thus, human beings must be released from the debt they justly owe the devil in order to be released from servitude to him.

derived from human beings “a racial not a criminal origin.” As Augustine writes:

For what was born was not a nature flawed by the infection of transgression, but the only remedy and cure for all such flaws. What was born, I say, was a man who had not and never would have any sin at all, a man by whom would be reborn those who were to be set free from sin, who could not themselves be born without sin.²²

Christ’s sinless nature was the key to freeing human beings from servitude to the devil, because “the author of death . . . was going to find nothing deserving of death in him and yet was going to kill him all the same.”²³ That is, Christ, because he had not sinned, not even by the fact of his birth, did not deserve the penalty of sin: to die in spirit and body and be subject to the devil’s authority. When the devil claimed his innocent life on the cross, he reached for something that did not belong to him and, so to speak, violated the terms of his agreement with God. Having violated these terms, the devil justly lost his claim on the human race.²⁴ Christ’s blood was able to redeem the whole human race from servitude to the devil, moreover, for it was also much more valuable than the blood of an ordinary person, insofar as Christ’s blood was the blood of man joined to God.²⁵ Thus, by his unjust

²²Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.5.23:361-62. “Nec interfuit carnis concupiscentia, per quam seminatur et concipiuntur caeteri, qui trahunt originale peccatum: sed ea penitus remotissima, credendo, non concumbendo sancta est fecundata virginitas; ut illud quod nascebatur ex propagine primi hominis, tantummodo generis, non etiam criminis originem duceret. Nascebatur namque non transgressionis contagione vitata natura, sed omnium talium vitiorum sola medicina. Nascebatur homo, inquam, nullum habens, nullum habiturus omnino peccatum, per quem renascerentur liberandi a peccato, qui nasci non possent sine peccato” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 330).

²³Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.5.23:362.

²⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.5.19:358. “Tunc enim sanguis ille, quoniam ejus erat qui nullum habuit omnino peccatum, ad remissionem nostrorum fusus est peccatorum, ut quia eos diabolus merito tenebat, quos peccati reos conditione mortis obstrinxit, hos per eum merito dimitteret, quem nullius peccatum reum immerito poenam mortis affecit” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 318). For Augustine’s explanation of why Christ is the ideal sacrifice for the redemption of human beings, see IV.3.19 of *The Trinity* (166-67).

²⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.5.21:360. “Peccata nostra diabolus tenebat, et per illa nos merito figebat in morte. Dimisit ea ille qui sua non habebat, et ab illo immerito est perductus ad mortem. Tanti valuit sanguis ille, ut neminem Christo indutum in aeterna morte debita detinere debuerit, qui Christum morte indebita vel ad tempus occidit” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 322, 324).

death, Christ was able justly to reclaim human beings from the devil.²⁶ As Augustine says, “he won the case against him with the justest of all rights.”²⁷ Freed from servitude to the devil, human beings were again free to serve God, the first condition for the possibility of the reform of his likeness in them.

However, according to Augustine, for human beings to be capable of participating in God again, it was not enough for them only to be freed from subjection to the devil. Although human beings might now be free to serve God, he argues that they were still weak, impure, and unjust on account of the effects of sin. So long as they remained unjust and impure, they could not participate in the just and pure God. As Augustine points out, in the prologue to the Gospel of John it is written that Christ, light from the light of God, shone in the darkness, but the darkness did not comprehend it (John 1:5). According to Augustine, the darkness here signifies the minds of human beings blinded by desire and faithlessness, and ultimately unfit for participation in that light on account of their sins.²⁸ Because of this weakness, human beings were in need of a doctor, and who better to perform this function for them than Jesus, whose name in Hebrew, Augustine points out, signifies doctor.²⁹ In short, to participate in God, human beings had first to be cleansed from the impurity of sin and restored to a just relationship with God.

In a brief, but brilliant, passage in Book IV of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine explains how Christ was able by his single death to release human beings from the double death

²⁶Christ, Augustine writes, pays for human beings “a debt he did not owe, with the result that we have been set free from debts, both ancestral ones and our own personal ones, which we do owe” (*The Trinity*, XIII.5.21:360).

²⁷*Ibid.*, IV.3.17:165.

²⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.1.4:154-55. “Sed lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt’. Tenebrae autem sunt stultae mentes hominum, prava cupiditate atque infidelitate caecatae. Has ut curaret atque sanaret ‘Verbum’, per quod facta sunt omnia, ‘caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis’ (Joan., I, 1, 14). Illuminatio quippe nostra participatio Verbi est, illius scilicet vitae quae lux est hominum. Huic autem participationi prorsus inhabiles, et minus idonei eramus, propter immunditiam peccatorum” (idem, *La Trinité* (*Livres I-VII*), 344).

²⁹Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.4.14:354. Here Augustine is commenting on the meaning of Rom. 5:6: “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (NRSV).

of godlessness and mortality — the consequences of sin — and restore them to a just relationship with God. He writes that

to contemplate God, which by nature we are not, we would have to be cleansed by him who became what by nature we are and what by sin we are not. By nature we are not God; by nature we are men; by sin we are not just. So God became a just man to intercede with God for sinful man. The sinner did not match the just, but man did match man. So he applied to us the similarity of his humanity to take away the dissimilarity of our iniquity, and becoming a partaker of our mortality he made us partakers of his divinity. It was surely right that the death of the sinner issuing from the stern necessity of condemnation should be undone by the death of the just man issuing from the voluntary freedom of mercy, his single matching our double.³⁰

Because Christ joined in himself God and man, divine justice and human weakness, he was able through his sacrifice to join humanity to God.³¹ As God he is just, divine, and immortal. By becoming man and dying for human beings, he was able to raise them to these same qualities, and by giving them these qualities he made possible their growth in likeness towards God. Christ made human beings sharers in his own divine nature by being crucified in their weakness. Because of sin, human beings became mortal, weak, and unjust, and therefore unfit for participating in the divine nature. Now, purified from these defects, they are again able to participate in God and become like him.³² For this

³⁰Ibid., IV.1.4:155. “ut ad contemplandum Deum quod natura non sumus, per eum mundaremur factum quod natura sumus, et quod peccato non sumus. Deus enim natura non sumus: homines natura sumus, iusti peccato non sumus. Deus itaque factus homo justus, intercessit Deo pro homine peccatore. Non enim congruit peccator justo, sed congruit homini homo. *Adjungens ergo nobis similitudinem humanitatis suae, abstulit dissimilitudinem iniquitatis nostrae, et factus particeps mortalitatis nostrae, fecit nos participes divinitatis suae.* Merito quippe mors peccatoris veniens ex damnationis necessitate, soluta est per mortem iusti venientem ex misericordiae voluntate, dum simplum ejus congruit duplo nostro” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 344, 346) (emphasis added).

³¹cf. Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 178. Linda Darwish has noted that “by emphasizing the unity of the divine substance while upholding true deity as essential to the Christian doctrine of redemption in Christ, and by distinguishing between Father and Son in terms of relationship, Athanasius laid the groundwork for Augustine’s profound exploration of the place of the mediator and his work of mediation within the divine trinity” (63).

³²I shall elaborate on this process of purification in the section on the role of faith in the reform of the divine image in the next chapter. See pp. 110 ff. below.

reason, for Augustine Christ's sacrifice for human beings on the cross is the *sine qua non* of making progress in the divine image in human beings.³³ Without believing "in the one whom" the devil "killed without being in his debt,"³⁴ human beings could not even begin to regain their likeness to God.³⁵

Augustine's insistence on the necessity of Christ's sacrifice for making progress in the divine image implies the same criticisms of the Neo-Platonic ideology of self-ascent mentioned in the section on grace above.³⁶ So as not to repeat what I wrote there, I shall only mention here what Basil Studer has observed concerning the influence of the Neo-Platonists on Augustine's theology of the reform of the divine image. Studer writes of the Neo-Platonists that they "pointed him towards the *patria*, but were not, however, able to show him the *via* that led there, because they were ashamed of the cross. Only Paul and John revealed to him how sinful man, through Christ in the Holy Spirit, can really belong to God."³⁷ Augustine's belief (on the basis of scripture) in the dependence of human beings on a mediator for their growth in likeness to God clearly distinguishes his understanding of

³³It is not a coincidence, or on account of negligence, that I have called both Christ's humiliation on the cross and humility on the part of human beings (see p. 54 above) the *sine qua non* of progress in the image. Both are absolutely necessary according to Augustine. Without Christ's humiliation, human beings could not begin to regain their likeness to God. Without humbly accepting Christ's sacrifice for them, human beings could also make no progress in likeness to God. Meekness and humility, both on the part of God and human beings, lies at the core of Augustine's thinking on the possibility of the reform of the divine image in human beings.

³⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.4.18:357.

³⁵Augustine brings this point out much more explicitly in his commentary on Ps. 38, where he writes: "We know by the words of an Apostle, that 'our old man is crucified with Him.' [Rom. 6:6] We should not, however, be divested of our old nature, had He not been crucified 'in weakness.' For it was to this end that He came, that we may be renewed in Him, because it is by aspiration after Him, and by following the example of His suffering, that we are renewed" (*Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, XXXVIII.26:111). Ladner has noted the centrality of the cross to Augustine's thinking on the reform of the divine image in human beings, and writes that this feature of his reform ideology sets him apart from that of the Greek Fathers who had preceded him. The latter, he writes, tended to focus on "the mysteries of God's incarnation and man's deification," rather than the significance of the crucifixion for the reform of the image (153-55).

³⁶See p. 46. cf. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 193.

³⁷Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 169. See also Crouse, "St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*: Philosophical Method," 504.

the process of reform from that of his Neo-Platonic sources.

Augustine goes on to argue in the *De Trinitate* that Christ not only makes it possible for human beings to regain their likeness to God, but actually assists them in this process by giving them in the crucifixion an example of the right order of justice preceding power. In the section on sin, I described at length how, for Augustine, pride, which he associates with the preference for power over justice, lies at the root of sin, and consequently of the deformation of the image of God in human beings.³⁸ Conversely, as I have also shown above, justice — being ruled by God in a just relationship with him — is the source of well-being for the image of God in human beings.³⁹ Christ, then, helps human beings to reform the image of God in them by providing them an example of the right preference for justice over power in order to counter their pernicious desire for power for its own sake, which led to the original deformity of the divine image and contributes to its continuing dissimilarity to God. Christ demonstrated his commitment to justice to human beings, Augustine argues, because he chose to undergo death on the cross when he could have avoided it. As Augustine explains:

Unless he had been man he could not have been killed; unless he had been God no one would have believed he did not want to do what he could do, but they would simply have thought that he could not do what he wanted to; nor would we have imagined that he was preferring justice to power, but simply that he lacked power.⁴⁰

That is, Christ did not lack the power to overcome the devil and retake human beings from him by force. As almighty God, creator of everything that is, no creature's — not even the devil's — power could compare to his. However, lest human beings should continue

³⁸See pp. 18 ff. above.

³⁹See my discussion of the necessity of justice (p. 17), grace (pp. 40 ff.), and humility (pp. 49 ff.) for preserving the image of God in human beings above.

⁴⁰Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.4.18:357.

to follow the devil's example and prefer power to justice, "the devil would have to be overcome not by God's power but by his justice." For this reason,

it pleased God to deliver man from the devil's authority by beating him at the justice game, not the power game, so that men too might imitate Christ by seeking to beat the devil at the justice game, not the power game. Not that power is to be shunned as something bad, but that the right order must be preserved which puts justice first.⁴¹

By choosing to die on the cross, then, Christ made the "justice of humility" more acceptable to human beings.⁴² For Augustine explains that God could have avoided the humiliation of death on the cross, "and so by the death of one so powerful we powerless mortals have justice set before us and power promised us. He did one of these two things by dying, the other by rising."⁴³ Like Christ, in order to rise again in power to God, human beings must first be humbled and just. For this reason, God gave them an example to follow in his Incarnation. He gave them a teacher.⁴⁴ According to Augustine, human beings had been

⁴¹Ibid., XIII.4.17:356. "placuit Deo, ut propter erudendum hominem de diaboli potestate, non potentia diabolus, sed justitia vinceretur; atque ita et homines imitantes Christum, justitia quaererent diabolum vincere, non potentia. Non quod potentia quasi mali aliquid fugienda sit; sed ordo servandus est, quo prior est justitia" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 310). See also p. 20 above. Augustine explains that the kind of power human beings should desire, the kind that is in accordance with the right order of justice preceding power, is power to strive against their own faults, rather than power over other human beings. The latter, he argues, is deceptive, for insofar as human beings imitate the devil when they seek power for its own sake, they actually weaken themselves when they want to rule others. He argues that they should instead "will to be sagacious, will to be brave, will to be moderate, will to be just, and by all means . . . want the power really to manage these things, and . . . seek to be powerful . . . in an odd way" against themselves, but ultimately for their benefit (*The Trinity*, XIII.4.17:356-57).

⁴²Note that here Augustine associates justice with humility, which I have argued above is the essential first step that human beings must take in reforming the divine image in them. See p. 54.

⁴³Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.4.18:357.

⁴⁴Another sense of the word *doctor*. John Cavadini, using Augustine's early philosophical dialogues to interpret the *De Trinitate*, has provided an excellent explanation of how Christ's example contributes to the reform of the divine image in human beings. Playing on the analogy between the inner word of human beings (the content of the mind that is prior to any linguistic determination, i.e., pure thought) and Christ as the Word of God that Augustine formulates in the *De Trinitate*, Cavadini explains that "the Word becomes the 'Good Teacher' (*magister bonus*) whose divine 'doctrina' will (using Pauline language) 'transform' our own inner word by enabling it to be conformed to his 'example.' Augustine characterizes this *doctrina* of the 'Good Teacher' specifically as persuasive, appealing to the will by presenting to it a moving sign of God's love, capable of detaching it from its addiction to power and returning it to justice in the exercise of

following the perverted example of the devil heretofore, so God gave them an example for their edification, rather than their destruction.

I also argued in the first chapter that for Augustine anxiety over the integrity of the body was one of the sources of the deformity of the image of God in human beings, insofar as it directs their attention to bodily things and makes them incapable of properly thinking of God.⁴⁵ Augustine believes that Christ assists human beings with this problem, too, since he argues that Christ's death and resurrection served as a sign of the resurrection of all human beings and showed them that they should not be anxious over their bodies, but should be intent on God. He writes that in order to "balance this double death of ours the savior paid in his single one, and to achieve each resurrection of ours he pre-enacted and presented his one and only one by way of sacrament and by way of model."⁴⁶ I discussed how, according to Augustine, Christ cures the first death — the death of godlessness — above when I described how he thinks Christ returned human beings to a just relationship with God. Christ cures the death of the body in the same way according to Augustine: by his own actions and by the example he provides for human beings to imitate.

The resurrection, Augustine argues, in addition to showing human beings Christ's victory over the author of sins in the "justice game," also shows them his victory over death, the consequence of sin. This demonstration, he writes, serves as a promise to human beings who believe in Christ, who died for their sake, that they too will be victorious over death. This, Augustine argues, is the sense of 1 Cor. 15:23: "It is because this model of our bodily resurrection to come has been pre-enacted in the Lord's case that the apostle says,

charity" (Cavadini, "The Quest for Truth in Augustine's *De Trinitate*," 438-39). I shall address Christ's role as exemplar for human beings and the role of charity in the process of the reform of the divine image at length below. See pp. 80 ff. and pp. 98 ff.

⁴⁵See pp. 21 ff. above.

⁴⁶Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.1.6:156. "Huic ergo duplae morti nostrae Salvator noster impendit simplam suam: et ad faciendam utramque resuscitationem nostram, in sacramento et exemplo praeponit et proposuit unam suam" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 350). See also IV.3.17:165 of *The Trinity*.

Christ the beginning, then those who belong to Christ."⁴⁷ Using the analogy of the Church as the body of Christ, Augustine writes that human beings need not despair that they will overcome death. For insofar as they love Christ and rise in spirit to God with him, so too they, having observed his bodily resurrection, will rise in the flesh, since in this regard "the many members" of the body of the Church "had been preceded by the one head," Christ.⁴⁸ Human beings, Augustine believes, had reason to be convinced by this sign of their future resurrection, for he argues that it is far more incredible that God should become a human being and die for human beings than that mortal human beings should become immortal sons of God. Thus Augustine asserts that it was to convince human beings that they might share in the immortal God that "the Son of God came to share in our mortality." Faith in Christ's humble sacrifice for them provides human beings with divine authority for belief in their resurrection. This is why, according to Augustine, in the Gospel of John after scripture indicated that Jesus gave human beings the right to become sons of God, it added that "the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us," (John 1:12-14) as though to assure human beings of the former.⁴⁹

For Augustine, one of the things that Christ gives human beings for the benefit of the

⁴⁷ Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.1.6:157. "Propter hoc exemplum futurae nostrae resurrectionis in corpore, quod praecessit in Domino, dicit Apostolus: 'Initium Christus, deinde qui sunt Christi' (1 Cor., XV, 23)" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 354).

⁴⁸ Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.2.11:161. See also II.6.29:118, IV.3.13:162, and finally III.3.20 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine makes this same point through a very clever exegesis of the significance of the serpent in Exod. 4:1-5, Num. 21:5-9, and John 3:14: "Serpent stands for death (which was caused by the serpent in paradise) in virtue of the figure of speech by which the cause is used to mean the thing caused. So the rod turned into a serpent means Christ turned into death, and the serpent turned back again into a rod means Christ transformed in the resurrection — the whole Christ with his body the Church at the end of time; this is the meaning of the serpent's tail, which Moses caught hold of to turn it back into a rod again." Augustine goes on to contrast the serpent in these verses with the serpents of the Pharaoh's sorcerers (Exod. 7:11-12), who "stand for the dead of this world, who will not be able to rise again with Christ unless by believing in him they are, as it were, devoured by him and incorporated into his body" (139). Augustine also states this point elegantly in his commentary on Ps. 120 (LXX): "He raised his flesh to life again on the third day, and he will raise ours at the end. The head was raised that the body might wait expectantly and not faint" (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 5:524). cf. Darwish, "The Concept of the Mediator," 78.

⁴⁹ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.3.12:353.

image of God in them, then, is *hope* for their immortality through *faith* in his own resurrection. He has given “actual definite content” to the belief of human beings in the possibility of their own immortality. When they did not believe in this possibility, Augustine points out, they failed to live in such a way that they could attain immortality.⁵⁰ They grasped for bodily things to preserve the body, and in this way they fell away from the likeness of God. In short, as I noted above, they made “a great fuss about not dying.”⁵¹ For this reason, Augustine explains, “the mediator of life [i.e., Christ] came to show us how little we should really fear death, which in our human condition cannot now be avoided anyway, and how we should rather fear ungodliness which can be warded off by faith.”⁵² Because human beings now know, with the constancy of God supporting their belief, that they will not die forever, Augustine argues that they need no longer be consumed by concern for their bodies, which formerly led them to seek out bodily things to serve the body, which led them to obsess over the images of bodily things until they could no longer think of anything else.⁵³ In suffering to die on the cross for human beings, God gave them a great sign of his love for them — a sign of his reconciliation with them, so to speak — and he delivered them from the state of despair that their sins had led them to.⁵⁴ That is, according to Augustine, he delivered their minds from the condition of mortality:

Nothing was more needed for raising our hopes and delivering the minds of mortals, disheartened by the very condition of mortality, from despairing of

⁵⁰Ibid., XIII.6.25:364. “Multi vero immortales se esse posse desperant, cum id quod omnes volunt, id est beatus, nullus esse aliter possit: volunt tamen etiam immortales esse, si possent: sed non credendo quod possint, non ita vivunt ut possint. Necessaria ergo est fides ut beatitudinem consequamur, omnibus humanae naturae bonis, id est, et animi et corporis. Hanc autem fidem in Christo esse definitam” (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres VIII-XV), 338).

⁵¹See p. 23.

⁵²Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.3.15:163.

⁵³cf. Augustine, *The City of God*, IX.15:360, where he argues that death should not be feared, since Christ has shown that it is not everlasting. This is just one example of the salutary effects that Augustine thinks faith has for the status of the image in human beings. I shall address the role of faith in the reform of the divine image at length in the following chapter. See pp. 110 ff. below.

⁵⁴cf. Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 172, 179.

immortality, than a demonstration of how much value God put on us and how much he loved us. And what could be clearer and more wonderful evidence of this than that the Son of God . . . should first of all endure our ills without any ill deserts of his own; and then once we had been brought in this way to believe how much God loved us and to hope at last for what we had despaired of, should confer his gifts on us with a quite uncalled for generosity, without any good deserts of ours, indeed with our ill deserts our only preparation?⁵⁵

Therefore, liberated from concern over the body through hope in their own resurrection, human beings were again free to think of God.

Moreover, in acquiring immortal bodies, Augustine argues that human beings come to be conformed to the likeness of the Son of God specifically, for the Son

alone in the triad took a body in which he died and rose again, carrying it up to the heavenly regions. This too can be called the image of the Son of God in which like him we shall have an immortal body, conformed in this respect not to the image of the Father or the Holy Spirit but only of the Son, because of him alone do we read and receive on wholesome faith that *the Word became flesh* (Jn 1:14).⁵⁶

Thus, without Christ's victory over death, human beings could not become like God, since they could not become like the Son, who even in heaven preserves an immortal body. This, Augustine argues, is what Paul was referring to when he wrote: "As we have borne the image of the earthen man, we shall also bear the image of the one who is from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:49). Formerly, sinful human beings bore the image of mortal man, the image of the

⁵⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.4.13:353-54. Notice again here Augustine's emphasis on the necessity of grace for human beings to become immortal, and hence to make progress in the image. Augustine brings this point out explicitly in Book IV of *The Trinity*, where he writes that it is only in the age under grace, following the age before the law and the age under the law, that human beings receive "the sacrament of our renewal, which is such that at the end of time we shall be renewed all through by the resurrection of the flesh, and healed of every infirmity both of body and soul" (IV.2.7:158). See also XIII.4.15:354-55.

⁵⁶Ibid., XIV.5.24:390. "Et in hac quippe similes erimus Deo, sed tantummodo Filio, quia solus in Trinitate corpus accepit, in quo mortuus resurrexit, atque id ad suprema pervexit. Nam dicitur etiam ista imago Filii Dei, in qua sicut ille immortale corpus habebimus, conformes facti in hac parte, non Patris imaginis aut Spiritus sancti, sed tantummodo Filii, quia de hoc solo legitur, 'Verbum caro factum est' (Joan., I, 14)" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 412).

first Adam, but with the advent of Christ and his victory over sin, they will bear the image of the immortal God in the person of the Son, the second Adam.⁵⁷

This is a very important feature of Augustine's thinking on the divine image in human beings, for it shows that, however much he might stress the unity of the three persons of the Trinity, he also acknowledges their distinctness as represented in their image in human beings. I noted in the introduction that LaCugna has argued that for Augustine the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have only one relationship to the creature, even though their inner relationship is three-fold. Furthermore, it is almost a commonplace among some historians of western theology to argue that Augustine stressed the unity of the Trinity to the detriment of the diversity of the persons in it.⁵⁸ Here, then, one may note a feature of Augustine's theology of the divine image that calls this interpretation of Augustine's trinitarian thought into question. The Son of God has a unique relationship to human beings that the other two members of the Trinity do not possess. Human beings are the image of the Trinity, but they are not an undifferentiated image, just as the Trinity is not an undifferentiated God. Moreover, one might argue — though Augustine does not make this point explicitly — that for Augustine human beings are the image of God because they preserve the same distinctness in the divine image that God has in himself. Thus, in virtue of their immortal bodies human beings distinctly bear the image of the Son within them, joined with the image of the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is true, however, that Augustine does not in the *De Trinitate* discuss the genuinely distinct relationships of the human image to the other two persons of the Trinity,⁵⁹ but its distinct relationship with the Son is sufficient to show

⁵⁷Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.5.24:390. "Secundam hanc imaginem Filii, cui per immortalitatem conformamur in corpore, etiam illud agimus quod dicit idem apostolus, 'Sicut portavimus imaginem terreni, portemus et imaginem ejus qui de coelo est' (*I Cor.*, XV, 45, 49): ut scilicet qui secundum Adam mortales fuimus, secundum Christum immortales nos futuros, fide vera et spe certa firmaque teneamus. Sic enim nunc eandem imaginem portare possumus, nondum in visione, sed in fide; nondum in re, sed in spe. De corporis quippe resurrectione tunc loquebatur Apostolus, cum haec diceret" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 412).

⁵⁸See pp. 6 ff. above.

⁵⁹For in Book XV of *The Trinity* Augustine argues that this distinctness does not lie in human memory or

that for Augustine there are, at the very least, two ways that the Trinity relates to human beings: through the Son, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, through the Father and the Holy Spirit.

For Augustine, it does not follow that because human beings are now able to think of God on account of Christ's actions for them that they will actually do so. Throughout Augustine's writings on the reform of the divine image in human beings, he repeatedly asserts that human beings need a teacher in order to get well. They cannot, like precocious children, simply be given the right materials and conditions for success; rather, instruction is a condition of their success. For this reason, for Augustine Christ is not only a *sacramentum* of God's love for human beings, but also an *exemplum* for them to learn from and follow for their well-being and the well-being of the image of God in them.⁶⁰

According to Augustine, then, perhaps the greatest function that Christ performs for the welfare of the divine image in human beings is that he, in addition to making it possible for them to think of God, actually provides them with knowledge of the Creator through faith in him. Because in Christ humanity and divinity were joined together, Augustine argues that he serves as a bridge between the creature and the Creator: being visible, he reveals the invisible God to them.⁶¹ In the *De Trinitate*, Augustine repeatedly makes the point that by becoming an incarnate human being the Son of God did not relinquish anything of his divinity, but existed as the perfect coincidence of the human and the divine. Christ, he explains, "did not so take the form of a servant that he lost the form of God in which he was equal to the Father," and he goes on to say that "it is the same only begotten Son of the Father who is both in the form of a servant and in the form of God, equal to the Father

will. See pp. 123 ff. below.

⁶⁰Studer points out that the notion of Christ as a divine teacher and exemplar is as ancient as the Christian tradition itself, but that it was particularly developed by the Roman rhetor Lactantius in the late third and early fourth century CE (*Trinity and Incarnation*, 180).

⁶¹cf. Jean-Louis Maier, *Les Missions Divines Selon Saint Augustin*, (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1960), 129.

in the form of God, in the form of a servant the mediator of God and men the man Christ Jesus.”⁶² Thus, it is only in his condition as a man that Christ is inferior to the Father. However, Augustine argues that as the Son of God he is equal to the Father to the extent that, along with the Father, he sends himself into the Incarnation.⁶³

Therefore, Augustine writes, since in the form of God Christ is identical with the Father, when he “brings the believers to the contemplation of God and the Father, he will surely bring them to the contemplation of himself, having said, *I will show myself to him* (Jn. 14:21).”⁶⁴ Here Augustine is speaking about the end of days when Christ hands over the kingdom to the Father, but elsewhere he argues that Christ reveals the Father to the faithful even in this life. According to Augustine, verses like John 14:9 — where Philip asks Christ to show the disciples the Father and Christ replies, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (NRSV) — indicate the possibility of knowing the invisible Father through the visible Christ.⁶⁵ Such verses, Augustine argues, “can only mean that he [Christ] was offering the flesh which the Word had been made in the fullness of time as the object to receive our faith; but that the Word itself, *through whom all things had been made* (Jn 1:3), was being kept for the contemplation in eternity of minds now purified through faith.”⁶⁶ By becoming flesh, the Word gave human beings a visible sign of the invisible Word — an object of faith to

⁶²Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.3.14:74. So as not to digress too far from my subject matter, I cannot here reconstruct Augustine’s arguments from scripture for these and his other assertions about the nature of Christ. I shall only mention that his argument rests in part on an exegesis of Phil. 2:6-7, where the Apostle writes concerning Christ that “being in the form of God [he] thought it no robbery to be equal to God, yet he emptied himself taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, in condition found as a man [*Qui cum in forma Dei esset, non rapinam arbitratus est esse aequalis Deo; sed semetipsum exinanivit, formam servi accipiens, in similitudinem hominum factus, et habitu inventus ut homo*]” (Ibid.; idem, *La Trinité* (Livres I-VII), 122). For Augustine’s full argument, see I.3.14-I.4.31 of *The Trinity* (74-90). See also II.1.2:98.

⁶³Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.3.14:74, II.2.9:103.

⁶⁴Ibid., I.3.18:79.

⁶⁵Another example that Augustine offers is John 14:21, which he quoted just above in a different context.

⁶⁶Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.5.26:172. I shall elaborate on faith’s purifying function in the next chapter. See pp. 110 ff. below.

purify their minds and direct their attention to the invisible God — whom they would only perceive fully in the eternity of the beatific vision.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Augustine believes that in this life Christ discloses some knowledge of the Father to human beings who have faith in him and thus helps them to grow in likeness to God. He argues that, as God, Christ is the Truth to which human beings, by coming to know it, wish to conform the likeness of God in themselves, and, as a servant of God, he is the way to the knowledge of that Truth (John 14:16).⁶⁸ Thus for Augustine in Christ alone the goal and the means to the perfection of the image of God in human beings are united.

That is, according to Augustine, Christ is not God alone or a man alone, but fully God and fully human. He identifies fully with both parties, so to speak. Therefore, Christ is the ideal person to teach human beings about God. In his condition as a man, Christ is so like human beings that, according to Augustine, he even possesses “the rational soul of man,” in addition to “the flesh of man.”⁶⁹ For this reason, Augustine argues that the whole that is Christ “can be called God because it is God and man because it is man.”⁷⁰ Accordingly, one could not find a teacher more familiar with his subject matter or one more understanding about the limitations of his students, for Christ, as the Word of God, knows the mind of God, and as a man, knows the minds of human beings. Thus, when Christ reveals himself and the Father to human beings in faith, he does not do so in the incomprehensible manner of God, but according to the manner of knowing of human beings.

As I noted in the first chapter, according to Augustine sin has weakened the ability for the human mind to think of purely spiritual things.⁷¹ The human mind, he argues, has

⁶⁷See the section on the perfection of the image, pp. 124 ff. below.

⁶⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.4.24:83.

⁶⁹In a helpful note to the text, Hill explains that Augustine emphasized this point to caution his readers against the Apollinarian heresy, which taught that the Word of God replaced the human soul in the incarnate Christ (n. 108, 185).

⁷⁰Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.5.31:176.

⁷¹See p. 24 above.

become accustomed to thinking in terms of bodily, changeable things. For this reason, Augustine writes:

It is difficult to contemplate and have full knowledge of God's substance, which without any change in itself makes things that change, and without any passage of time in itself creates things that exist in time. That is why it is necessary for our mind to be purified before that inexpressible reality can be inexpressibly seen by them; and in order to make us fit and capable of grasping it, we are led along more endurable routes, nurtured on faith as long as we have not yet been endowed with that necessary purification. Thus the apostle indeed says that *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ* (Col 2:3); yet to people who though reborn by his grace are still fleshly and 'all too human,' like babies in Christ, he presents him not in the divine strength in which he is equal to the Father, but in the human weakness through which he was crucified. *Nor did I consider myself to know anything among you*, he says, *except Jesus Christ, and crucified at that*; then he adds, *and in weakness and fear and much trembling was I among you* (1Cor 2:2). And a little later he says to them, *And I, brothers, could not speak to you as spiritual people, but only as fleshly; I gave you, like babies in Christ, milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet capable of it — indeed you are not capable of it even now* (1Cor 3:1-2).⁷²

Thus, even after human beings have been reborn through the grace of God, justified by Christ, and given the promise of immortality, Augustine thinks that their minds are still weakened by the effects of sin. Even the Apostle, whom Augustine did not consider a particularly slow learner when it came to divine truth, was not able to contemplate God in himself, but only as he became incarnate in Christ. Here again is evidence of Augustine's understanding of the reform of the divine image as a gradual process of renewal, rather

⁷²Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.1.3:66. "substantiam Dei sine ulla sui commutatione mutabilia facientem, et sine ullo suo temporali motu temporalia creantem, intueri et plene nosse difficile est: et ideo est necessaria purgatio mentis nostrae, qua illud ineffabile ineffabiliter videri possit; qua nondum praediti, fide nutrimur, et per quaedam tolerabiliora, ut ad illud capiendum apti et habiles efficiamur, itinera ducimur. Unde Apostolus in Christo quidem dicit esse omnes thesauros sapientiae et scientiae absconditos (*Coloss.*, II, 3): eum tamen quamvis jam gratia ejus renatis, sed adhuc carnalibus et animalibus, tanquam parvulis in Christo, non ex divina virtute in qua aequalis est Patri, sed ex humana infirmitate ex qua crucifixus est, commendavit. Ait namque: 'Neque enim judicavi me scire aliquid in vobis, nisi Jesum Christum, et hunc crucifixum'. Deinde secutus ait: 'Et ego in infirmitate et timore et tremore multo fui apud vos' (*I Cor.*, II, 2, 3). Et paulo post dicit eis: 'Et ego, fratres, non potui loqui vobis quasi spiritualibus, sed quasi carnalibus. Quasi parvulis in Christo, lac potum dedi vobis, non escam: nondum enim poteratis; sed nec adhuc quidem potestis' (*Id.*, III, 1, 2)" (idem, *La Trinité* (*Livres I-VII*), 90, 92).

than an instantaneous cure. Christ may have triumphed over sin, but the grave effects of sin on the human mind remained, even though he had removed their cause.⁷³ These abiding wounds in the image of God in human beings would have to be treated in order to bring that image to perfection, but their existence made treating them difficult. For the treatment for the fallen image is to make daily progress in the knowledge of God, and this knowledge is beyond the power of the sinful mind to grasp.

In order to teach human beings about God, then, Augustine argues that he would have to adapt himself to the fallen state of human beings; otherwise, they have no hope of understanding him. Insofar as they had become accustomed to “temporal things” by sin, human beings could only rise to the contemplation of the eternal God through them. As Augustine explains:

Health is at the opposite pole from sickness, but the cure should be halfway between the two, and unless it has some affinity with the sickness, it will not lead to health. Useless temporal things just delude the sick and disappoint them; useful ones help them to get well and lead them, once they have got well, to eternal things. Now just as the rational mind is meant, once purified, to contemplate eternal things, so it is meant while still needing purification to give faith to temporal things.⁷⁴

Thus, according to Augustine, Christ’s great service to human beings for the sake of their progress in likeness to God is to provide them with this nurturing faith that leads to the knowledge of God in eternity. The Incarnation is the cure that lies half way between the sickness of sin and health in God. In Christ, humanity and divinity were joined so intimately that he offers to human beings through faith in his visible existence what he is by nature in eternity. For this reason, human beings are able through faith in Christ to pass thence to truth, from temporal things to the eternal things of God. As Augustine explains:

⁷³See p. 29 above.

⁷⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.4.24:169.

To prevent the faith which we accord with all trust in this mortal life to things 'that have originated' from clashing with the truth of contemplating eternal things which we hope for in eternal life, truth itself, co-eternal with the Father, . . . took on our mortality in such a way that he did not lose his own eternity. *For what eternity is to that which has originated, that truth is to faith.* So it was proper for us to be purified in such a way that he who remained eternal should become for us 'originated'; it would not do for there to be one person for us in faith, another in truth. Nor, on the other hand, could we pass from being among the things that originated to eternal things, unless the eternal allied himself to us in our originated condition, and so provided us with a bridge to his eternity.⁷⁵

Because there is no gap, so to speak, between Christ's humanity and his divinity, human beings are able to pass from the former to the latter.⁷⁶ According to Augustine, Christ's words and actions are not like those of normal human beings, which coincide with the truth now and again. As God incarnate in a human being, his words and actions coincide perfectly with the truth (the Word of God) at all times, and thus they show forth God at all times, insofar as God is truth.⁷⁷ As Augustine writes, in Christ "it is one and the same person by whom deeds were carried out in time for us and for whom we are purified by faith in order that we may contemplate him unchangingly in eternity."⁷⁸ In short, Augustine argues, in Christ human beings encounter the coincidence of what Paul called wisdom (*sapientia*) and knowledge (*scientia*) (1 Cor. 12:7-8; Col. 2:3). Knowledge, according to

⁷⁵Ibid., IV.4.24:170.

⁷⁶Thus Darwish writes that for Augustine, "more than a mere agent of reconciliation, the mediator is himself, ontologically, the place where the two parties meet," and that "in his theology, the cross leads to the trinity and the trinity to the cross; and Christ, fully divine and fully human, is the means in both directions" (74, 86). See also, Hubertus R. Drobner, "Studying Augustine: An Overview of Recent Research," in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (London: Routledge, 2000), 29.

⁷⁷cf. Augustine, *The Trinity*, VI.2.11:213, VII.2.4:222. This is why, as Augustine points out in IV.4.24 of *The Trinity* (170), Christ tells his disciples that if they abide in his word, they will know the truth (John 8:31-32). This is not to say, however, that Christ's words and actions show forth the whole truth, but that they show forth nothing but the truth. See also Lewis Ayres's comments on the disclosure of the Father through the Word in Augustine's early treatise *De fide et symbolo* (56-57).

⁷⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.6.24:363.

Augustine, pertains to human things, wisdom to knowledge of the divine.⁷⁹ Since Christ — the eternal Word of God, co-equal to the Father, originated as a human being — has treasures of both, it is “through him,” Augustine argues, that human beings “go straight toward him, through knowledge toward wisdom, without ever turning aside from one and the same Christ.”⁸⁰ Therefore, Christ plays a pivotal role for Augustine in the reform of the divine image in human beings, since he reveals to them the knowledge of God that is the condition for their progress in the image. Moreover, since he not only shows human beings the way to the knowledge of God, but, as the Word of God, is this knowledge, he is the best possible means for their success.

Furthermore, according to Augustine, as a man Christ understands the weakness of the human mind so well that he knows that even his own teaching in the Incarnation could prove to be a stumbling block to human beings. Because human beings are so accustomed

⁷⁹Ibid. “Ego tamen secundum id quod scriptum est, ‘Unicuique autem nostrum datur manifestatio Spiritus ad utilitatem: alii quidem datur per Spiritum sermo sapientiae, alii sermo scientiae secundum eundem Spiritum’ (1 Cor., XII, 7, 8), si ita inter se distant haec duo, ut sapientia divinis, scientia humanis attributa sit rebus utrumque agnosco in Christo, et mecum omnis ejus fidelis” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 334). See also XIV.1.3 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine makes the same distinction, again referring to 1 Cor. 12:7-8 (371).

⁸⁰Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.6.24:363-64. “Scientia ergo nostra Christus est, sapientia quoque nostra idem Christus est. Ipse nobis fidem de rebus temporalibus inserit, ipse de sempiternis exhibet veritatem. Per ipsum pergitur ad ipsum, tendimus per scientiam ad sapientiam: ab uno tamen eodemque Christo non recedimus, ‘in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi’” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 336). See also Augustine’s commentary on Ps. 121 (LXX), where he writes: “Hold onto what Christ became for you, because Christ himself . . . is rightly understood by this name, *I AM WHO AM*, inasmuch as he is in the form of God. In that nature wherein *he deemed it no robbery to be God’s equal* (Ph 2:6), there he is Being-Itself. But that you might participate in Being-Itself, he first of all became a participant in what you are; *the Word was made flesh* (Jn 1:14) so that flesh might participate in the Word” (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 6:18). Therefore, through the knowledge of God revealed in Christ human beings come to participate in God and thereby to grow in likeness to him. Augustine makes this point again a little farther on in his commentary on Ps. 123 (LXX), where he writes: “To what are we traveling? To the truth. How shall we get there? Through faith. Whither are we traveling? To Christ. How shall we reach him? Through Christ. He told us himself, *I am the way, the truth and the life* (Jn 14:6). . . . He promised them [the disciples], *You will know the truth*, but he attached a condition: *if you abide in my word*. His word? What word? The apostle answers, *The word of faith which we preach* (Rom 10:8). . . . The Word abiding in himself is the truth we are approaching, the truth that sets us free. But the word of faith preached to us, the word in which the Lord bids us abide in order to know the truth, is the Word made flesh who lives among us. You believe in Christ born in the flesh, and you will attain to Christ born of God, God with God” (Ibid., 6:44). See also, Augustine, *The Confessions*, VII.xviii(24):128. cf. Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 179; Crouse, “*De Trinitate: Philosophical Method*,” 505.

to bodily things on account of sin, Augustine argues that they could easily become fixated on the body of Christ present to them in the Incarnation and thus fail to lift their gaze to the invisible Word, in which the perfect likeness of God lies. That is, they could focus their attention exclusively on the humanity of Christ and so fail to see his divinity. For this reason, Augustine argues, Christ had to ascend to the Father, to show human beings that they too must direct their gaze past Christ the man to the divine Word, that they must pass through the incarnate word to the eternal Word. This is why, Augustine writes, the risen Christ said to Mary Magdalene, “Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father” (John 20:17), for he explains that “touching concludes as it were the process of getting acquainted. He did not want this heart, so eagerly reaching to him, to stop at thinking that he was only what could be seen and touched. His ascension to the Father signified his being seen in his equality with the Father, that being the ultimate vision which suffices us.”⁸¹ Similarly, according to Augustine, it is for this reason that Christ said that his doctrine is not his own, but of the one who sent him (John 7:16), for in this way he directs the attention of human beings from his spoken word to the intelligible Word, who, along with the Father, sent the Incarnation into the world.⁸² Therefore, in light of the precautions that Augustine argues Christ has taken to ensure that even his own teaching does not serve as a snare for human beings, but leads them to the knowledge of the Father, his assistance is, for Augustine, absolutely crucial for them to make progress in the divine image.

In addition to revealing the knowledge of God to human beings through his doctrine,

⁸¹Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.3.18:78. Augustine does not note this himself, but one wonders whether he used John 20:17 to illustrate this point in part because right before Jesus says these words to Mary Magdalene, she calls him “Rabbouni” or “Teacher” (John 20:16; NRSV). Whatever the case may be, it is clear that Augustine thinks that Christ wanted to tell his disciples not to think of him only as a teacher, but as the source of his doctrine as well.

⁸²Ibid., I.4.27:25. “Cum enim dicit: ‘non est mea, sed ejus qui me misit’ (*Joan.*, VII, 16), ad ipsum Verbum nos facit recurrere. Doctrina enim Patris est Verbum Patris, qui est unicus Filius” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 162). John 12:44 is another example that Augustine cites where, he argues, Christ intends that the disciples should look past (or through) his Incarnation to the eternal Word, co-equal with the Father (*The Trinity*, I.4.27:86).

Augustine writes that Christ both teaches and conforms them to the likeness of God through his example, i.e., through the history of the Incarnation. By virtue of the existence of the Incarnation itself, Augustine argues, Christ shows human beings “the place [they] should have in God’s foundation, seeing that human nature could so be joined to God that one person would be made out of two substances. That in fact means one person now out of three elements, God, soul, and flesh.”⁸³ According to Augustine, because in one human being man and God were joined together, this serves as a sign to all human beings that they too should (and can) live as divine and human. Since Christ has shown them the possibility, they too can live as gods.⁸⁴ Christ, then, gives human beings the hope that they can become like God, without which they would despair of making any progress in the divine image within them. Similarly, Augustine argues that Christ’s human existence shows human beings that divine grace, which is absolutely necessary for progress in the divine image, is available to them regardless of their previous merits, since even Christ was born God and man, and did not become it through his own merits.⁸⁵ So too, then, Augustine asserts, is it possible for human beings to be divine, since the same grace is present for them as it was for Christ. As I noted above when discussing how Christ overcomes the devil in the justice game, Augustine thinks that Christ also shows human beings that humility can overcome pride,⁸⁶ that vice so opposed to God that is the root of human beings’ unlikeness to him. For Augustine, Christ shows human beings that humility is the beginning of the reform of the divine image in them. Similarly, Augustine writes that in the resurrection Christ shows human beings the reward of obedience to God, a condition for the reform of

⁸³Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.5.22:361.

⁸⁴See Augustine’s commentary on Ps. 50 (*Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, L.2:178) and *The City of God* (IX.23:369), where Augustine discusses in what sense human beings are the gods over which, as the psalm says, God is the “God of gods” (Ps. 136:2).

⁸⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII.5.22:361.

⁸⁶See p. 66. See also XIII.5.22:361 and IV.3.17 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine writes that the “true one also allowed himself to be tempted by him, in order to be a mediator for overcoming his temptations by way of example as well as by way of assistance” (164).

his likeness in them, in order to dissuade them from disobedience through pride in their own powers, a cause of the deformity of that likeness.⁸⁷ Thus, according to Augustine, human beings learn many profitable things for the sake of the reform of the divine image in them by contemplating the significance of the Incarnation's actions for them.

Furthermore, by actively imitating Christ's life on earth, Augustine argues that human beings grow in likeness to God.⁸⁸ According to Augustine, faith teaches that the Son is like the Father "to the point of being equal in being"; therefore, he argues, anyone who is made to the likeness of the Son is also made to the likeness of the Father.⁸⁹ For this reason Augustine urges his readers to "copy the example of this divine image, the Son, and not draw away from God." Since, Augustine writes, the Son does not have a model himself of the divine likeness, but is equal in likeness to the Father, by providing human beings with his example in the Incarnation he is able to lead them to likeness with himself, and therefore to likeness with the Father, the source of all deity.⁹⁰ Thus, speaking of Christ as the divine light that illuminates human beings, Augustine writes:

It provides a model for us without having a model itself. For it does not imitate another going before it to the Father, since it is never by the least hair's breadth separated from him, since it is the same thing as he is from whom it gets its being. But we by pressing on imitate him who abides motionless; we follow

⁸⁷Ibid., XIII.5.22:361.

⁸⁸Cavadini writes that for Augustine "our inner trinity is not healed by a contemplative escape from the world of sign and signification, but rather by conformation to the divine *paideia* over a lifetime of loving attention to and imitation of the example of the Good Teacher" ("The Quest for Truth," 439).

⁸⁹Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.2.7:325. "Si autem pia fides docet, sicut docet, Filium esse ad aequalitatem essentiae similem Patri, quod ad similitudinem Filii factum est, necesse est etiam ad similitudinem Patris factum sit" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 222).

⁹⁰For Augustine's argument establishing the Father as the source of all deity, see IV.5.29 of *The Trinity* (174). See also pp. 92 ff. below. The imitation of Christ was also central to Origen's views on the reform of the divine image in human beings; however, for him, as Ladner points out, "the imitation of Christ is ultimately conceived . . . as instrumental imitation of the divine Logos and as directed toward the Father" (*The Idea of Reform*, 86-87). Augustine's view, then, differs from Origen's, since for him the imitation of Christ is not directed to the Father *per se* but to the Word of God in Christ, who, being equal to the Father, also conforms human beings to the Father's likeness. Christ and the Word, then, are not simply instrumental for Augustine. Christ is both the way and the goal.

him who stands still, and by walking in him we move toward him, because for us he became a road or way in time by his humility, while being for us an eternal abode by his divinity.⁹¹

For Augustine, it was necessary, moreover, that God should provide human beings with this temporal model for their return to him, since, as I have noted several times, on account of sin human beings were not able to follow the eternal God. Since human beings could not perceive God in his own form, “he emptied himself” into the form of a human servant (Phil. 2:6), preserving his own divinity while taking on the changeability of human beings, in order to provide them with a model of return to himself through himself. Thereby God ensured that human beings should not stray from the path to him, for he himself would guide them, in the form of a servant, back to him, in the form of God. As Augustine explains, “man ought to follow no one but God in his search for bliss, and yet he was unable to perceive God; so by following God made man he would at one and the same time follow one he could perceive and the one he ought to follow.”⁹² Again, Augustine asserts that the complete union in Christ of divine and human nature makes it possible for human beings, ascending from his humanity to his divinity, to grow in likeness to God.⁹³

⁹¹Augustine, *The Trinity*, VII.2.5:223. “Cujus imaginis exemplo et nos non discedamus a Deo. . . . illa vero, quia lumen illuminans; et ideo illa sine exemplo nobis exemplum est. Neque enim imitatur praecedentem aliquem ad Patrem a quo nunquam est omnino separabilis, quia idipsum est quod ille de quo est. Nos autem nitentes imitamur manentem, et sequimur stantem, et in ipso ambulantes tendimus ad ipsum, quia factus est nobis via temporalis per humilitatem, quae mansio nobis aeterna est per divinitatem” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 522).

⁹²Augustine, *The Trinity*, VII.2.5:223. “Quoniam quippe spiritibus mundis intellectualibus, qui superbia non lapsi sunt, in forma Dei et Deo aequalis et Deus praebet exemplum: ut se idem exemplum redeundi etiam lapso praeberet homini, qui propter immunditiam peccatorum poenamque mortalitatis Deum videre non poterat, ‘semetipsum exinanivit’, non mutando divinitatem suam, sed nostram mutabilitatem assumendo; ‘et formam servi accipiens’ (*Phillip.*, II, 7). . . . Quia enim homo ad beatitudinem sequi non debebat nisi Deum, et sentire non poterat Deum; sequendo Deum hominem factum, sequeretur simul et quem sentire poterat, et quem sequi debebat” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 522).

⁹³Augustine also makes this point in his commentary on Ps. 119 (LXX), where he argues that since Christ descended from the Father to the “valley of weeping,” which symbolizes his humiliation in the form of a servant, therefore human beings must ascend to the Father from the “valley of weeping,” i.e., through his humble example: “He came down to you, but in such wise that he remained in himself; he came down to you so that for you he might become a valley of weeping, but he remained in himself so that he might be for you

This is why Christ is for Augustine the model by which human beings are “refashioned to the image of God.”⁹⁴ What Christ shows human beings first of all through his example, according to Augustine, is the importance of humility for overcoming pride and thereby returning to God, a point that I have already addressed above at length.⁹⁵

Finally, Augustine writes that Christ assists human beings in the reform of the divine image by bringing them to the face to face sight of God in the beatific vision (1 Cor. 13:12), which will restore the perfect likeness of God in them.⁹⁶ According to Augustine, this is what Paul meant when he wrote that Christ would hand over the kingdom to God and the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). In this verse, Augustine argues that kingdom cannot be understood literally, since this would imply that God and the Father did not already have a kingdom, which he thinks is plainly false. Therefore, he writes:

The fact is that the *man Christ Jesus, mediator of God and men* (1Tm 2:5), now reigning for all the *just who live by faith* (Hb 2:4), is going to bring them to direct sight of God, to the *face to face* vision, as the apostle calls it (1Cor 13:12), that is what is meant by *When he hands the kingdom over to God and the Father*, as though to say “When he brings believers to a direct contemplation of God and the Father.”⁹⁷

Augustine supports this exegesis of 1 Cor. 15:24 with a quotation from Matt. 11:27, where he points out that it is written that only the Son knows the Father and whomever the Son

the mountain of your ascent. . . . He is the starting point of your ascent and the goal of your ascent; you climb from his example to his divinity. He gave you an example by humbling himself” (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 5:498).

⁹⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, VII.2.5:223. “propter exemplum quod nobis ut reformemur ad imaginem Dei praebet imago aequalis Patri” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 524).

⁹⁵See pp. 50 ff.

⁹⁶Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.3.16:76, XIV.5.23:390. “In hac quippe imagine tunc perfecta erit Dei similitudo, quando Dei perfecta erit visio. De qua dicit apostolus Paulus: ‘Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate, tunc autem facie ad faciem’ (1 Cor., XIII, 12)” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 410). See the section on the perfection of the image, pp. 124 ff. below.

⁹⁷Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.3.16:76. See also I.3.17 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine explains that Ps. 5:5 — “In the morning shall I stand before you and contemplate” — refers to Christ revealing the knowledge of God at the end of days (77). See p. 27 above.

wishes to reveal the Father to.⁹⁸ Christ, then, remains the mediator between human beings and God even at the conclusion of the process of the reform of the divine image in them. As I noted above, for Augustine Christ is not one person in faith, another in truth, but in him faith and truth are joined. This is why Augustine calls him the “bridge to eternity” of human beings, since he is able to span from the human to the divine.⁹⁹ Therefore, it is fitting that he should be the one who leads human beings from faith to truth in the vision of God, when he does away with “the regime of symbols administered by the angelic sovereignties and authorities and powers.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, according to Augustine, for human beings Christ is a heavenly as well as an earthly mediator between them and God. Apart from him, truth could not succeed faith, and the divine image in human beings could not be brought to perfection.

For Augustine, then, Christ contributes a great deal to the process of reforming the divine image in human beings. By ransoming human beings from the devil, restoring them to a just relationship with God, and offering them the hope of eternal life along with a sign of God’s love for them, he gave them the possibility of contemplating God and thereby of growing in likeness to him. In the way that he overcame the devil, he offered human beings an example of the power of justice and humility, both of which, as I have noted, are essential to human beings for making progress in the divine image. Christ also ensured that human beings would be conformed to his own likeness, the distinctive likeness of the Son of God, by giving them the promise of gaining immortal bodies. Moreover, as man and God, Christ is able to teach human beings about divine wisdom through faith in his own doctrine and history, and thereby cause them to grow in likeness to God. Through imitating the Incarnation’s example — chiefly, his humility — human beings are also able to grow in

⁹⁸ Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.3.16:76.

⁹⁹ See p. 78 above.

¹⁰⁰ Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.3.16:76, IV.4.24:169-70.

likeness to God. Finally, it is Christ who leads human beings to the face to face vision of God, in which the likeness of God in them will be brought to perfection.

In light of these observations, it is difficult to see how LaCugna's assertion that for Augustine "it is possible to know the Trinity without Christ," that "the economy" for him "is irrelevant to a theology of God," and that in his theology "the true economy is that of the individual soul, whose interior structure discloses the reality of the Trinity" can be maintained.¹⁰¹ According to Augustine, the very possibility of thinking about God in human beings depends on the prior action of the Incarnation for them, and God, for Augustine, is nothing other than the Trinity.¹⁰² Moreover, as several scholars have already convincingly shown, for Augustine, as is evident in the *De Trinitate* and his other works, it is through the mission of Christ — the Father sending the Son to human beings out of Love, the Spirit that joins them together — that the mystery of the Trinity (including its inner relations) is first revealed to human beings.¹⁰³ That is, one of the treasures of knowledge and wisdom that Christ offers to human beings is knowledge of the Trinity. I shall also argue, when I discuss the role of self-knowledge in the process of the reform of the divine image in human beings, that even at this most "philosophical" stage of Augustine's thinking on the Trinity, he consciously asserts that faith is guiding him in his understanding of the Trinity, the faith given to him through the economy.¹⁰⁴ Christ, therefore, is absolutely essential, according to Augustine, to human beings' progress in understanding God and in growing in likeness to him.

¹⁰¹LaCugna, *God for Us*, 101. See pp. 4 ff. above.

¹⁰²cf. Ayres, "Fundamental Grammar," 70.

¹⁰³See Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 169; idem, *The Grace of Christ*, 109; Darwish, "The Concept of the Mediator," 84-86; Maier, *Les Missions Divines*, 129-30; Michel René Barnes, "Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 171. This would seem to be one of the purposes of Book IV of the *The Trinity*, but for one concrete example where Augustine argues that Christ reveals the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, see his comments on John 15:26 in IV.5.29 (174).

¹⁰⁴See pp. 117 ff. below.

The Holy Spirit: "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them." (1 John 4:16)

Although Augustine devotes much less space in the *De Trinitate* to discussing the role of the Holy Spirit in the reform of the divine image in human beings than to the role of Christ, this does not mean that for him the Spirit is less significant than the Son in this process.¹⁰⁵ On the contrary, the mission of the Holy Spirit to human beings is absolutely essential for their progress in the divine image. For Augustine, only the person who loves God will attain God. Without the gift of love through the Holy Spirit, human beings would not be able to participate in God, which is the condition for growing in likeness to him. Augustine argues, moreover, that faith, which leads human beings to participate in divine wisdom, is impossible without love. Apart from charity, he thinks, faith does not lead human beings to the vision of God, but is merely the faith with which even demons believe and tremble (James 2:19).

God is love (1 John 4:8); however, in the *De Trinitate* Augustine argues that the Holy Spirit is distinctively the love of God since he, as the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, suggests the "common charity by which the Father and Son love each other."¹⁰⁶ He is, moreover, appropriately called the love of God because through the gift of the Holy Spirit human beings become lovers of God. Augustine arrives at this conclusion from an exegesis of 1 John 4:13. After John had admonished his readers to love one another, and so have God abide in them — insofar as God is love (1 John 4:8, 11-12) — Augustine argues that John wished to explain more clearly how God comes to abide in them in the next verse:

¹⁰⁵This will become still more apparent when I discuss the role of charity in the reform of the divine image in the next chapter, pp. 98 ff. below.

¹⁰⁶Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.5.27:418, XV.5.30-31:420-21, XV.5.37:424. Bertrand de Margerie has pointed out that Augustine is the first theologian to have systematically elaborated the notion of the Spirit as the common charity of the Father and the Son. Bertrand de Margerie, *La Trinité Chrétienne Dans L'Histoire* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1975), 159. See also Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:77-78.

And so he had, *In this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit* (1Jn 4:13). So it is the Holy Spirit of which he has given us that makes us abide in God and him in us. But this is precisely what love does. He then is the gift of God who is love. Finally, after repeating this a little later and saying, *Love is God*, he immediately added, *and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him* (1Jn 4:16), about which he had said above, *In this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit* (1Jn 4:13). . . . So it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding from God who fires man to love of God and neighbor when he has been given to him, and he himself is love. Man has no capacity to love God except from God. That is why he says a little later, *Let us love because he first loved us* (1Jn 4:19). The apostle Paul also says, *The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us* (Rom 5:5).¹⁰⁷

Thus, in addition to being the “supreme charity conjoining the Father and Son to each other,” the Holy Spirit is, according to Augustine, the charity “subjoining us to them.”¹⁰⁸ The same love, then, that unites the Father and the Son within the Trinity, unites human beings with the Trinity.¹⁰⁹

Therefore, it is through this gift of love, Augustine writes, that the “whole triad dwells in us,” and he argues that apart from it no one can be led to God.¹¹⁰ I shall explain the full force of this statement in the next chapter on the role of charity in the process of reform,¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.5.31:420-21. “‘In hoc’, inquit, ‘cognoscimus quia in ipso manemus, et ipse in nobis, quia de Spiritu suo dedit nobis’. Spiritus itaque sanctus de quo dedit nobis, facit nos in Deo manere, et ipsum in nobis: hoc autem facit dilectio. Ipse est igitur Deus dilectio. Denique paulo post cum hoc ipsum repetiisset atque dixisset, ‘Deus dilectio est’; continuo subiecit, ‘Et qui manet in dilectione, in Deo manet, et Deus manet in eo’: unde supra dixerat, ‘In hoc cognoscimus quia in ipso manemus, et ipse in nobis, quia de Spiritu suo dedit nobis’. . . . Deus igitur Spiritus sanctus qui procedit ex Deo, cum datus fuerit homini, accendit eum in dilectionem Dei et proximi, et ipse dilectio est. Non enim habet homo unde Deum diligat, nisi ex Deo. Propter quod paulo post dicit: ‘Nos diligamus eum, quia ipse prior dilexit nos’ (*I Joan.*, IV, 7-19). Apostolus quoque Paulus: ‘Dilectio’ inquit, ‘Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris, per Spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis’ (*Rom.*, V, 5)” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 508, 510).

¹⁰⁸ Augustine, *The Trinity*, VII.2.6:224. “‘Spiritus quoque sanctus sive sit summa charitas utrumque coniungens nosque subjungens, quod ideo non indigne dicitur quia scriptum est: ‘Deus charitas est’ (*I Joan.*, IV, 8)’” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 524). It would seem, then, that for Augustine the terms *dilectio* and *charitas* are equivalent when speaking of the Spirit. Accordingly, I have used the English terms “love” and “charity” interchangeably when writing about the gift of the Spirit.

¹⁰⁹ See Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:80; De Margerie, *La Trinité Chrétienne*, 161, 168.

¹¹⁰ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.5.32:421.

¹¹¹ See pp. 98 ff. below.

however, it is sufficient for now to note that for Augustine the Spirit is so essential to the reform of the divine image in human beings because it enables them to participate in God, which is necessary for them to grow in likeness to him. According to Augustine, the gift of the love of God through the Spirit is the only thing that at the time of judgment will distinguish those heading to the eternal kingdom, placed at the right hand of God, from those condemned to eternal perdition, placed at the left hand (Matt. 25:31-41). As Augustine writes, “unless . . . the Holy Spirit is imparted to someone to make him a lover of God and neighbor, he cannot transfer from the left hand to the right.”¹¹² As I noted above, for Augustine the eternal kingdom consists in the face to face vision of God that brings his image in human beings to perfection;¹¹³ hence, for Augustine the gift of love in the Spirit is essential to reaching that vision and perfect likeness to God. Even before the final judgment, however, Augustine writes that it is only when human beings have “been roused by the warmth of the Holy Spirit” that they are able to stir themselves to the awareness of God.¹¹⁴ The human mind, he argues, “truly recalls its Lord after receiving his Spirit.”¹¹⁵ According to Augustine, then, without the gift of charity that the Holy Spirit gives to human beings there is no hope for them to grow in likeness to God, since without this gift they are not even able to think of him, much less participate fully in him, these being two conditions of their progress towards him.

That the mind can only recall its Lord after it receives his Spirit, Augustine thinks, can also be applied in a narrow sense to human beings’ recognition of Christ as their Lord in

¹¹²Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.5.32:421.

¹¹³See p. 84 and pp. 124 ff. below. See also XIV.5.25 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine, again commenting on Matt. 25:31-41, writes: “It is then that the godless man will be taken away so that he shall not see the glory of the Lord, when those on the left hand go to eternal punishment, while those on the right go to eternal life. *But this is eternal life*, as Truth says, *that they may know you*, he says, *the one true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent* (Jn 17:3)” (391).

¹¹⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.Prologue.1. “Qui vero iam evigilavit in Deum, Spiritus sancti calore excitatus” (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres I-VII), 336).

¹¹⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.4.21:386. “Quando autem bene recordatur Domini sui, Spiritu ejus accepto” (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres VIII-XV), 400).

faith. Human beings believe in Christ, he writes, “by the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Scripture indicated this, Augustine thinks, through the account of the Pentecost and Peter’s explanation of its significance (Acts 2:1-41). Augustine explains that the Spirit descended on the crowd in tongues of fire, making each person whom it alighted upon speak in the languages of the others in the crowd, in order to give a visible sign that it was through the Spirit that “the whole world and all nations with their variety of languages were going to believe in Christ.”¹¹⁶ However, Augustine argues that even before the Pentecost this function of the Spirit was demonstrated in Scripture. He points out that it is written there that the prophets who predicted Christ’s coming were filled with the Spirit. For example, Augustine writes, John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15), and his father Zechariah was filled with it too when he prophesied about Christ (Luke 1:67). Moreover, it was when Mary was filled with the Holy Spirit that she sang the praises of the child she was carrying within her (Luke 1:46), and it was when Simeon and Anna were filled with the same Spirit that they recognized the infant Christ’s greatness (Luke 2:25-38).¹¹⁷ For Augustine, then, the gift of the Spirit is necessary for human beings to have faith in Christ.

Love, the gift of the Spirit, Augustine goes on to argue in Book IX of the *De Trinitate*, is the difference between a word that simply “occupies a space of time with its syllables” when human beings utter it, and a word that “we like when it is conceived by the mind.” It is only with the latter kind of word, Augustine argues, following Paul in 1 Cor. 12:3, that human beings can confess that Jesus is Lord and enter the kingdom of heaven (i.e., be admitted to the full vision of God). Those who say that Christ is Lord without love, Augustine argues, are those whom Jesus himself describes in Matt. 7:21: “Not everyone

¹¹⁶Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.5.29:175. Lewis Ayres has pointed out that Augustine first made this point in his earlier treatise *De fide et symbolo* (57).

¹¹⁷Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.5.29:174-75.

who says to me ‘Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.”¹¹⁸ Faith apart from love, according to Augustine, is not genuine faith, for, again following Paul, he thinks that faith works through love (Gal. 5:6). Without love, even if a person speaks “with the tongues of men and angels” and “has prophecy and knows all mysteries and all knowledge and has all faith so as to move mountains,” it is, according to both Paul and Augustine, “nothing” (1 Cor. 13:1-2). Augustine asserts that love is necessary to bring human beings home to the eternal kingdom and he adds that “even faith is only rendered of any use for this purpose by charity.”¹¹⁹ If a person has faith apart from love, for Augustine she merely has the faith of demons, with which they believe and tremble (James 2:19), but which does not bring them through to the vision of God in the kingdom of heaven.¹²⁰

Therefore, according to Augustine, it is through the charity poured into the hearts of human beings through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5) that they are able to cling to Christ in faith —¹²¹ a faith that, in what it teaches and offers to human beings as an example to imitate, is so crucial for their progress in reforming the divine image within them. The gift of the Spirit is also the condition of the entry of human beings through Christ to the face to face vision of God that will perfect his image in them.¹²² For Augustine, then, the Spirit is

¹¹⁸Ibid., IX.2.15:279.

¹¹⁹I shall return to this point in my conclusions on the reform of the divine image in *The Trinity*, see pp. 128 ff. below. cf. Williams, “Sapientia and the Trinity,” 327.

¹²⁰Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.5.32:421. The notion that faith apart from love is of no benefit to human beings is present in many of Augustine’s works. For a few examples where Augustine also contrasts faith working through love with the faith of demons, see idem, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, trans. H. Browne and J.H. Myers, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, vol. 7, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody (Mass.): Hendrickson, 2004), X.1:520; idem, *Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament*, trans. R.G. MacMullen, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, vol. 6, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody (Mass.): Hendrickson, 2004), III.10-11:268-69, XL.8:395; idem, *Expositions on the Book of the Psalms*, L.2:178; idem, *The City of God*, IX.21:366-67; idem, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, trans. John Gibb and James Innes, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, vol. 7, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody (Mass.): Hendrickson, 2004), VI.21:46; idem, *Epistolae* [book on-line], in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 33, ed. J.-P Migne (Paris: Migne, 1844-1864, accessed 29 November 2007); available from <http://www.augustinus.it/latino/lettere/index2.htm>; Internet, 194.3.11; idem, *On Baptism, Against the Donatists*, trans. J.R. King, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, vol. 4, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody (Mass.): Hendrickson, 2004), I.9.12:417.

¹²¹Augustine, *The Trinity*, VII.2.5:223, cf. XIII.4.14:354.

¹²²cf. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:81. Basil Studer writes that in Augustine’s Anti-Pelagian

indispensable to human beings in the process of reforming the divine image in them.

Here, then, is an indication of the truly trinitarian character of the process of reforming the divine image within human beings in Augustine's *De Trinitate*. It is not simply the case, for Augustine, that the Son and the Holy Spirit both work to reform their likeness (and the Father's likeness) in human beings, but that they work together *inseparably* to accomplish this. Faith, which Christ gives to human beings, is necessary for them to make progress in the image, but they cannot receive this faith unless they receive along with it the gift of the Spirit that makes them love the knowledge that Christ offers. According to Augustine, the joint, but distinct actions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are therefore necessary for human beings to grow in likeness to God. It is only when the Son and the Spirit work together that human beings are able to return in likeness to them and the Father, the source of all divinity.

The Father: The Source

Unlike the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Father, according to Augustine, has no visible mission to human beings. He alone in the Trinity cannot be said to have been sent, but sends the Son and, together with the Son, sends the Holy Spirit to human beings.¹²³ Apart from this sending, then, the Father has no active role in the reform of the divine image in human beings — this activity is delegated to the Son and the Spirit alone. However, the Father is present in the process of reform, as I have noted above, as the source of all divinity in the Trinity.¹²⁴ He is always the person to whom the Son and the Holy Spirit are returning, just

writings the Spirit is also depicted as a source of inspiration for human beings to preserve a just relationship with God, as a source of strength for them to continually emulate the righteousness exemplified in Christ (*Trinity and Incarnation*, 182). I was not able to discern this function of the Spirit directly in the *De Trinitate*, but it may be implicit in Augustine's notion there that it is through the Spirit that human beings cling to Christ. See the section on the role of charity in the reform of the divine image, pp. 98 ff.

¹²³ Augustine, *The Trinity*, III.1.3:128-29.

¹²⁴ See p. 82 above. cf. Ayres, "Fundamental Grammar," 68.

as they proceeded from him in the first place. As such, for Augustine he is the terminal point of the process of reforming the divine image in human beings. For Augustine writes that it is only when Christ hands over the kingdom to God and the Father (1 Cor. 15:24), when he brings human beings to the face to face vision of God (1 Cor. 13:12), that he will reveal to them the form of God, "in which he is equal to the Father."¹²⁵ The Father, for Augustine, represents the height of divinity, the invisible substance of the Trinity, and as such acts as both the beginning and end of the process of the reform of the divine image in human beings.

This is not to say that for Augustine the Son and the Holy Spirit, in the form of God, are not equal to the Father. The three persons of the Trinity, as Augustine tirelessly demonstrates in the *De Trinitate*, are equal. The vision of God's substance is the vision of the three equal persons, not only of the Father. What I mean to say, rather, is that what is *distinctive* for Augustine about the Father is his position as the source of divinity, since he alone in the Trinity is not sent.¹²⁶ As such, in the reform of the divine image he represents the goal for human beings seeking a perfect likeness to God through the missions of the Son and the Spirit. He is always there with the Son and the Spirit as their source and the object of their return, and of the return of human beings through them.

Conclusion: The Trinitarian Reform of the Divine Image

According to Augustine, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together, distinctly, but inseparably to reform their image in human beings. The Father, as the source of divinity, sends the Son and the Spirit to return human beings to that divinity. The Son by becoming incarnate in Christ and dying on the cross justifies human beings before God and ransoms them from the devil. Furthermore, by rising from the dead he gives human beings the

¹²⁵ Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.4.28:87.

¹²⁶cf. *Ibid.*, IV.5.32:176-77.

promise of immortality. All these actions give human beings the possibility of thinking about God again and thereby growing in likeness to him. However, Augustine thinks that Christ does much more for human beings than this. As man and God joined together, through faith in his doctrine and by following his example, he leads human beings through his humanity to his divinity, from the form of a servant to the form of God. He leads them back to the Father, with whom, in the form of God, he is equal. Augustine maintains that this return is only possible, however, if it is made with love, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Unless human beings love God, the knowledge of God that Christ provides them in faith will not help them to grow in likeness to him, for it will either be dreadful to them — as it is for the demons — or they will refuse it altogether, failing to recognize Christ as Lord. Thus, according to Augustine, in order to return to full likeness to God, human beings must return to the Father through the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three work together at all times to perfect their image in human beings as beloved, lover, and the love that joins the two together.¹²⁷

¹²⁷Ibid., VIII.5.14:255.

The Role of Human Beings in the Reform of the Divine Image

As I argued in Chapter 2, human beings are, according to Augustine, entirely dependent on God's grace in the process of reforming his image within them;¹ however, this does not mean that he thinks that they make no contribution to this process. Human beings are not, for Augustine, passive receptacles of divine grace; rather, they actively co-operate with that divine gift in order to reform the image of God within them. Although Augustine maintains that human beings must be given the capacity to love God through the gift of the Holy Spirit and the capacity to know him through the revelation of the Incarnation, he believes that they must also consciously choose to love God and to grow in the knowledge of God revealed in Christ in order to become like God. That is, human beings must actualize the capacities that the persons of the Trinity have given them. Thus, the first concrete step that Augustine thinks that human beings must take in the process of reforming the divine image is the sacrament of baptism, which symbolizes their initial acceptance of faith in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. However, he argues that baptism is not sufficient of itself to renew the divine image in human beings. After this albeit powerful rite, human beings must still continually strive to make progress both in the love of God and in understanding him in order to regain his likeness.

¹See pp. 40 ff. above.

Baptism: Removing the Cause of the Deformity

In Book XII of the *De Trinitate* Augustine writes that it is with respect to the renewal of the image of God in the rational mind that human beings are “made sons of God through Christian baptism.” Therefore, for Augustine the first thing that human beings must do to reform the divine image within them is to be baptized.² It is in baptism, according to Augustine, that human beings put on the new man, the image of God renewed in the spirit of their minds (Eph. 4:23-24),³ and this new man is “Christ that we put on through faith.”⁴ Furthermore, Augustine maintains that in baptism human beings also receive the Holy Spirit in imitation of Christ’s baptism, in which he was anointed with the Spirit in the form of a dove descending upon him. Again, using the analogy of the Church as the body of Christ, Augustine argues that the descent of the Spirit on Christ in his baptism prefigured in the head what was going to happen in the body. What Christ was doing in his baptism, he writes, “was graciously prefiguring his body, that is his Church, in which it is particularly those who have just been baptized that receive the Holy Spirit.”⁵ For Augustine, then, it is in baptism that human beings receive the faith of Christ and the gift of the Spirit, which work together to reform the image of God in them.

However, Augustine maintains that baptism is only the beginning of this process of reform. The divine image in human beings is not completely regenerated in baptism, he thinks, but is only given the possibility of regeneration by having the cause of its degeneracy

²In the *De Trinitate* Augustine does not discuss infant baptism, but presumably here the parents of the child are acting for her sake, since she cannot yet act for herself. At any rate, whether human beings volunteer themselves for baptism or are volunteered by another, the action is still a human choice, rather than a divine gift (though it is a choice to participate in the divine gifts, and thus requires them antecedently), and for this reason it is a human contribution to the process of reforming the divine image.

³See p. 12 above.

⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.3.12:329. “secundum rationalem mentem, ubi potest esse agnitio Dei, hominem factum ad imaginem ejus qui creavit eum. Secundum hanc autem renovationem efficitur filii Dei per baptismum Christi, et induentes novum hominem, Christum utique induimus per fidem” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 234).

⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.6.46:431.

removed. As I argued in the first chapter, for Augustine progress in the reform of the divine image in human beings is not instantaneous, but is achieved gradually, day by day.⁶ In contrast, according to Augustine what is effected in baptism is an instantaneous cure of the cause of the deformity of the divine image in human beings. In baptism, human beings participate in Christ's sacrifice for them on the cross,⁷ such that "the forgiveness of all sins happens in a moment, so that not even one tiny sin remains unforgiven."⁸ Having been freed from sin through baptism, Augustine believes that human beings are no longer condemned to be perpetual victims of its harmful effects on the image of God in them. However, for Augustine this does not mean that the already extant effects of sin were removed along with their cause. Augustine likens sin to a fever: so long one has a fever, one will continue to suffer from its effects; once the fever is cured, one is able to get well, but its negative effects on one's health still remain for a time.⁹ For example, even once one's temperature has returned to normal after a fever, one is still weary. The difference is that whereas once there was no possibility of getting well — while the cause of the symptoms remained — now there is. Following this analogy, then, for Augustine baptism only cures the fever. As such, it is only the "first stage of the cure." In order to treat the symptoms of the fever to provide a "complete cure" — to address the defects in the image of God in human beings caused by sin — Augustine thinks that something more is required: the love and knowledge of God.¹⁰

⁶Sec p. 29 above.

⁷See p. 61 above.

⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.5.23:389.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid. Ladner points out that Augustine also makes the point that baptism is insufficient of itself for the renewal of the divine image in *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* (*The Idea of Reform*, 165).

Charity and the Reform of the Divine Image: "Whoever cleaves to the Lord is one spirit."
(1 Cor. 6:17)

In the last chapter I argued that, for Augustine, the gift of love through the Holy Spirit is essential to the process of reforming the divine image in human beings. For human beings, loving God is the first step towards removing the effects of sin on the divine image and growing in likeness to God, for as Augustine observes, "nobody wishes to be something he does not love."¹¹ Therefore, human beings must love God to be like him, and love, he argues, is an active force reaching out to another. However, Augustine sees two potential problems with this pair of propositions. How, he asks, can human beings actively love God if he is not directly present to them? Moreover, if nobody loves what he does not know, and human beings, on account of the effects of sin, cannot know God, how can they love him? In response to these two concerns Augustine argues that God is present to human beings in the neighbour and in faith and that it is through these two concrete means that they are able to cleave to him and liken themselves to him.

As I noted in the first chapter, for Augustine one of the effects of sin was to give human beings an excessive preoccupation with their own bodies. Anxious over their mortality, human beings directed their attention to material things below in order to serve the body, rather than to eternal realities above, by which, had they remained intent on them, they could have preserved their likeness to God.¹² They did not wish for the right things, he believes, and so they bounded away from God. As Augustine writes in Book XI of the *De Trinitate*:

A sequence of straight wishes or wills is a ladder for those who would climb to happiness, to be negotiated by definite steps; but a skein of bent and twisted wishes or wills is a rope to bind anyone who acts so, and have him *cast into*

¹¹ Augustine, *The Trinity*, VIII.4.9:249.

¹² See p. 24 above.

outer darkness (Mt 8:12). Happy then are they who in their deeds and behaviour sing the *song of steps*, and *woe to those who trail sins like a long rope* (Is 5:18).¹³

As I showed above, happiness (*beatitudo*) for Augustine, following John 17:3, consists in the vision of God, which perfects his image in human beings.¹⁴ Moreover, the “outer darkness” of Matt. 8:12 (cf. Matt. 22:13) is the place outside the kingdom of heaven, and Augustine also associates the kingdom of heaven with the vision of God’s essence.¹⁵ Therefore, according to Augustine, those who have bent wishes fail to attain the vision of God and thereby to perfect his likeness in them. Thus, in order to make progress towards the perfection of the divine image, human beings must have the right kind of wishes or wills. As T.J. van Bavel writes, for Augustine human beings must leave aside the love of self (*cupiditas/concupiscentia*) that they became accustomed to through sin, and instead take up the love of God and the neighbour (*caritas*).¹⁶

As I noted in the introduction to this section, Augustine maintains that nobody wishes

¹³Augustine, *The Trinity*, XI.3.10:312. “Et ideo rectarum voluntatum connexio iter est quoddam ascendentium ad beatitudinem, quod certis velut passibus agitur: pravarum autem atque distortarum voluntatum implicatio, vinculum est quo alligabitur qui hoc agit, ut projiciatur in tenebras exteriores (*Matth.*, XXII, 13). Beati ergo qui factis et moribus cantant canticum graduum: et vae iis qui trahunt peccata, sicut restem longam (*Isai.*, V, 18)” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 188). cf. Augustine’s commentary on Ps. 121 (LXX), where he writes of the kind of love that can bring human beings through to the eternal Jerusalem, the city that shares in Being-Itself: “We do not admonish you to love nothing, but we do admonish you to withhold your love from the world, so that you may be free to love him who made the world. A soul enmeshed in earthly love has sticky wings and is unable to fly. But once it is cleansed from filthy, mundane attachments its wings can spread freely. The two commandments of love — love of God and love of neighbour — are like a pair of wings, and as soon as they are disentangled from every impediment the soul flies. And whither does it fly? Where else but to God? It mounts to God in flight because it mounts by love. Before it gains the power to do this, it groans on the ground, if the longing to fly is already in it. *Who will give me wings, as though to a dove? Then I will fly away and find rest* (Ps 54:7(55:6)), it moans” (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 6:13, 6:17-18).

¹⁴See p. 30.

¹⁵See p. 84 above and pp. 124 ff. below.

¹⁶van Bavel, “The Anthropology of Augustine,” 36. cf. Augustine’s explanation of Song 8:6, where it is said that love is as mighty as death: “Moreover, love itself effects a kind of death in us, for charity slays what we once were so that we may become what we were not. The man who said, *The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world* (Gal 6:14), had died that death, and so too had those to whom he said, *You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God* (Col 3:3)” (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 6:27).

to be something he does not love.¹⁷ Human beings, he thinks, become like that upon which they are intent. If a person loves the body, he becomes like the body: he thinks in bodily terms and of himself as only a body. Conversely, Augustine believes that if a person loves God, he becomes like God.¹⁸ Since God is the object of his will, he tends towards him. Moreover, according to Augustine, love makes human beings tend towards God in two ways.¹⁹ First, it spurs them on to look for God. Thus, in the prologue to Book III of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine compares charity to a charioteer driving him along in his search for an understanding of the Trinity. If, he writes, his tongue and pen are two chariot horses, then charity is the driver, propelling him along in his “studies in Christ.”²⁰ For Augustine, then, charity motivates the search for the knowledge of God.²¹

Furthermore, Augustine maintains that charity ensures that human beings will make proper use of the knowledge of God when they find it. He points out that it is one thing for human beings to know what they ought to be like, another thing for them to be like that. For instance, a human being may know what it is to be just, know that it is a good

¹⁷See p. 98.

¹⁸Thus, van Bavel writes that “the reason that only love can distinguish between men is, according to Augustine, determined by the fact that man is what he loves: ‘Always, as man loves, so he is. Do you love the earth? Then you are earth. Do you love God? Then — do I dare say it? — you are God.’” (36). The quotation van Bavel uses is from Augustine’s commentary on the First Epistle of John (2, 14). See also Augustine’s commentary on Ps. 121 (LXX), where he writes that “impure love inflames the soul, lures it toward the pursuit of earthly things which are desirable but doomed to perish, and plunges it headlong into the deepest turpitude. Holy love raises the soul to heavenly thoughts and kindles in it a longing for eternal realities, arousing its desire for what neither passes nor dies, and lifting it from the depth of hell to heaven” (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 6:13).

¹⁹cf. Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 143-44.

²⁰Augustine, *The Trinity*, III.Prologue.1:127. cf. X.1.2 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine describes how the “loveliness” of potentially available knowledge “inflames the studiousness of learners” so that “they get all excited about it and hunger for it in all the work they put into acquiring such a competence that they may embrace in actual use what they have prior knowledge of in reason” (288).

²¹cf. Augustine’s commentary on Ps. 119:5-6 (LXX): “My soul has been on pilgrimage for a long time. . . . The body travels from place to place; the soul travels by its affections. If you are in love with the earth, your journey is taking you far from God. If you are in love with God, you are climbing toward him. Let us exert ourselves in charity toward God and our neighbour, that we may make our way back to charity” (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 5:507).

thing to be just, and yet not be just. The difference between knowing the value of justice and being just, Augustine argues, is love of the form of justice. Only if someone loves justice, will he become just.²² Similarly, only if someone loves the knowledge that she has about God, will she become like God. Thus, Augustine writes that “when we know God we are indeed made better ourselves than we were before we knew him, especially when we like this knowledge and appropriately love it and it becomes a word and a kind of likeness to God.”²³ Love, then, is the difference between a knowledge of God (*notitia Dei*) and a likeness of God (*similitudo Dei*) for Augustine.²⁴ When human beings cleave to God in love, Augustine argues, they become better than if they did not so cleave, and he goes on to explain that when they cleave to him completely, they become, as Paul writes in 1 Cor. 6:17, one spirit with the Lord:

This will come about with the mind attaining to a share of his nature, truth, and happiness, not with him growing in his own nature, truth, and happiness. So when it blissfully cleaves to that nature, it will see as unchangeable in it everything that it sees. Then as divine scripture promises, its desire will be filled with good things, with unchangeable good things, with the trinity its God whose image it is, and to save it from ever again being violated anywhere it will be in the hidden place of his countenance, so filled with his plenty that sinning can never delight it again.²⁵

²²Augustine, *The Trinity*, VIII.4.9:248-51.

²³Ibid., IX.2.16. “cum Deum novimus, quamvis meliores efficiamur quam eramus antequam nossemus, maximeque cum eadem notitia etiam placita digneque amata verbum est, fitque aliqua Dei similitudo illa notitia” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 104).

²⁴cf. Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 61-62.

²⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, VI.2.9:211, XIV.4.20:386. “Deinque [*sic*] cum illi penitus adhaeserit, unus erit spiritus: cui rei attestatur Apostolus, dicens, ‘Qui autem adhaeret Domino, unus spiritus est’ (*I Cor.*, VI, 17): accedente quidem ista ad participationem naturae, veritatis, et beatitudinis illius, non tamen crescente illo in natura, veritate et beatitudine sua. In illa itaque natura, cum feliciter adhaeserit, immutabiliter vivet, et immutabile videbit omne quod viderit. Tunc, sicut ei divina Scriptura promittit, satiabitur in bonis desiderium ejus (*Psal.*, CII, 5), bonis immutabilibus, ipsa Trinitate Deo suo cujus imago est: et ne uspiam deinceps violetur, erit in abscondito vultus ejus (*Psal.*, XXX, 21), tanta ubertate ejus impleta, ut eam nunquam peccare delectet” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 398). Notice that Augustine speaks here of a *participatio naturae* in God when human beings cleave to him completely. Participation in God, it will be recalled, is for Augustine one of the conditions for the growth of the image in likeness to God. See p. 15 above.

Therefore, according to Augustine it is through charity, the gift of the Spirit, that human beings ultimately come to the vision of God's nature, in which they will become like him. Charity, as he writes elsewhere in the *De Trinitate*, allows human beings to "enjoy the presence of him from whom we are." The corollary of this for Augustine is that unless human beings love God, they will never see him.²⁶ Thus, charity is essential for him to the process of reforming the divine image in human beings, since it is by participating in God and by seeing his essence that they become like him.

Augustine, therefore, thinks that charity lies at the heart of reforming the divine image in human beings. However, he senses that this might be problematic. Granted that human beings, as he writes following Paul, "are still walking by faith and not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7), and as such do not yet see God "face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12), how can they love God? For Augustine in the *De Trinitate* it is an axiom that no one loves what they do not know. How then, he asks, can human beings love God before they see him? If they cannot, then they will never see him, for according to Augustine they must love him in order to see him. Thus human beings appear to be caught in a terrible bind for Augustine: they can neither see God in order to love him nor love him in order to see him.²⁷ He argues that the answer to this dilemma, however, is partially contained in the question. It is true that human beings are not yet walking by sight, but they are walking by faith, and Augustine asserts that it is through faith that they come to know God so that they can love him in order to see him. Augustine provides this solution to the dilemma in Book VIII of the *De Trinitate*:

But then to behold and grasp God as he can be beheld and grasped is only permitted to the pure in heart — blessed are the pure in heart, because they shall see God (Mt 5:8); so before we are capable of doing this we must first love by faith, or it will be impossible for our hearts to be purified and become fit

²⁶Augustine, *The Trinity*, VIII.3.6:245-46. "Sed dilectione standum est ad illud et inhaerendum illi, ut praesente perfruamur a quo sumus, quo absente nec esse possemus" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 38). See the continuation of this quotation in n. 28 just below.

²⁷Augustine, *The Trinity*, VIII.3.6:245-46. See also X.1.1:286-87 and XIV.4.18:384.

and worthy to see him. Where after all are those three things to be found which the whole gear of all the inspired books is set up to build in the human spirit, where are faith, hope, and charity to be found if not in the spirit that believes what it cannot yet see, hopes in and loves what it believes? So something can be loved which is unknown, provided it is believed.²⁸

For Augustine, then, charity must go hand in hand with faith for human beings to become like God. Faith provides the knowledge of God necessary for human beings to love God in order that they might one day see him. Again, Augustine maintains that the distinctive gifts of the Spirit and the Son must work together to reform the likeness of the Trinity within human beings. Without the Spirit, human beings would not have the capacity to love God. Without the Incarnate Son, they would have no object for that love.

However, Augustine recognized that if charity is to be at the core of the reform of the divine image in human beings one more problem remains. Love, according to Augustine, is active; it is not an abstract state of mind, but something that concretely reaches out to another.²⁹ As Augustine says, speaking of the love of Charity itself (i.e., God), “when we love charity, we love her loving something, precisely because she does love something. . . . She is not charity if she loves nothing.”³⁰ That is, love loves something, but if God is not materially present to human beings, how can they love him? They can love him through faith, as I have shown, but even more concretely, Augustine maintains, they can love him through the love of their neighbour:

Let no one say, ‘I don’t know what to love.’ Let him love his brother, and love that love; after all, he knows the love he loves with better than the brother

²⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, VIII.3.6:246. “Sed et priusquam valeamus conspiciere atque percipere Deum, sicut conspici et percipi potest, quod mundicordibus licet; ‘Beati’ enim ‘mundicordes, quia ipsi Deum vident’ (*Matth.*, V, 8): nisi per fidem diligatur, non poterit cor mundari, quo ad eum videndum sit aptum et idoneum. Ubi sunt enim illa tria, propter quae in animo aedificanda omnium divinorum Librorum machinamenta consurgunt, fides, spes, charitas (*I Cor.*, XIII, 13); nisi in animo credente quod nondum videt, et sperante atque amante quod credit? Amatur ergo et qui ignoratur; sed tamen creditur” (idem, *La Trinité* (*Livres VIII-XV*), 38).

²⁹See Williams, “Sapientia and The Trinity,” 323.

³⁰Augustine, *The Trinity*, VIII.5.12:253. See also IX.1.2:271.

he loves. There now, he can already have God better known to him than his brother, certainly better known because more present, better known because more inward to him, better known because more sure.³¹

According to Augustine, when human beings love their neighbour, they love love itself, and since love is God (1 John 4:8, 4:16), in loving the love with which they love the neighbour, they are loving God. What is more, since this experience of love is internal God becomes, in a qualified sense, a certain presence to human beings. Through this inward experience of love for the neighbour, then, Augustine believes that human beings are capable of grasping God in order to love him.

Augustine's argument here is ultimately grounded in an exegesis of 1 John 4:20 and Matt. 22:36-40. He argues that the reason it is written in 1 John 4:20 that "Whoever does not love the brother whom he sees cannot love God whom he does not see," is that "whoever . . . does not love his brother is not in love, and whoever is not in love is not in God, because *God is love* (1Jn 4:8)."³² That is, for Augustine, the two commandments upon which the whole of the law hangs — the love of God and neighbour (Matt. 22:36-40) — are not just alike (Matt. 22:39), but are really identical, for he writes that "if a man loves his neighbour, it follows that above all he loves love itself. But *God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God* (1Jn 4:16). So it follows above all that he loves God."³³

The notion that by loving the neighbour human beings are loving God and are thereby able to grow in likeness to him has an important implication for Augustine's thinking on the reform of the divine image in human beings. The requirement that human beings love the neighbour in order to love God shows that, for Augustine, the reform of the divine image in human beings is not a purely self-serving enterprise. For him the reform of the divine image in oneself necessarily entails reaching out to others in love, and so self-interest is

³¹Ibid., VIII.5.12:253.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., VIII.5.10:251-52. cf. van Bavel, "The Anthropology of Augustine," 36.

here combined with the interests of others in love. Because the love of neighbour and the love of God are identical, Augustine writes that

we need not let that question worry us about how much love we should expend on our brother, how much on God. On our brother as much as on ourselves; and we love ourselves all the more, the more we love God. So with one and the same charity we love God and neighbor; but God on God's account, ourselves and neighbour also on God's account.³⁴

As I noted in the introduction, some scholars have argued that Augustine's emphasis on the trinitarian images within the individual human mind as a means to knowing God establish him as one of the forefathers of modern individualism.³⁵ However, Augustine's emphasis on the necessity for human beings to love the neighbour in order to attain vision of God, in which they will know him fully and thus become like him, undermines this interpretation of his thought in the *De Trinitate*. Without going beyond the self to the neighbour in love, human beings, according to Augustine, will never know God:³⁶ no matter how ardently they exert themselves in this quest, they will fail unless they have love for others.³⁷ After

³⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, VIII.5.12:254. cf. XII.3.15:330.

³⁵See p. 6 above.

³⁶cf. Augustine's commentary on Ps. 121:1-6 (LXX): "*We are going to the Lord's house*. Find out, then, if we are truly going there. We travel not on foot but by our affections. Test whether we are on the way. Each one of you must question himself about his attitude to the holy poor person, the needy brother or sister, the penurious beggar. Let each one check that his compassion is not too narrow, because the seats [the apostles] which will sit in judgment will have to interrogate you, and their duty is to seek out what makes for the peace of Jerusalem." Augustine also writes a little later, "who has charity, brothers and sisters? The person who in this life is not self-seeking. The apostle Paul was a man of charity. Listen to what he tells us: *Try to appease everyone in all circumstances, as I too make myself agreeable to all in every respect* (1 Cor 10:33)" (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 6:26, 6:27-28).

³⁷As such, Augustine's thinking on the reform of the divine image is distinct from what Ladner describes as the Greek Fathers's ideal: "If reform in its most spiritualized form in the mystic's soul and even in the bliss of heaven is mainly something negative, though negative in the very high sense of never-ending purification and of purest desire for the incommensurable majesty of God, it is understandable that on the lower levels of terrestrial life reform will also express itself in a negative rather than in a positive way: in withdrawal from the world, rather than in penetration of the world, or at least in a relatively disconnected juxtaposition of the mystical and the profane." A little later, Ladner notes that this "royal" road to the perfection of the divine likeness "could lead away from the realization of interpersonal love" (*The Idea of Reform*, 107, 110). Although, as I will show (see p. 114 below), Augustine does affirm the value of denying the world in order to rise to God, this denial does not entail a complete extraction from the world, but preserves the active love

all, following Augustine's logic in the *De Trinitate*, one might ask in his place how human beings could claim to know the God who is love, unless they understood in themselves (i.e., experienced) that love loves something other than itself? If they did not realize this, then according to Augustine they would not know the Trinity — the lover, the beloved, and the love joining them together — that is God.³⁸

The Role of Reason in the Reform of the Divine Image: "Unless you believe, you will not understand." (Isa. 7:9)

As I argued in the first chapter, for Augustine the person who progresses in the knowledge of God, or wisdom (*sapientia*), advances in likeness to him.³⁹ Charity is essential to this progress for human beings, he thinks, but so also is advancing their concrete understanding of God through rational contemplation of him. It is with respect to the rational soul, after all, that Augustine believes that human beings were created in the image of the Trinity. Therefore, in addition to loving God, according to Augustine human beings must strive to understand him rationally in order to become like him. However, Augustine makes clear that in this endeavour human beings never cease to rely on the assistance of faith. That is, for Augustine a purely philosophical approach to God cannot by itself lead to an understanding of him. He maintains that even when human beings exercise their rational mind to the utmost in the contemplation of God through his likeness in the structure of their mind faith still informs their search for him. According to Augustine, however much human beings might exert themselves in their attempt to understand God, they remain dependent on divine assistance in this effort. Furthermore, Augustine maintains that even with God's assistance through faith human beings cannot attain a perfect understanding of God in this

of others in the world. The spiritual hermit, at least according to the *De Trinitate*, is not the ideal model of a human being growing in likeness to God.

³⁸Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 117.

³⁹See pp. 13 ff. above.

life.

On the first page of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine asserts that reason unassisted by faith does not lead to the truth about God. For him, philosophy — the use of unassisted human reason to investigate an object of inquiry — cannot comprehend God.⁴⁰ He writes:

The reader of these reflections of mine on the Trinity should bear in mind that my pen is on the watch against the sophistries of those who scorn the starting point of faith, and allow themselves to be deceived through an unseasonable and misguided love of reason. Some of them try to transfer what they have observed about bodily things to incorporeal and spiritual things, which they would measure by the standard of what they experience through the senses of the body or learn by natural human intelligence, lively application, and technical skill. There are others whose concept of God, such as it is, ascribes to him the nature and moods of the human spirit. . . . Again, there is another type; people who indeed strive to climb above the created universe, so ineluctably subject to change, and raise their regard to the unchanging substance which is God. But so top-heavy are they with the load of their mortality, that what they do not know they wish to give the impression of knowing, and what they wish to know they cannot.⁴¹

Augustine here points out three errors that one can make in trying to know God, all of which he thinks the philosophers — those who have a “misguided love of reason” — make. The two basic tools of classical philosophy are experience and inference or deduction from that experience.⁴² When it comes to God, Augustine argues, these tools fail. Since God is “above the created universe,” he cannot be known by deduction from anything in it. Moreover, insofar as human beings are mutable creatures and God exists in eternity without change, they cannot know him by direct experience. As Augustine writes elsewhere in the

⁴⁰On this topic, see also Goulven Madec, “Notes sur l’intelligence augustinienne de la foi,” *Revue des études augustinienes* 17, no. 1-2 (1971): 125-32. Madec, arguing against Olivier du Roy’s interpretation of Augustine’s theological method as overly philosophical, makes a similar argument to mine below; however, Madec forms his arguments chiefly from the *Confessions*, rather than the *De Trinitate*.

⁴¹Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.1.1:65.

⁴²One could argue that this applies also to modern philosophy, or at least to phenomenology, since it relies on “phenomenological seeing” and inferences about universals contained in that sight. See Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964).

De Trinitate, “a thing cannot be properly called eternal if it undergoes change in any way. So insofar as we are changeable, to that extent do we fall short of eternity.”⁴³ Lest one should think that Augustine believes only the human body to be mutable, he also argues that the soul undergoes change since it either grows or diminishes accordingly as it becomes wise or unwise. In contrast, with God, he writes, “there is nothing like that.”⁴⁴ In short, according to Augustine “everything created is changeable,”⁴⁵ including the soul, and therefore nothing can perceive the unchangeable Creator directly.

However, Augustine acknowledges that there is precedent in scripture for understanding God by inference from the created world. In Rom. 1:20 Paul writes that “ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made” (NRSV). This verse would seem to suggest that there is some knowledge of God that human beings can attain unassisted by faith. Augustine argues, however, that Rom. 1:21 clarifies Paul’s intention in v. 20: “Though they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened” (NRSV). That is, according to Augustine, Rom. 1:21 shows the failure of the mind unaided by grace to truly know God.⁴⁶ For Augustine this failure may complete — as, for example, when

⁴³Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV.4.24:169. cf. Augustine’s commentary on Ps. 121 (LXX), where he writes, speaking of Christ: “Do not despair of your own prospects because I have told you, *I AM WHO AM, and HE WHO IS has sent me to you*. Do not despair, reflecting how you are tossed to and fro, and precluded from sharing in the Selfsame by the mutability of all human things and the inconstant state of mortals. I am coming down to you, because you cannot come up to me” (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 6:19).

⁴⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, V.1.5:191. cf. Augustine’s commentary on Ps. 121 (LXX), where he writes: “Not even the human soul can stand. What a variety of thoughts flit across it! What intense feelings of pleasure sway it! How fiercely it is pulled this way and that and stretched by its desires! The human mind itself, the so-called rational mind, is mutable, for it is not Being-Itself. One moment it wants something, and then it wants it no longer; now it knows something, and then it does not know; now it remembers, now it forgets. No one of himself has absolute being” (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 6:20).

⁴⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, VI.2.8:211.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, IV.4.23:168-69. See also XIII.6.24 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine, commenting on Rom. 1:18, 1:20, and 1:23, argues that philosophers, at the lowest level of creation, sought a middle level (some inferential data) to reach the Creator above them, but since they philosophized without a mediator, demons lured them away from the glory of God to worship instead their own glory and likeness in the form of idols (363).

philosophers attempt to explain the causes of natural phenomena, but posit false causes or “true . . . but proximate and secondary” causes, “while the cause that transcends all others, namely the will of God, they have been quite unable to discern” —⁴⁷ or it may be partial — as, for example, when philosophers “can show very truly by the most persuasive arguments” from created things “that all temporary things happen according to eternal ideas,” but are unable to “inspect these ideas themselves.”⁴⁸ Therefore, according to Augustine in the *De Trinitate* a natural knowledge of God is at best quite limited: it amounts to the knowledge of an eternal first cause, but fails to grasp anything about that cause apart from its eternity.

Despite what it might seem, in the *De Trinitate* Augustine is not wholly pessimistic about the value of philosophy for coming to understand God. He simply rejects the idea that philosophy can be of any use in this undertaking without God’s assistance.⁴⁹ That is, for Augustine philosophy understood as the unassisted exercise of human reason in inquiry cannot help human beings to grow in likeness to God by understanding him. However, philosophy understood as the love of (divine) Wisdom — the exercise of human reason in association with that Wisdom in order to progress in understanding it — is, according to Augustine, a means for human beings to grow in likeness to God.⁵⁰ That is, for Augustine

⁴⁷Ibid., III.1.7:130.

⁴⁸Ibid., IV.4.21:167-68.

⁴⁹Thus Augustine writes concerning Cicero that “from the philosophers, as he himself admits, *and they the greatest and far and away the most brilliant*, he had learnt that souls are eternal. It is quite reasonable that eternal minds should be stirred by his exhortation to be found in their course when they come to the end of this life, *that is in reason and in eager inquiry*, and should *mix themselves up less in the tangled vices and errors of men*, to make their return to God all the easier. But this course, which is set in the love of and inquiry into truth, is not enough for unhappy men, that is for all mortals who have this reason alone without any faith in the mediator” (*The Trinity*, XIV.5.26:392). See also Augustine’s etymology of the word “philosopher” in XIV.1.2:371. See also p. 44 above. John Cavadini has argued that Augustine’s intention in the *De Trinitate* as a whole is to critique the Neoplatonic idea of self-ascent through *noesis* — and, by extension, to critique his own earlier dialogues where he espoused this idea — by arguing that this kind of ascent “cannot but fail” without the assistance of faith. See John Cavadini, “The Structure and Intention of Augustine’s *De trinitate*,” *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 103-23.

⁵⁰Thus Crouse writes that “the reformed *philosophia*, whereby St. Augustine aspires to the contemplation of the eternal Trinity, must begin with belief in the *temporalia* of revelation, in terms of which a new *scientia*

the faith disclosed to human beings through the Son, the Wisdom of God, is a necessary pre-cursor and source of continuous aid for them in coming to know God.⁵¹

For Augustine, unless human beings first believe, they will not understand (Isa. 7:9).⁵² On account of sin, Augustine argues, the human mind had become so familiar with bodily things that it could not think of anything except in bodily terms. It could not, therefore, conceive of something entirely spiritual.⁵³ So he argues that for human beings to contemplate God they would have to be purified from this kind of thinking, and for this purification they would require a means adapted to their damaged intellectual capacities. This, according to Augustine, is what faith provides for human beings.⁵⁴ Following Matt. 5:8, Augustine asserts that it is only the “clean of heart” who will see God. The means for this cleansing, he thinks, are also indicated in scripture, for he writes, “contemplation [of God] in fact is the reward of faith, a reward for which hearts are cleansed through faith, as it is written, *cleansing their hearts through faith* (Acts 15:9).”⁵⁵ According to Augustine, therefore,

is constituted, and its *modus*, or method, must be the movement from the temporal to the eternal, from the external to the internal, from *fides to intellectus, per scientiam ad sapientiam*” (506).

⁵¹In connection with what follows, see also pp. 73 ff. above.

⁵²See Augustine, *The Trinity*, VII.4.12:232, where he writes that when discussing the Trinity, one must take care not to confuse the persons in it nor to imply any disparity between the persons in preserving their distinction from one another, and concludes: “If this cannot be grasped by understanding, let it be held by faith, until he [Wisdom] shines in our minds who said through the prophet, *Unless you believe, you will not understand* (Is 7:9).” See also XV.Prologue.2:396. cf. Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 175.

⁵³See pp. 24 ff.

⁵⁴Thus Augustine writes that one of his goals in the *De Trinitate* is to convince those who ask him for a rational account of the Trinity “that supreme goodness does exist which only the most purified minds can gaze upon, and also that they are themselves unable to gaze upon it and grasp it for the good reason that the human mind with its weak eyesight cannot concentrate on so overwhelming a light, unless it has been nursed back to full vigor on *the justice of faith* (Rom 4:13)” (I.1.4:67).

⁵⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.3.17:77, I.4.28:87. cf. Augustine’s commentary on Ps. 123 (LXX), where he writes that “face-to-face vision depends on our having cleansed our hearts, for the Lord tells us, *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God* (Mt 5:8). How are hearts cleansed? Only through faith. As Peter testifies concerning the gentiles in the Acts of the Apostles, God was *cleansing their hearts by faith* (Acts 15:9). Our hearts too are cleansed by faith until they are fit to be granted vision” (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 6:44). Ladner points out that the notion that God’s image in human beings had to be purified in order to progress towards him was common to the Greek Fathers, and in particular to Gregory of Nyssa, who likened this purification to cleaning a painting, removing rust from iron, or removing material in the production of a sculpture (*The Idea of Reform*, 91-93).

faith is the means necessary for human beings to be purified in order to contemplate God and thereby grow in likeness to him.⁵⁶

Faith accomplishes this, Augustine argues, by substituting the harmful and misleading likenesses of bodily things in human beings with helpful ones that raise their minds to the contemplation of God rather than drag them down to the level of bodies. As I showed above, Augustine argues that human beings who shun faith in the pursuit of wisdom (i.e., philosophers), either under the malign influence of a corporeal style of thought or deluding themselves that they could rise above the level of bodily things, make many errors when they think about God.⁵⁷ Therefore, he writes:

It was . . . to purify the human spirit of such falsehoods that holy scripture, adapting itself to babes, did not shun any words, proper to any kind of thing whatever, that might nourish our understanding and enable it to rise up to the sublimities of divine things. Thus it would use words taken from corporeal things to speak about God with, as when it says *Shelter me under the shadow of your wings* (Ps 17:8); and from the sphere of the created spirit it has transposed many words to signify what was not in fact like that, but had to be expressed like that; *I am a jealous God* (Ex 20:5) for example, and *I am sorry I made man* (Gn 6:7).⁵⁸

The scriptures, then, present the believer with signs that through faith she can understand so that she can grasp something else that, were it presented directly to her, she could not understand. God does not have wings, he does not become jealous or repent, but these figures teach the faithful person something true about God. In contrast to the faithful person, the philosopher either wrongly thinks that he can understand God apart from bodily likenesses — a mode of thought that Augustine thinks is impossible for sinful human beings — or by inferring things about God from the created order without the guidance of faith he drags

⁵⁶cf. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 196, where he traces the references to Isa. 7:9 in Augustine's works, but overlooks the *De Trinitate*.

⁵⁷See p. 107.

⁵⁸Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.1.2:66.

God down to that order or raises the human creation up to the level of the divine — both grievous errors according to Augustine. However, since God discloses the content of faith to human beings through *divine* (i.e., inspired) scripture, Augustine believes that it provides them with a reliable set of bodily signs by which they may grow in their understanding of God. For Augustine, as I showed in the previous chapter, this principle is supremely the case in the teaching and example of the Incarnation,⁵⁹ but it also applies to scripture as a whole. Therefore, for Augustine faith is necessary for human beings to understand the immaterial God, since he believes that on account of sin they cannot think apart from bodily likenesses and that these likenesses only direct them to God through faith.

According to Augustine, faith, moreover, provides human beings with a means to move beyond these bodily likenesses nearer and nearer to the contemplation of God as he is. As Augustine says, “the divine scriptures . . . are in the habit of making something like children’s toys out of things that occur in creation, by which to entice our sickly gaze and get us step by step to seek as best we can things that are above and forsake the things that are below.”⁶⁰ Thus faith provides a regimen for human beings to train them to think in divine, rather than bodily, terms. In this way it purifies their understanding so that they may contemplate God directly. It can, in this way, be compared to the method of a teacher. A teacher offers certain data to the student to be believed rather than understood, so that the student, having familiarized himself with these data and accepted them on the basis of authority, can then go on to investigate them and understand them for himself. For example, in learning algebra the student becomes intimate with using its theorems before, at an advanced stage, proving them. Unless he had learned how to use the theorems on the basis of authority, not being accustomed to algebraic reasoning he would have no hope of understanding how to prove them. Similarly for Augustine, when it comes to God, faith

⁵⁹See pp. 73 ff.

⁶⁰Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.1.2:66.

teaches a great deal about him that a person first accepts on authority and then goes on to investigate. The first step, however, is crucial to the second. For this reason, Augustine says that the “certitude of faith at least initiates knowledge,” and that this is the right intent for the person who seeks God.⁶¹ As Paul says, and Augustine affirms, it is only when human beings have been nourished on the “milk” of faith in Christ that they will be ready for the “strong food,” the knowledge of God (1 Cor. 3:1-2).⁶²

Provided, then, that human beings proceed from the firm foundation of faith, Augustine asserts that they must go on to seek to understand God in order to grow in likeness to him. But where is this understanding to be sought? According to Augustine, human beings find it within God’s creation. In the prologue to Book II of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine writes that in this treatise he “will not be idle in seeking out the substance of God, either through his scriptures or through his creatures. For both these are offered us for our observation and scrutiny in order that in them he may be sought, he may be loved, who inspired the one and created the other.”⁶³ Together with scripture, then, in which human beings find God through faith, Augustine believes that they may find him through his creation in order to understand him. Thus, he describes what his method has been in the *De Trinitate* in Book XV as follows: “As far as we could, we have also used the creation which God made to remind those who ask for reasons in such matters that as far as they can they should descry his invisible things by understanding them through the things that are made.”⁶⁴ For

⁶¹Ibid., IX.Prologue.1:270. “Sed ea recta intentio est, quae proficiscitur a fide. Certa enim fides utcumque inchoat cognitionem” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 74).

⁶²See p. 76 above. cf. Augustine’s remarks on 1 Cor. 3:2 and 1 Cor. 2:2 in his commentary on Ps. 119 (LXX): “If he had said simply, *save Jesus Christ*, we might have thought he meant Jesus Christ in his divinity, in his reality as the Word with God, Jesus Christ the Son of God. But him the little ones cannot grasp — not when he is spoken of like that. How can they take him in, these little ones who can only take milk? *Jesus Christ, crucified*, says the apostle. Suck what he became for you, and you will grow toward what he is” (*Exposition of the Psalms*, 5:500).

⁶³Augustine, *The Trinity*, II.Prologue.1:97. “non ero segnīs ad inquirendam substantiam Dei, sive per Scripturam ejus, sive per creaturam. Quae utraque nobis ad hoc proponitur intuenda, ut ipse quaeratur, ipse diligatur, qui et illam inspiravit, et istam creavit” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 182).

⁶⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.5.39:426.

Augustine, the person who believes does not fail at what Rom. 1:20 describes: they are able to perceive God's invisible things through his creation.

Augustine affirms that human beings can know the Creator from the creation outside of themselves,⁶⁵ and that, given their familiarity with bodily things on account of sin, this kind of knowledge is easier for them to acquire.⁶⁶ However, since this kind of knowledge is based on bodies and God is entirely spiritual, for Augustine it is inferior to the knowledge of God that human beings can obtain if they turn away from the bodies outside of them and instead turn inward to inspect their immaterial mind, the seat of the divine image.⁶⁷ Moreover, Augustine argues that if human beings are not careful in seeking to know and love God through the material creation, because of their delight in bodily things on account of sin they might end up loving these bodies for their own sake, and in this way become conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2) rather than to God.⁶⁸ Therefore, to arrive at the greatest knowledge of God possible, Augustine writes that human beings must ultimately die "to the material things of the flesh" in order to rise "to things of the spirit."⁶⁹ They

⁶⁵See, e.g., Augustine, *The Trinity*, III.2.15:136, VI.2.12:213, VIII.2.4-5:243-44; Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 87.

⁶⁶Augustine, *The Trinity*, IX.1.2:271, XI.Prologue.1:303.

⁶⁷See, for example, XII.2.5 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine writes that "it is to the likeness of things up there that all the different kinds of things in this lower creation were made, even though the likeness is a very remote one" (324). See also III.1.10:132-33.

⁶⁸Ibid., XII.3.21:333. See also IX.2.13:278, XI.2.8:310, XII.1.1:322, XII.2.5:325, XII.3.17:331-32, XIII.1.4:345, XIV.2.7:375.

⁶⁹Augustine, *The Trinity*, II.6.28:117. "tanto autem ad spiritualia resurgentem, quanto a carnalibus morientem" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres I-VII)*, 254). Augustine makes this point many times in *The Trinity*, citing texts such as 2 Cor. 5:6, Gal. 6:14, and Ws 9:15 in support of it. See, for example, IV.Prologue.1:153, IV.5.28:174, VIII.1.2:242, VIII.1.3:243, VIII.5.11:252, IX.2.9:276, X.3.11:295, XIV.5.23:389. See also Augustine's *Exposition of the Psalms* (5:499) and the *City of God* (IX.17:364). cf. Augustine's description of one of the stages of the soul's ascent to God in *On Christian Teaching*: "Full of hope now, and at full strength, since he has come to love even his enemy, he rises to the sixth stage, in which he now purifies the eye by which God may actually be seen – to the extent that he may be seen by those who, to the best of their ability, die to this world; for they see to the extent that they die to the world, and to the extent that they live in it they fail to see" (35). On this topic in the *De Trinitate*, see Hill's introduction to *The Trinity* (55). See also Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 62-63, 99; Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity*, 18; Crouse, "De Trinitate: Philosophical Method," 509; van Bavel, "The Anthropology of Augustine," 29-30.

must ascend “from lower things to higher . . . from outer things to inner,” passing from the vestiges of the Trinity in the outer creation, “going step by step” through the likenesses of the Trinity in the outer man (those trinities that involve the bodily senses, discussed in Book XI) and in the part of the inner man dedicated to external affairs (discussed in Book XII), “until,” he writes, “we eventually arrive at the mind of man.”⁷⁰ According to Augustine, it is in the rational part of the mind dedicated to the contemplation of eternal truth that the wisdom of God is to be found.⁷¹ Only there, he writes, will human beings find something that is a trinity and the image of God, as opposed to a simple likeness to the Trinity that is found in the part of the mind dedicated to external affairs.⁷² As Augustine writes:

The nature of the intellectual mind has been so established by the disposition of its creator that it is subjoined to intelligible things in the order of nature, and so it sees such truths in a kind of non-bodily light that is *sui generis*, just as our eyes of flesh see all these things that lie around us in this bodily light, a light they were created to be receptive of and to match.⁷³

That human beings participate in changeless wisdom through their minds, Augustine argues, is demonstrated by their ability to make judgments about bodily things. The human mind, he argues, is changeable, but human beings make absolute judgments about things that they all believe are correct. Therefore, he concludes, it must be by immutable truth outside itself, but joined to itself that the mind makes such judgments.⁷⁴ As such, Augustine writes in Book XV of the *De Trinitate* that it is “especially through the rational or

⁷⁰ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.1.5:373, XV.Prologue.3:396. See also IV.Prologue.1:152, VIII.5.11:252. cf. Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 62, 83.

⁷¹ Hill has created a very helpful diagram of Augustine’s understanding of the structure of the human mind, its different functions, and the relationship of these functions to the knowledge of the Trinity. See his forward to Books IX-XIV of *The Trinity* (261).

⁷² Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.1.4:324. See also Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 101.

⁷³ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.4.24:336. See also III.1.8 of *The Trinity*, where Augustine writes that the “soul is rational, and so although it is subject to change, it is capable of sharing in that wisdom which is changeless” (131). cf. IV.5.28:173, XII.1.3:323.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, XII.1.2:323.

intellectual creature which is made to the image of God," i.e., the rational soul of human beings, that human beings should strive to understand the invisible things of God through his creation (Rom. 1:20),

so that through this, as a kind of mirror, as far as they can and if they can, they might perceive in our memory, understanding and will that God is a trinity. Anyone who has a lively intuition of these three (as divinely established in the nature of his mind) and of how great a thing it is that his mind has that by which even the eternal and unchanging nature can be recalled, beheld and desired — it is recalled by memory, beheld by intelligence, embraced by love — has thereby found the image of that supreme trinity. To the memory, sight, and love of this supreme trinity, in order to recollect it, see it, and enjoy it, he should refer every ounce and particle of his life.⁷⁵

Therefore, according to Augustine it is through inner reflection on nature and operation of the rational soul — its memory, understanding, and will of itself — that human beings can attain the greatest possible understanding of God available, and thereby attain, as far as they can in this life, to his likeness.⁷⁶ Augustine maintains that this is what Paul meant

⁷⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.5.39:426. "et maxime per rationalem vel intellectualem creaturam, quae facta est ad imaginem Dei; per quod velut speculum, quantum possent, si possent, cernerent Trinitatem Deum, in nostra memoria, intelligentia, voluntate. Quae tria in sua mente naturaliter divinitus instituta quisquis vivaciter perspicit, et quam magnum sit in ea, unde potest etiam sempiterna immutabilisque natura recoli, conspici, concupisci, reminiscitur per memoriam, intuetur per intelligentiam, amplectitur per dilectionem, profecto reperit illius summae Trinitatis imaginem. Ad quam summam Trinitatem reminiscendam, vivendam, diligendam, ut eam recordetur, eam contempletur, ea delectetur, totum debet referre quod vivit" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 528, 530). See also XIV.3.11:379 and XV.6.49:434 of *The Trinity*.

⁷⁶Unfortunately, I cannot here discuss Augustine's arguments for how the mind's memory, understanding, and will of itself bear a certain likeness to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively. This would entail another book-length study of the entirety of the *De Trinitate*, insofar as the final books about the various trinitarian images (IX-XV) depend on what Augustine has established in the previous eight books. Moreover, as I noted in the introduction (see p. 3 above), Sullivan has already written a very good study of this topic. Therefore, I shall only here quote Augustine's brief summary of the likeness of the mind's memory, understanding, and will of itself to the Trinity. Speaking of the mind, Augustine writes: "The truth of course is that from the moment it began to be it never stopped remembering itself, never stopped understanding itself, never stopped loving itself, as we have already shown. And therefore when it turns to itself in thought, a trinity is formed in which a word too can be perceived. It is formed of course out of the very act of thought, with the will joining the two together. It is here then more than anywhere that we should recognize the image we are looking for" (*The Trinity*, XIV.3.13:382). See also, for example, IX.3.18:281, XIV.2.8:376, XV.3.20:409-11, XV.6.40-41:427, and especially XV.Epilogue.50 on how the will to recall something held in memory suggests the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son insofar as this will is not an image of the thing held in memory, like the understanding of it, but nevertheless proceeds from the memory of that thing and awareness of that memory (435).

when he wrote that before human beings will see God in the face to face vision after death, they see him “now through a mirror in an enigma” (1 Cor. 13:12), for he argues that it is an image that appears in a mirror and the human mind is God’s image. That is, for Augustine human beings must try “somehow to see him by whom we were made by means of this image which we ourselves are, as through a mirror.”⁷⁷ Through reflection on that which is joined to God, with that which is joined to God, human beings can come, in some measure, to understand that to which they are joined as images. Accordingly, Augustine admonishes that human beings should devote themselves to this task with the utmost ardour.

At first glance, it might seem that in the *De Trinitate* Augustine argues that the greatest insight into the Trinity available to human beings is purely philosophical, since it proceeds from an introspective analysis of the human mind. Such an interpretation of the *De Trinitate* lies at the heart of, for example, LaCugna’s assertion that, for Augustine, “we need only look within ourselves to discover God and God’s oikonomia,” that for him “it is possible to know the Trinity without Christ,” and that in Augustine’s theology “the true economy is that of the individual soul, whose interior structure discloses the reality of the Trinity.”⁷⁸ This, then, would contradict what I argued above concerning Augustine’s insistence that apart from faith there can be no understanding of God. However, Augustine’s explicit remarks on his method in the investigation of the image of God in the human mind as a means to understanding the Trinity belie such an interpretation. Even at this most “philosophical” level of investigation into the Trinity, Augustine upholds the view that, unless human beings first believe, they will not understand (Isa. 7:9). Apart from the faith disclosed in the economy, human beings, though they might exert themselves to the utmost in investigating

⁷⁷ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.3.14:406. “Quale sit et quod sit hoc speculum si quaeramus, profecto illud occurrit, quod in speculo nisi imago non cernitur. Hoc ergo facere conati sumus, ut per imaginem hanc quod nos sumus, videremus utcumque a quo facti sumus, tanquam per speculum” (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 456).

⁷⁸ LaCugna, *God for Us*, 101. See also the introduction, pp. 4 ff. above.

their own minds, do not thereby advance in their understanding of the Trinity.

For example, in Book IX of the *De Trinitate* Augustine argues that understanding how the mind does not beget its love of self in the same way as it begets its knowledge of self suggests an analogy for understanding how the Spirit is not begotten from the Father, but proceeds from him and the Son. He then explains how this analogical mode of understanding operates:

What we are now trying to do is to examine this question in the human mind; here our own nature can, so to say, answer our questions more familiarly; and so after practicing the mind's gaze on the lower image we may be able to shift it from the illuminated creature to the unchangeable illuminating light. This presupposes that truth itself has convinced us the Holy Spirit is charity, just as no Christian doubts that the Son is the Word of God.⁷⁹

By truth here Augustine means the truth of scripture, since it is on the basis of scripture that he argues in Book XV that the Spirit is distinctly charity.⁸⁰ Furthermore, it is clear that he is speaking of the truth of faith here because he says that the truth that must be embraced prior to understanding by analogy with the mind the difference between the Spirit's procession and the Son's birth is the same as the statement that the Son is the Word of God, which "no Christian doubts." This is not a statement that no reasonable human being doubts, but that no one in the Christian faith doubts. Therefore, according to Augustine, for the human mind to function as a means for understanding God through an investigation of its structure and function, human beings must first know God by faith. Unless human beings knew by faith that the Spirit is distinctly charity, they would not see how the function of their will, by which they are charitable, illuminates their understanding of the procession of the

⁷⁹Augustine, *The Trinity*, IX.3.17:280-81. "Quod nunc in mente humana utcumque investigare conamur, ut ex inferiore imagine, in qua nobis familiarius natura ipsa nostra, quasi interrogata respondet, exercitatio mentis aciem ab illuminata creatura ad lumen incommutabile dirigamus: si tamen veritas ipsa persuaserit, sicut Dei Verbum Filium esse nullus christianus dubitat, ita charitatem esse Spiritum sanctum" (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres VIII-XV), 106).

⁸⁰See Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.5.27-39:418-26.

Spirit from the Father and the Son. They would understand the function of their will, but Augustine asserts that without faith they would not be able to transfer that knowledge to an understanding of the Trinity.

The above is a concrete example of a general principle concerning the use of the mental image as a means to understand God that Augustine asserts in Book XV: unless human beings believe that they are the image of God, their efforts to know the mind will not advance their understanding of him. As he writes:

So those who see their mind insofar as it can be seen, and in it this trinity which I have discussed from many angles as best I could, but do not believe or understand it to be the image of God, see indeed a mirror, but are so far from seeing by the mirror the one who now can only be seen by a mirror, that they do not even know the mirror they see is a mirror, that is to say an image. If they did know this, they would doubtless perceive that the one whose mirror it is should be looked for in it, and seen in it for the time being, at least to some extent. Faith unfeigned would be purifying their hearts in order that the one who is now being seen in a mirror might one day be seen face to face. But by despising this faith that purifies hearts, what are they doing in understanding the nature of the human mind, with their very subtle discussions about it, but condemning themselves on the very evidence of their own understanding?⁸¹

It cannot be the case for Augustine that an understanding of the mind's structure and function alone leads to an understanding of God, for there are those who investigate the nature of the mind, but do not see the Trinity in it or through it. For example, both Plato and Aristotle thought a great deal about the mind, but neither of them saw the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in it or understood how these persons related to one another from this reflection. According to Augustine, it is because they and all pagan philosophers lack faith that

⁸¹Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.6.44:429. "Qui ergo vident suam mentem, quomodo videri potest, et in ea trinitatem istam de quam multis modis ut potui disputavi, nec tamen eam credunt vel intelligunt esse imaginem Dei; speculum quidem vident, sed usque adeo non vident per speculum qui est per speculum nunc videndus, ut nec ipsum speculum quod vident sciant esse speculum, id est, imaginem. Quod si scirent, fortassis et eum cujus est hoc speculum, per hoc quaerendum et per hoc utcumque interim videndum esse sentirent, fide non ficta corda mundante (*I Tim.*, I, 5), ut facie ad faciem possit videri, qui per speculum nunc videtur. Qua fide cordium mundatrice contempta, quid agunt intelligendo quae de natura mentis humanae subtilissime disputantur, nisi ut ipsa quoque intelligentia sua teste damnentur?" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 540, 542).

they fail to recognize the invisible God in his creature. Even if they discover many true things about the mind, since they do not know the Trinity through faith they fail to apply these things to an understanding of it. For this reason, Augustine thinks, they condemn themselves on the evidence of their own understanding, since though they study the visible things of creation in which the invisible things of God are hidden they fail to glorify God in them (Rom. 1:20-21).⁸² For Augustine, the image of God in the human mind is only a mirror through which to see God when human beings believe that they are the image of the Trinity and therefore direct their efforts in understanding the mind not towards understanding themselves, but to the Trinity through themselves, through the medium of its image in themselves.⁸³ As Augustine writes:

This trinity of the mind is not really the image of God because the mind remembers and understands and loves itself, but because it is also able to remember and understand and love him by whom it was made. And when it does this it becomes wise. If it does not do it, then even though it remembers and understands and loves itself, it is foolish.⁸⁴

However, those who do see [God] through this mirror and in this puzzle, as much as it is granted to see in this life, are not those who merely observe in their own minds what we have discussed and suggested, but those who see it precisely as an image, so that they can in some fashion refer what they see to that of which it is an image, and also see that other by inference through its image which they see by observation, since they cannot see it *face to face*. For the apostle did not say 'We see now in a mirror,' but *We see by a mirror* (1Cor 13:12).⁸⁵

If human beings only have the self as the end of their investigation of the mind, they will not become wise and grow in likeness to God for they will not see anything beyond the

⁸²See p. 108 above.

⁸³Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 145-46.

⁸⁴Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.4.15:383. "Haec igitur trinitas mentis non propterea Dei est imago, quia sui meminit mens, et intelligit ac diligit se: sed quia potest etiam meminisse, et intelligere, et amare a quo facta est. Quod cum facit, sapiens ipsa fit. Si autem non facit, etiam cum sui meminit, seseque intelligit ac diligit, stulta est" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 386).

⁸⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.6.44:429.

self.⁸⁶ For Augustine, the true image of God in human beings, as Rowan Williams has argued, is “*not* the mind’s self-relatedness.”⁸⁷ According to Augustine, therefore, human beings must have a prior knowledge of God and of their relationship to him as his image based on faith if they wish to advance in understanding him rationally.⁸⁸

The goal of human beings in coming to understand God for Augustine, then, is not to expect “the most stringent proof to be given them, which in any case the human mind in its slowness and weakness could not grasp.”⁸⁹ Rather, Augustine recommends the following program to human beings:

When they have placed their unshakable trust in the holy scriptures as the truest of witnesses, let them pray and seek and live rightly, and in this way take steps to understand, that is to be able to see with the mind, as far as it can be seen, what they hold on faith. . . . But if they suppose that these truths are to be denied because they cannot observe them with their blind minds, then people who are blind from birth should deny that there is such a thing as the sun. So the light shines in the darkness, and if as darkness they do not comprehend it, let them first be enlightened by God’s gift and become believers, and begin to be light in comparison with unbelievers; and after laying this foundation, let them build themselves up to see the things, which they now believe in order that one day they may be able to see them.⁹⁰

Faith, then, must always precede understanding for Augustine when it comes to God. As such, to progress in understanding God and growing in likeness to him, human beings are according to him always dependent on divine grace that discloses the content of faith to

⁸⁶cf. van Bavel, “The Anthropology of Augustine,” 31. See also Cavadini, “The Quest for Truth,” 438. In this respect, Augustine’s understanding of progress in understanding God through the self is similar to Gregory of Nyssa’s, for, as Ladner points out, “Gregory was . . . not concerned so much with self-knowledge of the soul as with the knowledge of God in the soul” (*The Idea of Reform*, 97).

⁸⁷See Williams, “Sapientia and the Trinity,” 317-32. See also, Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity*, 28.

⁸⁸cf. Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 137-38.

⁸⁹Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.6.49:434.

⁹⁰Ibid. See also the prayer at the conclusion of *The Trinity*, where Augustine sums up his approach in the treatise. He writes, “I have sought you and desired to see intellectually what I have believed, and I have argued much and toiled much” (XV.Prayer.51:435).

them through the economy.⁹¹ Granted what I argued in the previous chapter regarding Augustine's understanding of the roles of the Son and the Spirit in coming to know God and in this chapter regarding Augustine's rejection of purely secular philosophy as a means to know God, his statement quoted above is genuine and not simply a nominal profession of the necessity of faith for human beings. There is, properly speaking, no natural understanding of the Trinity for Augustine.⁹² In inspecting the mind, human beings might see a sort of trinity there, but Augustine maintains that they do not see the Trinity unless they first know it by faith.⁹³ Furthermore, as I have also shown in this chapter, it is faith that purifies human beings so that they might be capable of seeing the Trinity. Given Augustine's insistence on the necessity of faith for knowing God even at the level of the investigation of his image in the human mind, it is difficult to see how an interpretation of his theology in the *De Trinitate* as strictly philosophical or as independent of the economy can be maintained.

In seeking to understand rationally the Trinity that they know by faith through its image in their mind, human beings grow in likeness to God. However, Augustine makes clear that no matter how much they exert themselves in this effort they will never attain the perfect likeness of God in this life, since they will never see him fully through this image. In 1

⁹¹cf. Hill's introduction to *The Trinity* (22-24, 56). Crouse has pointed out that the notion that belief must precede understanding is characteristic of classical philosophy as a whole, pagan and Christian. "Its itinerary," he writes, "was the movement from belief, through the discursive reason of *scientia*, to the unified intellectual grasp of principle in *sapientia*," and thus he concludes that in such a context, "the question as to whether the *De trinitate* is philosophical or theological can easily be answered by saying that it is philosophical in the highest sense; that is to say, it is theological, seeking an ascent from the level of belief to a rational and intellectual understanding of the Divine Nature. About that objective, St. Augustine is quite unambiguous" (502-03, 507, 510). In this case, Augustine would not be rejecting philosophy *per se*, but, as I argued above, interpreting its task in a new way in accordance with the data of Christian revelation. On the relationship between faith and reason in the *De Trinitate*, see also Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity*, 16-17; Cavadini, "The Quest for Truth," 440; Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 172. These scholars come to a conclusion similar to mine based on different or, in some cases, overlapping evidence. Finally, Lewis Ayres has pointed out that Augustine first formulated this principle — that faith must precede understanding as its foundation — in *De fide et symbolo* (393 CE) (58).

⁹²cf. Johannes Brachtendorf, "'... prius esse cogitare quam credere' A Natural Understanding of 'Trinity' in St. Augustine?," *Augustinian Studies* 29.2 (1998): 35-45.

⁹³Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity*, 33.

Cor. 13:12 Paul writes that human beings will someday see God face to face, but that now they see him through a mirror in an enigma. The mirror, as I have shown above, Augustine interprets as God's image in the mind of human beings.⁹⁴ Augustine goes on to explain that an enigma is a kind of allegory in which it is difficult to understand the thing signified from the sign standing for it.⁹⁵ Thus, he argues that what Paul meant to say in 1 Cor. 13:12 was that, while human beings have a likeness of God from which to understand him, "it is an obscure one and difficult to penetrate." From this he concludes that "no one therefore should be surprised that in this fashion of seeing which is allowed us in this life, namely through a mirror in an enigma, we have a struggle to see at all. If it was easy to see, the word 'enigma' would not be mentioned in this connection."⁹⁶

For Augustine, then, the image of God in the mind, though it is a means for human beings to grow in their understanding of God and likeness to him, has limitations.⁹⁷ One of the greatest of these limitations according to him is that the rational human mind, even purified to the greatest extent from bodily influences through faith, is still changeable, and anything that is mutable falls short of eternity.⁹⁸ In Book XV of the *De Trinitate*, moreover, Augustine goes on at length to show specifically how the image of the Trinity in the mind falls short of the knowledge of the Trinity disclosed through faith. For example, human beings' memory, understanding, and will fall short of a genuine likeness to the Trinity, since human beings have these three things in them, whereas God is the three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is not one God having three persons — as a human being is one person having these three faculties — but rather he is these three persons.⁹⁹ Since

⁹⁴See p. 116.

⁹⁵Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.3.15:406-07.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, XV.3.16:407.

⁹⁷cf. *Ibid.*, XV.6.42:428.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, IV.4.24:169-70.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, XV.2.11:403, XV.6.42-43:428. This is just one of the many limitations of the mind as an image of the Trinity that Augustine describes in Book XV. See also, for example, XV.2.12:403-04, XV.5.28:419, on

the image of God in the human mind is an obscure likeness of him, Augustine asserts that even if one investigates this image fully one does not thereby attain perfect likeness with him. As he says in Book XII of the *De Trinitate*, “however much progress we make, we see now in a puzzling reflection in a mirror, but then it will be ‘in clear’; for this is what the apostle Paul means by *face to face*.”¹⁰⁰

Augustine maintains that human beings do not attain perfect likeness to God by seeing him, but rather by being shown him in the eschatological vision of his essence. As I have noted at different times throughout this thesis, for Augustine the perfect vision of God is reserved for the faithful in the beatific vision of his essence after the final judgment, when the Son divides humanity into those belonging to his kingdom and those shut out from it and then hands over the kingdom to God and the Father to behold him as he is (1 Cor. 15:24).¹⁰¹ He writes:

When the last day of his life overtakes someone who has kept faith in the mediator, making steady progress of this sort, he will be received by the holy angels to be led into the presence of the God he has worshiped and to be perfected by him. . . . For only when it comes to the perfect vision of God will this image bear God’s perfect likeness. Of this the apostle Paul says, *We see now through a puzzling reflection in a mirror, but then it will be face to face* (1Cor 13:12). . . . And the apostle John says, *Beloved we are now sons of God, but that which we shall be has not yet appeared. We know that when he appears we shall be*

how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not strictly to be identified with the memory, understanding, and will/love of the Trinity; XV.4.21-22:411-15, on how the Father’s memory is distinct from human memory; XV.4.23-25:415-17, on the disparity between human understanding (the mental word) and the Word of God; XV.6.43:429, on how human memory, understanding, and will can be unequal to each other, whereas the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are perfectly equal to each other; XV.6.47:432, on how human memory, understanding, and will proceed from each other in time, whereas the Son and the Spirit proceed eternally from the Father. See also Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 183.

¹⁰⁰Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.4.22:334. Augustine also quotes John 14:9 and 14:21 where Christ says that in the future he will reveal himself to those who have loved him in support of this position, concluding from these verses that “the Word itself, *through whom all things had been made* (Jn 1:3), was being kept for the contemplation in eternity of minds now purified through faith” (IV.5.26:172). On the inadequacy of the human understanding of God in this life, see also, I.4.28:87, V.Prologue.1:189, VII.3.7:224-25, IX.Prologue.1:270, XII.4.23:335, XIII.1.2:343, XV.2.13:404-05.

¹⁰¹Augustine, *The Trinity*, I.4.28:87. See, e.g., p. 84 above.

*like him, because we shall see him as he is (1Jn 3:2).*¹⁰²

Human beings, according to Augustine, are led into the presence of God in order to participate fully in his substance —¹⁰³ they do not enter it by themselves by virtue of their acumen in investigating his image in their mind. Therefore, for Augustine human beings cannot ultimately attain equality in likeness to God by their own efforts in the investigation of the divine image.¹⁰⁴ Through this investigation they can only hope to see him in part. Furthermore, as I have shown, even in the investigation of this imperfect likeness of God human beings depend on him to assist them through faith.

Conclusion: Grace Operates, Human Beings Cooperate

For Augustine, in order to know God and become like him human beings must love him and seek to understand him. In both of these tasks, as I have shown in this and the last chapter, Augustine maintains that they are dependent on divine assistance. Without the gift of charity in the Spirit, human beings cannot love God; without the content of faith disclosed in the economy, they have no hope of understanding him. However, Augustine also believes that human beings must cooperate with these gifts if they are to make progress in reforming God's image in them. For unless they actively love God and the neighbour, they will not have God present to them in order to participate in him, and unless they strive with "every ounce and particle" to understand him through his image in their minds,

¹⁰²Ibid., XIV.5.23:389-90. "In quo profectu et accessu tenentem Mediatoris fidem cum dies vitae hujus ultimus quemque comperit, perducendus ad Deum quem coluit, et ab eo perficiendus excipietur ab Angelis sanctis. . . . In hac quippe imagine tunc perfecta erit Dei similitudo, quando Dei perfecta erit visio" (idem, *La Trinité (Livres VIII-XV)*, 410). See also XIV.5.25:390-91 of *The Trinity*.

¹⁰³See p. 15 above.

¹⁰⁴In this respect, Augustine's theology of the divine image differs from that of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, who, as Ladner points out, both believed that the vision of God in this life is possible for those who have made great progress in reforming his likeness in them and that a "pre-eschatological restoration of a spiritual paradise in man's soul," could occur. In distinction from them, "Augustine did not think that the terrestrial condition of even the holiest man warrants the expectation of a vision of the fullness of God this side of heaven" (*The Idea of Reform*, 74-77, 190-91, 194-95).

they will not grasp him as far as he can be grasped in this life. Thus Sullivan describes Augustine's understanding of agency in the reform of the divine image in human beings expertly when he writes that the renewal of the image "involves God accomplishing this work in man, and the latter cooperating in a manner consonant with his nature, that is, by a voluntary and intellectual process," and that "the preeminence in this total operation is to be accorded to the part of God."¹⁰⁵ For Augustine, the image of God in human beings is not passively reformed. Although human beings, even in searching their own minds for God, remain dependent on his assistance in reforming his likeness in them, they do contribute to their own reform. They could not, however, be said to reform this image themselves, for this would imply that human beings could know God by themselves — something that I have argued is inconceivable for Augustine, especially insofar as the final vision of God's essence in which their knowledge of him is perfected is something that is revealed to human beings by God, rather than something that they see for themselves. As such, the reform of the divine image is for Augustine a joint undertaking between God and human beings.

¹⁰⁵Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 59, 61. See also Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 166-67.

General Conclusions

I have shown throughout this thesis that for Augustine the reform of the divine image in human beings consists primarily in progressing in the knowledge of God, a process that culminates in this life with the investigation of God's image in the rational mind. The human being becomes most like God in this life by recognizing and investigating his image within himself. As such, if one does not carefully examine what according to Augustine it means to come to know God, his theology of the reform of the divine image might seem intellectualistic, elitist, and individualistic. As Tarsicius J. van Bavel has observed regarding the modern reception of Augustine:

Introspection, self-knowledge, and memory call to the modern Western mind the image of intellectualism. However, this is not the case for Augustine. For self-knowledge does not result only in an 'I think' but also in an 'I will' or an 'I seek.' The intellect can never be cut free from the will. Without the will no knowledge is possible.¹

Unfortunately, van Bavel does not go on to elaborate upon this statement; however, in this thesis I have attempted to do so. Self-knowledge as a means to the knowledge of God, as I have shown, involves much more for Augustine than simply getting to know one's self by one's own efforts.

As I have shown repeatedly, according to Augustine human beings cannot reform the divine image within them by themselves. That is, they cannot come to know God without his assistance. He maintains that unless human beings have been justified from sin by

¹van Bavel, "The Anthropology of Augustine," 32.

Christ, nurtured by the faith disclosed through the economy, and followed the example of the Incarnation, they cannot hope to understand God. For Augustine there is no understanding of God independent of his influence on human beings. In the *De Trinitate*, Augustine never swerves from the message of Isa. 7:9: "Unless you believe, you shall not understand." Moreover, according to Augustine unless human beings have the gift of charity through the Holy Spirit, they will not be motivated to seek God or to apply whatever they discover of him to the reform of his image. For Augustine, unless human beings abide in love, they will not abide in God, since God is love (1 John 4:8, 4:16). It is true that for Augustine in order to know God and become like him human beings must know themselves; however, he believes that they must know themselves in and through God, stirred by the love of God given to them through the Spirit and led on by the faith disclosed to them in the economy. Apart from the trinitarian economy, no human being can come to know God. Augustine establishes this point *a fortiori* in the *De Trinitate* by showing the failure of "secular" philosophers to know the Trinity by their efforts in examining his creation. For Augustine, the ascent in likeness of the human being to God is not a Neo-Platonic self-ascent by means of one's own intelligence; rather, he maintains that human beings always need the Trinity to advance towards the Trinity.

Furthermore, Augustine's theology of the reform of the divine image is not individualistic in a second sense in that it is not a purely self-interested reform. In order to know and become like God, Augustine believes that human beings must love God, and he argues that God is present to them in faith and, more concretely, in their neighbour. Love, moreover, is an active force for Augustine. Therefore, he concludes in the *De Trinitate* that human beings must actively love one another in order to progress in likeness to God. Thus, although the reform of the divine image is for Augustine ultimately concerned with the individual's ascent in likeness to God, self-interest here necessarily entails concern for the interests of others.

This, I think, sufficiently undermines an interpretation of Augustine's theology of the reform of the divine image as individualistic. However, one could still argue that it is intellectualistic and elitist, for if progress in likeness to God finally depends on understanding what one holds on faith, then those human beings who have more understanding than others will be more like God than those others. Thus, according to this understanding of Augustine's theology of the reform of the divine image, Thomas Aquinas would be a superior image of God than the seminarian beginning his studies. In a very restricted sense, this may be true for Augustine if one is speaking about progress in likeness to God in this life. However, as I have shown throughout this thesis, and particularly in the last chapter, according to Augustine human beings do not attain the perfection of God's likeness in this life, but in the eschatological vision of God's essence that the Trinity reveals to them. Human beings, then, do not see and understand God's substance by themselves; rather, God reveals this to them. Moreover, for Augustine human beings are not judged worthy of this vision based on their cleverness in investigating God's image in the human mind, but based on their having kept faith in God.² As he says explicitly in his letter to Evodius, written in 415 CE:

For the words, 'He that is ignorant shall be ignored,' [1 Cor. 14:38] were not used by the apostle in reference to this subject, as your letter affirms; as if this punishment were to be inflicted on the man who is not able to discern by the exercise of his intellect the ineffable unity of the Trinity, in the same way as the unity of memory, understanding, and will in the soul of man is discerned. The apostle said these words with a wholly different design.³

Augustine then goes on to explain that the apostle's words were meant to be applied to the person who is ignorant of "those things which might be for the edification of the many in faith . . . not of those which might be with difficulty comprehended by the few, and by

²See pp. 84 ff. and pp. 124 ff. above.

³Augustine, *The Letters of St. Augustin*, trans. J.G. Cunningham, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody (Mass.): Hendrickson, 2004), CLXIX.2:539.

them only in the small degree in which the comprehension of so great a subject is attainable in this life.”⁴ Finally, he concludes that

since the Lord says, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,’ and that sight is promised to us as the highest reward at the last, we have no reason to fear lest, if we are now unable to see clearly those things which we believe concerning the nature of God, this defective apprehension should bring us under the sentence, ‘He that is ignorant shall be ignored.’ For when ‘in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believed.’ This foolishness of preaching and ‘foolishness of God which is wiser than man’ draws many to salvation, in such a way that not only those who are as yet incapable of perceiving with clear intelligence the nature of God which in faith they hold, but even those who have not yet so learned the nature of their own soul as to distinguish between its incorporeal essence and the body as a whole with the same certainty with which they perceive that they live, understand, and will, are not on this account shut out from that salvation which that foolishness of preaching bestows on believers.⁵

It is faith, then, rather than human cleverness that is ultimately decisive for Augustine in the perfection of God’s image within human beings. According to him, when it comes to the perfection of this image in the eschatological vision of the Trinity, the simple believer who cleaves in faith to God will be no worse off than Thomas Aquinas, for both had faith while they lived. Thus, Neil Ormerod correctly asserts that in the *De Trinitate* “there is an ascent . . . , but not the ascent of neo-Platonic achievement, restricted to the few. It is an ascent born of Christian faith, hope and love, of God’s love poured into our hearts, the work of divine grace.”⁶

Furthermore, even in this life Augustine does not assign an exalted status to the professional theologian over the simple believer, for, as I have shown in the last chapter and directly above, he does not think that those who exercise themselves in investigating God’s

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., CLXIX.3:539-40.

⁶Ormerod, “Augustine’s *De Trinitate* and Lonergan’s Realms of Meaning,” 788.

image within the mind attain anything comparable to the perfect understanding of God that will be given to all the faithful in the eschatological vision of his essence. God, for Augustine, remains ultimately incomprehensible to human beings in this life, and therefore it is the seeking of God, as opposed to the concrete results of this search, that Augustine prizes.

As he writes in the prologue to Book XV of the *De Trinitate*:

The God himself we are looking for will help us . . . to understand the meaning of the text in the holy psalm, *Let the heart of those who seek the Lord rejoice; seek the Lord and be strengthened; seek his face always* (Ps 105:3). Now it would seem that what is always being sought is never being found, and in that case how is the heart of the seekers to rejoice and not rather grow sad, if they cannot find what they are looking for? He does not, you see, say 'Let the heart of those who find,' but 'of those who seek the Lord rejoice.' And yet the prophet Isaiah testifies that the Lord God can be found⁷ provided he is sought, when he says, *Seek the Lord and as soon as you find him call upon him, and when he draws near to you let the godless man forsake his ways and the wicked man his thoughts* (Is 55:6). So if he can be found when he is sought, why does it say *Seek his face always*? Does he perhaps have to be sought even when he has been found? That is indeed how incomprehensible things have to be searched for, in case the man who has been able to find out how incomprehensible what he is looking for is should reckon that he has found nothing. . . . This is how we might also take the words of Wisdom in the book of Ecclesiasticus: *Those who eat me will be hungry still and those who drink me will be thirsty still* (Sir 24:29). They eat and drink because they find, and because they are hungry and thirsty they still go on seeking. Faith seeks, understanding finds; which is why the prophet says, *Unless you believe you shall not understand* (Is 7:9, Septuagint). And again, understanding still goes on seeking the one it has found; for, God gazed down upon the sons of men, as we chant in the sacred psalm, *to see if there is any who is understanding or looking for God* (Ps 14:2).⁷

Therefore, it is the intent of the seeker rather than the presumption of the finder that Augustine values in the reform of the divine image in human beings.⁸ Since no human being can ultimately understand God in this life, no matter how sharp she might be, it is the ardour

⁷ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XV.Prologue.2:395-96.

⁸cf. Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De trinitate*," 109.

with which one cleaves to God in order to find him so that he might be sought all the more avidly that distinguishes someone growing in likeness to God for Augustine. As I argued in Chapter 3, for Augustine without charity no one will attain perfect likeness to God. For this reason, he asserts in Book XIV of the *De Trinitate* that the wisdom of human beings in this life is not a concrete grasp of God's substance — something that eludes them until the final vision of his essence — but piety (*pietas/theosebeia*), the worship of God. As he writes: "That this is man's wisdom . . . is proved on the authority of holy scripture in the book of God's servant Job, where we read that God's wisdom said to man, *Behold piety is wisdom, while to abstain from evils is knowledge* (Jb 28:28). So God himself is supreme wisdom; but the worship of God is man's wisdom."⁹ Moreover, in Book XII Augustine had written: "And what is the worship of him but the love of him by which we now desire to see him, and believe and hope that we will see him?"¹⁰ Thus, the greatest wisdom that human beings can hope to attain in this life, according to Augustine, is to love God. In light of this his theology of the reform of the divine image by means of growth in the wisdom of God is neither intellectualistic nor elitist, nor, as I argued above, individualistic, since for him God is loved through the neighbour.

According to Augustine, on account of the effects of sin human beings were so altered from their original likeness to God that they could not reform his image in them by themselves. Since the reform of this image depends on growing in the knowledge of God, and this was rendered impossible for human beings by sin, Augustine maintains that they depend on God — on the Father as the source whither they must return; on the Son's act

⁹ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV.1.1:370. "loquemur de hominis sapientia, vera tamen quae secundum Deum est, et verus ac praecipuus cultus ejus est, quae uno nomine [*theosebeia*] graece appellatur. Quod nomen nostri, sicut jam commemoravimus, volentes et ipsi uno nomine interpretari, pietatem dixerunt. . . . Hanc esse hominis sapientiam . . . Scripturae sanctae auctoritate monstratur, in libro Dei servi Job, ubi legitur Dei sapientiam dixisse homini, 'Ecce pietas est sapientia; abstinere autem a malis, scientia' (*Job.*, XXVIII, 28)" (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres VIII-XV), 344).

¹⁰ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.4.22. "Et quis cultus ejus, nisi amor ejus, quo nunc desideramus eum videre, credimusque et speramus nos esse visuros" (idem, *La Trinité* (Livres VIII-XV), 252).

of justification for them, his doctrine, and his example; and on the Holy Spirit's gift of love — to reform this image. They depend on the Trinity's cooperation with their own efforts to grow in the love and the knowledge of God to reform his image in them. Of the two, however, Augustine values the love of God more in this process of reform, for he argues that love makes one continually seek to know God and makes one cleave to that knowledge when one receives it. Without it, he thinks, one cannot perfect God's image. Furthermore, for Augustine the love of God is not something that human beings feel in the abstract; rather, it is something that they must actively realize in the love of their neighbour. Accordingly, Augustine's theology of the reform of the divine image is perhaps best summarized in Christ's reply to the person who asked him "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He replied:

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.¹¹

¹¹Matt. 22:36-40 (NRSV).

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