

THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH AND THE ACTION OF THE TRINITY

TRUE BELIEF: THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH AND THE ACTION OF THE
TRINITY IN AUGUSTINE'S *DE TRINITATE*

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

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MASTER OF ARTS (2003)

McMaster University

(Religious Studies)

Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: True Belief: The Faith of the Church and the Action of the Trinity in
Augustine's *De Trinitate*

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NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 180

Abstract

Augustine's understanding of the knowledge of God being made manifest in a vision following the resurrection of the dead is consistent with, and an expansion of, his basic epistemological framework where certain knowledge is grounded in the intellectual perception of eternal realities in the light of truth. However, given the eschatological fulfillment of the vision, a considerable problem arises. If the knowledge of God as triune is postponed to eternity, we must ask on what basis Augustine is certain that God is triune, since what Augustine asserts to be true – that God is a trinity – can only be believed and is not yet seen. This thesis examines Augustine's solution to this problem through a close reading of *De Trinitate*, demonstrating that according to Augustine, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit both order and constitute all of man's thinking (and hence loving) activity. Accordingly, the claims made in faith by the church concerning the triune identification of God can be held to be true because these beliefs are the product of the action of the triune God on the mind of man. Thus the truth of the church's claim that God is triune is understood by Augustine to be guaranteed by the action of the Trinity itself.

Acknowledgements

Upon entering the M.A. program, I did not anticipate writing a thesis on Augustine. This unexpected change of events is owed to Dr. Widdicombe. His seminar on *De Trinitate* provoked a great deal of thought and an interest in Augustine that, even after the completion of this thesis, remains. Whatever may be worthwhile in this thesis owes much to his input. I would also like to thank my wife Andrea for sharing in my joys, tolerating the many lows, and always being unfailingly encouraging. Last, but not least, I would like to thank my friends in the department for thought-provoking conversation, both holy and profane.

Contents

Preface 1

Prologue 6

1 The Church's Confession of Faith 29

2 Augustine's Epistemology 61

3 The Action of the Trinity 107

Preface

This thesis aims to explore Augustine's answer to a simple but important problem generated by his understanding of human knowing. According to Augustine's conception of human knowing, certain knowledge can only be grounded in the intellectual apprehension of what is unchanging, namely, the immaterial eternal forms of goodness, beauty, understanding, and justice – that is, God's very nature. However, Augustine also holds that the intellectual apprehension of God's eternal nature is only possible in eternity, once man has been brought from faith to sight. Thus, any study of Augustine's epistemology is seemingly faced with a glaring contradiction at its outset: on the one hand, Augustine asserts that all understanding can only proceed from the confession that the godhead is the trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, while on the other hand he asserts that the understanding of that confession is only to be achieved in eternity when God's incorporeal nature is directly perceived by the mind. Moreover, Augustine nevertheless remains certain about the truth of his confession; while made in faith, i.e., in the absence of the mind's face to face perception of the Trinity, it is not open to doubt or revision. In short, Augustine asserts that he is absolutely certain about the truth of a belief that his own epistemology gives him no right to be certain about, and it is only from this belief that Augustine asserts all wisdom and understanding can proceed.

Needless to say, Augustine is keenly aware of this problem. Among its many other concerns, his seminal work on the Trinity, *De Trinitate*, is Augustine's response to those who are only too happy to point out this apparent contradiction at the heart of his understanding of human knowing. In *De Trinitate* Augustine argues that all man's

thinking is both ordered and constituted by the self-giving presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that there is no knowing this truth until the mind is prepared to accept the sinfulness of its pride and consequent need of divine aid. Moreover, the mind only comes to recognize its sinfulness and weakness in the warmth of the Holy Spirit as he directs our attention to the incarnate Son Jesus Christ. Thus Augustine asserts that the Trinity itself guarantees the truth of the church's triune identification of God as it lovingly introduces the mind of man into the knowledge of its eternal truth by directing his attention to those activities it has undertaken in history on behalf of humankind. It is on this basis that the claims made in faith by the Christian concerning the triune identification of God can be held to be true.

This thesis shall endeavor to demonstrate the coherence of this solution through a detailed reading of *De Trinitate*, augmented by portions from both Book VII of *Confessions* and *The Spirit and the Letter*. In the Prologue this thesis will undertake a close reading of the opening pages of Book I of *De Trinitate* wherein we find, with Augustine's insistence that all searches for truth must begin with the "starting-point of faith," the paradoxical nature of his epistemology revealed. Following this presentation and analysis of the problem, the thesis will examine *Confessions* Book VII. Here we find Augustine asserting that all his advances in understanding were the product of the action of triune God upon his mind. Among these advances Augustine includes, most importantly, the confession that God is the trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, with the Prologue this thesis presents in brief both the fundamental problem and Augustine's solution to it.

Chapter One takes a step back from epistemological concerns and presents Augustine's understanding of the faith of the Catholic Church. This is accomplished through, first, an analysis of Augustine's primary scriptural arguments for the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and secondly, an examination of his understanding of how we can speak logically of a triune divine substance. The purpose of this analysis is to establish the manner in which Augustine demonstrates that the triune identification of God made in faith by the Catholic Church is rationally coherent. Accordingly, Chapter One examines the faith of which Augustine is certain, keeping in mind all the while that what Augustine is here claiming to be true can only be believed and is not yet seen.

Chapter Two moves from Augustine's analysis of scripture's testimony to the triune nature of the godhead to an analysis of the basic framework of his epistemology. Here it will be shown that Augustine's understanding of human knowing is that the mind is created receptive of physical realities and is subjoined to eternal realities, and therefore that the mind's knowing relationship to both the temporal world and the eternal realm of intelligible ideas is largely outside of its control; its thinking activity is both ordered and constituted by the presence of both these physical realities, and more importantly, the eternal forms. However, none of these explanations for the mind's knowing, loving and thinking activity force one to confess that God is a trinity – let alone that this God is the loving self-sacrificing trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, not only is Augustine incapable of seeing God and thus arriving at the proper justificatory foundation for claiming that God is a trinity, but he also failed, at this point in our analysis, to provide compelling reasons for man to make this confession in spite of this absence of evidence.

Consequently the two most important claims of Augustine's epistemology, that the mind's knowing and loving activity is always already ordered and constituted by the presence of the Trinity to the mind, and second, that the mind images its triune Creator, can neither be justifiably asserted by Augustine's own standards of what it is to know something to be true, nor, seemingly, are they postulates necessary to explain man's thinking activity.

It is in Chapter Three that this thesis shall demonstrate the coherence of Augustine's epistemology through a more detailed analysis of his understanding of the human condition. This will be achieved through an examination of his understanding of pride and its role in the mind's failure to apprehend the true nature of its relationship to the Creator; in particular, this study of Augustine's understanding of the epistemological consequences of pride will focus on his use of Romans 1: 20-22 in three texts: *Confessions*, *The Spirit and the Letter*, and *De Trinitate*. Thus this analysis will examine the reasons Augustine provides for confessing the divinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in spite of the fact that the mind fails to attain to the light of its truth. Thereby, the thesis shall show how Augustine arrives at the two foundational premises of his epistemology: that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit order and constitute man's thinking activity, and that the mind is the image of the triune God. The church can hold its triune identification of God to be true because this confession is itself the product of the action of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit actively working to introduce humankind to the knowledge of its eternal nature.

These conclusions will be developed in greater detail in the second half of Chapter Three as this thesis turns to discuss Augustine's understanding of the relationship between the individual's experience of divine love and the knowledge that God is triune. The purpose of this investigation is to show that for Augustine, knowing in faith that God is a trinity is always attended by the experience of love, while the experience of divine love is not only inseparable from, but contingent upon, confessing the faith of the church, and therefore that the church's faith is an ineradicable part of the activity of divine love revealing its eternal nature in human history. This will be pursued first through an examination of the place of scripture in leading the mind of man into truth, followed by an analysis of Augustine's understanding of the particular actions that the Son and the Holy Spirit undertake, as proper to them by virtue of their eternal relationships with each other and the Father, in leading man to the knowledge and love of God's eternal nature.

Prologue

This Prologue shall present, in brief, both the central problem with which this thesis is engaged as well as Augustine's solution to it. This will be accomplished through a detailed reading of the opening pages of Book I of *De Trinitate* and through a summary of Book VII of *Confessions*. The purpose of this brief introduction to the central themes of this thesis is to introduce the reader to the complexities of Augustine's thought concerning the relationship between reason and faith; what Augustine calls the certitude of faith and the certitude of knowledge.¹ The tensions in the relationship between reason, faith, and scripture that are introduced here will not be fully resolved until our analysis of Augustine's epistemology is completed in Chapter Three. However, the conclusions that will be fully developed in subsequent chapters are outlined here. Namely, we shall see in our analysis of Book VII of *Confessions* that according to Augustine, the mind's ability to transcend thought's captivity to the corporeal world and attain to the sight of incorporeal truth is the result of God bequeathing to man not only the truth that he sees, but also the power by which he sees it. Thus this Prologue presents the essential point to keep in mind when reading any of Augustine's assertions regarding his understanding of human knowing; namely, that all of man's thinking and knowing activity is made possible by the active presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to the mind.

***De Trinitate* Book I**

¹ See *De Trinitate*. IX. 1.

Augustine opens *De Trinitate* with a statement that is undoubtedly designed to startle the reader. 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.”² Augustine then moves to outline three ways those who have scorned the “starting-point of faith” have exercised their reason in the effort to understand divine things. First, some have tried to transfer “what they have observed about bodily things to incorporeal and spiritual things,”³ thereby measuring the incorporeal realm by the standards of what they have experienced through the senses and learnt by “natural human intelligence, lively application, and technical skill.”⁴ Secondly, there are those whose concept of God attributes to him “the nature and moods of the human spirit.”⁵ Finally, there are those who do not attribute to God qualities proper to the created universe. Instead, these individuals “strive to climb above the created universe, so ineluctably subject to change, and raise their regard to the unchanging substance which is God.”⁶

Thus, Augustine articulates a typology of three conceptual categories individuals have used in their efforts to understand God. Significantly, it is the third type of individual – the one who rightly avoids conceiving God in terms of body or created spirit – who betrays the fundamental problem that Augustine believes attends all three conceptual efforts. Concerning these individuals, Augustine writes:

² Ibid., I.1.

³ Ibid., I.1.

⁴ Ibid., I.1.

⁵ Ibid., I.1.

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; and so they block their own road to genuine understanding by asserting too categorically their own presumptuous opinions, and then rather than change a misconceived opinion they have defended, they prefer to leave it uncorrected.⁷

As noted, Augustine holds that this problem – what he in fact calls a “disease”⁸ – is common to all three types. Nevertheless, while common, it is clear that Augustine finds this “disease” to be most severe in those who think of God neither as body nor as created spirit. Indeed, Augustine states that the ideas of these individuals “are all further from the truth in that they have no place either in the world of body, or in that of derived and created spirit, or in the Creator himself.”⁹ Thus, in correctly recognizing that God cannot be understood in terms of bodily forms or created spirit these individuals, ironically, have moved further away from the truth than those who commit the category error of thinking of God in terms of created substances. This is because these individuals, having recognized the inappropriateness of conceiving God in terms of body or created spirit, are particularly susceptible to “an unseasonable and misguided love of reason.” Whereas the first two types of individuals are restrained from devising ideas that have no basis in reality given their conceptual commitments, the third-type of individual is not. In short, their “disease” becomes more acute as their “load of mortality” drives them to form opinions that are not tempered by a commitment to any conceptual scheme (however mistaken) other than the one of their own choosing – which in the nature of the case, according to Augustine, will be the one that allows them to give

⁶ Ibid., I.1.

⁷ Ibid., I.1.

the impression of knowing that which they do not. Thus, it is in the third-type of individual that the deceptions that attend the “unseasoned and misguided love of reason” are the most acute, since it is in this individual that the “disease” of asserting too categorically one’s presumptuous opinions remains unrestrained.

In light of these considerations, we can see that when Augustine boldly states that he 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,” he clearly does not have in mind the love of reason per se. Rather, Augustine has in mind the purpose or end on account of which reason is loved. As is particularly clear in the case of the third-type, reason has been used to defend the individual’s own interests and loves rather than to search freely – at the cost of the individual’s dearly held opinions – for the object of understanding. Thus, when we read that Augustine is “on the watch against the sophistries of those who scorn the starting point of faith,” we can understand that faith, according to Augustine, obviates or tempers this inordinate love of self and sought object in whose employ reason has been enlisted.¹⁰ Concomitantly, we can also understand that faith, as a “starting-point,” introduces and instructs the

⁸ Ibid., I.1.

⁹ Ibid., I.1.

¹⁰ At this point in *De Trinitate* Augustine has not yet labeled man’s problem to be the inordinate love of self – a problem that he will discuss at great length in Book XII. Nevertheless, it is clear that this understanding of man’s problem is implicit in Augustine’s discussion of the third-type of individual. Here we might be reminded of Book XII of Augustine’s *Confessions*. In Book XII of *Confessions* Augustine notes that there are those who dispute his interpretation of Genesis not because it is untrue, but simply because they believe that it is not what the author had in mind (*Confessions* XII. xxv. 34). Augustine contends that these individuals do not make these assertions because “they possess second sight and have seen in the heart of your servant the meaning which they assert, but because they are proud. They have no knowledge of Moses’ opinion at all, but love their own opinion not because it is true, but because it is their own” (*Ibid.*, XII xxv. 34). Likewise, individuals of the “third-type” who categorically assert their own opinions do so

individual in the appropriate love of self and sought object that is necessary for reason to lead properly. In short, in the mind's search for the "unchanging substance which is God"¹¹ the use of reason needs to be tempered by those considerations that arise in the context of faith. This is because there is no disinterested use of reason. The fundamental issue is whether the love of reason is reasonable and guided rather than unreasonable and misguided – whether, in fact, man has been cured of his disease.

Of those falsehoods that arise from the misguided use of reason, Augustine confidently asserts that scripture purifies us. He writes: "It was therefore 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."¹² Speaking in particular to individuals of the third-type, Augustine notes that while scripture speaks about God using words taken from the created universe in order to "entice our sickly gaze" and enable us to seek "the things above and forsake the things below,"¹³ scripture has not formed "into figures of speech" words drawn from things that do not exist.¹⁴ Hence, Augustine states that "those who are shut off from the truth by the third kind of error fade away into the meaningless even more disastrously than the others, since they imagine things about God that have no place either in him or in anything he has made."¹⁵ Moreover, while scripture speaks about God with figures of speech and riddles taken from the created universe, it

not because they have privileged knowledge of God's substance, but because they love their opinions more than the truth that they seek. In short, they suffer from an inordinate love of self and sought object.

¹¹ *De Trinitate*, I.1

¹² *Ibid.*, I.2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, I.2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, I.2.

rarely mentions things that are peculiar to God. As examples, Augustine cites “I am who I am,” and “He who is sent me to you” (Ex 3:14). According to Augustine, since both the body and soul are said to be, scripture must have intended this to be understood in a manner peculiar to God alone. Similarly, when we read “who alone has immortality” (1 Tim 6:16), we must understand that since the soul is “in some way” immortal, the author would not have written this “unless it were the case that true immortality is unchangingness, which nothing created can have as it is peculiar to the creator.”¹⁶ Thus, Augustine holds that it is through scripture – what he calls a more endurable route¹⁷ – that the mind is purified, cured of its disease, and made fit and capable of grasping God’s unchanging substance.

There are several points that could be raised concerning Augustine’s brief introduction of the purpose of scripture in light of his discussion of the falsehoods that arise from an “unseasonable and misguided love of reason.” I shall discuss in brief only two. The first concerns Augustine’s trust in the truthfulness of scripture and its ability to guide his search for truth apart from any prior demonstration of scripture’s fitness for that purpose. The second concerns the place of reason amidst this trust, particularly as it concerns scripture’s statements concerning God’s eternal nature. These two points are important because they directly touch on the problem with which this thesis is engaged. Augustine asserts that scripture purifies us of the falsehoods that arise from a misguided love of reason without yet demonstrating either this purification or, concurrently, that the

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I.2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I.2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, I.2.

conceptions of the “third-type” are indeed mistaken. It is a statement made in faith. However, this trust in scripture’s truthfulness with respect to its triune identification of God and its ability to purify us for his sight is not, according to Augustine, to jettison the mind’s rigorous use of reason in the pursuit of truth. Rather, as the opening line of *De Trinitate* suggest, it is to begin to use reason properly, out of the awareness that our misguided love of reason is only tempered within its context.

First, perhaps the most outstanding feature of Augustine’s discussion so far is his absolute trust in scripture’s ability to enable the mind to contemplate “the sublimities of divine things.” In fact, Augustine boldly states that it was for this purpose that scripture judiciously uses words drawn from the created realm. Thus, while Augustine by no means takes the meaning of every verse of scripture at face value, the study of scripture is absolutely necessary for one to arrive at full knowledge of God. Scripture is not simply one option among many possible sources of information concerning God’s unchanging substance. Accordingly, we can conclude that for Augustine, the “starting-point” of faith involves the belief that the knowledge of God revealed in scripture is indispensable for one to arrive at the sight of God himself. Stated otherwise, for the individual dedicated to the scriptures through faith in the God it identifies, the “starting-point of faith” involves a *prima facie* belief in the trustworthiness of the language of scripture to guide one’s search for the knowledge of God.¹⁸

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, I.3. Lest it appear otherwise, I am not suggesting that Augustine identifies faith with scripture alone – that faith only involves the interpretation of scripture. Rather, I am simply noting that faith, for Augustine, integrally involves a devotion to scripture based upon the belief that it is an indispensable grace given to man by the God identified therein. However, faith is not limited to this one means of grace. Instead, faith involves trust in all the means of grace provided by God within the Church. In Book I Augustine states that the treatise will attempt a reasoned explanation for “the one and only and true God

Furthermore, it is important to note that for Augustine, this trust in the language of scripture is not the product of one's ability to demonstrate that scripture coheres with, or is a natural extension of, one's prior conceptual commitments. One trusts what scripture reveals about God through the language it uses to speak of him without having first justified the use of that language. This is most powerfully seen in Augustine's discussion of scripture's infrequent reference to things that are peculiar to God. Here Augustine is keen to assert that scripture, when talking about God without reference to bodies or created spirit, is saying something definitive about what God is in himself. Scripture is not, in these instances, drawing names "to form into figures of speech or weave into riddles," and thus supplying the reader with metaphors for which they must supply the justificatory arguments. Rather, scripture is revealing what belongs properly to God. Accordingly, the relative silence of scripture concerning what is peculiar to God is not license to fill in the gaps imaginatively.¹⁹ In short, Augustine's commitment to the

being a trinity, and for the rightness of saying, believing, and understanding that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are of one and the same substance or essence" (Ibid., I.4). In doing so, Augustine hopes to bring the unfaithful to realize "that that supreme goodness does exist" and that "they are themselves unable to gaze upon it and grasp it" since their minds are not yet purified. Augustine then writes:

In this way if there is a particle of the love or fear of God in them they may return to the beginning and right order of faith, realizing at least what a wholesome regimen is provided for the faithful in holy Church, whereby the due observance of piety makes the ailing mind will for the perception of unchanging truth, and saves it from being plunged into opinions of a noisome falsehood by the random whims of temerity. (Ibid., I.4.)

For Augustine, the mind is purified by the "due observance of piety" within the Church. This no doubt includes both the study of scripture as well as the observance of the sacraments. Moreover, Augustine does not encourage the individual to embark on a solitary study of scripture apart from the church. Rather, scripture is studied within the church community alongside the due observance of the other means of grace provided by God for the purification of the faithful.

¹⁹ Just as those who conceive of God in terms of corporeal bodies or created spirit are not directed to scripture because scripture confirms those conceptual commitments, those who recognize the problems that attend conceiving God in terms proper to creation are not directed to scripture because scripture leaves those concepts behind and embarks on an imaginative or probabilistic discussion of what God is in himself. Augustine trusts that scripture's identification of God is not an approximation or an estimate, but is complete. His task is to understand it, not to correct or embellish it.

language of scripture is not the product of him having raised his regard “to the unchanging substance which is God” and finding those discoveries replicated in scripture. Rather, Augustine is committed to the truth of what scripture says about God prior to fully understanding what that truth is. Thus, when Augustine asserts that scripture declares that God is a trinity, this is fundamentally the result of Augustine trusting the language of scripture to reveal who God is in himself. Augustine has not first found a way to peel back the curtain and determine whether what scripture says about God does in fact correspond to the object of which it speaks.

These considerations lead us to the second point that can be raised concerning Augustine’s discussion of scripture’s relationship to the problems that attend an “unseasonable and misguided love of reason.” For Augustine, the meaning of scripture is not self-evident.²⁰ When scripture uses words taken from corporeal things and the realm of created spirit to speak about God, these words are used “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).”²¹ Thus, Augustine is clear that one must exercise reason to determine the meaning of scripture when it uses predicates taken from creation to refer to God – scripture itself does not provide the rule that God is improperly understood when conceived in terms of corporeal matter or created spirit. Likewise, scripture nowhere explicitly states that God’s substance, “without any change in itself

²⁰ In *The Spirit and the Letter* Augustine writes: “That text – ‘The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life’ – is naturally taken to mean that we are not to understand the figurative sayings of Scripture in their literal sense, which may be irrational, but to look for their deeper significance, and find nourishment for the inward man in a spiritual understanding of them . . .” 6 (iv). Passages of scripture that predicate of God qualities proper to the realm of corporeal bodies and created spirit are, for Augustine, figurative sayings of scripture that must be read for spiritual meaning.

makes things that change, and without any passage of time in itself creates things that exist in time.”²² This understanding, while supported in scripture (Augustine cites 1 Timothy 6:16, James 1:17, and Psalms 102:27), is in large part the product of reasoned reflection on what must necessarily belong to the essence of God – on what it means to call something God.²³ Finally, reason itself must judge whether what scripture says concerning things that are peculiar to God are indeed possible. Thus, Augustine sees no conceptual difficulty in holding that “the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are of one and the same substance or essence”²⁴ even though nothing in the world of body or created spirit is like that. Conversely, Augustine dismisses the suggestion that God begets himself since “not only is God not like that, but neither is anything in the world of body or spirit. There is absolutely no thing whatsoever that brings itself into existence.”²⁵ This suggestion is not dismissed because scripture itself straightforwardly disavows this possibility, but rather because reason judges that it is impossible for something to bring itself into existence. Conversely, while belief in the Trinity is not based on the sight of the Trinity itself but instead on the testimony of scripture, this belief, unlike a belief in a God that begets himself, does not demand that one suspend rational judgment in order to believe it.²⁶

²¹ *De Trinitate*, I.2.

²² *Ibid.*, I.3.

²³ Consider Augustine’s discussion of the nature of God and the nature of evil in Book VII of his *Confessions*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, I.4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, I.1.

²⁶ Again, this is not to assert that Augustine believes in the Trinity only because it is a logically necessary conclusion based on his exercise of reason. It is only to assert that for Augustine, one’s belief in the Trinity is not to be maintained if reason judges that belief to contradict rational judgment. Thus we can see that, in his trust in the truth of scripture, Augustine anticipates that scripture will no more ask him to believe that a substance can beget itself any than it will ask him to believe that it can rain and not rain at the exact same

With these considerations in mind we can see that, for Augustine, reason and faith are not two irreconcilable rivals. Rather, the “starting-point of faith,” which integrally involves trust in scripture’s ability to guide one’s search for understanding, articulates and allows for the fullest exercise of reason – an exercise of reason untainted by the “unseasonable and misguided love of reason.” Only in the context of faith can man exercise his mind properly to attain its greatest good, the knowledge of his Creator.²⁷ Moreover, for Augustine, these considerations entail the recognition that our reason is ours to use insofar as the Creator has given it to his creatures in order that they might know him. If we fail to see this fundamental connection between our reason and its supreme object of understanding – as do all those who are infected with the “disease” of “asserting too categorically their own presumptuous opinions” – we will love reason improperly (misguidedly) and move away from God. Accordingly, the central question for Augustine is how man can exercise properly his mind for God. Augustine’s answer to this question is that only from the starting-point of faith and with the aid of scripture can

time. Thus, trust in scripture involves both the belief that scripture will deepen one’s understanding of God, as well as the anticipation that it will not demand that one believe what one knows to be false. Obviously, there may be considerable tension between these two currents, but two points, already mentioned, need to be kept in mind. First, there is no disinterested use of reason. Thus, any judgment that declares that belief in the Trinity is rationally unacceptable – equivalent to believing in a God who begets himself – must be evaluated cautiously since the argument may be deliberately omitting careful analysis in an effort to protect a “presumptuous opinion.” Secondly, and related, Augustine is keen to demonstrate that our judgments are to be treated with caution because, in addition to being driven at times by ignoble interests, these judgments concern an object that is not easily accessible to our understanding. Our mutable sinful selves have difficulty comprehending immutable goodness itself. Augustine emphasizes this theme constantly throughout *De Trinitate*. The downfall of those of the third-type is their mistaken belief that they (can) know God, and as such, have no need for the guidance of scripture.

²⁷ This statement should not be read apart from love. For Augustine, the understanding of God that is our greatest good is suffused with love. As is well known, the rational soul, for Augustine, consists in the mind’s remembering, understanding, and loving activity. There can be no rationality belonging to the mind apart from its loving activity any more than the mind can be rational while failing to remember or understand. That is why the inordinate love of God and self is so dangerous for the mind’s proper functioning – the mind can be truly rational only insofar as it knows and loves the Good.

humankind “seek as best we can the things that are above and forsake the things that are below.”²⁸

These considerations raise considerable difficulties. Among these difficulties, two stand out. First, we might ask Augustine how one is to determine whether he is being deceived through a misguided love of reason. Each individual, given the fact that he or she is committed to the truth of various beliefs, will naturally hold that their use of reason is not misguided. Thus, it is not clear how these individuals are to judge whether their love of reason has deceived them when they hold certain beliefs just because they understand themselves not to be deceived in so believing. Furthermore, this does not appear to be a question that reason alone can answer since it is reason itself, according to Augustine, which is disorientated.

Secondly, when Augustine asserts that the starting-point of faith is necessary for any reflection on the Trinity, it is clear that this faith fundamentally involves the confession that “according to the scriptures Father and Son and Holy Spirit in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity; and therefore there are not three gods but one God.”²⁹ However, Augustine makes clear in Book I of *De Trinitate* that the vision of the triune God – the mind’s “face to face” perception of the Trinity – is only achieved in eternity.³⁰ This is because, as we have already seen, the mind’s loves

²⁸ Ibid., I.2.

²⁹ Ibid., I.7.

³⁰ Augustine in Book I insists that the faithful will be granted the vision of God only after the Son, in the form of man, has judged humanity following the resurrection of the dead. The wicked will not be granted the supreme reward of faith, which is to see the Son in the form of God in which he is equal to the Father (and thereby see the Father and the Holy Spirit in their divine forms as well) (Ibid., I.28). Furthermore, this vision of God is eternal life. Augustine writes: “This then is why he had to receive that authority as Son of man; it is in order that all, as they rise again, may see him in the form in which he can be seen by all – by

are disordered. Man wishes to live like a god under no other authority than his own, and thus is unable to free himself from his inordinate self-love in order to gaze on truth itself.³¹ Augustine claims that only when the Son has judged humanity and granted life to those who heard of his incarnation and believed him to be the Son of God can the Trinity be known.³² Accordingly, we ask Augustine by what right he holds that scripture's trinitarian identification of God is the bedrock from which all searches for God must begin when that trinity itself remains inaccessible to the understanding of the mind.

These two difficulties are intimately related to the central problem of this thesis. Augustine's understanding of the knowledge of God being made manifest in a vision is consistent with, and an expansion of, his basic epistemological framework where certain knowledge is grounded in the intellectual perception of eternal realities in the light of truth. However, given the eschatological fulfillment of the vision of God, a considerable problem arises. If the knowledge of God as triune is postponed to eternity, we must ask on what basis Augustine holds that God is triune, since what Augustine claims to be true – that God is triune – can only be believed and is not yet seen. This thesis will examine Augustine's solution to this problem by demonstrating that according to Augustine, the claims made in faith by the Christian concerning the triune identification of God can be

some however to their undoing, by others to eternal life. And what else is eternal life but that sight which is not granted to the wicked?" (Ibid., I.30).

³¹ See *De Trinitate* Book XII. 16 and Book VIII. 3.

³² Augustine writes in Book I:

What then does it really mean, *When he hands over the kingdom to God and the Father* (1 Cor 15:24), as though at present God and the Father had not got a kingdom? The fact is that the *man Christ Jesus, mediator of god and men* (1 Tim 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 (1 Cor 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."

held to be true because these beliefs are the product of the action of the triune God on the mind of man. Thus, the truth of the church's claim that God is triune is understood by Augustine to be guaranteed by the action of the Trinity itself.³³

***Confessions* Book VII**

Before we move to Chapter One's analysis of Augustine's understanding of what it means to say that God is a trinity, we will first turn to a brief analysis of Book VII of Augustine's *Confessions*. In this book not only do we find clearly manifest Augustine's trust in the truthfulness of scripture as well as his insistence on the "starting-point of faith" to guide the exercise of one's reason, but we also find that Augustine attributes all his advances in understanding to the action of God himself. Thus, in Book VII of *Confessions* we find, in brief, Augustine's solution to the abovementioned problem that we shall soon examine in detail in *De Trinitate*.

In Book VII of *Confessions*, Augustine records his struggle to maintain his belief in God amidst the threat that the problem of evil poses to that belief. In the opening of Book VII Augustine writes: "With all my heart I believed you to be incorruptible, immune from injury, and unchangeable."³⁴ Soon thereafter, Augustine states the danger that the existence of evil poses to his belief in an immutable God.

Although I affirmed and firmly held divine immunity from pollution and change and the complete immutability of our God . . . I had no clear and explicit grasp of the cause of evil. Whatever it might be, I saw it had to be investigated, if I were

³³ Therefore, it is on this basis that scripture's trinitarian identification of God can serve as the bedrock from which all attempts to understand God must begin. Moreover, instructed in its love of certain beliefs, the mind's inordinate love of self and sought object is thereby corrected, enabling it, in turn, to recognize its unseasonable and misguided love of reason.

³⁴ *Confessions* VII. i. 1.

to avoid being forced by the problem to believe the immutable God to be mutable.³⁵

The problem that Augustine is grappling with is the following: Augustine affirms – or we might say, as does Augustine himself, that he confesses³⁶ – that God is the supreme and highest good, and as such, is neither able to suffer evil nor be its cause. Yet, evil is present in the world. Thus, given these two propositions – first that God is the supremely good creator of the universe, and second, that evil exists – it appears that one must either assert that God’s power is not sufficient to his will and that God is unable to prevent the evil that the world suffers, or that God himself is the cause of evil.³⁷ Both of these possibilities force one to conclude that God is subject to change. In the first instance this is because, according to Augustine, “the will and the power of God is God’s very self.”³⁸ In other words, God is not capable of willing that which he is unable to perform. Thus, if God is able to will the creation of a good universe, it necessarily follows that he is able to create and preserve that universe in its goodness – an incorruptible substance has the power to will and act steadfastly not because there are no contravening powers present but because he is the author of his own incorruptibility.³⁹ Consequently, if evil is present in the universe because God is not able to preserve the world in the goodness that he wills for it, he must therefore be corruptible since an incorruptible God cannot lack the power to actualize the good that he wills. In the second

³⁵ Ibid., VII. iii. 4.

³⁶ Ibid., VII. iv. 6.

³⁷ See Ibid., VII. iii. 4 and VII. iii. 5.

³⁸ Ibid., VII. iv. 6.

³⁹ Augustine writes: “There is absolutely no way corruption can injure our God – no act of will, no necessity, nor unforeseen chance – since he is God and what he wills for himself is good, and he is that same good” (Ibid., iv 6).

instance, God is corruptible for the simple and obvious reason that he changes his mind – having willed good he now wills evil.

Unable to substantiate its truth at this point in Book VII, Augustine nevertheless remains committed to his belief that God, the supreme and highest good, is incorruptible. However, Augustine recognizes that his ability to maintain this belief ultimately hinges on him finding an acceptable solution to the problem of the cause of evil. Yet, the absence of an immediate solution does not provoke Augustine to abdicate his belief in God's immutability. Augustine writes: "These reflections depressed me once more and suffocated me. But I was not brought down to that hell of error where no one confesses to you (Ps 6:6), because people suppose that evil is something that you suffer rather than an act by humanity."⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Ibid., iii 5. Likewise, in *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Augustine, while searching for an answer to Evodius' question of why humans do evil, says the following:

Be of brave spirit and believe what you believe, for there is nothing worthier of belief, even though the reason why it is true may lay hidden. For to hold God supreme is most truly the beginning of piety; and no one holds Him supreme who does not believe Him to be omnipotent and absolutely changeless, Creator of all good things which He Himself transcends in excellence, and the most just Ruler, as well, of all that he created. . . . With this belief as our foundation, let us thus strive, with God's aid, toward an understanding of the question you have proposed. (*On the Free Choice of the Will* I. 12)

In *De Trinitate* Augustine gives expression to these statements in the form of a general rule that one should follow when seeking knowledge of God. Augustine writes:

Now therefore, as far as the wonderfully merciful creator may assist us, let us turn our attention to the things we are going to discuss in a more inward manner than the things that have been discussed above, though in fact they are the same things; *but let us all the while still keep to the rule that just because a thing is not yet clear to our understanding, we must not therefore dismiss it from the firm assent of our faith.* (*De Trinitate* VIII. 1 – emphasis added)

Given our analysis up to this point, we can see that this general rule is largely the product of Augustine's awareness that there is neither no disinterested use of reason, nor is God's immutable nature easily apprehended (see n. 26). However, in addition to these two considerations, there is a third crucial motivation for this rule. This consideration is that given that man's misguided use of reason makes the apprehension of God's eternal nature extremely difficult to achieve, man's proper response in the face of this difficulty is not to diminish God's power such that he conforms to our limited understanding, but rather to amplify God's power and in so believing, hopefully come to understand what one believes. To do otherwise is to place our short-sighted interests and concerns, and truncated understanding, ahead of the desire to fully plumb the depths of God's eternal truth. Thus, though Augustine thought the existence of

Clinging, therefore, to his belief in an immutable God, Augustine makes an effort to discover other principles that might provide insight into this problem. The principle that Augustine comes to discover is that God must be, by definition, incorruptible. In other words, Augustine comes to recognize that it is a contradiction in terms to speak of a God who is subject to change. This recognition is the product of Augustine having already determined that the incorruptible is superior to the corruptible. Accordingly, God, as the supreme and highest good, must be discovered on the side of incorruptibility alone.⁴¹ Moreover, God, as the supreme and highest good, is necessarily that which no soul can conceive better. Therefore, given the fact that the incorruptible is superior to the corruptible, if it were the case that God is corruptible, it would be possible to conceive of something better than God.⁴² And, in the nature of the case, that which is conceived as better would necessarily be deserving of the title of God since, as incorruptible, it would be superior to that substance that suffers corruption. Thus, by definition, God as the supreme and highest good is that substance which can undergo no change. “Indeed,” Augustine writes, “why need we say repeatedly ‘Why is the being of God not a corruptible substance?’ If it were so, that would not be God.”⁴³

Thus, Augustine comes to understand that the problem of the cause of evil is not a threat to God’s immutability. If God exists, he must be necessarily immutable.

evil to be without adequate explanation if there exists an omniscient, omnipotent, benevolent God, he nevertheless saw it as *impious* to abdicate that confession if its end was only to make his understanding of evil less arduous.

⁴¹ *Confessions*, VII. iv. 6

⁴² *Ibid.*, VII. iv. 6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, VII. iv. 6. To summarize the argument:

- 1) God, by definition, is the supreme and highest good.
- 2) The incorruptible is superior to the corruptible.

However, a larger problem now looms for Augustine. The presence of evil no longer simply challenges his belief that God is immutable. Instead, the presence of evil now challenges Augustine's belief that this immutable God exists. It is with Augustine's encounter with the books of the Platonists that this new problem is resolved, for it is under their tutelage that Augustine moves from simply affirming that God exists to being certain of God's existence.

Augustine writes that it was by the Platonic books that he was admonished to return into himself.⁴⁴ With their guidance Augustine was able to ascend step by step from the contemplation of bodies to the contemplation of his own soul, and finally to a fleeting glimpse of God himself. Only after this sight, albeit short-lived, does Augustine declare that he has come to *know* God. Reflecting on this experience, Augustine writes: "When I first came to know you, you raised me up to make me see that what I saw is Being, and that I who saw am not yet Being. And you gave a shock to the weakness of my sight by the strong radiance of your rays, and I trembled with love and awe."⁴⁵ Furthermore, having now become certain of the existence of God, Augustine's concerns about the origin of evil are allayed.⁴⁶ This is because Augustine now knows that the explanation for the cause of evil must necessarily be such that the existence of an immutable God is not brought into question.

3) Therefore, it is necessarily the case that God is an incorruptible substance. (If the being of God were a corruptible substance, that substance would not be God.)

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, VII. x. 16.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, VII. x. 16.

⁴⁶ Concerning the fact that with his ascent God became a certainty to him, Augustine writes: "I would have found it easier to doubt whether I was myself alive than that there is no truth 'understood from the things that are made' (Rom 1:20)." (*Ibid.*, VII. x. 16)

In the remainder of Book VII Augustine records how he was unable to sustain the vision of God. Strangely, this failure resulted in the swelling of Augustine's pride. He writes:

I was sure that you truly are, and are always the same; that you never become other or different in any part or by any movement of position, whereas all other things derive from you, as is proved by the fact that they exist. Of these conceptions I was certain; but to enjoy you I was too weak. I prattled on as if I were expert, but unless I had sought your way in Christ our Saviour (Titus 1:4), I would have been not expert but expunged. I began to want to give myself airs as a wise person. I was full of my punishment but I shed no tears of penitence. Worse still, I was puffed up with knowledge.⁴⁷

Hence we find that Augustine, seeking to obtain strength to enjoy God, found none.

Mired in his "customary condition"⁴⁸ of weakness and unable to keep his vision fixed on God's immutable goodness, Augustine writes that he carried "only a loving memory and a desire for that of which I had the aroma but which I had not yet the capacity to eat."⁴⁹

By his own analysis, Augustine was one who saw what the goal was, but not how to get there.⁵⁰

It is only after turning to the letters of the apostle Paul that Augustine begins to obtain the strength and acquire the means necessary to enjoy God. In Paul's letters Augustine discovers that it is only in the embrace of Jesus Christ that man is able to overcome his weakness and attain the vision of God. More pointedly, Augustine discovers in these letters the commendation of God's grace, "so that he who sees should 'not boast as if he had not received' both what he sees and also the power to see."⁵¹ In

⁴⁷ Ibid., VII. xx. 26.

⁴⁸ Ibid., VII. xvii. 23.

⁴⁹ Ibid., VII. xviii. 24.

⁵⁰ Ibid., VII. xx. 26.

⁵¹ Ibid., VII. xxi. 27.

short, Augustine discovers in the letters of Paul that both his ability to apprehend the truth, and his vision of truth itself, are thanks to the gratuitous action of God alone. As a result, Augustine comes to assert that it is on account of pride – the “disease” of asserting too categorically his own presumptuous opinion out of an inordinate love for himself – that he was unable to raise his regard to God’s unchanging substance. Prattling on as if an expert, Augustine saw in Paul that his presumption had only blocked the road to genuine understanding.⁵²

It is Augustine’s realization that he has received from God both what he sees and the power to see that is the key to understanding his account of his experiences in Book VII of the *Confessions*. Throughout Book VII Augustine continually attributes all his advances in understanding to the action of God upon his mind. Thus, while at the time they took place, Augustine understood these advances to be the product of his own power, in failing to maintain his vision of God and subsequently encountering the letters of Paul, Augustine comes to understand the true nature of these experiences.

Accordingly, he comes to recall his vision of God in the following way:

But you, Lord, ‘abide for eternity and you will not be angry with us for ever’ (Eccles 18:1; Ps 84:6). You have mercy on dust and ashes, and it has pleased you to restore my deformities in your sight (Ps 18:15). By inward goads you stirred me to make me find it unendurable until, through my inward perception, you were a certainty to me. My swelling was reduced by your hidden healing hand, and my mind’s troubled and darkened eye, under the hot dressing of salutary sorrows, was from ‘day to day’ (Ps 60.9) brought back to health.⁵³

⁵² See again *De Trinitate* I.1 for Augustine’s comments concerning the (Platonic) “third-type.” In light of our analysis of Book VII, we can now see that with these comments Augustine is speaking from experience.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, VII. viii. 12.

Likewise, as we noted earlier, before Augustine experienced this vision he steadfastly believed and affirmed God to be the immutable and just Creator of the universe.

Augustine now attributes this confession to the providential action of God himself. He writes:

I was seeking the origin of evil and here was no solution. But you did not allow fluctuations in my thinking to carry me away from the faith which I held, that you exist and are immutable substance and care for humanity and judge us; moreover, that in Christ your Son our Lord and by your scriptures, commended by the authority of your Catholic Church, you have provided a way of salvation whereby humanity can come to the future life after death. These matters, therefore, were secure and firmly fortified in my mind while I was seeking feverishly for the origin of evil.⁵⁴

Accordingly, while Augustine later states that he found in the letters of Paul “all the truth I had read in the Platonists,”⁵⁵ we see in this passage that he was already committed to their truthfulness well before their truth was illuminated by the books of the Platonists. Moreover, just as Augustine believed in the truthfulness of scripture before that truthfulness was illuminated, so too does Augustine believe that God has provided, in Jesus Christ and scripture, the means whereby man might enjoy the eternal contemplation of his unchanging goodness. There is, and can be, no Platonic demonstration of this

⁵⁴ Ibid., VII. vii 11. It is the recognition of God’s active presence in leading his mind into the love of the truth as revealed in Christ in scripture that undoubtedly leads to Augustine’s famous statement in Book X: “My entire hope is exclusively in your very great mercy. Grant what you command, and command what you will” (Ibid., xxviii 39). Having recognized the sustaining and providential role of God in his life, as God both prevented his descent and enabled his ascent, Augustine earnestly prays that God may continue to transform his mind. Accordingly, piety, for Augustine, no longer is simply confessing that God is immutable and does not suffer evil. In addition, piety fundamentally involves the acknowledgement that it is only thanks to the action of this immutable God that the mind of man is able to make this confession; according to Augustine, not only the beliefs that one holds to be true by virtue of attaining to the realm of immaterial eternal ideas (i.e., for Augustine, that God exists), but also those beliefs that one holds in the absence of seeing them indubitably confirmed in the light of eternal truth (i.e., that God’s gracious hand prevented him from falling away and neglecting to confess Christ) are both the product of God’s action on the mind.

⁵⁵ Ibid., VII. xxi 27.

belief.⁵⁶ Its truth, for Augustine, will only be demonstrated in eternity when Jesus Christ brings us, by virtue of our faith in him, to the sight of God the Father.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ There can be no Platonic demonstration of the belief that Jesus Christ, as the incarnate Son of God, is the means whereby man is brought to the eternal contemplation of God's unchanging goodness because such a demonstration would contradict that very claim. Any vision of God that is the product of Platonic ascent would necessarily mean that the mediating role offered by the Son of God is unnecessary. This ultimately would entail not that the mediating role of the Son requires qualification, but rather that the Son has no mediating role. In short, this would mean that Augustine could no longer hold that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word sent to mediate between God and man. Accordingly, Augustine must assert, either that no vision of the Word can be had, or, that all visions of God are partial perceptions at best. This is not because only a part of God has been seen – God, as simple substance, does not have parts, and thus any glimpse of him is a glimpse of him in the entirety of his truth – but because the sin of the individual keeps him from comprehending what he sees. It is the latter claim that Augustine makes throughout *De Trinitate* and *Confessions*.

However, the Platonist might reply that if, in completing the ascent, he saw that the Word is incarnate, this would substantiate the truth of Jesus Christ's mediating role. This is because, once one is committed to the belief that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word of God, it appears to follow that one is then committed to hold that the Word is always incarnate. Bruce Marshall writes:

It seems . . . to make no substantive difference whether one speaks of the Word incarnate (*Verbum incarnatum*) or the Word "to be incarnate" (*Verbum incarnandum*), since from God's point of view . . . the Word is *always* incarnate. Like divine acts generally, the Father's sending of the Son into human flesh, the Son's acceptance of this mission, and the Spirit's creation of the humanity of Mary's first child by uniting that humanity to the eternal Son – everything which makes up the incarnation from God's side – is always actual in and for God. *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 112.

While Augustine nowhere in *De Trinitate* explicitly makes a statement equivalent to this, given his concern for the absolute immutability and simplicity of the divine substance, combined with his belief that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word sent to mediate between God and man, it is likely that such a line of thought would have occurred to him. Evidence for this is the fact that, for Augustine, all anthropological considerations have trinitarian implications. In Augustine's conflict with the Pelagians, what is at issue is not simply how humans are to understand themselves, but the church's very identification of God. This is because, if man can independently find his way back to God, not only is Jesus Christ not the incarnate Word mediating between God and man, but there can be no Word to speak of (given the fact that the Word is always incarnate). Thus, the Platonist's efforts to demonstrate the truth of Augustine's belief by attaining the sight of the immutable incarnate Word – without the aid of the incarnate Word himself – would ultimately demonstrate the falsity of Augustine's belief by showing that God is not a Trinity. In the end, however, regardless of whether Augustine thought along these lines, it is clear that there can be no Platonic demonstration of the belief that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, brings man to the sight of God.

⁵⁷ To summarize: After initially achieving the vision of God, Augustine's faith dimmed as his pride swelled. He believed that the affirmations he made in faith could now be discarded in favor of the everlasting vision of God himself, achieved under his own power. Only after being humbled in his failure did Augustine become aware of his profound need for a mediator to overcome his weakness – and only then did Augustine realize that his earlier advances were not his own. It was in this way that we might say Augustine came to true faith – an absolute trust in Jesus Christ and scripture to raise him up to the sublimities of divine things. Faith, for Augustine, became not a prelude to vision that is discarded as one grows in the knowledge of God. Rather, faith became an absolute reliance on God, in Jesus Christ and through scripture, to grace eternally his mind with the vision that he had been given but a glimpse.

Thus we see in Book VII of the *Confessions* that Augustine's trust in the truthfulness of scripture is not predicated on scripture's coherence with the books of the Platonists. Rather, believing that the scriptures are true, Augustine has come to a more profound understanding of their truth while at all times remaining faithful to the language scripture uses to speak about God. Moreover, we also see that Augustine's willingness to search for the truth from the "starting-point of faith" is only deepened as his understanding of both God and himself increased.⁵⁸ Finally, we see that Augustine's willingness to begin from the "starting-point of faith" is inextricably linked to his awareness that all his advances in understanding are the product of the Trinity's loving action upon his mind. In short, we see in Book VII of the *Confessions* that for Augustine, the truth about God and oneself cannot be known apart from the Trinity instructing the mind in these truths.

⁵⁸ We see that the more Augustine comes to recognize and accept the weakness of his own sight, the more willing he is to be led. Having been graced with the vision of God, Augustine subsequently becomes increasingly aware of the yawning distance that separates him from this supreme good. And, having come to understand that in Jesus Christ God has provided the means for man to bridge this distance, Augustine is saved from the disease of the Platonic "third-type" who tries to remove the painful awareness of this distance by self-congratulatory measures that only serve to deny the distance.

Chapter One

In this chapter this thesis will undertake an analysis of Augustine's understanding of what it means for the church to confess that God is a trinity. The purpose of this analysis is to come to understand the faith that, for Augustine, is both the cure of man's misguided love of reason and the starting-point for all searches for truth. Furthermore, this chapter will also discuss Augustine's defense of the logical coherence of the church's faith; while he is aware that the truth of the church's faith cannot be conclusively demonstrated, Augustine is keen to show that this faith is not rationally indefensible. Consequently, this chapter will analyze Augustine's principal arguments for why the church holds that "the Father and Son and Holy Spirit in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity" as well as his subsequent efforts to speak logically of a triune divine essence. This will entail first an analysis of the arguments Augustine provides in Book I to establish the divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit, and then an examination of his efforts in Book V and VII to resolve the difficulties that arise from these arguments, and in so doing preserve the faith of the church.

Shortly after his discussion of scripture's purifying function with respect to the falsehoods that arise from a misguided love of reason, Augustine provides a statement of the faith of the church. It is worthwhile for the purposes of this chapter to reproduce this statement in its entirety.

The purpose of all the Catholic commentators I have been able to read on the divine books of both testaments, who have written before me on the trinity which God is, has been to teach that according to the scriptures Father and Son and Holy Spirit in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity; and therefore there are not three gods but one God; although indeed the Father has begotten the Son, and therefore he who is the Father is not the Son; and

the Son is begotten by the Father, and therefore he who is the Son is not the Father; and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but only the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, himself coequal to the Father and the Son, and belonging to the threefold unity.

It was not however this same three (their teaching continues) that was born of the virgin Mary, crucified and buried under Pontius Pilate, rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven, but the Son alone. Nor was it this same three that came down upon Jesus in the form of a dove at his baptism, or came down on the day of Pentecost after the Lord's ascension, with a roaring sound from heaven as though a violent gust were rushing down, and in divided tongues of fire, but the Holy Spirit alone. Nor was it this same three that spoke from heaven, *You are my Son*, either at his baptism by John (Mk 1:11), or on the mountain when the three disciples were with him (Mt 17:5), nor when the resounding voice was heard, *I have both glorified it (my name) and will glorify it again* (Jn 12:28), but it was the Father's voice alone addressing the Son; although just as the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable, so do they work inseparably. This is also my faith inasmuch as it is the Catholic faith.⁵⁹

First, we will consider Augustine's principal arguments for the divinity of the Son and the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

Augustine's first argument for the divinity of the Son is centered on the prologue of the gospel of John. Here, according to Augustine, scripture testifies to the divinity of the Son and confutes those who assert that the "Lord Jesus Christ is not God, or is not true God, or is not with the Father the one and only God, or is not truly immortal because he is subject to change . . ." ⁶⁰ Augustine first establishes both that the "Word" mentioned in John 1:1 refers to the Son of God Jesus Christ, and that the "Word" is divine.⁶¹ He writes:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (Jn 1:1). It is clear that we are to take the Word of God for the only Son of

⁵⁹ *De Trinitate* I. 7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, I.9.

⁶¹ Augustine in fact does not provide any substantive argument for the claim that the "Word" mentioned in John 1:1 is divine. Rather, he simply lets the verse speak for itself.

God, of whom he goes on to say, *and the Word became flesh* (Jn 1:14), with reference to his incarnation birth which took place in time of the virgin.⁶²

Second, Augustine demonstrates that the Word – the Son of God born in time of the virgin – is not only divine but of one and the same substance as the Father. According to Augustine, this is established by John when, after writing “and the Word was God,” he adds: “This was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him nothing was made” (John 1:2). According to Augustine, by “all things” John means, “only what has been made, that is every creature.”⁶³ Consequently, Augustine concludes that if “all things” came into existence through the Word, then it follows that the Word himself is not a creature.

With this conclusion in hand, Augustine then asserts that, “if he [the Word] is not a creature he is of the same substance of the Father. For every substance that is not God is a creature, and that is not a creature is God.”⁶⁴ Here Augustine introduces an ontology of creator and creature. Every substance that is can be exhaustively categorized in either one of these two categories. Furthermore, in the nature of the case, there can only be one substance that is Creator – there can only be one first principle, one maker of “all things.” The tacit problem presented by the gospel of John is the writer’s apparent claim that there are two first principles, two makers of “all things,” God and the Word – the Father and the Son. Augustine’s solution to this problem is to assert that the Word, not being a creature, is therefore of the same substance as the Father. Thus, Augustine is able to assert that there remains but one God, one maker of “all things.” What allows Augustine

⁶² Ibid., I. 9.

⁶³ Ibid., I.9.

to reach his conclusion in this way (to assert the consubstantial nature of the Father and the Son) is his unspoken judgment that since the Father (as God) does not occupy space, and since the Son (as God) does not occupy space, there is therefore no place where both the Father and Son are not fully present. Thus, the Son must be said to be of the same essence of the Father with whom he was with before the creation of “all things.”

Augustine ends his argument for the divinity of the Son by demonstrating that to deny the divinity of the Son is to contradict the claims of scripture. This is because if the Son is not of the same substance of the Father, it follows that he is a made substance. And, if a made substance, then it follows that not all things were made through the Son, which is to contradict the claim made by the writer of the Fourth Gospel.⁶⁵

Augustine’s second argument for the divinity of the Son differs from the first. Whereas the above argument rests solely on Augustine’s distinction between created and uncreated substance, the second rests, in addition to this same distinction, on an analysis of the implications of scripture’s testimony to the Father and Son’s shared action in creation.⁶⁶ The verse around which Augustine centers his discussion is 1 Corinthians 8:6.

⁶⁴ Ibid., I.9.

⁶⁵ Again, this is not an argument that would prove particularly persuasive for those without a prima facie trust in the truthfulness of scripture. At this stage in the treatise Augustine is concerned only “to establish by the authority of the scriptures” whether the church is right to say, believe, and understand that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are of one and the same essence (Ibid., I.4). In fact, at no point in *De Trinitate* does Augustine attempt to provide an argument for the divine essence being a trinity apart from considerations that arise in the context of faith. Rather, Augustine’s efforts to persuade unbelievers that God is indeed a trinity are centrally focused on demonstrating to them that they are unfit to apprehend the goodness that they wish to understand. Insofar as they accept these demonstrations and “find fault with their own minds than with the truth itself or our arguments” Augustine hopes that they will be persuaded to return to “the beginning and right order of faith” where they will be saved from “being plunged into opinions of a noisome falsehood by the random whims of temerity” (Ibid., I.4).

⁶⁶ As we examine the argument it will become clear that it is successful both by virtue of arguing that since the Father and Son perform the very same actions they are co-substantial, as well as by arguing – as in the first argument based on John – that since the Son creates “all things” he is not a creature but creator, and

It is quoted in *De Trinitate* as follows: “For us there is one God the Father from whom are all things, and we in him, and the Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things, and we through him.” Augustine again notes that we must understand “all things” to refer to all that is created.⁶⁷ Following this statement, Augustine turns from 1 Corinthians 8:6 to Romans 11:36. He asks whom Paul is referring to when he writes: “Since from him and through him and in him are all things, to him be glory for ever and ever” (Romans 11:36). Augustine suggests that if Paul means Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, “attributing a phrase apiece to each person – *from him*, from the Father; *through him*, through the Son; *in him*, in the Spirit – then it is clear that Father and Son and Holy Spirit is what the one God is, since he concludes in the singular, *to him be glory for ever and ever.*”⁶⁸ However, Augustine quickly notes that one need not assume that Paul is attributing a phrase to each person of the Trinity. Thus, in its most straightforward reading, Romans 11:36 challenges the claim that the Son is divine since at no point is it necessary to posit the Son’s divinity in order for the meaning of the verse to be coherent. It is at this point that Augustine returns to 1 Corinthians 8:6 to challenge this interpretation of Romans 11:36.

Augustine challenges this interpretation by asking how Romans 11:36 can be understood of the Father alone if, according to 1 Corinthians 8:6, “all things” were made

ipso facto of one and the same substance as the Father. The argument can be read both ways, and which of these routes Augustine is intentionally pursuing is not clear.

⁶⁷ Augustine here makes a point that we might seem to think unnecessary. However, Augustine is keen to ensure that his readers do not interpret the verse to be saying that the Lord Jesus Christ is unique among all made things that are from God the Father insofar as he has a role in the creation of all things other than himself.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, I.12.

through the Father and “all things” were made through the Son.⁶⁹ Augustine notes that if all things were made through the Father and others through the Son, “then it cannot be all things through the Father nor all things through the Son.”⁷⁰ Hence, Augustine asserts that if indeed “all things” were created by the Father and “all things” were created by the Son, we must conclude that Father and Son created the same things.⁷¹ From this judgment Augustine concludes that, “the Son is equal to the Father, and the work of the Father and the Son is inseparable.”⁷²

As noted above, two considerations seem to be at work in this concluding statement. The first is one we noted in Augustine’s argument for the Son’s divinity based on John’s prologue. Augustine is anxious to show that the Son is not to be counted among created things. To assert otherwise is to contradict Paul’s claim, like John’s, that “all things” were made through the Son. And, if the Son is not to be counted among “all things” that have been created, then the Son necessarily is of the same substance of the Father. Thus, we see that in his second argument Augustine again employs a dipartite ontology of creature and creator to secure his conclusion.

⁶⁹ Ibid., I.12. It is interesting to note that Augustine departs from 1 Corinthians use of “from” the Father and “through” the Son in favor of using “through” the Father and “through” the Son. A possible explanation for this change might be a desire on Augustine’s part to preclude any interpretation that reads “from” and “through” as meaning that the Father initiates and the Son completes the act of creation. If read in this manner, 1 Corinthians 8:6 would seem to suggest that the act of creation is shared between the Father and the Son because neither is sufficient to create alone. Of course, such an interpretation would challenge the church’s faith that the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God, and that together Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three gods but one God.

⁷⁰ Ibid., I.12.

⁷¹ In more technical language we might say that here Augustine asserts that the actions of the Father and the Son are numerically identical – that the Father and the Son do *not* simply perform actions that are qualitatively identical, but rather perform the very same action. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 8:6 we do not have two agents performing two similar actions, but two agents performing one and the same action.

⁷² Ibid., I.12.

The second consideration at work in Augustine's conclusion is one we have mentioned only in passing. In 1 Corinthians 8:6 we read that the Father creates all things and that the Son creates all things, and that together the Father and the Son create one and the same things. From this judgment, Augustine concludes that "the Son is equal to the Father, and the work of the Father and Son is inseparable." This conclusion is the product of Augustine's recognition that only if the Father and the Son are of one and the same substance can scripture coherently assert that the Father creates, the Son creates, and that together the Father and Son create, where in each case they are performing the very same act of creation. Thus, Augustine is able to argue for the Son's divinity on the basis of the Father and Son's numerically identical activity because only on the basis of their unity does scripture's testimony to their creative agency become intelligible.⁷³

Finally, it is significant to note that, if Augustine's analysis of the language of scripture is sound, Romans 11:36 cannot be read as referring to the Father alone⁷⁴ and still be read consistently with the broader testimony of scripture concerning the identity of the Creator. Thus, while Augustine suggests that on its own, Romans 11:36 can be read coherently as referring to the Father alone, within the broader context of scripture's references to God, Romans 11:36 must be read as referring to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in order for its meaning to be consistent with the fullness of scripture's speech about the Creator. Hence, with these two arguments Augustine has established on the

⁷³ To clarify, both of these ways of reading the argument secure the conclusion that the Son is divine. One is not needed to complete the other in order for this conclusion to be reached.

⁷⁴ Or, we might say that Romans 11:36 cannot be read as referring to the Father alone in regard to the fullness of its meaning.

basis of the testimony of scripture that the Father and Son are inseparable, and that the Father and Son work inseparably.⁷⁵

We can now move to the Holy Spirit. Here again Augustine provides two arguments from scripture for the Holy Spirit's divinity. Augustine makes the basic logic of his argumentative methodology clear. As with the Son,

testimonies have been collected on the Holy Spirit and copiously employed by previous expositors of the subject to show that he too is God and not a creature. And if he is not a creature then he is not only God – for even men have been called gods (Ps 82:6) – but also true God; therefore absolutely equal to the Father and son, and consubstantial and co-eternal in the oneness of three.⁷⁶

Thus, we see here those considerations that were particularly prevalent in Augustine's first scriptural defense of the Son's divinity. Augustine begins by noting that Romans 1:25 and Deuteronomy 6:13 order us not to serve the creature but the creator.⁷⁷

Accordingly, Augustine declares that the Holy Spirit is not a creature "since all the saints offer him such a service, according to the apostle's words, *For we are the circumcision, serving the Spirit of God* (Phil 3:3) . . .".⁷⁸ Having established that the Holy Spirit is not a creature according to the scriptural demands of worship, it follows that the Holy Spirit is of the same substance of the Father and Son since if he is not a creature he is

⁷⁵ To reiterate once more, Augustine's argument based on 1 Corinthians 8:6 can be read as moving from either the Father and Son's substantial inseparability to their inseparability of action, or from their inseparability of action to their substantial inseparability. Thus, one need not first establish that the Father and Son are inseparable to assert thereby that they work inseparably. One may also move from scripture's testimony to the unity of divine action to the inseparability of the divine substance.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, I.13.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, I.13.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, I.13.

“absolutely equal to the Father and the Son, and consubstantial and co-eternal in the oneness of three.”⁷⁹

Augustine’s second argument is a variant of the first. He notes that according to 1 Corinthians 6:19, the bodies of Christians are the temple of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰ Then, having already established that Jesus Christ is consubstantial with the Father, Augustine exclaims: “Could anything be more insanely sacrilegious than to have the effrontery to call the members of Christ the temple of a creature who is inferior, in these people’s opinion, to Christ himself? For he says earlier on, *Your bodies are the members of Christ* (1 Cor 6:15)”.⁸¹ Thus, Augustine concludes that the Holy Spirit is not a creature but divine since if the things that scripture declares are members of Christ are also the temple of the Holy Spirit, it follows that “we cannot but owe, to one whom we offer our bodies to as a temple, that service by which only God is to be served . . .”.⁸² In other words, since scripture demands the same service to be given to the Holy Spirit as to Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit must be divine.⁸³

With these arguments Augustine concludes his defense of the church’s faith that according to the scriptures the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are inseparable, and as such,

⁷⁹ Here again we find Augustine’s unspoken judgment that since the Father (as uncreated) does not occupy space, and since the Son (as uncreated) does not occupy space, and since the Holy Spirit (as uncreated) does not occupy space, there is therefore no place where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not fully present. Thus, the Holy Spirit must be said to be of the same substance as the Father and the Son.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, I.13.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, I.13.

⁸² *Ibid.*, I.13.

⁸³ The argument might be recast in the following way: Scripture asserts: a) Jesus Christ is divine and that our bodies are members of Christ, and, b) our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Given “a” scripture cannot also say “b” unless the Holy Spirit is divine since that would make our bodies temples of a being inferior to the one with respect to whom scripture also demands our service. In fact, this would be for scripture to demand at one and the same time that we serve God alone (Christ), while also demanding that

work inseparably. Of the four arguments that have been discussed, it is notable that Augustine follows no methodological blueprint in articulating the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Instead, his arguments rest variously on ontological considerations, an attentiveness to scripture's witness to the actions of the Father and Son in creation, as well as an analysis of scripture's injunctions concerning the worship of God. What unites these four arguments and their divergent foci is Augustine's commitment to the truthfulness of scripture – his willingness to believe that scripture infallibly identifies God and directs us in the proper worship of him. Augustine's first argument for the divinity of the Son based on the prologue of the gospel of John makes no headway unless one concedes that scripture is making truth claims. Only when one is committed to the language of scripture to identify God does Augustine's dipartite ontology of creature and creator become persuasive. More specifically, one must first believe John's claim that the Word is God, and further, that the Word is the incarnate Son of God, to be persuaded by Augustine's use of the distinction between created and uncreated substance as a defense of the faith of the church.⁸⁴ Thus, Augustine's argument for the divinity of the Son does not stand or fall on his distinction between creator and creature. Rather, this distinction helps to make the claims of John's prologue intelligible to those already committed to their truth.

Similarly, the arguments Augustine provides for the divinity of the Holy Spirit, as well as his second argument for the divinity of the Son, all fundamentally rest on the

we idolize a creature by offering to him the service that is owed only to God since, according to Augustine, to offer our bodies as a temple is to give the service by which only God is to be served.

conviction that scripture does not contradict itself either when talking about God's creative and redemptive activities, or when it instructs us in our worship of him. For modern readers, the suggestion that the divinity of the Holy Spirit is proved by the fact that scripture commands us to offer our bodies as temples to him is not a particularly persuasive argument. However, for Augustine, this argument is a proof just because he is committed to the language of scripture to instruct him in the knowledge of God.⁸⁵ In the same way, scripture's attribution of the creation of "all things" to both the Father and the Son is not a confused myth concerning the origin of the universe. Rather, in its accounts of the creation of the universe, Augustine trusts the language of scripture to reveal the very nature of the Creator. Thus, when we read that both the Father and the Son create "all things," Augustine understands his task not to be to correct two apparently contradictory claims, but rather to understand how what is being claimed is not in contradiction. Hence, Augustine sets about exercising his reason to find a way to honor both scripture's testimony to the agential distinctiveness of the Father and Son, as well as the rational judgment that there is but one immutable God. Thus, scripture ultimately comes to transform and deepen Augustine's rational judgments – Augustine does not exercise his reason in an effort to reshape the language scripture uses to speak about

⁸⁴ This is not to say that this ontology is unpersuasive. Rather, it is simply to say that there are many more beliefs that one must hold to be true before one will be persuaded by the application of this ontology to the prologue of the Fourth Gospel.

⁸⁵ In addition, as Dr. Widdicombe has brought to my attention, also at work in Augustine's arguments for the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit is the assumption that creature does not worship creature, but only the divine. Accordingly, for scripture to command man to offer his body as a temple to the Holy Spirit is for scripture to reveal that the Holy Spirit is divine.

God.⁸⁶ For Augustine to approach scripture's identifying language of God and its injunctions concerning his worship in any other way would be to hold that scripture is simply one resource among many sources of information concerning God's unchanging substance. It would be, in short, to put scripture in the dock, subservient to the judgments of reason, where its identifying language of God is held provisionally until its truth is demonstrated.⁸⁷

Now that we have examined Augustine's scriptural proofs for the faith of the church, and prior to examining Augustine's defense of its rational coherence, it is important to note the interpretative framework in which Augustine situates himself as he embarks on his analysis of the language of scripture.⁸⁸ Prior to outlining the faith of the church, Augustine writes that he trusts in God's mercy not only to preserve him in all truths that he is sure of, but also to enlighten him in those areas in which he is mistaken, "either by hidden inspirations and reminders, or by his own manifest utterances, or by discussions with the brethren."⁸⁹ This is not a benign statement on the part of Augustine. Rather, it reveals the three essential tools⁹⁰ Augustine believes all those in search of the

⁸⁶ It should be clear that in the scriptural texts upon which he bases his defense of the church's faith, Augustine holds that the words scripture uses to identify God are not words taken from the realm of bodies or created spirit, nor are they words drawn from things that do not exist. In short, these texts are not forming figures of speech or weaving riddles. Rather, Augustine holds that when scripture uses the words "Son," "Holy Spirit," "Word," and "Father," it is revealing what belongs properly to God. "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit" are not metaphors that reason is given to play with. Thus, in these verses scripture is identifying the immutable God whom we will see in eternity.

⁸⁷ This would be nothing less than for Augustine to become an individual of the "third-type" (see again *De Trinitate* I. 1) – one who subsumes all scriptural references to God to his own opinion, thereby giving reign to the "disease" which makes the proper function of reason impossible.

⁸⁸ In fact, this interpretive framework applies not only to the abovementioned scriptural proofs, but also to the treatise as a whole.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, I.5.

⁹⁰ This is a particularly infelicitous term because it suggests that truth can be discovered by man as long as he properly equips himself with the right tools for the job. However, such an interpretation of Augustine's meaning in this passage would grossly miss the mark. Before the introduction of these "tools," Augustine

truth must rely on. Of these three, we have already discussed at length the second – scripture, or what Augustine here calls God’s manifest utterances.⁹¹ Hence, we will focus on the first and the third.

The first tool Augustine mentions is God’s “hidden inspirations and reminders.” While it is not clear exactly what Augustine has in mind here, we can be sure of at least two things. First, Augustine holds that the discovery and understanding of truth in scripture is not incumbent on discovering the intention of the author alone, but rather upon scripture guiding the mind in the process of raising its regard “to the sublimities of divine things.”⁹² Thus, Augustine writes in Book XII of *Confessions*:

I say with utter confidence that in your immutable Word you made all things invisible and visible. I cannot say with equal assurance that this was exactly what Moses had in mind when he wrote ‘In the beginning God made heaven and earth’. Though in your truth I see the proposition to be certain, yet I cannot see in Moses’ mind that this is what he was thinking when he wrote this.⁹³

plainly asserts that it is only on account of God’s mercy that he will be preserved in those truths that he knows, and discover those that he does not. In short, Augustine understands that at all times his search for truth is ultimately underwritten by God. While, as we shall see, this remains apparent when he refers to God’s “hidden inspirations and reminders,” it is no less true when he refers to God’s manifest utterances. For Augustine, the discovery of truth in scripture is not possible apart from the active intervention of a merciful God on the mind of man. Thus, Augustine couches man’s search for truth wholly within God’s providential disposal of that truth to man. This is consistent with our earlier analysis of Book VII of *Confessions* in the Prologue.

⁹¹ In Book IX of *De Trinitate* Augustine calls scripture the truth of God that invites man to faith through human speech (IX. 17).

⁹² *Ibid.*, I. 2. For Augustine, scripture guides the mind into truth by reshaping the way man thinks, not by revealing the intention of the author. Augustine does not hold that for each statement in the Bible there is but one true interpretation that is, in the nature of the case, the meaning intended by the author. The language of scripture but suggests sacred mysteries; it does not reveal the mysteries themselves. Thus, apart from passages of scripture that mention what is peculiar to God, the signs used in the bible are open to several interpretations. The “regime of symbols administered by the angelic sovereignties and authorities and powers” comes to an end only with the direct contemplation of the Trinity (*Ibid.*, I. 16.). In other words, while Augustine might hold that there is exactly one true and complete description of God and the universe, this description is only possible in eternity when the believer is given a “God’s-eye view” of the universe. Scripture gives us but a share in this knowledge, and in doing so, aims to enable the mind to rise up further. It does not give us a one-to-one correspondence of signs and external realities.

⁹³ *Confessions.*, XII. xxv. 34.

Of course, this is not to say that Moses did not reveal truths when he wrote these words. Augustine continues: “whether it was one of these propositions or some other . . . which that great man had in mind when he uttered these words, I do not doubt that what he saw was true and that his articulation of it in words was appropriate.” Nevertheless, Augustine asserts that in the mind’s search for truth, the discovery of the intention of the author only belongs to belief: “If Moses himself had appeared to us and said ‘This is my meaning’, even so we would not see it but believe it.”⁹⁴ Thus, even if the author’s intended meaning is known, the truth of that meaning is only understood – as opposed to being believed – when it is seen in the immutable light that is higher than the human mind.⁹⁵ It is the understanding of these truths that Augustine has in mind when he refers to the place of God’s “hidden inspirations and reminders.” As such, they remain distinct from, yet inextricably linked to, God’s own “manifest utterances” in scripture.

This brings us to our second point, which is to emphasize the fact that the discovery of these truths is not instantaneous, but takes place over time. Furthermore, their (eventual) discovery is owed to the power and initiative of God, not to the strength of man. This point can be seen when we ask why Augustine relates the dawning discovery of these truths to God’s *hidden* inspirations and reminders. Of course, one

⁹⁴ Ibid., XII. xxv. 35.

⁹⁵ Ibid., XII. xxv. 34. Once again, this is not to say that Augustine does not hold Moses’ meaning to be true until it is seen in God’s immutable light. Rather, because of his trust in the truthfulness of scripture, if Augustine were to discover the intended meaning of Moses, he would be certain that that meaning is true even though he does not perceive that truth himself. This is precisely what is going on with Augustine’s belief in the truth of the church’s trinitarian identification of God. Augustine believes scripture to be true, and as such, believes its identification of God to be veridical. Nevertheless, that truth is not certain in the same way that Augustine’s belief that God is immutable is certain. The latter he has seen to be true, the former he believes to be true. Yet, as we have seen, anticipating that scripture will purify his mind of falsehoods and limited conceptions of God – thereby enabling it to rise to the sight of God in eternity –

obvious answer is that Augustine is simply noting that these truths are discovered in the incorporeal realm of truth to which the mind is subjoined.⁹⁶ While this is no doubt true, this cannot be what Augustine has in mind for the simple reason that he understands the realm of truth to be the most public of domains. In Book XII of *Confessions* Augustine writes the following:

Lord, ‘your judgments are to be feared’ (Ps 118:120); for your truth does not belong to me nor to anyone else, but to us all whom you call to share it as a public possession. With terrifying words you warn against regarding it as a private possession, or we may lose it (Matt 25:14-10). Anyone who claims for his own property what you offer for all to enjoy, and wishes to have exclusive rights to what belongs to everyone, is driven from the common truth to his own private ideas, that is from the truth to a lie. For ‘he who speaks a lie’ speaks ‘from his own’ (John 8:44).⁹⁷

As we saw in Book VII of *Confessions*, Augustine recognizes that we frequently maintain beliefs in the face of considerable contradictory evidence. Augustine himself confessed God to be immutable in the face of his dawning awareness that the problem of the origin of evil made that confession seemingly untenable. In the end, Augustine came to attribute this confession to God’s sustaining and inspiring presence. Accordingly, I suggest that by “hidden” Augustine has in mind the fact that the discoveries made by the rational mind in the immutable light of truth are, at bottom, the product of God’s unseen prompting of the soul. Stated otherwise, we might say that Augustine believes that the truths the mind is preserved in, as well as those it discovers, are the product of God’s hidden – as opposed to his manifest – utterances. In Book VII of *De Trinitate* Augustine

Augustine allows scripture’s identification of God to shape his understanding of immutability, rather than allowing his understanding of immutability to reshape the language of scripture.

⁹⁶ On the mind being subjoined to the realm of intelligible ideas, see *De Trinitate* XII. 25. We will discuss Augustine’s understanding of the mind’s relationship to the realm of truth in detail in Chapter Two.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, XII. xxv. 34.

inquires why scripture frequently attributes wisdom to the Son. In articulating his answer Augustine writes the following: “For the Father utters her [wisdom] to be his Word, not like a word spoken aloud from the mouth, or even thought of before it is pronounced – such a word is completed in a space of time, but this other Word is eternal; and she by enlightening us utters to us whatever needs to be uttered to men about herself and the Father.”⁹⁸ Here we see that Augustine trusts that God will enlighten his mind through the hidden utterances of the Word concerning God’s immutable nature.⁹⁹ Thus, these utterances – God’s “hidden inspirations and reminders” – not only preserve Augustine in the truths he is sure of, but also provoke him to exercise his reason, in conjunction with

⁹⁸ *De Trinitate* VII. 4.

⁹⁹ As we have already seen in part with the Prologue, the relationship between memory, reason, scripture, and the action of God is, for Augustine, a much more complicated and nuanced relationship than I am making it out to be here. Nevertheless, the point being made is simply that when Augustine asserts that he is relying on God’s “hidden manifestations and utterances” to guide him into truth, he is fundamentally attributing the discovery of truth, and his perseverance in it, to the action of God. More specifically, however, it needs to be pointed out that when Augustine writes that he trusts in God’s hidden reminders to lead him into truth, this is not to be read simply as Augustine’s expectation that God will instruct him in the same manner in which Socrates instructed Meno in geometrical truths. Augustine disavows this understanding of the mind’s memory of God in Book XII of *De Trinitate*. Rather, when Augustine speaks of God’s hidden reminders, we must keep in mind that for Augustine, memory does not only involve the recollection of things past, but also the memory of things present. Thus, when Augustine asserts that the mind remembers itself, he does not simply mean that the mind remembers its past actions, but that it is always present to itself through its memory of itself in the present. In Book XIV Augustine writes:

When Virgil said that Ulysses did not forget himself, what can he have meant us to understand but that he remembered himself? As he was present to himself, he could not at all have remembered himself unless memory also belonged to things present. As regards things past one means by memory that which makes it possible for them to be recalled and thought over again; so as regards something present, which is what the mind is to itself, one may talk without absurdity of memory as that by which the mind is available to itself, ready to be understood by its thought about itself, and for both to be conjoined by its love of itself. (*Ibid.*, XIV. 14)

Similarly, when Augustine makes mention of God uttering himself to us through hidden inspirations and reminders, Augustine understands God to be exhorting the mind of man to direct its attention to God’s surrounding presence – the mind is not being reminded because God belongs to its past experience, and as such, can be recalled in thought. Rather, God is always present to it. Augustine writes: “He always is; it is not the case that he was and is not, or is and was not, but just as he never will not be, so he never was not. And he 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” (*Ibid.*, XIV 21). Thus, when by hidden utterances God inspires and reminds man, 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” (*Ibid.*, XIV 21).

scripture, to discover God's eternal nature. Thus, at the behest of both his manifest and hidden utterances, God preserves and introduces man into the truth.¹⁰⁰

The third tool Augustine mentions is “discussions with the brethren.” Here it is necessary to note that Augustine neither is referring to discussions with friends, nor to the particular church in which he happens to be located. Rather, Augustine's reference to “discussions with the brethren” is understood in its fullest sense when it is read as referring to the church as both a spatial and a temporal entity. In his request that God both preserve him in the truths that he is sure of and lead him into truth where he is otherwise minded, Augustine understands the church to be the place where God reveals his truth.¹⁰¹ Accordingly, not only must Augustine engage in conversations with brethren near to himself, he must also engage in “conversations” with commentators and expositors whose study of the divine books has preceded his own. In this engagement with the church's tradition of teaching, Augustine's confidence that he will be both preserved and led into truth is predicated upon his belief that a “wholesome regimen is

¹⁰⁰ In Book XIII of *De Trinitate* we find another passage that closely parallels the above quotation from Book VII. Augustine, having established that knowledge belongs to the rational cognizance of temporal things, and wisdom to the contemplation of eternal things, writes the following: “Our knowledge therefore is Christ, and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with the truth about eternal things” (Ibid., XII.24.) According to Augustine, Christ plants faith in us by taking on human form and performing deeds in time that we believe, and by teaching us through his words recorded in scripture. It is through these means that Jesus Christ's eternal nature is revealed, thus preparing the believer for the sight of him in eternity. When we read in John's Gospel, “I came forth from the Father and have come into this world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father” (16:26). Augustine holds that Christ is teaching that he can only be fully understood in his equality with the Father (Ibid., I.1). Here again, though, we see that for Augustine, one cannot separate the true beliefs that one holds in virtue of trusting in the language of scripture from the action of God in planting that faith in us. Faith is not simply read off the pages of scripture – our belief in its truth must be sown in us by God. Furthermore, Christ is providentially present in every stage of one's movement from belief to sight as he prods the believer into truth through both his manifest and hidden utterances.

¹⁰¹ It is in the Catholic Church that the means necessary for man's salvation are commended; where these means are Jesus Christ and scripture, through which the church believes that God reveals his eternal nature. See *Confessions* VII. vii. 11.

provided for the faithful in holy Church, whereby the due observance of piety makes the ailing mind well for the perception of unchanging truth, and saves it from being plunged into opinions of a noisome falsehood by the random whims of temerity.”¹⁰² Thus, Augustine holds that there can be no successful search for the truth outside of the church since it is in this entity, enlivened and established by God, that a regimen is provided to curb the disease of pride that infects man’s search for God.¹⁰³ Accordingly, Augustine trusts that he will find in the church those brethren, both past and present, who along with him, piously confess and long to know the immutable God. Furthermore, Augustine can be confident that the beliefs that he encounters in these discussions approach God’s eternal truth insofar as he trusts that God was at work in these individuals, leading them into the truth by both his manifest utterances as well as his hidden inspirations and reminders.

Of course, in his engagement with God’s manifest utterances as well as in his conversations with the brethren, Augustine’s search for the knowledge of God is always already shaped by the church’s tradition of teaching. Augustine is not, in Book I, discovering scripture’s trinitarian identification of God, but rather defending and re-articulating the testimonies of previous commentators. As noted above, this willingness to believe these commentators, insofar as they do not express beliefs that directly contradict reason, arises from Augustine’s belief that in the church a regimen is provided for the purification of the faithful. Thus, in order for an individual to be shaped by the

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, I. 4.

¹⁰³ This is not to suggest that the Church, for Augustine, is truth in the way that Jesus Christ is the truth. For Augustine, Jesus Christ is divine truth itself. Conversely, the church, Augustine would be quick to

church's tradition of teaching, that individual must first become attracted to the church. As Augustine indicates in Book I of *De Trinitate*,¹⁰⁴ this is the product of the individual recognizing the limits of his own understanding, as well as the individual, thus humbled, becoming attracted to the actions that the church confesses Jesus Christ performed in time for the salvation of man.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, dedicated to the church through faith in, and love for, the God identified in scripture and worshiped therein, successive brethren have trusted in the regimen provided by the church to guide their search for the knowledge of God.

We can now return to Augustine's defense and analysis of the faith of the church. Having established that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are inseparable and work inseparably, Augustine turns to analyze 1 Corinthians 15: 24-28. In this analysis, covering several topics and several pages, Augustine spends considerable effort demonstrating that since the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are inseparable, scripture sometimes speaks as if one member of the Trinity would suffice for our bliss in eternity. Thus, while the apostle writes that the end will come "when he [Jesus Christ] hands over the kingdom to God and the Father (1 Cor 15:24)," the Son is not excluded from the contemplation of God that is the reward of the faithful.¹⁰⁶ Rather, since Jesus declares that "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30), Augustine writes that "it makes no difference whether sometimes the Father alone or sometimes the Son alone is mentioned

point out, remains mutable and plagued by sin – its sickly gaze all too frequently departs from the incarnate truth of the person of Jesus Christ.

¹⁰⁴ This is also something Augustine knows on the basis of his own experience.

¹⁰⁵ See *De Trinitate* I. 4 and IV. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Again, Augustine understands this verse to refer to the bringing of believers to the direct contemplation of God and the Father by the mediator Jesus Christ. See *De Trinitate* Book I. 16.

as the one who is to fill us with delight at his countenance”¹⁰⁷ because neither can be shown without the other.

Similarly, scripture also speaks as if the Holy Spirit suffices by himself. In doing so, scripture’s speech about God remains consistent with its broader testimony concerning the identity of the Creator for the very reason that the Holy Spirit “cannot be separated from the Father and the Son – just as the Father suffices by himself because he cannot be separated from the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the Son suffices by himself because he cannot be separated from the Father and the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, when we read in John 14:22 that the Father and the Son come to take up their abode in the believer, the Holy Spirit is not to be excluded from this abode. The suggestion that he is excluded is confuted, according to Augustine, by John 14:17 which asserts that the believer knows the Holy Spirit because “he abides with you and is in you.” Moreover, Augustine also rejects the suggestion that the Holy Spirit withdraws when the Father and Son arrive by reference to Christ’s words in John 14:16: “And I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to be with you for ever and ever.” Augustine concludes with the following:

He [the Holy Spirit] will not therefore withdraw when the Father and the Son arrive, but will be with them in the same abode for ever; for as a matter of fact, neither does he come without them nor they without him. It is to make us aware of the trinity that some things are even said about the persons singly by name; however they must not be understood in the sense of excluding the other persons, because this same three is also one, and there is one substance and godhead of Father and Son and Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., I. 17.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., I. 18.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., I. 19. According to Augustine’s understanding of scripture, the Father is Father only in relationship to the Son and Holy Spirit, the Son is Son only in relationship to the Father and Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is Holy Spirit only in relationship to the Father and the Son. The persons of the trinity

Thus we see that Augustine holds that in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son are also present in the lives of the faithful. Moreover, it is only to make us aware of the three that scripture says things about the persons singly by name. This is because it is impossible for one of the persons of the trinity to be present apart from the other two. Thus, while it remains the case that it is in the Holy Spirit that the Father and Son is present, the believer is not able to determine on the basis of his own experience which person of the Trinity has been sent in virtue of which the whole triad is present.¹¹⁰ This can only be believed on the basis of the testimony of scripture.

However, if we recall the statement of faith with which we opened this chapter, it now appears that the claims that comprise it are inconsistent. The reason for this apparent incongruity is that, on account of the testimony of scripture, the church holds that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are inseparable. As such, no one member of the Trinity can be shown in eternity without the other two. However, the church also holds, on the basis of the testimony of scripture, that only the Son became incarnate and only the Holy Spirit was sent at Pentecost – the Trinity was not born of the virgin Mary, nor

are not independent, separable entities – no one member can be shown in his eternal form without the others.

¹¹⁰ Of course, the vision of God is the experiential understanding par excellence. However, suffering from the disorder of its loves, humankind is unable to become united with God such that it is able to comprehend both the unity and distinctiveness of the persons of the Trinity. This unification, while made possible in the temporal missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, is only completed in eternity. In this regard, it is important to emphasize that for Augustine, knowledge of the Trinity is not fundamentally grounded in the transformation that one experiences in the Holy Spirit. By this I mean that knowledge of the Trinity is not to be equated with the experiences of love that one might have in the Holy Spirit. Rather, while the Holy Spirit prods and prompts the believer in love, these promptings have as their end the knowledge of God that is manifest in the eternal contemplation of the divine – the promptings themselves are not constitutive of the knowledge of the Trinity. Thus, for Augustine, the Holy Spirit is not the supreme agent of the “Schleiermacherian” thesis that knowledge of divine things is grounded in the stirrings of religious self-consciousness. The Trinity can only be known when it is seen in itself, not through the effects it works

did the Trinity descend from heaven in divided tongues of fire. Finally, the church maintains that in the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Father and the Son are also present since “neither does he come without them nor they without him.”¹¹¹ The first and second claims appear to be straightforwardly inconsistent,¹¹² while the third claim appears to be simply unintelligible.¹¹³

The apparent incongruity of these statements is not an idle problem. Augustine must be able to make all three claims in order for the church’s tradition of understanding to be preserved.¹¹⁴ Thus, the specter of inconsistency strikes to the heart of the church’s

inseparably in the Holy Spirit on the human soul. Consequently, it is only on the basis of scripture that we are made aware of the persons of the Trinity.

¹¹¹ Ibid., I.20

¹¹² This apparent inconsistency will be analyzed below. On the face of it, however, one might simply say that to hold that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are consubstantial *is* to hold that no one member alone can be sent. This is not a problem Augustine obviates with his third claim, but instead occludes – it is a poor attempt to try to hold both claims without candidly admitting the inconsistency.

¹¹³ More explicitly, this third claim gives rise to the question of what is different about the presence of the Father and the Son in the sending of the Holy Spirit that is different from their presence in eternity such that the Trinity itself cannot be said to be sent.

¹¹⁴ This can be seen when we examine the three claims in greater detail. Again, the three claims Augustine is making are the following:

- a) In eternity, the individual who has been brought from faith to sight will see in the Father both the Son and the Holy Spirit since the Father cannot be separated from the Son and the Holy Spirit. Being of one and the same substance, the sight of any one member of the Trinity suffices for our eternal joy just because each person cannot be separated from the other two. In short, to see the Father *is* to see the Son and Holy Spirit.
- b) However, it was not the Trinity that was born Jesus of Nazareth, was crucified and rose on the third day, but the Son alone. Likewise, it was not the Trinity that was poured out on the day of Pentecost after the Son’s ascension, but the Holy Spirit alone. It is through their temporal missions, testified to in scripture, that the Trinity is revealed.
- c) Yet, in the Holy Spirit’s taking up abode in the hearts of believers, the Father and Son are also present. As Augustine will say in Book XV, through the Holy Spirit charity is poured out in our hearts. “and through it the whole triad dwells in us” (Ibid., XV. 15).

One will note that while there is ample scriptural support for claims “a” and “b,” there is scarce direct scriptural evidence for “c.” However, for Augustine, “c” is a necessary assertion insofar as it is the logical outcome of scripture’s testimony to the truth of “a” and “b.” In this way scripture necessitates the claim made in “c.” Stated otherwise, to deny “c” would be to deny directly “a” – the consubstantiality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – since the possibility of “c” depends on the truth of “a.” And this would be nothing less than to deny the claims made by Jesus of Nazareth regarding his relationship with the Father and the purpose of his death and resurrection. Thus, we can see that Augustine’s understanding and analysis of the truths presented in scripture moves from “b” to “a” to “c.” Consequently, if these three

“unshakable trust in the holy scriptures as the truest of witnesses.”¹¹⁵ Accordingly, we find Augustine, at the close of his work, earnestly praying for understanding concerning the faith of the church:

O Lord our God, we believe in you, Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Truth would not have said, *Go and baptize the nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* (Mt 28:19), unless you were a triad. Nor would you have commanded us to be baptized, Lord God, in the name of any who is not Lord God. Nor would it have been said with divine authority, *Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one God* (Dt 6:4), unless while being a triad you were still one Lord God. And if you, God and Father, were yourself also the Son your Word Jesus Christ, were yourself also your gift the Holy Spirit, we would not read in the documents of truth *God sent his Son* (Gal 4:4), nor would you, only-begotten one, have said of the Holy Spirit, *whom the Father will send in my name* (Jn 14:26), and, *whom I will send you from the Father*.¹¹⁶ (Jn 15:26). Directing my attention toward this rule of faith as best I could, as far as you enabled me to, I have sought you and desired to see intellectually what I have believed, and I have argued much and toiled much.¹¹⁷

If the church’s understanding of scripture’s testimony to the consubstantiality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is inconsistent, Augustine suggests that the church is left only to confess that the Father “were yourself also the Son your Word Jesus Christ, were yourself also your gift the Holy Spirit.” However, Augustine does not countenance the possibility that the claims the church makes in faith are inconsistent. His concern is to articulate these claims as best as possible, confident that the God whom he confesses will providentially support him in this task. It is to Books V-VII of *De Trinitate* that we will now turn in order to examine Augustine’s efforts to articulate coherently all three of these

claims prove to be inconsistent, Augustine’s trust in the language of scripture to identify God and instruct the mind in the knowledge of him will have been shown to be misplaced.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., XV. 49

¹¹⁶ For Augustine, these two texts are the primary scriptural proofs that the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from both the Father and the Son.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., XV 51.

claims.¹¹⁸ In so doing we will see that Augustine establishes their conceptual possibility as well as their confessional necessity.

Augustine's primary concern in Book V is to respond to a challenge posed by the Arians. The Arians correctly noted that since God is immutable, it follows that nothing can be predicated of God by way of modification. God does not gain or lose wisdom, goodness, or greatness. Accordingly, the Arians argued that everything that is predicated of God is predicated by way of substance. Thus, when we read that God is great, we are to understand that God is "great with his great self because he is his own greatness."¹¹⁹ On the basis of this principle, the Arians presented the following argument: "Whatever is said or understood about God is said substance-wise, not modification-wise. Therefore the Father is unbegotten substance-wise, and the Son is begotten substance-wise. But being unbegotten is different from being begotten; therefore the Father's substance is different from the Son's."¹²⁰

Augustine's reply to this argument is to assert that while nothing is said of God modification-wise, it does not follow that everything is said of him substance-wise.¹²¹ Some things are said with reference to something else – namely Father is said with reference to Son and Son with reference to Father.¹²² Augustine writes: "Therefore, although being Father is different from being Son, there is no difference of substance,

¹¹⁸ Again, firstly, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit "in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity," and as such are work inseparably in everything. Secondly, that only the Son was born Jesus of Nazareth and that only the Holy Spirit was sent at Pentecost. Thirdly, that in the Holy Spirit's taking up abode in the heart of believers the Father and the Son are also present.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, V. 5. In short, God is his own greatness, just as God is the author of his own life.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, V. 4.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, V. 6.

because they are not called these things substance-wise but relationship-wise; and yet this relationship is not a modification, because it is not changeable.”¹²³ With this understanding, Augustine articulates the rule that whatever the divine substance is called with reference to itself is said substance-wise. Whatever it is called with reference to another is said relationship-wise.¹²⁴ Accordingly, when read that the Father is good, the Son is good, and the Holy Spirit is good, we understand that what is said individually about each of them adds up to a singular and not a plural – the Trinity is good, not three goods. This is on account of what Augustine calls the “force of the expression ‘of the same substance.’”¹²⁵ Augustine concludes by asserting, “So whatever God is called with reference to self is both said three times over about each of the persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and at the same time is said in the singular and not in the plural about the trinity.”¹²⁶

However, this analysis is problematic. This is brought out by Augustine himself in his analysis of the text, “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor

¹²² Ibid., V. 6. We might say that “Father” only has meaning in reference to another – in particular, in reference to a Son. “Good,” conversely, has meaning apart from reference to another. It is said of a thing itself. It is not declarative of a relationship.

¹²³ Ibid., V. 6.

¹²⁴ Ibid., V. 9. Again, we might say that words that have meaning apart from reference to another are said substance-wise. Words that are meaningful only in reference to another are said relationship-wise.

¹²⁵ Ibid., V. 9. Thus, Augustine holds that “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” are said relationship-wise, and also that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can individually, with reference to self, be called good, wise, great, etc. However, since the godhead is nothing other than the consubstantial relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we do not have three predicates attributed to three separate substances that can be added together. Just as they do not add up to three Gods, so too there are not three goods. Running this analysis of our speech concerning the Trinity from a focus on their unity rather than on their distinctiveness, we understand that the Trinity is called good, great, and wise in reference to itself and thus is called these things substance-wise. However, the Trinity is nothing other than Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, in the absolute simplicity of the divine substance – the godhead is not three separate substances mixed together to form a complex single substance – the Father individually can be called good, as can the Son and the Holy Spirit.

¹²⁶ Ibid., V. 9.

1:24). The problem raised by this text is “whether we can predicate of each person in the trinity by himself, and not just together with the other two, such names as God and great and wise and true and omnipotent and just and anything else that can be said of God with reference to self as distinct from relationship; or whether these names can only be predicated when the trinity or triad is meant.”¹²⁷ In short, the question Augustine is asking is whether the Father is his own wisdom, or instead, is wise in the same way that he is Father – by uttering his Word the Son.¹²⁸ If the latter is the case, “power and wisdom and Word are all the same, and all said by way of relationship, like Son and image, so that the Father is not powerful or wise taken singly, but only taken together with that power and wisdom which he has begotten, just as he is not uttering taken singly but only with the Word . . .”¹²⁹

This problem is the same as the “second claim” that we outlined above, namely, that only the Son became incarnate and only the Holy Spirit was sent at Pentecost – the Trinity was not born of the virgin Mary, nor did the Trinity descend from heaven in divided tongues of fire. The only difference is that in Book I this problem arises in the context of discussing the actions of God in the economy of salvation, whereas here in Book VII the problem arises in the context of Augustine’s analysis of how we are to talk about God as he is in himself, apart from reference to salvation history. The correspondence of these claims becomes clear when we consider more closely the assertion “the Father is wise.” According to this assertion, the Father taken singly is

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, VII. 1.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, VII. 1.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, VII. 1.

wise. However, divine wisdom – wisdom itself – is nothing other than the consubstantial relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is because God’s wisdom is the same as his being. Accordingly, it seems to be the case that wisdom can only be predicated when the trinity is meant – no one member of the trinity “taken singly” is wise just because wisdom is the consubstantial relationship of the three. Therefore, the Father “taken singly” can no more be his own wisdom than he can be the Father without the Son – both assertions depend for their possibility on the Father’s generation of the Word. These same difficulties attend the assertion “the Holy Spirit is wise.” Moreover, just as the Holy Spirit can no more be his own wisdom than he can be Holy Spirit apart from the Father and Son, so too he cannot be sent alone at Pentecost and still be the Holy Spirit. Thus we can see that the assertion “the Father is wise” is logically equivalent to the claim that the Holy Spirit alone was sent at Pentecost. Both assertions depend for their possibility on our ability to assert coherently that the Father and the Holy Spirit can be and do singly what only exists, and can be done, inseparably.¹³⁰

The outcome of these conclusions is not that the church now has to confess that the Trinity was born of a virgin and was sent at Pentecost. Rather, since the mission and message of Jesus Christ, according to Augustine, essentially reveals the Son of man to be distinct and yet inseparable from God the Father, the church can no longer confess the

¹³⁰ More explicitly stated, the Holy Spirit is sent alone to take up his abode in believers when to be the Holy Spirit is to be in inseparable co-substantiality with the Father and the Son. The Father is wise when wisdom is the indivisible co-substantiality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Again, Augustine’s third claim – that when the Holy Spirit is sent alone to take up his abode the Father and Son are also present – does not appear to be a solution to this problem as much as it is an attempt to maintain both claims in the face of their inconsistency. One might say that it expresses their unintelligibility rather than resolves it.

Trinity at all.¹³¹ This is because the church confesses that the Trinity is nothing other than the inseparable equality of three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If the church cannot hold that the Son and the Holy Spirit are both distinct from the Father and each other in such a way as to be sent, it follows that the godhead is not a trinity but a monad.¹³² Thus, at the most, the church is left only to confess that the “Father” sent

¹³¹ Naturally, the church can neither hold that salvation lies in knowing the Trinity. As we have noted, salvation, according to Augustine, consists in the knowledge of God – the mind’s loving embrace of the Creator can only take place when it no longer fabricates false notions out of its inordinate self-love. To this end, the incarnation of the Son is indispensable for man’s salvation, since in making himself visible to the world, the Son reveals that he is begotten of, and of the same substance as, the Father. Thus, it is by believing that Jesus Christ is born from the Father that we, having been humbled in the recognition of God’s sacrifice for our sins, are purified by Christ in the church through the study of his word. In short, Augustine holds that Jesus Christ is able to mediate between God and man because he is from the Father, and it is in his sending into the world that this eternal relationship is revealed in such a way that we might turn from our sin and know eternal truth in him. Accordingly, when Augustine in Book IV of *De Trinitate* asks what is the purpose and meaning of the Son’s mission in the New Testament, he answers that it is to reveal the eternal procession of the Son from the Father. Augustine writes: “And just as being born means for the Son his being from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to be from him” (Ibid., IV. 29). Likewise for the Holy Spirit: “And just as for the Holy Spirit his being the gift of God means his proceeding from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to proceed from him” (Ibid., IV. 29). Thus, we can see that for Augustine, the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit, sent from him who himself cannot be sent – since the Father proceeds from no one – reveal the persons of the Trinity to be both distinct and equal in the inseparable unity of the divine substance

¹³² If the church cannot confess that the Son, as distinct from the Father, was sent into the world of a virgin, and that the Holy Spirit, as distinct from the Father and the Son, was sent at Pentecost, it follows that the names “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” can only be understood as metaphors. As stated above, for the Son and the Holy Spirit to have been sent is for them to be distinct from the Father and each other in such a way as to be “sendable” divine agents; if there is no distinction in the godhead, there can be nothing distinct to send. Thus, Augustine must find a way to assert that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are of one and the same substance and yet distinct. As we will see below, and as Augustine asserts in the statement of faith above, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct from each other by way of relationship. It is just because the Father has begotten the Son that he who is the Father is not the Son. Likewise, just because the Son is begotten by the Father, he who is the Son is not the Father. Similarly, just because the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son he who is the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son. In short, scripture’s testimony to the Father’s begetting of the Son, and the Holy Spirit’s procession from both the Son and the Father, is testimony to the indelible distinctiveness of the persons of the Trinity. Only if one is willing to deny scripture’s testimony to the Father’s begetting of a Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit can one hold that the godhead is a monad

Again, as Augustine argues above in our discussion of Book V, the faith of the church is that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God and yet there are not three gods but one God. Similarly, the Son and the Holy Spirit alone are sent, yet each is fully divine – in the incarnation of the Word and in the sending of the Holy Spirit, God in his fullness is present. The problem presented by Augustine in his analysis of the assertion “the Father is wise (God),” is that the church can only confess that the “Trinity” is God, but not that the Father taken singly is God, nor the Son and Holy Spirit. Correspondingly, there can be no Son and Holy Spirit to be sent since neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit,

himself into the world of a virgin and came down at Pentecost. Consequently, “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” become three different metaphors for an undifferentiated godhead – they do not signal what is irreducibly proper to the Creator.¹³³ Accordingly, we can see that with Augustine’s analysis of the assertion “the Father is wise,” the entire faith of the church is at stake.

Augustine’s solution to this problem is simple. He notes that because God’s being is the same as his wisdom, if we assert that the Father is not wise taken singly, it follows that the Father is not God taken singly, but only with the Son he has begotten. Thus we are forced to say that the Father is the Father of his own being,¹³⁴ and that the Son, likewise, is only called being in relationship to the Father.¹³⁵ This assertion, Augustine writes, leads us into absurdity:

So we are left with the position that the Son is called being by way of relationship, with reference to the Father. And this leads us to the most unexpected conclusion, that being is not being, or at least that when you say being you point not to being but to relationship; just as when you say master, you point not to a being but to a relationship, which refers to slave; but when you say man, or anything similar that has reference to self and not to another, then you point to a being. . . . But in the case we are considering, if being is predicated by way of relationship, then being is not being.¹³⁶

in failing to be their own wisdom, are “sendable” divine agents. In short, the Trinity is no longer the consubstantial equality of three distinct but inseparable persons. Rather, the “Trinity” is a monad to which the church ascribes three figures of speech to describe its activity.

¹³³ This is exactly what Augustine expresses in the prayer quoted above.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, VII. 2. Augustine, surprisingly, does not here point out that to say that God is the Father of his own being is to say that God begets himself. However, a few paragraphs later Augustine writes: “Therefore, if the cause of his being wise is the wisdom he has begotten, this will also be the cause of his being at all. And it can only be this by begetting him or making him. But no one has ever dreamt of saying that wisdom is the begetter or maker of the Father. Could you have a crazier notion?” (*Ibid.*, VII. 2).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, VII. 2.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, VII. 2. In the words of Edmund Hill, Augustine shows that “if you reduce words like ‘wisdom’ and ‘goodness’ to relationship status, you are compelled in fact to reduce ‘God’ to relationship status too; worst still ‘substance’ or ‘being’ will become relationship words, which is the height of absurdity” (*De Trinitate* 187).

Therefore, having established that being must be predicated by way of substance and not by way of relationship, Augustine is able to establish the proper way to understand the assertion “the Father is wise.” To assert “the Father is wise” is not to assert that the Father is wise only with the Son and the Holy Spirit that proceed from him. Rather, to assert “the Father is wise” is to assert that the Father is the source of his own wisdom, *and as such*, it belongs to the Father to eternally generate a Son. Accordingly, the Son is “born wisdom,”¹³⁷ and as such, it belongs to him to share with the Father in the giving of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the Holy Spirit is “gifted wisdom,”¹³⁸ and as such, it belongs to the Spirit to be “a kind of inexpressible communion or fellowship”¹³⁹ of Father and Son – of generating and generated wisdom. Thus, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are each their own wisdom, and together are one wisdom, with the Father as the “source and origin of all deity.” Augustine writes: “So the Father is himself wisdom, and the Son is called the wisdom of the Father in the same way as he is called the light of the Father, that is, that as we talk of light from light, and both are one light, so we must

¹³⁷ Augustine writes in Book VII: “But because wisdom is also Word, though not Word in the same way as wisdom (for Word is to be understood relationship-wise, wisdom being-wise), let us take it as being the same, when it is called Word, as if it were called ‘born wisdom,’ and as such it can also be Son and image. When we use these two words ‘born wisdom,’ the first of them, ‘born,’ can be understood as signifying Word and image and Son, and none of these names indicates being, because they state a relationship; but the second word, ‘wisdom,’ having only a self-reference (it is wise with itself), indicates being, and its being is the same as its being wise” (Ibid., VII. 3.)

¹³⁸ In Book V 12-16 Augustine analyzes the name “Holy Spirit.” This is because, unlike “Father” and “Son,” “Holy Spirit” does not seem to signify a relationship. Augustine writes that the Holy Spirit’s relationship to the Father and Son is made apparent when he is called the gift of God (Acts 8:20; John 4:10). The Holy Spirit is the gift of both the Father and the Son, “because on the one hand he *proceeds from the Father* (Jn 15:26), as the Lord says; and on the other the apostle’s words, *Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ is not one of his* (Rom 8:9), are spoken of the Holy Spirit” (Ibid., V. 12.). Thus, since scripture declares that the Holy Spirit, as the gift of God, proceeds from both the Father and the Son, it follows that “the Holy Spirit is a kind of inexpressible communion or fellowship of Father and Son” (Ibid., V. 12.).

¹³⁹ Ibid., V. 12.

understand wisdom from wisdom, and both one wisdom.”¹⁴⁰ Similarly, the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from both the Father and the Son, is also light from light, and thus wisdom from wisdom.¹⁴¹

With this analysis of the assertion “the Father is wise,” Augustine is able to preserve the faith of the church. He has shown that the church’s tradition of understanding concerning the meaning of the words and actions of the person of Jesus Christ does not lead it to hold inconsistent – and ultimately untenable – beliefs about the God it worships. Accordingly, the church is able to maintain its “unshakable trust in the holy scriptures as the truest of witnesses” and the God it identifies, confessing that only the Son and the Holy Spirit were sent, that in eternity the believer who has been brought from faith to sight will see in the Father both the Son and the Holy Spirit (since the Father cannot be separated from them), and that in the abiding of the Holy Spirit the Father and Son are present as well.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, VII. 2.

¹⁴¹ In Book IV of *De Trinitate* Augustine writes:

By saying then, *Whom I will send you from the Father* (Jn 15:26), the Lord showed that the Spirit is both the Father’s and the Son’s. Elsewhere too, when he said, *whom the Father will send*, he added, *in my name* (Jn 14:26). He did not say however, “whom the Father will send from me” as he said *whom I will send from the Father* (Jn 15:26), and thereby he indicated that the source of all godhead, or if you prefer it, of all deity, is the Father. So the Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son is traced back, on both counts, to him of whom the Son is born. (*Ibid.*, IV. 29).

Rowan Williams analysis of Augustine’s understanding of the Spirit is helpful here. Williams writes:

The Spirit is ‘common’ to Father and Son not as a quality characterizing them equally, an impersonal attribute, but as that active divine giving, not simply identical with the person of the Father, which the Father communicates to the Son to give in his turn. . . the Father, in eternally giving (divine) life to the Son, gives that life as itself a ‘giving’ agency, for there is no abstract, pre-personal or sub-personal divinity; he gives the son the capacity to give the same divine life – which, in our history, is the giver to us of the relation of gift that exists between Father and Son. “Sapientia and the Trinity: Reflections on De Trinitate” (*Collectanea Augustiniana*. Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1990) pp. 317-332.

¹⁴² Earlier we asked, with respect to this third claim, what is different about the presence of the Father and the Son in the sending of the Holy Spirit that is different from their presence in eternity such that the Trinity itself cannot be said to be sent (n. 114) Augustine’s answer to this question would be to assert

In the next chapter we will analyze the basic framework of Augustine's epistemology to show that while Augustine has found a way to state intelligibly the three claims upon which the faith of the church rests, he cannot justifiably claim that he is certain of their truth by virtue of his own epistemological requirements. All that has been shown here is that the faith of the church, rooted in believers' trust in the truthfulness of scripture, can be stated coherently – Augustine has not provided an explanation for why he is certain of the truth of these claims in spite of the fact that they do not arise from a perception of the Trinity itself. Thus, in the next chapter the problem that this thesis is engaged with will be developed fully as it will be shown that Augustine's understanding of human knowing, the product of his effort to arrive at explanations for man's thinking and loving activity, seemingly does not allow him to hold the faith of the Catholic Church to be true.

simply that the manner in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are present in eternity is different from the manner in which the Father and the Son are present in the sending of the Spirit for the reason that it was only the Holy Spirit – and not the Trinity itself – who was sent following Christ's ascension. Thus, in the sending of the Holy Spirit the triad is present, yet it remains the case that we have a different relationship to the person of the Spirit than we do to the Father or to the Son just because it is in the sending and abiding of the Holy Spirit, and not the Father or Son, that the Trinity is present. While this might seem confused, it is also important to note that given the inseparability of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Augustine cannot

Chapter Two

(Augustine's epistemology is fundamentally shaped by his conviction that the mind of man is the image of the triune God, and as such, its thinking has a real, albeit distant, affinity to God's triune nature. Moreover, not only does the mind of man image its triune Creator, its thinking is always already both ordered and constituted by the presence of the Creator to the mind. Given these considerations, it appears paradoxical to assert that Augustine's epistemology, at its most fundamental level, is "caught out" by its own standards of what it is to hold something to be true.¹⁴³ However, this is precisely the case. Augustine holds that certain knowledge is grounded in the intellectual perception of intelligible realities in the divine light. That is to say, while I might know something to be true in that I know it, at the moment, to be the case,¹⁴⁴ certain knowledge can only

but make this third claim. To do so would be to say that the Holy Spirit is a separate substance from the Father and the Son.

¹⁴³ Paradoxical because to make the claims that Augustine is making, one assumes that Augustine knows something to be true – namely, that God is a trinity – in virtue of which these trinitarian convictions are warranted.

¹⁴⁴ Augustine does not systematically differentiate between these two classes of true belief, but it is clear that he holds there to be a fundamental distinction between knowing something to be true and knowing truth itself. When I know truth itself both of these classes are united – I know truth itself, and in so doing, I know truth to be true. On the other hand, while I may know something to be true – that at the moment I am hungry, for instance – this is not to know truth itself. Truth itself, by definition, is eternal. Thus, to know truth itself *is* to be certain since what one has observed is not subject to change – and one knows it to be unchanging in so observing since immutability is its very nature. Moreover, since truth is unchanging, it follows that it is not the property of any one person or group of persons. The mind of man is mutable. Even if it were free from sin, it could not be truth itself since it is unable, by nature, to know and present all truths timelessly. In short, for man to be is not the same thing as for him to be truth. Unchanging truth is found "above" the mind of man, accessible to all. We can see these features of Augustine's epistemology in Book IX. He writes:

And a man is acting in one way when he looks at what is going on in himself and speaks to declare his mind; but in quite another when he defines the human mind in terms of specific or generic knowledge. So when he speaks to me about his own particular mind, saying whether he understands this or that or does not understand it, and whether he wishes or does not wish this or that, I believe it. When however he says something true, specifically or generically, about the human mind, I acknowledge and agree with it. Clearly then what anybody can see in himself, which someone else he tells it to can believe but not see is one thing: what he sees in truth itself.

be grounded in the apprehension of what is unchanging – truth itself. However, at no time in *De Trinitate* does Augustine claim to have an intellectual perception of God's triune nature. This vision is only available after the faithful have been brought to sight following Christ's judgment at the resurrection of the dead. Therefore, when Augustine asserts that the mind of man images its triune Creator, and that this Creator both orders and is the ground of the mind's thinking activity, these assertions do not belong to certain knowledge. Thus, we find that Augustine's epistemology, at the outset, is predicated on the instruction of faith in the church; in short, we find that Augustine's pursuit of truth is shaped and orientated by his trust in the truthfulness of scripture's witness before the correctness of that orientation has been demonstrated.¹⁴⁵

While today this observation does not cause us much alarm as foundationalist epistemologies have come into disrepute,¹⁴⁶ giving way to coherentist and cultural-

which someone else can gaze upon, is another. And one of these changes with time, while the other stands fast in unchangeable eternity. (Ibid., IX. 9).

¹⁴⁵ Less strongly, we might say that Augustine adopts this orientation without arguing for its superiority by demonstrating the shortcomings of the alternatives.

¹⁴⁶ Foundationalist epistemologies are theories of knowledge that assert that beliefs are justified in virtue of their relationship to other basic beliefs – beliefs which themselves are not held on the basis of other beliefs. In this way, the foundationalist puts a stop to what otherwise would be an infinite regress of unjustified beliefs. (One might imagine the foundationalist's fear regarding the groundlessness of belief to be akin to a chain of people linked together edging their way over a cliff, where by virtue of their weight they are initially convinced of firm anchor, yet as more descend, the entire chain is lost). The foundationalist holds that these basic beliefs are immediately justified. That is, they are self-evident, like mathematical propositions, or incorrigible, such as beliefs about one's state of mind. By being linked to these basic beliefs, non-basic beliefs can be held to be true. Foundationalist theories have come into disrepute as some have argued that the foundationalist thesis itself is not supported by reference to basic beliefs, and that basic beliefs, in order to be infallible, are too anemic to support other more complex beliefs involving the past, the future, or the unobserved. Others, more radically, have questioned whether there are immediately justified beliefs by challenging the distinction between form and content, suggesting instead that all our beliefs are always brought into contact with the whole of our experience – there is no singular belief that corresponds to a singular experience whose truth alone I can be sure of. In short, there is no such thing as data that is not always already interpreted, and thus there is no scratch from which to start in building a justificatory chain.

linguistic models of justification,¹⁴⁷ we would be mistaken if we understood Augustine to be a fifth century precursor to twentieth century epistemological “discoveries.”

Augustine’s epistemology is foundationalist, but not in the manner in which foundationalism has been understood in much modern philosophy. That is to say, while Augustine does not assert that he can demonstrate the unchanging truth of his trinitarian foundation, he is not agnostic as to its truth. Thus, we find ourselves in a peculiar position when we try to understand Augustine’s theory of knowledge. Augustine has not given up the claim to truth with respect to the most important belief upon which his epistemology rests – that God is a trinity – while that very belief fails to meet his own criteria for being justified in holding a belief concerning a spiritual reality to be true.¹⁴⁸ In a word, Augustine seemingly thumbs his nose at his own criteria for knowing truth at the very start of his effort to discover it.¹⁴⁹

The purpose of this chapter is not to resolve these difficulties. Rather, its purpose is to make Augustine’s understanding of human knowing as clear as possible. A defense

¹⁴⁷ Both of these are theories that, unlike foundationalism, have trouble (or have given up the effort as nonsensical) articulating the connection between justification and truth. Coherentist and cultural-linguistic epistemologies tend to be concerned with the question of what gives someone the right to hold a certain belief, not with whether that right also establishes the truth of that belief. In other words, coherentist and cultural-linguistic epistemologies have greater difficulty showing that coherence or rule-following increases the likelihood of truth (if in fact this remains, in their view, a relevant question to pursue).

¹⁴⁸ More specifically, his belief that God is a trinity fails to meet the criteria of truth for beliefs concerning spiritual realities. To reiterate, only in gazing on the eternal realities themselves can man claim to know truth. Here Augustine is claiming to know truth without having seen it.

¹⁴⁹ Again, these features of Augustine’s epistemology might not sound surprising or wrong-headed on the face of it. One might (correctly) reply that in any search, one must always make certain assumptions at the outset in order for the search to get underway – the “truth” of the New World could only be discovered after several explorers had acted on, and frequently demonstrated the error of, their assumptions. However, Augustine’s earnest search for truth is not akin to the educated guesses of European explorers. Rather, in Augustine’s search for truth, his belief that God is a trinity is at no point open to revision. He is certain of its truth – it is not an assumption or hypothesis. Thus we might compare Augustine to an adventurer certain of the existence of Atlantis without having seen it and without expectation of seeing it in this life.

of its coherence will be left for chapter three. To begin, this chapter will examine why Augustine holds that man is the image of its triune Creator with respect to his capacity to reason, and the criteria he believes must be met for the image of God in the rational mind to be found. Subsequent to this analysis this thesis will briefly discuss the two trinities that belong to the mind's activity concerning the perception and memory of the physical world – activities proper to what Augustine calls the “outer man.” As shall be seen, these two trinities of the mind's activity fail to meet the criteria for being image. The purpose of this analysis is to show, first, that Augustine holds that the mind of man is made receptive of physical realities, and second, that the mind's thinking activity concerning material realities is set by the limits of memory. These conclusions take on greater import as we move to analyze the three remaining trinities. As we shall see, the three remaining trinities, according to Augustine, are proper to man's thinking activity as it concerns, and is related to, the unchanging immaterial forms – activities belonging to what Augustine calls the “inner man.”

The basis for Augustine's belief that the mind of man images its creator is Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man to our image and likeness.”¹⁵⁰ Augustine insists that this verse is to be understood of the Trinity, and not the Son, the Holy Spirit, or the Father alone. He writes:

God said *Let us make man to our image and likeness* (Gn 1:26), and a little later on it adds, *And God made man to the image of God* (Gn 1:27). “Our,” being plural in number, could not be right in this place if man were made to the image of one person, whether of the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit; but because in

whose entire map of the world is shaped by its presence, and who all the while insists that certain knowledge of Atlantis is grounded only in the perception of Atlantis itself.

¹⁵⁰ Thus, Augustine begins from scripture in his characterization of the human mind as a knowing subject

fact he was made in the image of the trinity, it said *to our image*. And then in case we should suppose that we have to believe in three gods in the trinity, while this same trinity is in fact one God, it goes on to say, *And God made man to the image of God*, which amounts to saying “to his image.”¹⁵¹

However, Augustine does not believe that man, both body and soul, is the image of God, but the mind alone. “After all, the authority of the apostle as well as plain reason assures us that man was not made to the image of God as regards the shape of his body, but as regards his rational mind.”¹⁵² The scriptural support Augustine adduces for this position is Ephesians 4:23 and Colossians 3:9.

And does not the blessed apostle say, *Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, the one who was created according to God* (Eph 4:23); and even more clearly elsewhere, *Putting off the old man, he says, with his actions put on the new who is being renewed for the recognition of God according to the image of him who created him* (Col 3:9)?¹⁵³

Augustine thus concludes that if the spirits of our minds are being renewed, and if the renewal has as its end the recognition of God according to the image of its creator, “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.”¹⁵⁴ Moreover, since the soul, according to Augustine, is

¹⁵¹ Ibid., XII. 6 Earlier in Book VII, Augustine writes the following concerning Genesis 1:26: 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 Spirit should do it; do it therefore to the image of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, so that man might subsist as the image of God; and God is the three. (Ibid., VII. 12)

¹⁵² Ibid., XII. 12. At this point in Book XII, Augustine is in the midst of an extensive analysis of 1 Corinthians 11:7: “The man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God. But the woman is the glory of man.” Augustine does not introduce this verse to argue that only the minds of men are the image of God. Rather, he uses this verse to reject the interpretation of Genesis 1:26 that asserts that the basic family of man, woman, and child is the image of the Trinity.

¹⁵³ Ibid., XII. 12.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., XII. 12. As we saw in Book VII of *Confessions*, Augustine, under the tutelage of the books of the Platonists, was able to catch a glimpse of God through the rigorous exercise of his reason.

immortal, the image of God in man must be found in that portion of the rational soul that will exist immortally. “But it is intolerable to suppose that while the soul is by nature immortal and from the moment of its creation never thereafter ceases to exist, its very best attribute or possession should not last out its immortality.”¹⁵⁵ Thus, “What we have to find in the soul of man, that is in the rational or intellectual soul, is an image of the creator which is immortally engrained in the soul’s immortality.”¹⁵⁶

Based upon his belief that the image of God belongs to the rational mind, and as such, is immortally engrained in the soul’s immortality, Augustine articulates several criteria that must be fulfilled in order for the image of God to be correctly identified. First, Augustine assumes that since God is a trinity, the image of God in man will also have a trinitarian form. Secondly, the image of God in the rational mind is to be found in the mind’s thinking activity. That is, Augustine does not search for the image in the mind’s potential for activity, but in its actual thinking activity. This is because the mind is always active – it is never static or dormant. Moreover, spurred by his belief that the mind images Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Augustine asserts that when the mind of man directs its thought to what it knows, a word is begotten from this knowledge. This is the human corollary to the divine Word.¹⁵⁷ Thus, Augustine searches the spectrum of man’s

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., XIV. 4. If man is the image of God, this, naturally, is his best possession or attribute. Accordingly, it stands to reason that the image is to be found in man’s rational intellect, not in those faculties that he shares with animals. Thus, while Augustine has scriptural support (Eph 4:23 and Col 3:9) for his position that the image is found in man’s rational mind, this position also has support independent from scripture, based on Augustine’s understanding of the place of the mind in the order of creation given its ability to apprehend God itself. Later in Book XIV Augustine writes: “It is his image 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” (Ibid., XIV. 11).

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., XIV. 5.

¹⁵⁷ Edmund Hill writes:

thinking activity to determine in the formation of which words the image of God is present.¹⁵⁸ Thirdly, since the image of God is to be found in the rational mind's thinking activity, Augustine holds that the image is not to be discovered in man's thought concerning the physical world, nor in his thought concerning the skills and virtues necessary for right living in it. This is because the world, and hence the need for specific skills and virtues, will pass away. If one were to assert that the image is located in man's thought concerning the temporal world, one would be asserting that the soul's best attribute fails to last out its immortality. Fourthly, while the image of God is found in the rational mind's *thinking* activity, the image is not constituted by the presence of an external element, as if the mind contributes two members to which is added an external third. Rather, the image is constituted by some special trinity that is *sui generis*.¹⁵⁹ This is because "the human soul is never anything but rational and intellectual."¹⁶⁰ Therefore, if the image is referred to man's "capacity to use reason and understanding in order to gaze upon 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

As there is a Word of God, so there is a word of man; and it is not just the vocal word uttered in speech. This itself represents a mental word – and not, as Augustine makes quite clear, simply the word in Latin or English or whatever language you think in, the word thought before being uttered. No, behind this word-in-a-language there is a word-beyond-language which is formed in the mind when it sees something to be true. . . it is this mental word then that lies behind and is expressed by any language word that I may speak or even just think to myself without speaking (*De Trinitate* 266).

Augustine's understanding of the human word and its relationship to the mind's knowing and thinking activity will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

¹⁵⁸ Since the mind is always thinking about a variety of things – past experiences, objects surrounding it, God – Augustine must discover with which words, arising from the knowledge of certain objects, the image of God in man is formed.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, XIV. 6.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, XIV. 6.

nothing, or faint and distorted, or clear and beautiful.”¹⁶¹ However, this fourth criterion appears to contradict the second. How, we might ask, is Augustine to find the image in the rational mind’s thinking activity, while at the same time demonstrating that the image is *sui generis*.¹⁶² This brings us to the final criterion. Augustine is here faced with what are, for him, two irreducible facts. First, that the image of God is proper to the mind, and second, that the mind is always thinking. Therefore, Augustine must find an object of attention that is not adventitious to the mind such that the mind’s being image comes to it from outside. Stated otherwise, Augustine must find an object of attention that is not external to the mind, but that belongs immortally to it, in virtue of which the mind is image.

In the course of *De Trinitate* Augustine observes that there are five trinities that arise in the mind’s activity, with each successive trinity more closely approximating the image and likeness of God in man.¹⁶³ Of the five trinities that are present in the mind’s activity, two belong to what Augustine calls the “outer man,” and three to the “inner man.” The “outer man” refers to the capacities that man shares with animals, while what belongs to the “inner man” are those capacities that are peculiar to humankind.¹⁶⁴ The capacities that belong to the “outer man” are the sensation and memory of those realities

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, XIV. 6.

¹⁶² Since Augustine states that the image of God is *sui generis*, is this not, we might ask, to search for the image of God in the mind’s potential for thought rather than in its actual thinking activity.

¹⁶³ To be clear, and based on the preceding criteria, Augustine does not hold that there are always five trinities present in the thought of man, each of which lies dormant while another is being used. Rather, the mind itself is a single trinity whose trinitarian activity is determined by the objects upon which it fixes its attention. Thus, the trinities that Augustine presents in the mind’s activity are not dependent on the mind of man alone, but the worlds (both corporeal and incorporeal) in which man lives.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, XII. 1.

perceived with the body.¹⁶⁵ The first trinity Augustine detects in the activity of the “outer man” belongs to man’s perception of the physical world, while the second belongs to the mind’s recollection of the physical world through images stored in his memory. The capacities that belong to the “inner man” are those associated with the understanding and memory of immaterial realities - realities perceived by the mind itself, not through the senses of the body. With respect to the “inner man” Augustine makes a further distinction between wisdom and knowledge, provoked by the apostle’s words in 1 Corinthians 12:8: “To one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit.” According to Augustine, “wisdom is concerned with the intellectual cognizance of eternal things and knowledge with the rational cognizance of temporal things . . .”.¹⁶⁶ More specifically, knowledge is

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., XII. 1.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., XII. 25. It may appear that Augustine is here contradicting himself, for first he asserts that the inner man is endowed with understanding – the mind’s apprehension of immaterial realities – while at the same time asserting that knowledge, while proper to the inner man, is concerned with the performance of “bodily and temporal actions” (Ibid., XII. 3). However, the contradiction is apparent and not real. According to Augustine,

to compose fabricated sights by taking all sorts of things recorded from here and there and as it were sewing them together; to observe how in this kind of thing what is like truth is to be distinguished from what is actually true – in bodies I mean, not in spiritual things; all this kind of conscious activity, while it is carried on with sensible things and with what the consciousness has imbibed from them through the senses of the body, is nonetheless not without its share in reason, and so is not common to man and beast. (Ibid., XII. 2)

Thus, knowledge is separable from the activities proper to animals insofar as it is related to man’s capacity to reason, a capacity whose proper aim is the intellectual perception of truth. Without the ability of the rational intellect to access the realm of immaterial realities – truth itself – the mind in its activity would be indistinguishable from that of animals. However, since the mind of man finds itself at one and the same time in the realms of bodily and immaterial realities, knowledge belongs to the rational cognizance of temporal things and wisdom to the rational cognizance of eternal things. However, to reiterate, the knowledge of temporal things is *rational* only insofar as it is related to man’s capacity to apprehend the invisible realm of eternal ideas – that realm which is proper to man’s capacity to reason.

However, while that part of us, which is occupied with the performance of bodily and temporal actions in such a way that it is not common to us and beasts, is indeed rational, still it has so to say been led off from that rational substance of our minds by which we cling from underneath to the intelligible and unchanging truth, and deputed to the task of dealing with and controlling these lower matters. (Ibid., XII. 3)

concerned with abstaining from evil, while wisdom is concerned with the contemplation of God's eternal nature alone. Augustine writes:

To abstain from evil things . . . is without doubt a matter of temporal things, because it is in terms of time that we are in the midst of evils, which we should abstain from in order to arrive at those eternal good things. Thus anything that we do sagaciously, courageously, moderately, and justly belongs to this knowledge or discipline with which our activity sets about avoiding evil and seeking good; and so does whatever historical knowledge we gather for the sake of examples to be avoided or imitated and for the sake of the necessary information about anything at all that has been provided for our use.¹⁶⁷

Accordingly, the first trinity Augustine detects in the "inner man" belongs to knowledge, while the second trinity belongs to wisdom. The third and final trinity belonging to the "inner man" is found not in the mind's thought about temporal or eternal realities, but in its thought about itself. It is towards a brief examination of the two trinities belonging to the outer man that we will now turn.

As noted, the first trinity detectable in the mind's activity, related to the "outer man," is the trinity that is formed in the man's perception of physical objects. According to Augustine, when we perceive a body,

there are three things which we can very easily remark and distinguish from each other. First of all there is the things we see, a stone or a flame or anything else the eyes can see, which of course could exist even before it was seen. Next there is the actual sight or vision, which did not exist before we sense that object presented to the sense. Thirdly, there is what holds the eyes on the thing being seen as long as it is being seen, namely the conscious intention.¹⁶⁸

As Augustine notes, not only are all these three elements distinct from each other, but they are also of different natures. The nature of the rock is different from the form that is impressed on the sense, which is different from the nature of the conscious intention.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., XII. 22

The nature of the rock is bodily and “is separable in its nature from sight.”¹⁶⁹ The sense itself and the sight informed on the sense by the presence of the body “belongs to the nature of the living being, which is quite different from the body that we perceive by seeing; and this body does not form the sense into becoming sense but into becoming sight.”¹⁷⁰ Finally, the conscious intention differs in nature from both the visible thing and the sense, since “this intention belongs only to the consciousness. The sense of the eyes, however, is called a sense of the body precisely because the eyes too are parts of the body; and although an unconscious or lifeless body does not sense anything, yet it is through a bodily instrument that the conscious soul mixed with body senses . . .”¹⁷¹ However, unlike the remaining trinities detectable in the mind’s activity, this trinity is not related to the mind’s *thinking* activity, and as such, it cannot be considered the image of God. Furthermore, on account of its activity being concerned with external physical realities, this trinity is not co-extensive with the mind, and thus fails to meet the requirement that the image of God, the soul’s best possession, be immortally engrained in the soul.¹⁷²

The second trinity proper to the “outer man” is the trinity that arises in the mind’s recollection of objects that it has perceived through the senses. “For even when the form of the body is taken away which was perceived by the bodily senses, there remains a likeness of it in the memory, to which the will can again turn the attention to be formed

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., XI. 2.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., XI. 2.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., XI. 2.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., XI. 2.

by it from within, just as the sense was formed from without by the sensible body presented to it.”¹⁷³ Accordingly, in the mind’s thought of objects contained in the memory “one gets another trinity, out of the memory and internal sight and the will which couples them together.”¹⁷⁴ Here again, each member of the trinity is distinct, yet unlike the trinity proper to the perception of bodies, the memory and internal sight and will are of the same nature.¹⁷⁵ Yet, neither is this trinity the image of God. First, “it is produced in the soul through the senses of the body out of the lowest level of creation, which is the bodily one, and the soul itself is higher than this.”¹⁷⁶ Secondly, the image of God in man must be “immortally engrained in the soul’s immortality.” Accordingly, a trinity in the mind’s activity that is formed from its recollection and thought of mortal temporal realities cannot be considered the image of the creator. Finally, and related, for the mind itself to be the image of God, it follows that its being image cannot be constituted by the presence to it of external realities, such that its being image is a

¹⁷² The mind’s only concern in eternity will be the rational cognizance of God’s eternal nature. Since there will be no bodily – read temporal mutable realities in heaven – the trinity of physical object, sight, and conscious attention that arises in the perception of bodies will cease to exist.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, XI. 6.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, XI. 6.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, XI. 7. Augustine compares the two trinities proper to the “outer man” in the following way: As a body in place, then, is to the senses of the body, so is the likeness of a body in the memory to the conscious attention; and as the sight of one looking at something is to that look of a body that informs the sense, so is the inner sight of one thinking about something to the image of a body fixed in the memory that forms the conscious attention; and what the intention of the will is to the coupling of a body seen to the sight, so that a kind of unity of three is produced even though they are of such different natures, that the same intention of the will is to the coupling of the image of a body in the memory to the sight of the one thinking about it, which is the form grasped by the conscious attention as it goes back to the memory; and here too a unity is produced out of three, which are not now differentiated by diversity of nature but are or one and the same substance, because all this is inside and it is all one consciousness. (*Ibid.*, XI. 7).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, XI. 8

contingent feature of its existence, dependent on the unfaltering presence of outside objects.¹⁷⁷

Following his analysis of the two trinities that are proper to the “outer man, ” Augustine makes some general comments concerning the thinking activity that is proper to the second of the two, the inner trinity of memory.¹⁷⁸ Examining whether the mind returns to the stores of memory when it is told things that others, but not itself, have experienced, Augustine judges that he could not understand what he was being told if what he was hearing was entirely novel. In order to understand the reports of others concerning what they have experienced and perceived, one must at least have a “general memory” of the things of which they speak. Augustine suggests that if someone were to tell him about a mountain stripped of its natural vegetation and replanted with olive trees, he could still understand what he is being told since he remembers what olive trees and

¹⁷⁷ This is a point that has now been raised several times, and deserves clarification. To say that the mind’s being image is not constituted by the presence of external realities to it is not, for Augustine, to say that the mind of man can exist and function properly irrespective of the presence of God. The mind is not the source of its own life any more than it is the author of its own goodness. It is only to say that since the image of God in man is to be found in man’s rational nature (that is to say, that the image of God is the mind’s rational nature in an as yet undiscovered trinitarian form), its being image belongs properly to the mind itself, not in conjunction with something external to it. Using an example of Augustine’s might help clarify. The sense of vision is proper to man irrespective of whether man lacks the light and objects necessary to see. According to Augustine, sight is the product of “the visible object and the seeing subject” where the subject provides the sense of the eyes and the looking intention “but the information of the sense, which is called sight, is imprinted on it only by the body which is seen, that is by some visible thing” (Ibid., XI. 3). If the seen body is removed, “the form which was in the sense while the thing being seen was present does not remain; but the sense itself remains, as it was there even before anything was sensed by it” (Ibid., XI. 3). This is what separates the seeing from the blind. If the sense only came into existence when a visible thing presented itself, “we would be no different from blind men when we see nothing either because it is dark or because we have our eyes shut” (Ibid., XI. 2). Thus those who can see differ from the blind in that while they might not, at the moment, be seeing, they have the sense by which they can see. Likewise, humans differ from animals in that they have the capacity to see God – a capacity that remains whether the light is poor and visible realities are, as yet, unperceived. This is precisely the problem with humankind; at the moment humans fail to see God, but the sense by which they are able to see him remains.

mountains are. Without the appropriate memories, Augustine asserts that he would be unable to “think about his account of it.”¹⁷⁹ He concludes:

Thus it happens that everyone who thinks about bodily things, whether he makes them up himself or hears or reads someone else describing past events or forecasting future ones, has to have recourse to his memory and there bring to light the limits and measure of all the forms which he looks at in his thoughts. It is simply impossible for anyone to think about a color or a shape he has never seen, a sound he has never heard, a flavor he has never tasted, a smell he has never smelled, or a feel of a body he has never felt. . . . So the limits of thinking are set by the memory just as the limits of sensing are set by bodies. The senses receive the look of a thing from the body we sense, the memory receives it from the senses, and the thinking attention from the memory.¹⁸⁰

This conclusion will be repeated in Augustine’s analysis of the “inner man’s” relationship to eternal realities and the two trinities that arise from the thinking activity that is proper to the rational intellect.¹⁸¹ To conclude, we can see from our brief examination of the two trinities belonging to the outer man that according to Augustine the limits of man’s thinking about the material world are set by memory. Moreover, Augustine holds that the senses of man, like animals, are created receptive of, and attuned to, the physical world; he expresses no skepticism about the trustworthiness of our senses.

It is to a much more extensive examination of the “inner man” that we will now turn. In so doing we will first examine some of the arguments Augustine provides to show that our judgments concerning the beauty and goodness of temporal objects and

¹⁷⁸ Properly speaking, the following comments are more appropriate to the trinity of knowledge that belongs to the “inner man,” although Augustine does not seem to recognize this fact himself. Nevertheless, the point he is making still stands.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, XI. 14. Augustine writes: “I could not even begin to understand what he was telling me if I was hearing all the things he said and what they added up to for the first time, and did not have a general memory of each of them” (*Ibid.*, XI. 14).

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, XI. 14.

¹⁸¹ The significance of this conclusion, in conjunction with its corollary with respect to the “inner man,” will be discussed below.

mutable persons must be rooted in the mind's perception of eternal realities. Following this analysis, we will relate these arguments to the second impetus behind Augustine's reference to eternal realities, namely, the relationship between the mind's loving and knowing activity. Thirdly, having established the reasons for Augustine's reference to an eternal realm of truth, we will attempt to clarify tensions and show parallels between Augustine's understanding of the mind's relationship to the physical world on the one hand, and its relationship to the immaterial world on the other. Subsequent to this, we will move to an examination of what Augustine has to say about the mind itself, momentarily leaving aside an analysis of the trinities proper to knowledge and wisdom.

As noted above, Augustine contends that just as the outer man is endowed with sensation, so is the inner man with understanding.¹⁸² That is to say, the inner man is concerned with the perception of truth, as well as the exercise of reason in temporal matters, where the mind is occupied "with the performance of bodily and temporal actions" in light of its perception of and connection to "non-bodily and everlasting meanings."¹⁸³ In Book IX Augustine provides four thought-experiments to demonstrate these conclusions. We will discuss in brief only two.

Augustine notes that when he remembers an arch he has seen in Carthage, he is observing something "brought to the mind's notice through the eyes and transferred to the memory" which then "produces an observation in the imagination."¹⁸⁴ However, in

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, XI. 1.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, XII. 3. Plainly stated, here Augustine provides four thought-experiments to show that knowledge of mutable temporal goods must be grounded in the perception of a reality that itself is unchanging; only in virtue of one's awareness of this reality can one both identify the objects as good and judge their relative goodness.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, IX. 11.

his recollection of the arch, Augustine notes that not only does he remember the arch, but he also judges its beauty. From this fact of his mental activity, he concludes that there must exist something in virtue of which this judgment is made – a form accessible to his mind in the light of which the beauty of the arch is evaluated. Augustine writes: “But with the mind I observe something else, in terms of which I take pleasure in this work of art, in terms of which I would put it right if it displeased me.”¹⁸⁵ Accordingly, “our shaping the images of bodies in our consciousness or our seeing bodies through the body is one thing; quite another is our grasping by simple intelligence the proportions, the inexpressibly beautiful art of such shapes, existing above the apex of our minds.”¹⁸⁶

Augustine’s second thought experiment deals with the love that arises in him when he hears reports of a man who has “endured severe tortures in the fine constancy of his faith.”¹⁸⁷ Augustine asks from where this love is kindled in him. This question arises because he notes that if, in conversation with this man, he discovers that this man has “unworthy beliefs about God and looking for some material benefit from him . . . immediately that love which carried me out to him is brought up short and as it were repulsed and withdrawn from an unworthy man . . .”¹⁸⁸ Accordingly, Augustine concludes that the love that was kindled in him was due to his knowledge of an unchanging standard in the light of which he could judge, and thereby love, what is purported to be in the man.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, it is also on account of this same knowledge

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, IX. 11.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, IX. 11.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, XI. 11.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, XI. 11.

¹⁸⁹ The point Augustine is after is that his love for the man arises, and subsequently disperses, for reasons that are not locatable in the mind of man alone. This is because man is neither the author of his own

that Augustine is able to judge the man's shortcomings, and thereby withdraw his love when he ascertains the man's distance from the goodness that was claimed for him.

Augustine states:

But the form itself of unshaken and abiding truth, in which I would enjoy the man while I believed him to be good and in which I now counsel him to be good, continues unruffled as eternity to shed the same light of the purest incorruptible reason both on the vision of my mind and on that cloud of imagination which I perceive from above when I think of this man I had seen.¹⁹⁰

Thus we can see that according to Augustine, in order to make judgments concerning the beauty of arches and the goodness of human beings, there must exist something – a form – in the light of which these persons and objects are evaluated. Furthermore, this form, whether it is beauty or goodness, must be eternal lest it too be susceptible to judgment;¹⁹¹ and for it to be eternal is for it to be truth itself. This is because it exists truly. That is to

goodness, nor the author of his own life; man can no more will that he become unchangingly good than he can will eternal life for himself. Accordingly, someone can love a good man only insofar as he or she loves goodness itself. An evil man fails to love a good person just because, at bottom, he fails to love the eternal good in the manner that he ought. Therefore, the degree to which one loves a good man depends on one's knowledge of and participation in goodness itself. Similarly, one's love for another person depends on the degree to which this person does, or does not, know and participate in goodness itself. In short, Augustine here asserts that his love for another man is determined by the degree to which both he and the other man participate in that which is judged to be loveable in and of itself – the form of the good. Thus, Augustine shows that his love for this man neither arises nor disperses for reasons that can be accounted for by reference to the mind of man alone. Rather, Augustine finds this love generated in him the more he immerses himself in the goodness that he is incapable of authoring for himself.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., XI. 11.

¹⁹¹ According to Augustine, it would be impossible to assert that *all things* are susceptible to judgment. Only things that are temporal and transient are to be judged. Eternal realities are to be contemplated and enjoyed. If the forms themselves were susceptible to judgment this would mean that they were not unchanging; and this would ultimately mean that nothing, neither the "forms" themselves nor physical objects, could be judged since judgment demands an unchanging inviolable standard; if nothing were eternal, it would be impossible to recognize and evaluate deviations and differences. In short, for an experience to be evaluated rationally in thought, there must be a reality that exists unchangingly in virtue of which the meaning of the experience can be apprehended. Here Augustine's thought concerning man's knowledge of eternal realities, and man's knowledge of the temporal world in their light, parallels his analysis of how we are able to understand reports of events and objects we ourselves have not seen or experienced. Just as Augustine is able to understand the report of a mountain planted with olive trees because he has, in his memory, knowledge of mountains and olive trees, so too is he able to understand the

say, it truly exists – existing without change. Augustine writes: “Now in the substance of truth, since the only way it is truly, nothing is greater unless it is more truly. And where things are intelligible and unchangeable one is not truer than another, because each is equally unchangeably eternal; and what makes a thing great in his sphere is simply the fact that it truly is.”¹⁹² For this reason Augustine, whether in his discussion of the arch at Carthage, or his love for the man who endured severe tortures in faith, refers not to the form of beauty or the form of goodness, but rather to truth itself. Following the four thought experiments, Augustine concludes: “Thus it is that in that eternal truth according to which all temporal things were made we observe with the eye of the mind the form according to which we are and according to which we do anything with true and right reason, either in ourselves or in bodies.”

These two thought-experiments are intimately linked to what is perhaps the foundational problem that spurs Augustine’s reference to a realm of intelligible realities to explain man’s thinking activity. It is axiomatic for Augustine that something can only be loved if it is known: “What you are absolutely ignorant of you simply cannot love in any sense whatsoever.”¹⁹³ When he hears a report of a good man he has not met, Augustine holds that he would not find himself carried out to this man in love unless he already knew the virtues this man is said to have. Without this antecedent knowledge, Augustine would be unable to love what he has heard since the report would be entirely

beauty of an arch, and the goodness of faith, because he already has knowledge of beauty and goodness itself.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, VIII. 2.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, X. 1.

novel – it would be outside his understanding, and thus completely unknown, since it fails to refer to anything in the light of which its meaning can be apprehended.¹⁹⁴

This connection between knowing and loving is explored in detail in Book X, where Augustine focuses his attention on the problem of “what sort of love it is that the studios have, that is people who do not yet know but still desire to know some branch of learning.”¹⁹⁵ In particular, Augustine centers his exploration on the question of how someone can seek to know the meaning of a word that is completely unknown. As an example, Augustine suggests “metheglin.” Since a man who “earnestly, enthusiastically, and persistently”¹⁹⁶ seeks to know the meaning of this unknown word cannot be said to be without love, Augustine must find what it is that he knows.¹⁹⁷ He answers that this man must know “how beautiful the discipline is that contains knowledge of all signs.”¹⁹⁸ This, according to Augustine, “is the lovely and useful form which the soul discerns and knows and loves, and anyone who inquires about the meaning of any words he does not know is studiously trying to perfect it in himself as far as he can”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ See *De Trinitate* X. 1.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, X. 1. The studios individual is a problem for Augustine because here we have an individual who seemingly loves what is completely unknown, contrary to Augustine’s assertion that this is impossible. Augustine cannot deny that the studios individual loves what he seeks to know. The man’s persistence and enthusiasm makes this route impossible. Nor can Augustine assert that this man loves only that bit of knowledge that spurred him to know, since the man is not pursuing what he knows, but what he does not know. Therefore, Augustine must find something that the studios individual knows that is neither what he is searching to know, nor what he knows already; for instance, that it is a sign “and that it means something and is not just this vocal noise” (*Ibid.*, X. 2).

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, X. 2.

¹⁹⁷ “The object of our inquiry is what it is that he loves in that which he is studios to know. Clearly he does not know it yet, and so we are wondering why he loves it, since we know for certain that things cannot be loved unless they are known” (*Ibid.*, X. 2).

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, X. 2.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, X. 2. Augustine’s solution to the problem of what the studios individual loves is fuller than this single statement. Ultimately he concludes his investigation by presenting not one but four “knowns” that can serve as a ground for the study of the unknown. The studios man may have “a general kind of knowledge of what he loves and longs to know it in some particular or in all particulars which are still

Thus Augustine refers to the mind's knowledge and love of what we might call the form of understanding (or the form of communication) to explain its desire to know the meaning of an unknown word. At this point it is necessary to emphasize that in his concern for how the mind can love what is completely unknown, Augustine's understanding of the human condition is not one where man wanders the physical world with knowledge and love of the forms in hand, selecting physical objects to know and love in their light. Rather, man always already finds himself loving good men, beautiful arches, and the "discipline" of communication, and it is by reference to eternal realities that Augustine finds this activity to be intelligible. If an individual did not know the forms themselves, there would be nothing for him to know and judge in the good man, and if he did not love the forms, there would be nothing lovable in the man.²⁰⁰ Thus,

unknown to him and perhaps have been recommended to his attention, so he fabricates in his consciousness some imaginary form which will stir him to love such particulars" (Ibid., X. 4). Thus we might imagine that Augustine, informed of the beauty of Alexandria's arches – a city he has never seen – fabricates an image of its arches based on his knowledge of both arches and beauty. With this form in mind, which he loves by virtue of his love for beautiful arches in general, he is stirred to know the object recommended to him. In addition, the studious may also "see something in the form of everlasting reason, and then we believe and love some expression of it in the formation of some temporal thing when we hear the praises of those who have experienced this particular . . ." (Ibid., X. 4). This second "known" corresponds to Augustine's thought-experiment concerning his love for the faithful man. Thirdly, as in the "metheglin" example, "we love something known and because of it look for something unknown, and it is not at all the love of this unknown thing that holds us but love of that known thing; for we know that it is relevant to it that we should know this unknown thing that we are looking for . . ." (Ibid., X. 4). Finally, "Or else everybody loves knowing, which cannot be unknown to anyone desirous of knowing the unknown" (Ibid., X. 4).

²⁰⁰ Technically, these statements are incorrect, but they capture the spirit of Augustine's understanding of man's knowing and loving activity. They are incorrect in that my apprehension or misapprehension of beauty in an object or a person is not constitutive of that person or thing's beauty. There may be something for me to know and love whether or not I perceive and love it. The point, however, is that if one did not already know and love the forms, one's knowledge and love of the beauty and goodness in persons and things would be impossible; there would be nothing to know or love since what is in the man would be completely unknown. However, since man always already knows and loves goodness and beauty in persons and things, he must know and love the forms. (If he did not know it, how could he love it, Augustine would ask. According to Augustine, while we may be skeptical about our ability to know, we are not skeptical about our loving activity, and it is this loving activity that shows that we do indeed know, despite our doubts otherwise.)

Augustine explains both his judging and his loving activity with reference to one and the same eternal realities. And therefore while we can say that the mind must first know and love the forms for its knowing and loving of beautiful arches and good men to be possible, it is these latter experiences that man first finds himself immersed in – experiences which, in turn, lead the thoughtful individual to rediscover what he already knew.

Having discussed the reasons why Augustine refers to a realm of unchanging forms to explain man's knowing, judging, and loving activity, it will be helpful to clarify some points of tension that have arisen. We will recall that according to Augustine, the senses of the body are created to be receptive of physical realities. The souls of animals, unlike those of men, are not able to perceive eternal truths, yet their behavior indicates that their experience of the world is ordered and coherent. Similarly, man's sensory perception of the world is also ordered and coherent. Moreover, this is not due to the fact that the mind of man is capable of attaining truth itself, but because man shares with the animal the created ability to perceive, remember, and recall physical objects. Augustine does not see a need to refer to a realm of intelligible forms in order to explain man's sensory activities any more than he sees such a need with respect to the animal's. However, this analysis might seem to be undermined by Augustine's discussion of the mind's ability to understand reports of experiences it has not had, as well as its ability to love and judge the beauty of physical objects. Here we concluded that, according to Augustine, if there are no related experiences in the memory (of mountains and olives), or unchanging realities available to the mind (the forms of beauty and goodness), it

follows that nothing can be understood, evaluated and judged since there is nothing to fix the meaning of the report or experience. Similarly, it would appear to be the case that in order for man to have a coherent and ordered experience of the world, he must have concepts, ideas, or memories at his disposal which make the experience intelligible rather than formless.²⁰¹ However, the inconsistency in Augustine's seeming recognition of the need for ideas and concepts on the one hand, and their omission on the other, is apparent rather than real.²⁰² There are (at least) two reasons why Augustine omits any reference to prior knowledge with respect to man's perception of the physical world.

First, Augustine's analysis of the mind's ordered and coherent engagement with the physical world is unconcerned with the mind's rational use of things. For Augustine, only insofar as the mind is concerned with the rational use of physical realities is its relationship with the realm of ideas (forms/immaterial realities) of importance. To see why this is the case we need note that by rational use we are not to understand the practical, productive, or expedient use of the physical world. Rather, rational use, for Augustine, is the mind's ordinate love of the good things it uses in light of the goodness

²⁰¹ Of course, even if concepts, ideas, and memories are intimately involved in the sensing of the physical world, this does not mean that our mind's are not made to be receptive of the physical world. Even if our perception of the world is inextricably linked with concepts and judgments, this does not demonstrate that our experiences of the physical world are not accurate perceptions of the world. It is only to bring into question our ability to be certain of their accuracy – not the possibility of their accuracy. However, the point being raised is that Augustine fails to recognize that the form of our sensory experience is determined by our concepts just as our understanding of another's speech is determined by what is in our memory (which itself includes innumerable concepts), just as our judgment of a things goodness is determined by our understanding of the form of the good. In a word, and as stated earlier (n. 148), the whole of our sense experiences always confronts the whole of our conceptual scheme. There is no experience that is not shaped and interpreted by our conceptual apparatus.

²⁰² I am referring primarily to the internal consistency of Augustine's epistemology. One might conceivably show Augustine to be wrong on all points. The point at hand is whether Augustine at one and the same time asserts that human knowing both does and does not depend on concepts, and if he does, whether there is a relevant reason in virtue of which the distinction is warranted.

by which they are good – which is not to be used but enjoyed in and of itself.²⁰³

Accordingly, an individual is rational only insofar as he can and does refer his love for good things to the form of goodness itself.²⁰⁴ Thus, for Augustine, animals are not irrational because they fail to use the good things of this world in an expeditious and “intelligent” manner, but because they are unable to see and love the form of the good by which the good things they use exist. Therefore, since the “outer man” is, like the animal, unconcerned with the rational use of the things of this world, reference to the realm of intelligible forms is not necessary to explain his coherent and ordered experience of the world. Reference to the realm of intelligible forms is only necessary to explain man’s rational use of beautiful objects and good men – not his ability to perceive a fire or remember its heat.²⁰⁵ Hence, to those who would assert that Augustine needs to

²⁰³ See *De Trinitate* Book XI 10; XII 17 & 21; XIII 4.

²⁰⁴ Thus we can see that Augustine’s understanding of what it is to use rationally the things of the material world is the product of those activities that, for Augustine, demand reference to the realm of eternal ideas. These activities are, first, the judging of the beauty, goodness, and justice of objects and persons, and second, our love of the unknown: I can act rationally only insofar as I can determine which persons and objects are greater or lesser goods, and I can be drawn to these goods and their proper use only if I already have a knowledge and love of the good itself. Therefore, parallel to Augustine’s distinction between wisdom and knowledge, we see that in his epistemology the realm of eternal intelligible forms only has a place, first, in the mind’s love of the forms themselves, and secondly, in the mind’s judgment of the beauty and goodness of the things of this world. Only insofar as I refer the things of this world to the form by which they are good am I acting and using these things rationally. For Augustine, it is self-evident that if I were to love things that are good by participation in the good more than unchanging goodness itself, I would be acting irrationally.

²⁰⁵ However, since man is at one and the same time in both the realm of intelligible ideas and in the realm of physical objects, man’s perceptual engagement with the world may be always attended by concepts, ideas, and judgments. In fact, we might say that according to Augustine’s epistemic framework, what differentiates man from the animals is that his engagement with the things of this world is never free from the ideas and concepts that arise in him due to knowledge and love of the intelligible forms. Thus, while humans may never approach arches and men without, at some level, judging them against the standards available to their mind of how arches ought to be and how men ought to act, this is not to say that the perception of men and arches would be impossible without these ideas. On this point we might well imagine Augustine agreeing with a statement from the American philosopher William Alston.

In opposition to all this [that there can be no form of cognition unmediated by concepts] it seems clear that sensory experience essentially involves a *presentation* of objects to consciousness in a way that does not *necessarily* involve the application of general concepts to those objects or taking

refer to concepts to explain man's sensory experiences of the world, Augustine's first reply would be to point out to these individuals that they have confused where the need for concepts and ideas arises and where it does not.

However, an objector might reply that while he, along with animals, perceives mountains, cardinals, and arches, the concepts of mountains, cardinals, and arches are not intrinsic to the sensory experiences themselves. Thus, we might be led to wonder if Augustine needs to assert that the concepts of mountains, cardinals, and arches belong to eternal truth. Augustine certainly says nothing of this sort, and it is unlikely that he would. To Augustine's mind, this would be to add to eternal unchanging truth a contingent and hence changeable element of creation – which itself is contingent on God's will. Beauty, goodness, and understanding, as well as the truths of mathematics and geometry, are truths that do not depend on the presence of the world for their truth, while the truths of mountains, cardinals, and arches are dependent on the presence of the world.²⁰⁶ Stated otherwise, the truth of goodness, beauty, justice, and mathematics are

them to be such-and-such, and that it is this feature of perception that clearly distinguishes it from just thinking about an object, remembering it, or fantasizing about it. No doubt, in normal perception this direct awareness of X is intimately entangled with conceptualization and judgment, but in unusual cases it can exist alone, and even when it doesn't it is recognizable as that element of the complex that makes it *perceptual* consciousness rather than abstract thought. After all, conceptualization and judgment are common to normal perception and abstract thought.

Therefore, they can't be what distinguishes perception from the latter. *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 38.

²⁰⁶ One could not say, according to Augustine, that the beauty we see in arches, like the arch or the cardinal itself, is a contingent feature of creation and has no place in God's truth. The "cardinalhood" of cardinals is proper to this bird alone. No other animal shares those features that make this bird a cardinal. However, Augustine would assert, the beauty that we see in cardinals shares something with the beauty we see in arches and the beauty we see in a "cheerful face and a fresh complexion" (Ibid., X. 4). If it did not, we would not say they were all beautiful, but rather would assert that like being a cardinal, an arch, or a face, their "beauty" is proper to each alone – and thus would need a different word for what is perceived in each. And, crucially for Augustine, for cardinals, arches, and faces to be judged beautiful is for there to be an unchanging form of beauty in light of which disparate mutable realities can be evaluated to be alike. This

is because, Augustine assumes, if beauty was proper to the cardinal itself, as is its “cardinalhood,” this beauty would no more be detectable in arches or faces than “cardinalhood” is in these same objects.

However, this conclusion might also be challenged. Just as an ox, a horse, and a dog are three different species but yet each an animal, sharing in “animal-hood,” so too might we say that a cardinal, an arch, and a face are three different things but yet each beautiful because they all share in and have in common “beauty-hood.” Augustine’s reply to this problem would be, I believe, to point out that we do not make value judgments concerning the “animal-hood” of various animals. That is to say, we do not assert that an ox is more of an animal than a dog, which, in turn, is more of an animal than a horse. Being an animal is not something that an ox can have more or less of; rather, the ox either is, or is not, an animal. Conversely, an arch can be more or less beautiful, just as a man can be more or less good. This is the key difference, for Augustine, between temporal realities that have characteristics that are related to, and present because of their share in, the eternal realm of truth, and the characteristics of temporal realities that are not referred to eternal realities. Only because a separate reality exists in which they can participate to a greater or lesser degree can an arch have more or less beauty than another arch, or a man have more or less goodness than another man. Moreover, it is only because our minds are capable of beauty and goodness itself that we are able to make these judgments – unless we saw an unchanging standard our evaluations of the good we see in men would not be possible. Conversely, our minds need not be capable of an eternal form in order to determine that a cardinal, an ox, a dog, and a horse are all animals.

In the end, however, we might conclude that Augustine should have explicitly distinguished between concepts and ideas that are related to the eternal forms, and those concepts and ideas that are not. Presumably Augustine would assert that animals do not have these latter concepts and that they are proper to that part of man’s rational intelligence that is deputed the task of dealing with, and acting properly in, the material world (*Ibid.*, XII. 2). Nevertheless, it remains the case that Augustine’s reasons for referring to an unchanging realm of truth are separable from the reasons for man having the concepts “animal,” “cardinal,” or “arch.” These concepts neither explain man’s ability to make judgments concerning the beauty, goodness, etc., of persons, objects, and experiences, nor do these concepts explain man’s loving activity concerning things that are unknown to him. Rather, we might very well imagine that Augustine would assert, as in his search for the cause of man’s desire to know an unknown word, that only because man knows and loves an intelligible reality (perhaps the very same form of understanding/communication) does he form concepts and inquire about the characteristics common to created beings in virtue of which they can be classified either specifically or generically.

This raises one final difficulty. How, we might ask, can there be a form of communication in which we see “how beautiful the discipline is that contains all knowledge of signs; and how useful the skill is by which a human society communicates perceptions between its members” when the very thing we see belongs to the temporal activity that is to cease in eternity (*Ibid.*, X. 2). In short, how can there be an eternal form of a purely temporal activity? Here we need to refer to the four “knowns” in virtue of which the unknown can be loved (see n. 197). These “knowns” are not easily distinguished from each other, nor is it easy to determine the different ways in which what is known is related to the intelligible forms in virtue of which the unknown can be loved. Nevertheless, we might expand on Augustine’s suggestion, in line with the third “known,” that when man explores, investigates, classifies, and conceptualizes the unknown physical world, the form of communication is known and loved. However, and this is the expansion, this form itself is an imaginary form fabricated in his consciousness (see the first “known”) from both his knowledge and love of the form of understanding, and his receptivity to the physical world itself. Unlike the form of communication as Augustine characterized it, the form of understanding is not related only to man’s temporal activity. True understanding will take place not in discussion with, but in the sight of, God. Thus, in the apprehension of this form, along with his inescapable sensory engagement with the physical world, man “devises” the form of communication suitable to the formation of concepts concerning material realities. Finally, this fabrication is not conscious or deliberate. Rather, it belongs properly to man as a result of his dual occupation in both the immaterial and the physical world. However, we might also abandon this complicated explanation and simply say that man’s knowledge and love of the form of understanding is sufficient, on its own, to explain his formation of words and concepts signifying the characteristics of material realities; just as the form of the good is expansive enough to cover man’s

necessary truths – their truth could not have been otherwise, and there is no world in which they are not true. Conversely, the truths of mountains, cardinals, and arches are contingent truths – their truth is a result of states of affairs that could have been very different. God might not have created red birds, elevated terrain, or the material necessary to make arches.

Accordingly, the prior knowledge that Augustine refers to in understanding the reports of others is not ultimately rooted in the perception of mountains and olive trees (or their ideas/concepts) in eternal truth. Rather, the prior knowledge that is necessary is the knowledge that is associated with the learning of languages in general, to which the formation of concepts like mountains and olive trees belongs; and as we have seen in Augustine’s analysis of how we come to know the meaning of unfamiliar words, the learning of a language is rooted in the mind’s knowledge and love of the form of understanding.²⁰⁷ Without this prior knowledge, the activity of coming to learn and speak a language, with its attendant activity of forming concepts, would be, for Augustine, without explanation. This brings us, therefore, to the second reason why Augustine omits any reference to prior knowledge with respect to sensory perception. The prior knowledge of mountains and olive trees necessary to understand a report of a denuded and replanted mountain is itself made possible because of the mind’s love and knowledge of the form of understanding. Thus the cause of our formation of concepts is

love of God’s goodness as well as his love of the goodness of forms (Ibid., X. 4), so too is the form of understanding expansive enough to cover man’s love of the knowledge of God as well as his love of the knowledge of the material world and the conceptual apparatus humankind uses to communicate.

²⁰⁷ “What one observes in the light of truth is what a great and good thing it would be to understand and speak all the languages of all peoples, and so to hear nobody as a foreigner, and to be heard by no one as such either” (Ibid., X. 2).

found “above” the mind of man, in eternal truth, not in the physical world. Accordingly, Augustine would reply that his objector has again confused where the need for concepts and ideas arises; the formation of concepts belongs to the use and learning of a language, an activity that is only made possible by the mind’s knowledge and love of the form of understanding. The fact that animals do not speak a language does not mean that they are incapable of having a coherent and ordered experience of the world.

This brings us to our final clarifying comment. In both the case of an adult’s search for the meaning of an unknown word, and in the case of an infant who is learning to speak, the desire to know something unknown is undeniably present, and unless both the infant and the adult already knew and loved something, this desire would be without explanation. Moreover, if my learning of the form of understanding were like the learning of an unknown word, where in order to know and love the form I must know and love something else, I would become involved in an infinite regress, without an explanation for why I know in the first place.²⁰⁸ Thus, we find that in language learning man must know, at the outset, certain things for this activity to be possible. Furthermore, this is not a knowledge that I discover or determine for myself, but rather is given to me. It is fixed. Only by virtue of being determined in my knowledge and love of the form of understanding am I able to learn and know further. Augustine writes:

The conclusion that we should rather draw is that the nature of the intellectual mind has been so established by the disposition of its creator that it is subjoined to the intelligible things in the order of nature, and so it sees truths in a kind of non-bodily light that is *sui generis*, just as our eyes of the flesh see all these things that

²⁰⁸ I need to know something in order to know something as unknown. If there is nothing I know in and of itself, so to speak, I cannot know something as unknown, and thus I cannot seek to know it. Therefore, if there is an infinite regress of things that are “known,” this means, in fact, that I cannot know anything since I have no knowledge in virtue of which I can know the unknown and (be able to) seek to know it.

lie around us in this bodily light, a light they were created to be receptive of and to match. It is not because the eyes already knew the difference between black and white before they were created in this flesh, that they can tell the difference now without being taught it.²⁰⁹

Therefore, Augustine concludes that just as the mind is created receptive of material realities, so it is created receptive of immaterial realities. Accordingly, while the specter of inconsistency concerning Augustine's characterization of sensory perception arose given the apparently conceptual foundation of his understanding of human knowing, we can now see that Augustine's understanding of human knowing is not characterized by the need for concepts, but by the givenness of its perceptual character, both sensuous and intellectual. Moreover, just as the limits of the "outer man's" thinking are set by memory, which in turn is limited by the number of objects present to his senses, so too are the limits of the "inner man's" thinking set by his memory of those immaterial realities present to the "senses" (understanding) of his mind.²¹⁰ This concludes our discussion of Augustine's understanding of the mind's relationship to both the corporeal world and the eternal realm of truth. We will now turn to Augustine's analysis of the mind itself.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, XII. 24. It should be noted that Augustine reaches this conclusion not in his discussion of language learning, but while discussing the mind's apprehension of geometrical and mathematical truths. Augustine here asserts that even if the mind forgets these truths, and if its memories are "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" (*Ibid.*, XII. 24). Against the use of the Platonists theory of the preexistence of the soul to explain this phenomenon, Augustine arrives at the above conclusion. If the Platonists were right, Augustine contends, "not everybody or practically everybody would be able to do the same if interrogated in the same way; it is unlikely that everybody was a geometer in a previous life, seeing that they are such a rarity in the human race that it is a job even to find one" (*Ibid.*, XII. 24). But here again, the fundamental point is not whether men may or may not have had the opportunity to be geometers in previous lives. The point is why men are able to be geometers in the first place. Unless their minds were subjoined to the realm of intelligible ideas, their knowing of geometry would lack an explanation just as man's awareness of the world would lack an explanation if we were to assert that the eyes of men are not receptive of the physical light surrounding them.

²¹⁰ Augustine's understanding of the place of memory in man's understanding of immaterial realities will be discussed in greater detail below.

In the context of Book X, Augustine's discussion of man's efforts to learn the meaning of unknown words is a prelude to a much more difficult problem that arises from the axiom that nothing can be loved if it is completely unknown. Augustine's basic epistemic orientation remained unchanged throughout his life: "I desire to know God and the soul. Nothing besides? Nothing whatsoever."²¹¹ However, here we find this orientation challenged. This is because, according to Augustine's own axiom, the mind must know something other than itself if it seeks to know itself.²¹² Yet, all the conventional solutions that were fruitfully applied by Augustine regarding our love for the faithful man, and our desire to know unfamiliar words, fail to apply plausibly to the mind's desire to know itself.²¹³ Unlike the mind's desire to know and to seek out a good man that has been highly praised, the knowledge in virtue of which the mind seeks to know itself cannot reasonably be said to be found in the realm of eternal truth. Augustine asks rhetorically:

Can it be that it sees in the canon of eternal truth how beautiful it is to know oneself, and that it loves this thing that it sees and is at pains to bring it about in itself, although it does not know itself, it knows how good it would be to know itself? But this is passing strange, not yet to know oneself, and already to know how beautiful it is to know oneself.²¹⁴

Thus Augustine is faced with two "facts" that need to be brought together without reference to the realm of intelligible forms: first, that the mind can, and should, seek to

²¹¹ *Soliloquia* 1. 2. 7.

²¹² The mind that seeks to know itself cannot be said to be without love. But what does it love? It cannot be said to love itself, because in order to love itself it must know itself, and clearly it does not know itself since it is seeking itself. Therefore, Augustine must find what the mind knows and loves in the light of which it seeks to know itself. Augustine writes: "What is it then that the mind loves when it ardently seeks to know itself while still unknown to itself? Here you have the mind seeking to know itself and all afire with this studious concern. So it is loving. But what is it loving? If itself, how, since it does not yet know itself and no one can love what he does not know?" (*Ibid.*, X. 5).

know itself, and second, that a suitable ground exists in virtue of which the mind's search for the knowledge of itself is possible.

Augustine's begins his solution to this problem by noting that the mind "knows what knowing is, and while it loves this that it knows it also longs to know itself."²¹⁵ "But where in this case" Augustine asks, does the mind know its knowing, "if it does not know itself?"²¹⁶ The suggestion here is that for the mind to be unknown to itself while it knows its knowing would be for it to know (and do) its knowing from somewhere other than itself, which is absurd. Pushing this point, Augustine asks again, "How comes it then that a mind which does not know itself knows itself knowing something else?"²¹⁷ The mind, Augustine asserts, does not know another mind knowing, but knows itself knowing. "Therefore," he concludes, "it knows itself."²¹⁸

Thus we can see that Augustine's solution to the problem of mind wanting to know itself lies in the fact that once we grant that the mind knows itself knowing that metheglin, for example, is what the ancients called fermented liquors, it follows that the mind knows itself. This is because the mind is aware that it is not another mind knowing what metheglin is, but that it itself knows what metheglin is. Therefore, since it knows itself knowing, it knows itself.²¹⁹ Augustine continues: "And then when it seeks to know itself, it already knows itself seeking. So it already knows itself. It follows then that it simply cannot not know itself, since by the very fact of knowing itself not knowing, it

²¹³ Ibid., X. 5.

²¹⁴ Ibid., X. 5.

²¹⁵ Ibid., X. 5.

²¹⁶ Ibid., X. 5.

²¹⁷ Ibid., X. 5.

²¹⁸ Ibid., X. 5.

knows itself. If it did not know itself not knowing, it would not seek to know itself.”²²⁰

Moreover, given the fact that the mind cannot not know itself, Augustine also establishes the ground of the mind’s love of itself – just as the mind always knows itself, so too does it always loves itself.²²¹ Therefore we find the trinity of the mind, its knowledge of itself, and its love of itself.

Having shown that the mind always knows itself, Augustine turns to re-examine the meaning of the command “Know thyself.” He concludes that the Delphic injunction is really a command for the mind to think about itself “and live according to its nature,”²²² refraining from joining to itself, in its “extravagant love” for the material world, the physical images stored in its memory such that it “comes to think it is itself something of the same sort.”²²³ Accordingly, the task set before the mind by the command is for it to exercise its rational intelligence in the effort to strip away these mistaken conceptions. Thus the problem for Augustine becomes one of method. Namely, he must find a way for the rational intelligence to be confident that it is not mistaking what it is for a bodily image that it is clinging to.²²⁴

²¹⁹ Ibid., X. 5

²²⁰ Ibid., X. 5. Later in Book X Augustine writes: “But when the mind is told *Know thyself*, it knows itself the very moment it understands what “thyself” is, and for no other reason than that it is present to itself. . . . So it is being commanded to do something which it automatically does the moment it understands the command” (Ibid., X. 12).

²²¹ From his analysis of man’s ever-present desire not only to know, but also to enjoy himself, Augustine holds that man always love himself.

²²² Ibid., X. 7.

²²³ Ibid., X. 8. Augustine continues: “Thus it gets conformed to them in a certain fashion, not by being what they are but by thinking it is – not of course that it thinks itself to be an image but simply to be that of which it has the image by it.”

²²⁴ Augustine writes:

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 long kind of familiarity. But it cannot bring these bodies themselves back inside with it into the region, so to say, of its non-bodily nature: so it wraps up their images and clutches them to itself, images made in itself out of itself. For it gives something

The foundational premise upon which Augustine constructs his method is the mind's presence to itself. In all its knowing activity the mind always knows itself since it knows itself knowing. Accordingly, nothing is more present to the mind than itself: "What after all is so present to knowledge as what is present to mind, and what is so present to mind as the mind itself?"²²⁵ Thus, in its effort to think itself, the mind is not to look for itself as if it is absent from itself. Rather, it is to turn its regard inwards: "Let the mind then recognize itself and not go looking for itself as if it were absent, but rather turn on to itself the interests of its will, which had it straying about through outer things, and think about itself."²²⁶ Given the presence of the mind to itself, Augustine is able to articulate the means whereby the mind can be confident that it is not mistaking what it has added to itself for what it is. This method is, quite simply, for the mind to "set aside what it thinks it is, and mark what it knows it is; in this way it will be left with something even people who have thought mind is this or that sort of body can have no doubt about."²²⁷ Employing this method, Augustine arrives at the following conclusion:

Whether the power of living, remembering, understanding, willing, thinking, knowing, judging, comes from air, or fire, or brain, or blood, or atoms, or heaven knows what fifth kind of body besides the four common elements; or whether the very structure or organization of our flesh can produce these things; people have hesitated about all this, and some have tried to establish one answer, others another. Nobody surely doubts, however, that he lives and remembers and understands and wills and thinks and knows and judges. . . . You may have your doubts about anything else, but you should have no doubts about these; if they were not certain, you would not be able to doubt anything.²²⁸

of its own substance to their formation; but it also keeps something apart by which it can freely make judgments on the specific bearing of such images; and this is more truly mind, that is rational intelligence, which is kept free to judge with. (Ibid., X. 7)

²²⁵ Ibid., X. 7.

²²⁶ Ibid., X. 11.

²²⁷ Ibid., X. 13.

²²⁸ Ibid., X. 14.

Thus, the mind is certain that it lives, remembers, understands, and wills, while remaining uncertain whether these activities come from corporeal substances.

However, this solution, in itself, is not only trivial, but it also fails to secure the conclusion Augustine sought. He had exhorted the mind to “set aside what it thinks it is, and mark what it knows it is,” in the hope that in so doing, the mind would discover and thereby live according to its nature. Yet, what Augustine has managed to establish is only that the mind is certain that it performs a range of activities. Concerning the nature of the substance that gives rise to these activities, the mind remains uncertain. In other words, Augustine has only managed to establish what the mind knows it does, not what it knows it is.²²⁹ As a result, the mind might very well be said to be living according to its nature when it falls in love with, and wraps itself in, the images of bodies.²³⁰

Augustine is aware of this gap between what the mind knows it does and what its nature or substance is. He notes that there are those who “would like these things

²²⁹ We might also say that Augustine knows that the mind is a living, thinking, remembering, understanding, and willing substance, without knowing what kind of substance the mind is.

²³⁰ This statement sounds surprising and incongruous with the tenor of Book X. This is because my analysis of the argument has left out, in its focus on Augustine’s premise that the mind is present to itself, the fact that Augustine throughout Book X assumes the conclusion which he eventually arrives at, namely, the incorporeality of the soul. Throughout Book X Augustine never seriously considers the possibility that the mind is a body. Rather, he clearly holds that the mind is immaterial, and therefore he is on the lookout against thinking that leads it to conclude otherwise. The central reason why Augustine holds that the mind is incorporeal is intimately related to his analysis of the mind’s knowledge of goodness, beauty, and God himself (recall Augustine’s analysis of Ephesians 4:23 and Colossians 3:9 above). Namely, the soul can and does attain to immaterial realities, and it sees these realities not with the eyes of its body, but with the eyes of its mind – its rational intellect. Accordingly, the soul is an incorporeal rational substance. Therefore, given the fact that Augustine is already certain of the nature of the mind, the question arises as to why this long discussion in Book X is necessary. This will be answered below. However, for the moment we can note, first, that Augustine’s primary interest in Book X is to discover not only the incorporeal nature of the mind, but the particular activities that the mind’s incorporeality consists in. In so doing, Augustine is hoping to discover the image of God in man. Secondly, Augustine wishes to demonstrate that in the mind’s turn inward, away from the things that are outside, the mind discovers that

[thinking, understanding, etc.] to be regarded as ‘being in a subject’; thus the substance would be air or fire or any other body they think mind is, while understanding would be in this body as a quality of it, so that this body would be the subject and understanding would be in the subject.”²³¹ Furthermore, as an indirect indictment of the reach of his own conclusions, he notes that, “properly speaking a thing cannot in any way be said to be known while its substance is unknown.”²³² However, Augustine, in fact, does believe that he has made clear the nature of the mind. Following the above statement he writes: “Therefore when mind knows itself it knows its substance, and when it is certain of itself it is certain of its substance. But it is certain of itself, as everything said above convincingly demonstrates.”²³³ To understand the cause for Augustine’s certainty, we need to return to his foundational premise – the mind’s presence to itself. Against those who contend that the mind’s activity is in a bodily subject Augustine demonstrates the non-bodily substance of the mind with the following argument. He reiterates that the mind is not “in the least certain whether it is air or fire or any kind of body or anything appertaining to the body.”²³⁴ Accordingly, he then asserts that, given its presence to itself, if the mind were one of these things, “it would think that thing differently than the others . . . with some inner, non-simulated but true presence (nothing after all is more present to it than itself), in the same way as it thinks its living and remembering and

its presence to itself as a thinking thing is always mediated by the presence of God to it. In short, in its inward turn, the mind finds an external reality ordering and constituting its thinking activity.

²³¹ Ibid., X. 15.

²³² Ibid., X. 16.

²³³ Ibid., X. 16.

²³⁴ Ibid., X. 16.

understanding and willing.”²³⁵ Consequently, since the mind fails to think of air, fire, brain, or atoms in this manner, but instead only thinks of these bodies through the images that have been stored in the memory from their sight, it follows that the mind is not a body in nature; if it were a body, the mind would think its bodily nature not through an image located in its memory, but from the sheer presence of this nature to itself.²³⁶ With this argument, Augustine therefore demonstrates that the mind is incorporeal substance, in turn establishing the mind’s place in the order of nature – above the material world and below only the incorporeal God. “It is true that not everything in creation which is like God in some way or other is also to be called his image, but only that which he alone is higher than. That alone receives his direct imprint which has no other nature interposed between him and itself.”²³⁷

Augustine is now able to elucidate this “direct imprint” – the image of God – in the incorporeal substance of the mind. As we have seen, Augustine first described the trinity of the mind, its knowledge of itself, and its love of itself. From this trinity of mind, knowledge, and love Augustine discriminates further and constructs the trinity of

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, X. 16.

²³⁶ To be clear, Augustine’s argument against the mind’s bodily nature is not that the mind does not think of itself in bodily terms. It does, and all too frequently. This is the problem Augustine is struggling to remove. Rather, because the mind does not think of itself as a body other than in terms of those bodily images it has stored in its memory, Augustine concludes that the mind is an incorporeal substance. This is because, again, Augustine insists that nothing is more present to the mind than the mind itself. (“What after all is so present to knowledge as what is present to mind, and what is so present to mind as the mind itself?” *Ibid.*, X. 10.) Therefore, if the mind were a body, and if it were to direct its thought to itself in the effort to know what it is, its bodily nature would be known directly, without need of the images of external bodies it has stored in its memory. When the mind thinks about itself in the effort to know (and live according to) its nature, its nature is necessarily made manifest since nothing is more present to the mind than itself in its entirety. (How else, Augustine would ask, would the mind discover its nature other than thinking about itself since it is not separate from itself.) Thus, the mind’s uncertainty about its being air, fire, blood, brain, or atoms is sufficient reason for it to conclude justifiably that it is not any one of these bodily forms.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, XI. 8.

memory, understanding, and will, selecting these three mental acts from amongst those activities of which the mind is certain. According to Augustine, “since it was seen always to know itself and always to will itself, it must at the same time be seen always to remember itself and always to understand and love itself.”²³⁸ This, Augustine concludes, is the substance of the rational mind. That is to say, the mind *is* memory, understanding, and will in the same way that God *is* the consubstantial unity of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Just as there is no divine substance existing apart from the three persons of the Trinity, so too is there no mind to speak of apart from the mind’s memory, understanding, and will of itself; the substance of the rational mind is entirely explicated in these three terms. “These three then, memory, understanding, and will, are not three lives but one life, nor three minds but one mind. So it follows of course that they are not three substances but one substance.”²³⁹

However, a crucial caveat needs to be added here. Augustine does not yet hold that the mind understood as memory, understanding, and will is the image of God in man. Rather, only when the mind turns to think about itself is it the image of God. This is because in so doing the mind begets a word of understanding from its ever-present knowledge of itself. To reiterate, the mind can know both eternal immaterial realities as well as temporal physical realities. Both the immaterial realities that it knows by the sight of rational intellect, as well as those realities it knows by the sense of its body, are

²³⁸ Ibid., X. 19. Augustine, for whatever reason, here uses “will” where he normally uses the term “love” when discussing the mind and its knowledge and love of itself, and, in turn, uses the term “love” where he normally uses the term “will” when discussing the image of God in man: memory, understanding, and will.

²³⁹ Ibid., X. 18.

stored in the mind's memory,²⁴⁰ and it is from this knowledge that a word is begotten when the mind turns its attention to the stores of memory and utters what it sees.²⁴¹ Thus a man might know the beauty of the arches of Carthage, and be learned in both geometry and musicianship.²⁴² However, as a brute fact of the human condition, man can consciously think about only one of these things at any one time, and only then does he utter its word. Similarly, as noted above, the mind always knows and loves itself even when it is not thinking about itself. More specifically, the mind can be said to always remember, always understand, and always love itself even while it is not thinking itself. For this reason Augustine writes that “when it is not thinking about itself, it is indeed not in its own view, nor is its gaze being formed from itself, and yet it still knows itself by

²⁴⁰ Ibid., XV. 22. We will recall that in Augustine's discussion of his love for the faithful man and the beautiful arch, he concludes that it is in eternal truth, apprehended by the eye of the mind, that we observe the form according to which things are beautiful and good. Following this conclusion Augustine writes: “And by this form we conceive true knowledge of things, which we have with us as a kind of word that we beget by uttering inwardly, and that does not depart from us when it is born” (Ibid., IX. 12).

²⁴¹ It is necessary to emphasize again that when Augustine refers to the word that is uttered when the mind turns its thought towards what is stored in memory, he does not have in mind a word that is uttered in sound or even in the thought of sound. Rather, the word of the rational intellect, the imperfect human corollary to the Word of the Father, is uttered before all thought of sound. It transcends, or might be said to be beyond or before, all human languages. To be clear, this is not to say that Augustine holds that we are in possession of these words outside of or prior to our understanding and speaking of a language. Rather, Augustine's point is simply that this word precedes and is the origin of both private mental speech and public audible speech, and as such, it is non-bodily, just like the knowledge from which it is born. Therefore, just as the Word of the Father is the exact image and likeness of the Father himself, so to the begotten word is the exact likeness of the knowledge from which it is generated. (The begotten word is not the exact image and likeness of the thing known, whether it is an arch, men, stones, or goodness. Rather, the begotten word is the exact image and likeness of the mind's *knowledge* of arches, men, stones, and itself contained in the memory. Everything that we know “co-generates in us knowledge of itself; for knowledge issues from both, from the knower and the thing known.” Ibid., IX. 18). Augustine writes:

And so we must come to that word of man, the word of a rational animal, the word of the image of God, which is not born of God but made by God, the word which is neither uttered in sound nor thought of in the likeness of sound which necessarily belongs to some language, but which precedes all the signs that signify it and is begotten of the knowledge abiding in the consciousness, when this knowledge is uttered inwardly exactly as it is. When it is uttered vocally or by some bodily sign, it is not uttered just exactly as it is, but as it can be seen or heard through the body. (Ibid., XV. 20)

²⁴² These latter two are Augustine's own examples. See Bk. XIV. 9.

being somehow in its own memory of itself.”²⁴³ Yet, while the mind is always present to itself through its memory of itself in the present (its ever-present remembering, understanding, and loving of itself), it is only when it directs its thought towards itself that it is the image of God. It is then that it utters a word of understanding concerning its knowledge of itself: “So when the mind views itself by thought, it understands and recognizes itself; thus it begets this understanding and self-recognition.”²⁴⁴ Moreover, as with the Word of the Father, the word of man totally matches itself “since it does not know itself less than it is, nor is its knowledge different in being from itself, not only because it is doing the knowing but also because what it is knowing is itself. . .”²⁴⁵

Augustine concludes at length:

For if we refer to the inner memory of the mind with which it remembers itself and the inner understanding with which it understands itself and the inner will with which it loves itself, where these three are simultaneously together and always have been simultaneously together from the moment they began to be, whether they were being thought about or not, it will indeed seem that the image of that other trinity [the divine trinity] belongs only to the memory. But because there can be no word in it without thought – we think everything we say, including what we say with that inner word that is not part of any people’s language – it is rather in these three that this image is to be recognized, namely, memory, understanding, and will. And here I mean the understanding we understand with as we think, that is when things are brought up that were to hand in the memory but were not being thought about, and our thought is formed from them; and the will or love or esteem I mean is the one that joins this offspring [the word of understanding] to its parent [the knowledge in memory] and is in a certain measure common to them both.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Ibid., XIV. 8. Concerning the mind’s memory of itself in the present, Augustine writes that “as regards something present, which is what the mind is to itself, one may talk without absurdity of memory as that by which the mind is available to itself, ready to be understood by its thought about itself, and for both to be conjoined by its love of itself” (Ibid., XIV. 14). See also Chapter One n. 99.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., XIV. 8.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., IX. 18.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., XIV. 10.

To clarify the point that the mind is only the image of God when it turns to think about itself, thereby generating a word, we need to keep in mind that (according to Augustine, the mind is always thinking. The mind is never dormant, at times directing its attention to either the material or immaterial worlds, while yet at others in a slumber.) Rather, its thought is always “chopping and changing”²⁴⁷ from one object of attention to another, and thus it is always forming words. For this reason, Augustine could not choose to set up the image of God in man’s potential for thought rather than in man’s actual thinking activity. Rather, Augustine was faced with the task of discerning which objects inform the mind’s thinking activity such that the requirements for being image are satisfied. Only with the trinity of memory, understanding, and will arising from the mind’s self-directed thought are these requirements fulfilled.²⁴⁸ This is because only here is a trinity of the mind’s activity located in what is best in man, his rational intellect, where unlike the trinities that arise in the “outer man’s” memory, understanding, and love of the images of material objects, this trinity is not adventitious to the mind.²⁴⁹ Similarly, the trinity that is proper to knowledge, the mind’s “rational cognizance of temporal things,” fails to fulfill the requirements for being image since the knowledge that arises in the mind both comes to it from outside and will not persist in eternity.²⁵⁰ As such, it is

²⁴⁷ Ibid., XV. 25.

²⁴⁸ Stated otherwise, while the mind is memory, understanding, and will, this trinity is never static or inactive. Rather, the mind is its remembering, understanding, and willing *activity*. This trinity of the “inner man” is always remembering, understanding, and willing something.

²⁴⁹ As Augustine noted, while the members of the second trinity belonging to the “outer man” are of one and the same nature, therefore approaching more closely than the first trinity the requirement that the image of God is proper to the mind alone, this trinity still comes to the mind from outside. It was from the outside that the memory received what it was to retain, and thus this trinity is not immortally engrained in the soul’s immortality.

²⁵⁰ See Book XIV. 11.

immortally engrained in the soul's immortality; it will continue to be the image of God even when the temporal material world passes away.²⁵¹

However, having seemingly discovered the image of God in man, Augustine radically qualifies these conclusions. He 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. If it does not do it, then even though it remembers and understands and loves itself, it is foolish."²⁵² Thus we arrive at the final trinity belonging to the "inner man" – the trinity of wisdom that is the mind's rational cognizance of God's eternal nature that Augustine here declares to be the image of God. With our analysis of Augustine's epistemology up to this point, we are well equipped to understand this transition.

First, the mind is largely determined in both its knowledge and its loves. As Augustine demonstrated in the mind's search for the meaning of an unknown word, the fact that the mind earnestly strives to know the unknown gives the lie to its illusion of epistemic self-sufficiency. This activity is only made possible because prior to any self-conscious apprehension of the forms themselves, the mind is already inextricably linked with these intelligible realities. Similarly, only because the mind always already knows

²⁵¹ Therefore, while the trinity that arises in man's memory, understanding, and love of beautiful arches and the virtue of moderation is found in the rational intellect, it cannot properly be said to be the image of God since it is temporal. In eternity there will be no arches for the mind to remember, understand, and love, nor will there be the need for moderation since lusts will be non-existent. Again, the image of God in man must be found in the mind's memory, understanding, and love of an object that will not pass away, and thus Augustine locates the image of God in man's self-remembering, self-understanding, and self-loving. This again shows that Augustine is not establishing the image of God in nascent faculties or potential abilities, but is rather searching for the image in the thinking activity that the mind is always involved in.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, XIV. 15.

and loves goodness itself is it able to love good things;²⁵³ without this ever-present knowledge and love the goods that it encounters would be utterly unknown and unloved. The mind, in short, is not self-generating of either its knowledge or its loves; its knowing is not the product of its agential activity, nor are its loves the outcome of its unfettered choice amongst the goods available to its knowledge. Rather, God has created our minds, like our senses, to be receptive of reality.²⁵⁴ In a word, God has subjoined our minds to himself.

Secondly, since the mind's knowledge and loves are given to it, so is its presence to itself *as image*.²⁵⁵ As Augustine demonstrates in Book X's analysis of the command for the mind to know itself, the mind knows and loves itself in its knowing activity – it does not first become aware of itself as a thinking thing before embarking on its exploration of the world around it. Instead, as we have noted, the mind is always immersed in its knowing and loving activity, activities that Augustine has shown are possible only in virtue of the fact that the mind is ineradicably “subjoined to intelligible things in the order of nature.”²⁵⁶ Therefore, at the heart of its inward turn the mind finds the irreducible presence of these immaterial realities,²⁵⁷ and the mind's self-presence, constituted by its memory of itself in the present, cannot be extracted from its simultaneous memory of these intelligible realities without its very nature as a thinking

²⁵³ Ibid., VIII. 4. See again n. 190.

²⁵⁴ Charles T. Mathewes. “Augustinian Anthropology: interior intimo meo” (Journal of Religious Ethics. 27.2, 1999): 199.

²⁵⁵ By image, I am now referring to the mind's memory, understanding, and love of God.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., XII. 24.

²⁵⁷ It is important to stress that these immaterial realities have been shown by Augustine *not* to be external. They are no more outside of the mind than the mind is to itself. In fact, Augustine writes that “God is closer to me than myself” (*Confessions* III. 6)

(remembering, understanding, and willing) thing being compromised. To be clear, this is not to say that the mind comes into being in its thinking activity, nor is it to say that the mind's being is constituted by the presence of these immaterial realities. Augustine is clear that the mind exists as memory, understanding, and will – the image of God is immortally engrained *in* the soul's immortality.²⁵⁸ However, if the mind's thought were only concerned with itself, this thought would effectively have no content. As Augustine has shown, the mind is neither self-generating of its knowledge of beauty or justice, nor is it the author of its goodness. Accordingly, if the mind were divorced from these realities, its knowledge would consist only in that it remembers and understands that it remembers and understands itself, where this self is nothing but the consubstantial activity of its self-remembering, self-understanding, and self-willing. In short, for these activities to have no object of thought other than their own self-directed activity is, in effect, for these activities to have nothing to think about – “even though it remembers and understands and loves itself, it is foolish.” However, since the image of God is found in the mind's ability to remember, understand, and love God, its presence to itself as image is given to it because God has subjoined the knower to himself; as Augustine has shown, the mind always knows and loves goodness, beauty, and understanding.²⁵⁹ Accordingly, we find Augustine writing in *Confessions* that God is “more inward than my most inward

²⁵⁸ Unlike the realm of incorporeal truth that is public and cannot be made the property of any one individual or group, Augustine says that being image is a property or attribute of the soul. See *De Trinitate* XIV. 4.

²⁵⁹ As stated above, the mind is always immersed in its knowing and loving activity; we might say that the mind's earliest memories are its memories of itself thinking about and loving things other than itself. Of course, while to be a knower is for the mind to be present to itself in its memory of itself in the present, it remains the case that the mind does not first know itself, as if it occupies a private inner-chamber, and then

part and higher than the highest element within me.”²⁶⁰ In short, God is not adventitious to the mind. Therefore, in remembering, understanding, and loving of God, the mind satisfies the requirements for being image, for here we have a trinity in the rational mind that is immortally engrained in the soul’s immortality. Furthermore, unlike the merely formal satisfaction of the requirements for being image fulfilled in the mind’s thought about itself, in its remembering, understanding, and loving of God the mind truly is image because it images God’s own wisdom: “In this way it will be wise not with its own light but by sharing in that supreme light . . .”²⁶¹ “For man’s true honor,” Augustine writes, “is God’s image and likeness in him, but it can only be preserved when facing him from whom its impression is received.”²⁶²

With these points in mind, we can see that when Augustine exhorts the mind to know itself, this command becomes, at bottom, a command for the mind to know God. This is because when the mind turns to think about itself it finds that its knowledge and loves, and thus its very nature as a thinking thing, is determined by the presence of God to it. In its thought about itself the mind finds that an objective reality sits at the very heart of its subjectivity;²⁶³ the mind’s most present and pressing epistemological relationship is not to the physical world, to bodily images stored in its memory, or even to

subsequently comes to know realities other than itself. Rather, the mind, created as a knower subjoined to the known, simultaneously knows both itself and these immaterial realities.

²⁶⁰ *Confessions* III. vi. 11. In Book XIV of *De Trinitate* Augustine asks, “What, after all, is not in God, of whom it is divinely written, for from him and through him and in him are all things (Rom 11:36)? So of course if all things are in him, what can things that live live in and things that move move in but in him in whom they are?” (*De Trinitate* XIV. 16).

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, XIV. 15.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, XII. 16.

²⁶³ Charles T. Mathewes. “Augustinian Anthropology: interior intimo meo” (*Journal of Religious Ethics*. 27.2, 1999): 198.

itself, but to God. “Why then is the mind commanded to know itself? I believe it means that it should think about itself and live according to its nature, under him it should be subject to and over all that it should be in control of; under him it should be ruled by, over all that it ought to rule.”²⁶⁴

Consequently, what both grieves Augustine the most and demonstrates the sinfulness of the human condition is that the mind finds the physical world and its images more present, and more real, than the goodness of God which sits at the heart of its very self; what is in fact closest to the mind has become the least familiar. However, while unfamiliar and distant, the mind never entirely forgets God. This is because God does not belong to its past experience, such that in order to know God the mind must recall past events and prior instruction. Rather, when Augustine exhorts the mind to remember, understand, and love God, he is urging man to direct his attention to God’s surrounding presence. He writes:

The mind does however remember its God. He always is; it is not the case that he was and is not, or is and was not, but just as he never will not be, so he never was not. And he 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.²⁶⁵

Just as the mind is always present to itself through its memory of itself in the present, so too is God present to the mind through the mind’s memory of God’s presence in the present. Thus, though the mind has become forgetful, it is continually prodded “to turn to the Lord, as though to the light by which it went on being touched in some fashion even

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, X. 7.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, XIV. 21.

when it turned away from him.”²⁶⁶ Because of the light of God’s presence “even the godless can think about eternity, and rightly praise and blame many elements in the behavior of men.”²⁶⁷ In short, the mind is never untouched by God’s light, and yet it fails to rest in the contemplation of that light; stated otherwise, the mind always knows and loves justice, goodness, and beauty, yet it fails to know and love the triune God whose very being is goodness and justice itself. Thus while remaining subjoined to God, the mind has turned its gaze away from his eternal nature towards the temporal material world, and thereby it has led itself outside of itself, away from its source of strength, “into less and less which is imagined to be more and more.”²⁶⁸

To conclude, we will recall that this chapter opened by noting that Augustine’s epistemology is fundamentally shaped by the conviction that the mind of man is the image of the triune God, as well as the conviction that the mind’s thinking activity is both ordered and constituted by the presence of this triune God to the mind. We then proceeded to point out the paradoxical nature of these foundational claims given the fact

²⁶⁶ Ibid., XIV. 21.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., XIV. 21. This entire passage is worth quoting since in it we see many of the elements of Augustine’s epistemology that we have discussed.

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. 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 can see this sort of thing can see that these standards are unchangeable. 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 a seal which both passes into the wax and does not leave the signet ring? As for the man who does not do justice and yet sees what should be done, he is the one who turns away from that light, and yet is till touched by it. (Ibid., XIV. 21)

²⁶⁸ Ibid., X. 7.

that these beliefs fail to meet Augustine's own criteria for being justified in holding a belief concerning spiritual reality to be true, which is, namely, an intellectual perception of the spiritual reality itself. However, one might very well argue that Augustine's epistemology does not at all rest on the conviction that there exists a triune Creator to which the mind of man has a distant likeness. Quite simply, one need not even be a theist either to hold that the mind's knowing and loving activity requires that it be subjoined to immaterial unchanging realities, or to affirm that the mind begets a word when it directs its attention to the knowledge stored in its memory. In short, the seemingly irreducible epistemological facts that Augustine elucidates do not require that one confess that there is a God, let alone that this God is the loving trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, as the next chapter shall demonstrate, these two convictions, first, that the mind is the image of the triune God, and second, that its thinking is both ordered and constituted by the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to it, are the foundational claims of Augustine's epistemology because they reveal Augustine's understanding of how man is to situate himself within this epistemological reality in order that he might begin to remember and contemplate eternal truth.

Chapter Three

We concluded Chapter Two by noting that one might very well accept Augustine's understanding of the mind's knowing activity without confessing that God is a trinity. What were claimed to be the two foundational elements of Augustine's epistemology, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitute and order the mind's thinking activity, and that the mind is the image of the triune God, appear to be superfluous additions; without violence to the explanations he arrives at to explain man's knowing and loving activity, one might substitute Brahman, Allah, or the impersonal form of the Good where Augustine asserts the eternal Trinity. However, to suspend our analysis of Augustine's epistemology with these solutions – that the mind is created receptive of physical realities and is subjoined to eternal realities – is to deprive ourselves of the fullness of his understanding of the human condition, and in turn, the fullness of his understanding of human knowing. It is to an examination of Augustine's understanding of the sinfulness of humankind that we will now turn. In particular, we shall examine his understanding of pride and its disruption of our natural relationship with God. However, to begin we will briefly discuss a significant passage from Book VIII of *De Trinitate* where Augustine introduces the place of greed in preventing the mind's ascent to, and repose in, God's eternal goodness. Following this discussion we will turn to a passage from Book XII of *De Trinitate* where Augustine argues that greed is rooted in pride, the soul's love for its own power.

As noted above in Chapter Two, what grieves Augustine the most is that the mind finds the physical world and its images more present, and more real, than the forms of

beauty, goodness, and understanding which sit at the heart of its very self. In Book VIII of *De Trinitate* Augustine endeavors to discuss the nature of the substance of truth in order to demonstrate that in the Trinity, two or three persons are not greater than one person alone.²⁶⁹ However, the human mind finds this truth exceedingly difficult to apprehend. This is because man's "flesh bound habit of thought"²⁷⁰ prevents him from raising the regard of his intellect to truth itself, and thereby seeing the consubstantial equality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If man were able to, "then this physical light around us would in no way at all be clearer or more obvious than what we have just said."²⁷¹ Therefore, recognizing man's inability to shed his materialistic manner of thought and grasp eternal truth, Augustine, rather than attempting to eradicate thought's captivity to notions of extension, corporeality, and time, attempts only to give his readers a fleeting glimpse of truth in the hope of demonstrating the weakness of their minds. He writes:

Do not ask what truth is; immediately a fog of bodily images and a cloud of fancies will get in your way and disturb the bright fair weather that burst on you the first instant when I said "truth." Come, hold it in that first moments in which so to speak you caught a flash from the corner of your eye when the word "truth" was spoken, stay there if you can. But you cannot; you slide back into these familiar and earthy things. And what is it, I ask, that drags you back but the birdlime of greed for the dirty junk you have picked up on your wayward wanderings?²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Ibid., VIII. 2.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., VIII. 2.

²⁷¹ Ibid., VIII. 2. This passage shows that when Augustine discusses the nature of the substance of truth, demonstrating that two or three persons of the trinity are not any greater than one of them alone, he does not simply have in mind the logical necessity of this point. Rather, Augustine is keen for his readers to understand their inability to *see* this truth, where this seeing does not refer to our consent to its rational validity, but rather to our intellectual perception of truth's very substance.

²⁷² Ibid., VIII. 3.

Here we find Augustine both describing what befalls all minds in their attempt to see truth, and pointing to the cause of this failure. The mind is incapable of comprehending the light of truth that persistently shines on it because of its greed; namely, its greed for the “dirty junk” (material things) picked up on its “wayward wanderings.” To be clear, these wanderings are not to be understood in spatial terms: “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.”²⁷³ Accordingly, having wandered away from God by turning the gaze of its attention away from God’s eternal nature to the material world,²⁷⁴ the mind fails to comprehend truth since in its greed earthly goods have not only become more familiar, but also more prized, than the goodness of God by which they are good. At the most the mind can capture truth in a flash. Nevertheless, it finds this region dissimilar and strange, and it retreats to the material world where it has made its home.

However, at this point we would be right to find lacking this explanation of man’s inability to see the realm of God’s truth as clearly as the physical light which surrounds him. While we might agree with him that man is unable to cleave to God because he cherishes material goods more than the eternal goodness by which they are good, Augustine has not yet provided an explanation for *why* man opts for material goods in place of goodness itself. Stated otherwise, while we might agree that it is on account of man’s greed for material things picked up on his wayward wanderings that he is kept

²⁷³ Ibid., VII. 13.

²⁷⁴ We will recall that in Chapter Two we noted that according to Augustine “man’s true honor is God’s image and likeness in him, but it can only be preserved when facing him from whom its impression is received” (Ibid, XII. 16).

from grasping truth, we are still left with the question why man wanders away from God to begin with. Augustine's answer to this question is pride. The mind's greedy preoccupation with the physical world and its bodily images is symptomatic of its pride; it is the inevitable product of the mind's extravagant love for itself.²⁷⁵ In Book XII

Augustine writes:

What happens is that the soul, loving its own power, slides away from the whole which is common to all into the part which is its own private property. By following God's directions and being perfectly governed by his laws it could enjoy the whole universe of creation; but by the apostasy of pride which is called the beginning of sin it strives to grab something more than the whole and to govern it by its own laws; and because there is nothing more than the whole it is thrust back into anxiety over a part, and so by being greedy for more it gets less. That is why greed is called the root of all evils. Thus all that it tries to do on its own against the laws that govern the universe it does by its own body, which is the only part it has part-ownership in. And so it finds delight in bodily shapes and movements, and because it has not got them with it inside, it wraps itself in their images which it has fixed in the memory.²⁷⁶

Thus we see that according to Augustine, man, out of love for his own power, forsakes the eternal goodness (the whole) that he is able to share in in favor of the part that is its rational intellect.²⁷⁷ As we shall see, this fall ("slide") from the whole to the part is laden with destructive irony.

²⁷⁵ More explicitly, for someone to be proud is for him or her to be necessarily greedy, and for someone to be greedy is for him or her to be necessarily proud. Pride is always productive of greed, and greed is always the product of pride. Psychologically speaking, we might say that pride is a state of mind, or a way of being, that always manifests itself in behavior that aims to get for the individual more than their share.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, XII. 14.

²⁷⁷ There are two candidates for what Augustine is referring to when he writes that the soul slides away from the whole "into the part which is its own private property." Augustine may either be referring to the body, the "only part it [the soul] has part-ownership in," or he may be referring to the image of God in man (the rational mind), the soul's "very best attribute or possession" (*Ibid.*, XIV. 4). I believe he has the latter possibility in mind. Augustine traces the fall of man from the whole into the part in three stages. The last stage is where man finds pleasure in the things of the body alone – "to the things in which the beasts find their pleasure" (*Ibid.*, XII. 16). The middle stage is when man finds pleasure in experiencing his own power, and the first stage is when man finds pleasure in eternal truth alone (*Ibid.*, XII. 16). In the above passage it is clear that Augustine is not yet referring to the bottom-most level when he states that the mind,

As we noted in Chapter Two, the image of God is the soul's best attribute or possession.²⁷⁸ More pointedly, Augustine here states that it can be said to be his private property. However, as we also observed in Chapter Two, the rational mind acts rationally, and is the image of God, only insofar as it is focused on, and refers all earthly goods to, God's eternal goodness. What is more, apart from the persistent presence of God, the mind would be foolish, its thoughts empty. The mind would become, in fact, non-rational.²⁷⁹ Yet this is precisely the wayward path the mind has embarked on in its

out of love for its own power, slides away from the part into the whole. This is because he introduces the mind's delight in the pleasures of the body – what the soul has part-ownership in – as being the *product* of anxiety arising from the mind's love for the part that is its own private property. Augustine is clearly not identifying these two parts as identical. Concerning this fall Augustine asks: "And how could he travel this long way from the heights [the whole] to the depths [the body] except through the half-way level of self?" (Ibid., XII. 16). Finally, added to these considerations, as we noted in Chapter Two, is the fact that Augustine asserts that the image of God is immortally engrained in the soul's immortality; "this image is always there, whether it is so worn away as to be almost nothing, or faint and distorted, or clear and beautiful (Ibid., XIV. 6). Being image belongs to the soul as soul. It is its "best attribute or possession" (Ibid., XIV. 4) It therefore can be said, as Augustine says here, to be its private property. Accordingly, it stands to reason that the image of God, man's best possession, which is immortally engrained in the soul's immortality, is the part that Augustine is referring to when he traces the tripartite fall of man from his rest in eternal truth to his collapse into the pleasures of the body. As a final consideration we might add that unlike either the realm of truth or the world around us, the mind is only known by itself – one cannot know another mind as one knows one's own, whereas an equal degree of knowledge and familiarity with the realm of truth and the world might be shared amongst persons.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., XIV. 4.

²⁷⁹ This statement appears to be incongruous with Augustine's claim that the human soul "is never anything but rational and intellectual" (Ibid., XIV. 6). However, we might imagine man's ability to understand God's eternal truth and goodness to be akin to a divining rod. A divining rod is a forked stick, usually of hazel or willow, believed to indicate the presence of water by bending downward. However, if the earth were suddenly devoid of water, the stick of hazel or willow could no longer be said to possess this ability; quite simply, the stick of hazel or willow could no longer be said to be a divining rod. This is because the ability of the stick to determine the presence of water is really the *product* of properties unique to both hazel and willow *and* the presence of water; the ability of the hazel or willow stick to divine water relies no less on the presence of water than on properties inherent to it. Similarly, the mind of man could not be rational if God were absent from it. This is because its ability to know, understand, and judge goodness, beauty, and justice depends on the presence of these eternal realities to it. The mind can no more think and act rationally in the absence of God's presence than a willow stick can divine the presence of water where there is none. Thus, while the human mind is unique among animals in that it can attain to unchanging immaterial realities, it is "never anything but rational and intellectual" (Ibid., XIV. 6) only insofar as God remains present to it. In the absence of God's presence, man could no more think and act rationally than animals. Accordingly, it also follows that man can know God only insofar as God allows himself to be known by man; God's eternal nature cannot be made captive to the human mind. Rather, man's ability to

pride. In loving its “capacity to use reason and understanding in order to understand and gaze upon God”²⁸⁰ more than God himself, the mind has begun to effect its own foolish thoughtlessness by directing the gaze of its thought away from God’s wisdom to itself – that which, as creature, only has the capacity to receive, and not be, eternal wisdom.

To be sure, Augustine asserts that we are right to esteem the soul, preferring it to physical bodies, their images, and even light. However, this is because we *do not* value the soul in itself, “but in the art by which it was made.”²⁸¹ He writes: “For the reason we value it once made is that we see the reason why it was worth making. This reason, this art is truth, and the simple good; for it is nothing else but the good itself, and thus it is also the highest good.”²⁸² Accordingly, in turning its gaze towards itself and away from the light of God’s presence in which it is to love itself, “sliding away from the whole that is common to all the mind into the part which is its own private property,” the mind loves improperly a good that exists and is praiseworthy only in its connection to eternal goodness and truth. Therefore, by inappropriately loving its own power, the soul is effectively working to erode the foundation upon which it is able to love and esteem itself. In short, out of an inflated love for its own power, the mind is ultimately establishing the impossibility of both its rational activity and hence its self-love.²⁸³ It is

know God depends on God’s desire to dispose himself freely to the mind of man, which he has made receptive of his truth.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., XIV. 6.

²⁸¹ Ibid., VIII. 5.

²⁸² Ibid., VIII. 5.

²⁸³ As we established in Chapter Two, for the mind to be acting rationally is for it to refer all goods in its life – including itself – to the good by which they are good. Moreover, if the mind is to be loved, as Augustine contends, not in itself but in the art in which it was made, it follows that if it establishes for itself the impossibility of attaining the goodness and truth (the art) by and for which it was made by loving itself more than its Creator, the mind has effectively eroded the ground upon which it is loveable. C. S. Lewis, in his characteristic manner, echoes Augustine on this point. He observes that, “the woman who makes a dog

only because the mind's connection with God is not dependent on the will of man but on the will of God that the mind does not succeed in extinguishing its capacity to use reason and understanding to gaze upon God; only because the Creator remains providentially present to the creature does man, in desiring to be the author of his own life, fail to destroy that life.

Moreover, as Augustine remarks in the quotation above, in loving its own power and sliding away from the whole that is common into the part that is its private property, the mind thereby endeavors to grab more than the whole. This is because by claiming independence from God by mistakenly believing that the power of the rational intellect is its own, the mind thereby claims God-like status for itself and thus it attempts to grab more than the whole by desiring to author both its own ends and to have at its disposal the power necessary to realize them. However, as Augustine notes, the mind is soon made anxious in the dawning realization that this whole is a fiction. Thus, realizing that “there is nothing more than the whole” the mind “is thrust into anxiety over a part, and so by being greedy for more it gets less.”²⁸⁴ Stated otherwise, in desiring to be the author of its own interests and to be governed by its own laws, the mind discovers that its power is insufficient to the ends that it desires for itself.²⁸⁵ Thus, failing its ability to grasp more

the center of her life loses, in the end, not only her human usefulness and dignity but even the proper pleasure of dog-keeping. The man who makes alcohol his chief good loses not only his job but his palate and all power of enjoying the earlier (and only pleasurable) levels of intoxication” (Lewis 14). Lewis continues: “Of course, this law has been discovered before, but it will stand re-discovery. It may be stated as follows: every preference of a small good to a great, or a partial good to a total good, involves the loss of the small or partial good for which the sacrifice was made” (Lewis 14). According to Augustine, man has preferred his own goodness to God's goodness, and in so doing, he has lost not only the whole, but also the part; in short, in forsaking the whole for the part man has inadvertently forsaken both God and himself.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., XII. 14.

²⁸⁵ The mind, loving its own power, comes to believe (mistakenly) that it not only has the power, but also the right, to determine its own ends. Finding its power lacking, it nevertheless feels it has the right to that

than the whole it was created to enjoy (rather than govern), the mind directs its attention to exercising power over the body, the only part “it has a part-ownership in.”²⁸⁶ In this way the mind finds delight in the pleasures of the physical world and the power it is able to exercise both over it and over the images contained in its memory. Augustine writes:

In this way it defiles itself foully with a fanciful sort of fornication by referring all its business to one 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 to their senses; or carnal pleasure, plunging itself into this muddy whirlpool.²⁸⁷

Therefore, while man is alone among creatures in that no other nature is interposed between himself and God, he finds himself living as a beast as his loves are directed away from God and toward the material world. Estranging himself from God’s wisdom by substituting in its place love for his own power, man begins his wayward wanderings, descending from the whole of God’s truth that is common into the part, all the while attempting to grab more than the whole “by the apostasy of pride.” Thus man distances himself from God by becoming increasingly dissimilar as he directs his gaze away from eternal wisdom and goodness – the art by which and for which he was made. Then, having discovered that there is no more than the whole, in his anxiety “he is thrust down as a punishment from his own half-way level to the bottom, to the things in which

power. Thus, in its anxiety, it searches to find those ends that it has the power to secure. Hence, the mind finds itself enjoying those goods that it ought only use.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., XII. 14.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., XII. 14.

It is significant to note that for Augustine, the fact the mind busies itself with satisfying its curiosity by culling pleasures from the physical world indicates that the mind has forgotten itself (Ibid., X. 7). Once again, for the mind to think about itself is for it to discover the truth of God’s ineradicable presence to it, thus discovering that all its knowing and loving activity ultimately depends on God’s providential presence. Accordingly, the more the mind occupies itself with the pleasure it receives from external physical realities, the more it fails to remember its nature, and thereby its need, of God. In this way it comes (mistakenly) to think of itself as secure, in turn thereby thinking of itself all the less (Ibid., X. 7).

the beasts find their pleasure”²⁸⁸ Hence, man further increases his distance from God by exacerbating his dissimilarity. The wisdom of God has become strange and foreign, and in its place man has only the curious, conceited, and carnal ends he authors for himself as he refuses to relinquish, in his pride, his greed to experience his own power.²⁸⁹

At this point one might well reply that the remedy for man’s pride is easily at hand. While Augustine in Book VIII exhorts his readers not to ask what truth is, lest a cloud of fancies and bodily images obstruct the vision of their intellect, we will also recall that in Book VII of *Confessions* Augustine, under the tutelage of the books of the Platonists, managed to free his mind from the limitations of corporeal images and attain a fleeting glimpse of God himself. Similarly, we will also remember, in the course of his discussion of the image of God in Books X and XIV of *De Trinitate*, Augustine’s insistence that the mind must know (think) itself so that it might re-discover its true nature and the nearness of God to it. In this way the mind of man will be brought to the proper understanding of itself as it comes to understand God – that is, as it comes to understand that its presence to itself as a thinking and loving thing is always mediated by the irreducible nearness of God’s unchangeable goodness to it. Accordingly, we might reasonably ask why Augustine does not encourage his readers to turn to the books of the

²⁸⁸ Ibid., XII. 16. It is worthwhile to quote this passage in whole, for here Augustine succinctly describes the fall we have been tracing.

For man’s true honor is God’s image and likeness in him, but it can only be preserved 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. But out of greed to experience his own power he tumbled down at a nod from himself into himself as thought to a 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. (Ibid., XII. 16)

²⁸⁹ Again, it is only because God remains present to the mind of man that he is able to believe that his power to reason is wholly his own.

Platonists and therein discover the means necessary to free the mind from its enslavement to bodily images so that it might ascend to the realm of incorporeal spirit. For it is only with this ascent, we might reasonably expect, that the mind will be cured of its pride as it comes to see with the eyes of its rational intelligence that both what it sees, and the power by which it sees it, are the result of God's self-giving presence to it. Knowing that both its thinking activity and its goodness are made possible by the presence of God to it, the mind will place itself under God – not by subsuming its interests to God, but recognizing that its interests are, at bottom, identical to God's interests for it.²⁹⁰

However, rather than finding the mind's ascent to eternal goodness to be curative of man's pride, Augustine finds demonstrated in man's response to the sight of God's

²⁹⁰ The question of whether man ought to subsume his interests to God's interests is a question that Augustine would assert man could only pose while he suffers beneath the weight of his sinful lust for material goods; more specifically, this question demonstrates the perverted condition of our created nature that is the result of man's pride. Since the eternal immutable God sits at the very heart of man's subjectivity, and man's proper activity is the contemplation (worship) of God alone, the goodness that is God's very being is to be our first love and greatest joy, towards which all our loving and knowing activity is to be directed. Quite simply, our nature is designed to participate in his. Augustine writes that good souls are happy with the contemplation of nature, "in which nothing is better or more loved than the nature which created and established all other natures" (*De Trinitate* XIV. 12). Consequently, man's interest is God's interest for man, where God's interest is for his creatures to steadfastly remain where they have been established in the order of nature, unchangeably lit – despite their best efforts otherwise – by the light of his goodness. "What it comes to then is that if the soul consults its own interests or those of others with good will, it aims at obtaining those inner and higher things that are not possessed privately but in common by all who love them, possessed in a chaste embrace without limitations or envy . . ." (*Ibid.*, XII. 15). The perversion of humankind's will is demonstrated by the fact that we are not primarily concerned with re-ordering our loves so that we re-form our interests so that they are identical to God's interests for us. Rather, man's dominant concern is to have God conform to our interests and loves. In *Confessions*, Augustine asserts that it was this desire to have God conform to his own interests that was behind his adoption of Manicheism. In particular, it was the Manichean doctrine that the good human soul is the very substance of God, and that man suffers evil because God's substance lacks the power necessary to prevent human souls – and hence itself – from suffering evil that drew Augustine's attention. Augustine writes:

What could be worse arrogance than the amazing madness with which I asserted myself to be by nature what you are? I was changeable and this was evident to me from the fact that I wanted to be wise and to pass from worse to better. Yet I preferred to think you mutable rather than hold that I was not what you are. That is why I was pushed away, and why you resisted my inflated pride. . . I used to argue that your unchangeable substance is forced into mistakes rather than confess that my mutable nature deviated by its own choice and that error is its punishment. (*Confessions* IV. XV. 26)

truth the absolute intractability of the soul's love for its own power apart from the active intervention of God on the mind of man in the person of the Holy Spirit. This can be seen clearly in Augustine's understanding of Romans 1:20-22 in both *Confessions* Book VII and *The Spirit and the Letter*, the latter being a treatise written by Augustine in 412 during the fifteen-year period in which *De Trinitate* was composed. In Romans 1:20-22 Paul writes:

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. So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools.²⁹¹

Therefore, having completed our examination of Augustine's understanding of the soul's slide away from the whole of God's truth into the part, we shall now turn to Augustine's use of Romans 1:20-22 in these two texts to demonstrate why he holds the Platonic method of self-purification to be inadequate to the task of curing man of his pride. In so doing we will come to see that when Augustine asserts that both what the mind sees, and the power by which it sees it, are the result of God's self-giving presence to it, he does not have in mind simply the soul's capacity to use reason and understanding to gaze upon God. Rather, when Augustine asserts that man receives both the sight and the power to raise his regard to the Creator himself, man receives both not simply as belonging to the order of creation; having alienated himself from that order through his willful rejection of repose in the power of divine wisdom, man is graced with the vision of God in spite of

²⁹¹ Romans 1:20-22. NRSV.

the foolishness of his heart.²⁹² We will first analyze Augustine's use of Romans 1:20-22 in *Confessions*, and then we will turn to its use in *The Spirit and the Letter*.

In *Confessions* Book VII Augustine famously records his vision of God.²⁹³ With this ascent to the vision of God, thereby arriving at certain knowledge of God's existence, Augustine discovers for himself the truth of Paul's words in Romans 1:20.

He writes: "I would have found it easier to doubt whether I was myself alive than that there is no truth 'understood from the things that are made' (Rom 1:20)."²⁹⁴ Moreover, while he was incapable of sustaining the vision, Augustine is now convinced that God's incorporeal nature can be known through a carefully reasoned examination of the material world. Augustine writes that though "With a groan I crashed into inferior things," he nevertheless remained "wholly certain that your invisible nature 'since the foundation of the world is understood from the things which are made, that is your eternal power and divinity' (Rom 1:20)."²⁹⁵

However, Augustine's ascent to the vision of God taught him more about the truth of Paul's words than that God's invisible nature can be known through the things that are made. More specifically, Augustine came to understand the truth of verses 21-22.

Furthermore, it is the truth of Romans 1:21-22, rather than v. 20, that Augustine takes to

²⁹² Even while facing God – loving the Good more than all other goods – man can only attain and sustain the vision because God has given him the capacity to reason, i.e., has made him receptive of eternal realities, and because God remains present to the mind at all times. By turning away, man is effectively doing his best to remove himself from God's presence and his place in the order of creation. Thus the power by which man (the Platonist) is able to see God is a special donation designed to correct man's willful rejection of his rest in the power of God's wisdom. In short, it is a grace given to men to make them aware of their weakness and distance from God; it is not a donation of power based on any previous merits on their part.

²⁹³ See *Confessions* VII. x. 16 and VII. xvii. 23.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, VII. x. 16.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, VII. xvii. 23.

be the most pressing truth of the human condition. In turn, it is this truth that has everything to do with Augustine's understanding of human knowing, wherefrom his foundational premises arise: first, that the triune God both orders and constitutes man's thinking activity, and second, that the mind of man images the trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

To begin our analysis of Augustine's understanding of Romans 1:20-22 in Book VII of *Confessions* we have to first note the manner in which he introduces his discovery of Platonic philosophy. Immediately preceding his discussion of the Platonic books introduced to him by "a man puffed up with monstrous pride,"²⁹⁶ Augustine writes the following concerning God's intentions for him: "First you wanted to show me how you 'resist the proud and give grace to the humble' (1 Pet. 5:5), and with what mercy you have shown humanity the way of humility in that your 'Word was made flesh and dwelt among' men (John 1:14)."²⁹⁷ This preface to his discussion of the truths discovered by the Platonists is extremely significant, for here Augustine declares his understanding of God's purpose in leading him to their books, and it is in light of this statement that Augustine's accounts of his vision must be read. Thus, though it is clear in Book VII of *Confessions* that Augustine sees his ascent to the vision of God via Platonic philosophy to be an indispensable grace given to him by God, both coaxing him out of his distress over the presence of evil in the world and curing him of materialistic thinking,²⁹⁸ more

²⁹⁶ Ibid., VII. ix. 13.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., VII. ix. 13.

²⁹⁸ Augustine writes:

You have mercy on dust and ashes, and it has pleased you to restore my deformities in your sight (Ps 18:15). By inward goads you stirred me to make me find it unendurable until, through my inward perception, you were a certainty to me. My swelling was reduced by your hidden healing

important still is the fact that through this vision Augustine eventually came to discover the sin of his pride and the commendation of humility in Jesus Christ. Accordingly, following his account of his ascent to the vision of God Augustine records the descent of his thought into futility. It is to this account that we will now turn.

Following the vision Augustine notes that while he was now certain that God is neither extended in space, nor undergoes change, and that all things are derived from him, in lacking the strength necessary to maintain the vision and thus rest in the enjoyment of God's wisdom,²⁹⁹ "I began to want to give myself airs as a wise person" and "I was puffed up with knowledge."³⁰⁰ Thus, while he became certain that the immutable God exists,³⁰¹ and thus escaped the blindness of his total ignorance of God, Augustine's thought became darkened as he subsequently fell into an impiety of another sort; namely, unable to sustain the vision of God and thus become wise, Augustine nevertheless ventured to claim this wisdom for himself.³⁰² Hence, despite having raised his regard to the immutable light of God's goodness, and upon being cast out having his own weakness laid bare, Augustine's pride not only remained unbowed, but it became

hand, and my mind's troubled and darkened eye, under the hot dressing of salutary sorrows, was from 'day to day' (Ps 60:9) brought back to health. (*Confessions*. VII. viii. 12)

²⁹⁹ "Of these conceptions I was certain; but to enjoy you I was too weak" (Ibid., VII. xx. 26).

³⁰⁰ In *De Trinitate* Augustine writes: "If you neglect to hold dear in charity the wisdom which always remains the same, and hanker after knowledge through experience of changeable, temporal things, this knowledge puffs up instead of building up" (*De Trinitate* XII. 16). Thus, Augustine suggests in *Confessions* that in failing to sustain and reproduce the vision of God - "But I did not possess the strength to keep my vision fixed. My weakness reasserted itself, and I returned to my customary condition" (*Confessions* VII. xvi. 22) - he substituted the knowledge of the world for the wisdom of God, and in so doing, came to pass off this knowledge as the wisdom which is God's alone. In this way Augustine himself tried to grab more than the whole - claiming to be wise himself without giving honor and glory to the wisdom by which man can be wise- and was therefore cast into the part.

³⁰¹ As we noted in the Prologue, *Confessions* Book VII is largely Augustine's record of his struggle to maintain belief in God amidst the threat that the presence of evil poses to that belief. Only with the sight of God does Augustine become certain that God exists, and thus he arrives at the realization that any explanation of the origin of evil must necessarily be such that God's immutability is unquestioned.

magnified. Refusing to accept his weakness, he continued to look within himself “to obtain strength enough to enjoy you.”³⁰³ Thus we find that Augustine himself, having risen to the sight of God, failed to place himself under God in the order of creation. Instead, although he succeeded, at least temporarily, in restraining some of his greed for material things, he remained mired in the part and alienated from the whole on account of his love for his own power. Therefore, running beneath and parallel to the story of his struggle to maintain his belief in God in the face of the problem of evil, we find in Book VII of the *Confessions* that Augustine also constructs a narrative of his own experience that corresponds to the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 1: 20-22. Here Augustine not only traces the arc of his mind’s ascent into knowledge, but also its subsequent descent into darkness, the mind’s thinking becoming futile on account of its presumption.³⁰⁴

However, Augustine does not find man’s sin to be most powerfully demonstrated by his descent into presumption following the vision of God. Rather, he finds man’s sin to be demonstrated primarily by the mind’s failure to respond appropriately to God at the moment of the vision itself. The futility and the emptiness of man’s thinking are merely the natural result and the inevitable extension of the mind’s failure to respond properly to

³⁰² Ibid., VII. xx. 26.

³⁰³ Ibid. VII. xviii. 24.

³⁰⁴ Augustine writes the following concerning the purposes of God in introducing him first to the books of the Platonists and subsequently to the letters of Paul.

Your intention was that the manner in which I was affected by them should be imprinted in my memory, so that when later I had been made docile by your books and my wounds were healed by your gentle fingers, I would learn to discern and distinguish between presumption and confession, between those who see what the goal is but not how to get there and those who see the way which leads to the home of bliss, not merely as an end to be perceived but as a realm to live in. (Ibid., xx. 26)

God in his sight. In a word, having come into the presence of God, presumption is the unavoidable offspring of the mind neither honoring him as God nor giving thanks (Romans 1:21).³⁰⁵ Leaving aside *Confessions* we will now turn to *The Spirit and the Letter*, for it is here that Augustine discusses in detail the sinfulness of the Platonists' (and his own) failure to glorify God and give him thanks.

In *The Spirit and the Letter* Augustine begins his discussion of Romans 1:20-22 with v. 18, which he quotes as follows: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in iniquity."³⁰⁶ He notes that Paul does not call these men ignorant of the truth, but instead says that they held the truth in iniquity. Accordingly, understanding Paul to be addressing these comments to Gentiles, Augustine asks how these men, not having the law, managed to have knowledge of the truth. He finds Paul's answer in v. 20 – that the invisible things of

Accordingly, whatever good purpose Augustine holds that the books of the Platonists may serve, that purpose is not to cure man of his pride.

³⁰⁵ In the opening of Book VIII of *Confessions* Augustine summarizes the narrative of Book VII in the following way:

Assuredly all men are vain in whom there is no knowledge of God; not even from the things which appear good can they find him who is' (Wisd 13:1). But now I was not in vanity of that kind. I had climbed beyond it, and by the witness of all creation I had found you our Creator and your Word who is beside you and with you is one God, by whom you created all things (John 1:1-3).

There are impious people of another sort who 'not knowing God, have not glorified him as God nor given thanks' (Rom 1:21). In this respect I had fallen; but 'your right hand sustained me' (Ps 17: 26). . . For you said to man 'Behold piety is wisdom', and 'Do not wish to appear wise (Job 28:28; Prov 26:5). 'Those who asserted themselves to be wise have been made foolish' (Rom 1:22).

As we have now seen, although Augustine escaped the vanity of thought that attended his ignorance of God's incorporeal substance and the Manichean doctrines that preyed upon this ignorance, his subsequent descent into presumption was the product of his pride – demonstrated starkly in his refusal to honor God and give him thanks. However, as he suggests here, it was only thanks to the exceptional grace of God in sustaining him that he did not fall away as much as he deserved (and was actually attempting to accomplish for himself). Furthermore, as we will see below with our analysis of *The Spirit and the Letter*, and as the verses quoted above suggest, only by recognizing his needfulness of God's constant provision – not simply as fallen man, but as proper to his status as creature – did Augustine become wise

³⁰⁶ *The Spirit and the Letter*, 19. xii.

the Creator have been understood through the visible things of creation. Augustine writes: “There have, indeed, been great minds who sought earnestly for truth this way and were able to find it.”³⁰⁷ However, given that these men have attained to the sight of God

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 19. xii. Augustine consistently asserts in his works that (some of) the Platonists have succeeded in reaching a genuine apprehension of God. In *Confessions* VII Augustine’s appraisal of the heights reached by Platonic philosophy is robust. He notes that in the books of the Platonist he read, “not of course in these words, but with entirely the same sense and supported by numerous and varied reasons. ‘In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him nothing was made. What was made is life in him; and the life was the light of men’” (*Confessions* VII. ix. 13). Likewise, in *De Trinitate* Augustine again asserts that the Platonists have succeeded in attaining to the sight of God. However, stepping back from the enthusiasm of *Confessions*, Augustine displays greater reserve in what he is willing to concede. He writes that “some of them have been able to direct the keen gaze of their intellects beyond everything created and to attain, in however small a measure, the light of unchanging truth . . .” (*De Trinitate* IV. 20). Thus, unlike Book VII of *Confessions* where Augustine commends the heights reached by Platonic philosophy while chastising them for their pride, in Book IV of *De Trinitate* Augustine expends greater effort in demonstrating the partiality of the Platonic vision, emphasizing to a greater extent the limits imposed by man’s pride on the height of the ascent and the knowledge gleamed from it.

However, this difference need not be read as a difference in kind, but only in degree. Quite simply, Augustine’s purpose in *Confessions* Book VII is different from his purpose in Book IV of *De Trinitate*, and thus his emphases differ accordingly. Though his ascent to the sight of God did not cure him of his pride, as we have noted above, Augustine clearly holds that his ascent to the vision of God via Platonic philosophy was an indispensable grace given to him by God, for it is with this vision that Augustine was no longer tempted to (impiously) compromise God’s immutability in his struggle to understand the origin of evil. In Book IV of *De Trinitate* Augustine’s primary purpose is to demonstrate why Jesus Christ was sent, and hence his focus is on man’s absolute needfulness of the Word’s strength to lead us back to the Father. Accordingly, Augustine is more concerned to stress our inability to grasp – to hold onto and cleave to in love – God’s immutably good self on account of our pride. Thus, after granting that the Platonists have attained, “in however small a measure, the light of unchanging truth,” Augustine writes the following: “To sum up then: we were incapable of grasping eternal things, and weighed down by the accumulated dirt of our sins, which we had collected by our love of temporal things, and which had become almost a natural growth on our mortal stock; so we needed purifying” (*De Trinitate* IV. 24). Nevertheless, it is clear that in both works Augustine claims that the Word of God can be known and perceived according to the capacity of the rational soul (see again *Confessions* VIII. i. 2. as well as *De Trinitate* IV. 26)

However, even more significant is the fact that in both *Confessions* and *De Trinitate* Augustine asserts that any vision of God, from the most robust to the most fleeting, is the product of God’s gratuitous action on the soul. Thus if there is any difference between Augustine’s views regarding the attainability, the duration, and the knowledge gleamed from the vision of God in the *Confessions* and *De Trinitate*, this difference is not the product of a change in his anthropology, but a change in his understanding of the extent to which God decides, in his hidden wisdom, to grace the sinful mind of man with the sight of himself. Similarly, Augustine asserts in *The Spirit and the Letter* that no man is capable of living a sinless life save in the power of God. Accordingly, though some men live more righteous lives than others (just as some men may attain to a fuller apprehension of the divine wisdom than others), the Christian is to resist vehemently the opinion that “the power of the human will can of itself, without the help of God, either achieve perfect righteousness or advance steadily towards it” (*The Spirit and the Letter*. 4. ii).

– undoubtedly a good thing – Augustine is therefore led to ask what their ungodliness and unrighteousness lies in. He finds the answer in Paul’s words in verses 21-22:

In that, having come to know God, “they glorified him not as God, nor gave thanks, but became empty in their thoughts.” Emptiness is the peculiar disease of men who deceive themselves in the belief that they are something when they are not. . . . Thus they have turned away from the very light of changeless truth, and “their foolish heart is darkened.” For though they had known God their heart is not wise, but foolish, since ‘they glorified him not as God, nor gave thanks.’³⁰⁸

It is not difficult to understand why Augustine holds that man’s failure to glorify God and give him thanks after having come into the light of his presence demonstrates the acute sinfulness of man’s soul.³⁰⁹ As has been noted repeatedly, man fails to attain to

Finally, it is necessary to point out that when Augustine laments the fleeting nature of the vision, and writes in *De Trinitate* that the Platonists “were not capable, of course, of fixing the keen gaze of their intellects so constantly on the eternity of that spiritual and unchanging nature that they could see in the wisdom of the creator and ruler of the universe the rolled up scrolls of the centuries,” that the issue of time is a red herring. This is because for God’s eternal nature to be directly perceived by the rational intellect, thus leaving behind the realm of temporal signs, *is* for the mind to step into the timelessness of God’s presence. In God’s presence, the whole of God’s truth is immediately present – the mind’s awareness of God’s wisdom has no past, present, or future. Moreover, in the timeless vision of God, the mind also apprehends the whole of God’s substance. This is because God, as simple substance, does not have parts; any glimpse of God is a glimpse of him in the entirety of his truth. Accordingly, man does not fail to comprehend God’s wisdom because he was unable to sustain the vision for a sufficient length of time. Rather, it is on account of his sin that man is unable rest in the timelessness of God’s light. Consequently, when Augustine focuses on the fleeting nature of the vision, his primary rhetorical purpose is to show that it is because of our sin that we are repelled from that eternal rest. Terms suggesting temporality are unavoidable in expressing this failure. From the perspective of an outsider, or from the other side of the ascent in the “region of dissimilarity,” the vision seems shockingly brief. That is to say, the intellect was not capable of “constantly” focusing its gaze of God’s goodness, where this constancy refers not to the length of the vision itself – it does not take place in time – but rather refers to the fact that on account of the mind’s sin the vision is always bracketed by time as the mind exits, and then re-enters, the temporal, material, order.

³⁰⁸ *The Spirit and the Letter.*, 19. i. Thinking that one is both wise and strong independently of God’s wisdom and strength in one’s life, the mind becomes barren.

³⁰⁹ It should be said that Augustine’s interpretation of these verses in both *Confessions* and *The Spirit and the Letter* does not force one to conclude that Augustine is referring man’s failure to give thanks in the moment of the vision alone. Rather, one could also hold, without compromising the fundamental point Augustine is trying to make, that this failure to give thanks and glorify God properly refers to man’s behavior following the vision. It may well be that Augustine only has this latter possibility in mind. The central point that needs to be made, however, is that if man fails to glorify God and give him thanks upon the sight of him, he will also necessarily fail to glorify God and give him thanks when he finds himself back in the corporeal world. Conversely, if man appropriately glorifies God and gives him thanks while he remains unable to see him face to face, it follows that he will necessarily, and all the more, glorify God and

the sight of incorporeal truth itself, which should be as obvious and as clear as the physical light around us, because his thoughts are clouded with the images of bodies and the fogs of fancy. Only a very few have managed to tame their greed for earthly goods long enough to free the mind from its hostage to corporeal images and thereby reach, however fleetingly, the sight of God's eternal goodness. More importantly, in taming its greed and casting aside thought's enslavement to corporeal images, the mind begins to free itself from its attachment to those realities that fool it into thinking that its power and strength are its own. As noted earlier, in loving its own power the mind slides away from the whole into the part, in the process all the while striving to grab something more than the whole.³¹⁰ Finding that there is nothing more than this whole, the mind is cast into anxiety over parts – in particular, over those parts relating to the body, since it is only the body that, together with God, it has part-ownership in. Thus the mind, as a punishment for its inflated self-love, is through the body given power to set up earthly goods as ends that it indeed can possess for itself. Consequently, having its weakness demonstrated and turning towards those transient and low goods over which it is able to exercise its power, the mind thereby comes to believe that its power is, indeed, strong enough to possess the whole that it failed to possess earlier. Thus the mind continually repeats its past failures out of its inordinate self-love and its greed for material pleasures. However, the Platonist, in successfully abstaining from the temptation to exercise power over earthly

give him thanks upon seeing him face to face. It is only in faith – the confession that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word of the Father – that the mind has in its possession the truth of its relationship to God such that in the love of this truth the heart is purified in preparation for the face to face sight of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

³¹⁰ It does in fact appear that according to Augustine, the apostasy of pride – the mind's inordinate love of its own power – is the attempt to grab something more than the whole.

goods and instead setting his sights on the goodness by which they are good, seemingly escapes this cyclical misapprehension of the source of his power. No longer setting up the possession of earthly goods as an end in itself, but instead desiring eternal truth, the Platonist is ostensibly beginning to aim with a good will “at obtaining those inner and higher things that are not possessed privately but in common by all who love them, possessed in a chaste embrace without any limitations or envy.”³¹¹

However, the Platonist’s failure to glorify God and give thanks upon raising his regard to the Creator’s eternal truth gives the lie to this interpretation of the reform of his willing activity. At the moment when no corporeal matter or its images interferes with or clouds the mind’s understanding of the self-giving providential Creator, the Platonist still refuses to relinquish his belief that this power of sight is his own. If he had, he would have given thanks, since the act of giving thanks is the product of the mind’s recognition that “any good in their life is theirs by the grace of God, and that their perfecting in the love of righteousness can come about in no other way.”³¹² Conversely, thanklessness is

³¹¹ *De Trinitate* XII. 15.

³¹² *Ibid.*, x. 17. This statement from *The Spirit and the Letter* can be read in two ways. Firstly, it can be read as referring to man in his fallen state, having slid from the whole into the private part that is his mind, and therefrom into the material world in which the beasts find their pleasure. Secondly, it can be read as referring to man in the state in which God intended him to remain prior to his slide from the whole into the part. However, it is important to note that these two ways of interpreting this statement are not mutually exclusive; more explicitly, for Augustine this statement remains true with either interpretation. The difference between the two readings hangs on how the term “grace” is understood. Here Augustine may indeed be referring to the grace offered to man in the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit whereby he is recalled to the knowledge of God and a life of righteousness thanks to their undeserved intervening action. Thus this statement should be read to be asserting that thankfulness is for the mind to recognize that all goods come to it through Jesus Christ, and that a life of righteousness cannot be lived apart from confessing one’s (forgetfulness of their) needfulness by believing in the incarnate Son. On the other hand, Augustine may simply be referring to God’s free disposal of himself to us, as well as to the fact that we were made in his image. Thus this statement should be read as stating that all man’s knowledge and love of God, and thus his becoming righteous, is only possible because God has freely given himself to creatures whom he has made receptive of the divine life. Whatever interpretation is favored, it is clear that thankfulness is not proper to man in his fallen state alone. Rather, thankfulness is man’s natural state – the state from which he

for “the soul to attribute to itself that which comes to it from God – above all, to think of the works of righteousness as its own, as acquired by itself for itself.”³¹³ Consequently, though the Platonists have reached the knowledge of God through reasoned reflection on man’s knowing and judging activity concerning the beauty and goodness of corporeal nature, their hearts (wills) remain foolish since they take superior pride in the goodness of their own minds than the good from which they get their being.³¹⁴ Thus the visions attained by these men do not serve to demonstrate their greater purity of heart, but rather expose the absolute sinfulness of the human condition.³¹⁵ Ultimately, the Platonic ascent is to be commended not for any method or course of action that it prescribes, but because with it we see the most profound expression of man’s pride. It is for this reason that

has slid away. Man giving thanks in his love of Christ is to prepare him for the state of thanksgiving to which he is to be returned in eternity.

³¹³ Ibid., X. 18.

³¹⁴ Augustine writes that pride “is the fault which has caused even great men to fall away from the steadfastness of the divine being into the dishonor of idolatry” (*The Spirit and the Letter* xi. 18). Of course, the gravest form of idolatry perpetuated by man in his pride is setting himself up as a God and claiming divine wisdom for himself.

³¹⁵ This claim might appear to be undermined by Augustine’s remark in the *Confessions* that his inability to conceive of incorporeal substances was the cause of his (sinful) errors in coming to grips with the origin of evil and accepting responsibility for his own actions. (*Confessions* V. ix. 18, 19). However, we will recall that Augustine himself asserts that his fondness for Manichean doctrines was rooted in his pride (n. 292). “My execrable weakness preferred the disastrous doctrine that in me you, almighty God, suffer defeat rather than that, to be saved, I needed to surrender to you” (Ibid., V. x. 18). Augustine’s lack of intellectual sophistication at the time simply gave him ammunition to defend the reasonability of the Manichean position. However, having come to conceive incorporeal substance, and subsequently coming to understand evil to be the privation of good, Augustine was no longer able to defend the rationality of the Manichean doctrine, and thus he could no longer defensibly maintain the doctrines his pride had found so appealing. Nevertheless, as we have seen, Augustine soon found in the Platonists a new doctrinal form for his pride to adopt. Accordingly, the issue of whether man can or cannot conceive incorporeal substance is clearly subsidiary to the problem presented by his pride. However, it is also clear that given the Platonists greater share in truth, Augustine came to find it increasingly difficult to find doctrines that provided a home for the interests arising from his inordinate self-love. Thus following Book VII of *Confessions* we find Augustine struggling to will what he knows he must in light of his failure to sustain the vision of God and his subsequent discovery of the commendation of God’s grace in the letters of Paul. Early in Book VIII, Augustine writes: “And now I had discovered the good pearl. To buy it I had to sell all that I had; and I hesitated (Matt 13:46)” (Ibid., i. 2).

Augustine criticizes the Platonists in Book IV of *De Trinitate* for claiming that they are capable of purifying themselves for the eternal contemplation of God.

However, there are some people who think that they can purify themselves for contemplating God and cleaving to him by their own power and strength of character, which means in fact that they are thoroughly defiled by pride. 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.³¹⁶

Augustine passionately resists the temptation to read the visions of the Platonists as evidence that they had succeeded, of themselves, in reforming their wills where others had failed. To see this point clearer still, we will conclude our analysis of Augustine's understanding of Romans 1:20-22 and its statement of the most pressing truth of the human condition (vs. 21-22) by examining the comparison Augustine draws between the Platonists' response to the divine law in the sight of God's eternal truth, and the Jews' response to the divine law in the form of the Decalogue.

As before in our analysis of Augustine's description of man's slide from the whole into the part, in the above quotation from Book IV of *De Trinitate* we again find Augustine declaring that pride is a violation of divine law.³¹⁷ And, as the quotations above concerning thankfulness suggest, *The Spirit and the Letter* is a treatise primarily concerned with man's ability to fulfill the divine law and perform works of righteousness. However, while both works ultimately identify God's law with divine charity, the questions that exercise Augustine's attention in each work are of a different scope.

³¹⁶ *De Trinitate* IV. 20.

³¹⁷ Again, in Book XII Augustine writes: "By following God's directions and being perfectly governed by his laws it could enjoy the whole universe of creation; but by the apostasy of pride which is called the beginning of sin it strives to grab something more than the whole and to govern it by its own laws" (Ibid., XII. 14).

Namely, in *The Spirit and the Letter* Augustine's primary concern is the question of the power of man's will to fulfill the specific laws given by God to Moses. In *De Trinitate* Augustine's concern is more broadly focused on the question of how man is to (re)discover his place in the order of nature; that is, his concern is for the mind's proper loving activity as it thinks and acts in both the whole of God's truth and the part that is the temporal order. However, as Augustine's discussion of Romans 1:20-22 shows, *The Spirit and the Letter* is a treatise that spans both these questions. In particular, in moving from his discussion of man's ability to fulfill the requirements of the Mosaic law, to Romans 1:20-22, and then back again to the law, Augustine identifies man's response to the knowledge of the divine law given to the one entering into the light of God's presence with man's response to the divine law revealed in the Decalogue.

Noting that Paul, in the verses preceding Romans 1:20-22, commends "the true religion of faith, by which we should show thankfulness to God for our justification,"³¹⁸ Augustine contends that Paul's purpose in Romans 1:20-22 is to oppose "the true religion of faith," at the heart of which lies thanksgiving, to "the contrary state for our abhorrence." And as we have seen, this contrary state is pride: a state that Augustine, understanding himself to be taking his lead from Paul, sees most powerfully demonstrated in the actions of those who have come to the knowledge of the divine law from the things that have been made. Following his discussion of Romans 1:20-22,

³¹⁸ *The Spirit and the Letter* xii. 19. Earlier in the treatise Augustine writes that man cannot be justified by the law since he fails to obey perfectly its commands. Accordingly, the law primarily serves to condemn man and show him his weakness (*Ibid.*, ix. 15). Thus Augustine asserts that man is justified by faith alone, "through which he has believed that his own infirmity could in no way be enabled to fulfill the commands of the law of works, save by the succor of divine grace" (*Ibid.*, x. 16).

Augustine relates the conclusions drawn from it to the question of the power of man's will to perform works of righteousness. He writes:

It is not our purpose in this work to expound the Epistle to the Romans, but to use its testimony to prove as surely as we may that the divine aid for the working of righteousness consists not in God's gift of the law, full as it is of good and holy commands, but in that our will itself, without which we cannot do the good, is aided and uplifted by the imparting of the Spirit of grace. Without that aid, the teaching is a letter that killeth . . . To those who gained knowledge of the Creator through the creature, that knowledge was of no avail unto salvation, because "knowing God they glorified him not as God, nor gave thanks, professing themselves to be wise." Even so, those who through the law of God know how man ought to live are not justified by their knowledge, since "willing to establish their own righteousness they have not been subject to the righteousness of God" (Rom 5:20).

Hence, those who see the divine law in God's eternal truth and those who are given Gods' truth in the form of the law both fail to respond properly on account of their pride. That is, man's love of his own power and his consequent refusal to accept the weakness of his own condition lies behind both his failure to perform willing works of the law and his failure to give thanks for the power given to him by which God's self-giving presence can be known. The Platonist's sight of God's eternal nature is not to be compared to the fulfillment of the law either in whole or in part, thereby satisfying God's will where others have failed.³¹⁹ Rather, it is equivalent to man's rejection of God's holy commands as he willfully fails to do the good that he knows.

³¹⁹ According to Augustine, man's inability to fulfill the law is not a matter of him only fulfilling in part what must be fulfilled in whole in order for him to be considered righteous. Rather, man's will is just as inadequate to obey perfectly part of the law (a single command), as it is to obey the whole (all of God's divine directions). Of itself the will of man cannot either achieve perfect righteousness "or advance steadily towards it" (Ibid., ii. 4). This is because "when the right action and the true aim has begun to appear clearly, there is still no doing, no devotion, no good life, unless it be also delighted in and loved. And that it may be loved, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, not by the free choice whose spring is in ourselves, but through the Holy Spirit which is given us" (Ibid., iii. 5).

Accordingly, Augustine holds that the Platonists have not succeeded in attaining to the sight of God because they have managed to shed the weight of material conceptions and imaginative fancies through a reform of their will. Instead, through the fault of pride these men “have mounted of themselves like blown-up bubbles into the empty air, and fallen down not to rest but to be shattered on the stones of idolatry.”³²⁰ In other words, just as God freely gave his divine law to Moses at Mt. Sinai, so too does God grace individuals by bringing them into his presence.³²¹ Moreover, just as the law serves as a “tutor,” leading man to recognize his need for grace,³²² so too does the ascent to incorporeal truth, and the mind’s subsequent descent in its weakness, serve to show man his need for God’s strength. In short, God graces man with the sight of himself not because of his purity of heart, but in spite of it. As with Augustine, this vision may either ultimately bring man to confess his need of the mediator Jesus Christ, or instead seal God’s wrath, as man, confronted with eternal goodness in its purest form, continues to love the part greater than the whole. Accordingly, when Augustine asserts that man receives both what he sees and the power to see, man does not receive both as belonging to the order of creation. Rather, God graces man with both the sight and the power to see in order that he might become wise, not because he is.

³²⁰ Ibid., xii. 19. In *De Trinitate* Book XII Augustine writes: “But just as our body is raised up by nature to what is highest in bodies, that is, to the heavens, so our consciousness being a spiritual substance should be raised up toward what is highest in spiritual things – not of course by the elevation of pride but by the dutiful piety of justice” (*De Trinitate* XII. 1).

³²¹ Augustine could not have meant this statement literally since it would completely contradict of all his claims concerning the sin of pride and man’s failure to live in right loving relationship with God because of it.

³²² *The Spirit and the Letter* x. 16.

Therefore, with our analysis of Augustine's use of Romans 1:20-22, we can see that the books of the Platonists, and more importantly the Platonic ascent itself, is insufficient to cure man of his pride. Stated in the terms that Augustine employs in *De Trinitate*, though the mind might direct the attention of its thought towards itself in the effort to live according to its nature, "under him it should be subject to and over all that it should be in control of,"³²³ this re-direction of its thinking activity is insufficient to cure man of his inflated self-love. It is for this reason that in *De Trinitate* Augustine couches this inward turn within the context of faith. That is to say, Augustine exercises his mind in the effort to contemplate eternal truth only in the context of worshiping the triune God revealed in scripture in the person of Jesus Christ. All other endeavors to ascend to eternal truth are in vain. Accordingly, noting that having attained to the light of God's truth, the Platonists "ridicule those many Christians who have been unable to do this and who *live* meanwhile *out of faith* (Rom 1:17) alone," Augustine reproaches them with the following:

But what good does it do a man who is so proud that he is ashamed to climb aboard the wood, what good does it do him to gaze from afar on the home country across the sea? And what harm does it do a humble man if he cannot see it from such a distance, but coming to it nonetheless on the wood the other disdains to be carried by?³²⁴

³²³ *De Trinitate* X. 7.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, IV. 20. Similarly, Augustine writes in Book VII of *Confessions*:

It is one thing from a wooded summit to catch a glimpse of the homeland of peace and not to find the way to it, but vainly to attempt the journey along an impracticable route surrounded by the ambushes and assaults of fugitive deserters, with their chief, 'the lion and the dragon) (Ps. 90:13). It is another thing to hold on to the way that leads there, defended by the protection of the heavenly emperor. There no deserters from the heavenly army lie waiting to attack. For this way they hate like a torture. (*Confessions* VII. xxi. 27).

The Christian's heart, conversely, far outstrips the Platonist's in wisdom; recognizing his needfulness, he clings to the mediator Jesus Christ identified in scripture and worshiped in the church.³²⁵ Thus Augustine's exhortation for the mind to know itself is not just for the mind to become convinced of the irreducible nearness of God to it, but also to be convinced of the absolute weakness of its will independent of the succor of divine grace. Hence we read in the opening of Book IV of *De Trinitate*:

The knowledge of earthly and celestial things is highly prized by the human race. Its better specimens, to be sure, attach even greater value to knowledge of self; and the mind that knows its own weakness deserves more respect than the one that, with no thought for a little thing like that, sets out to explore, or even knows already, the course of the stars, while ignorant of the course it should follow itself to its own health and strength.³²⁶

Moreover, as Augustine suggests in the above quotation from *The Spirit and the Letter*, it is only with the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit that man's will is brought to faith in the love of Jesus Christ through the awareness of its weakness and inability to live according to the divine law. Accordingly, echoing *The Spirit and the Letter*, Augustine continues in Book IV:

But take a man who has been roused by the warmth of the Holy Spirit and has already woken up to God; and in loving him he 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 discovered himself, and realized that his own sickness cannot be compounded with God's cleanness. So he finds it a relief to weep and implore him over and over again to take pity and pull him altogether out of his

³²⁵ Again, the difference between the fallen man and the man resting in the contemplation of God's eternal truth is that the former has, in his pride, forgotten his needfulness, whereas the latter is continually cognizant of his needfulness. The difference is *not* that fallen man has become needful whereas before he was not. Instead, the fallen man, in forgetting his need of divine strength and wisdom to image the Creator whom he was given a capacity to image, has forgotten himself. Prior to his slide from the part into the whole man did not forget himself; in the knowledge that all goods were his by God's grace alone he unfailingly desired to rest in and receive, rather than possess as his private property, God's gracious goods. In this way he unfailingly imaged the God in whose image he was created.

³²⁶ *De Trinitate*, IV. 1.

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 to us by God.³²⁷

Therefore, we can now see that according to Augustine, it is only in the warmth of the Holy Spirit that man comes to recognize his sickness and need of God's strength and wisdom. Furthermore, having been awakened to the truth of himself, man is now prepared, in the Holy Spirit, to love the love that the Father shows for us in his Son Jesus Christ. Thus, it is only by accepting, in the Holy Spirit, the truth of its weakness demonstrated by the love of God for humanity in the humility of Jesus Christ that man can come to know that the God that both orders and constitutes his thinking activity is not a monad but the trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Moreover, this truth of the mind's relationship to its Creator is only discovered in scripture, wherein both Jesus Christ's and the Holy Spirit's eternal relationship to the Father is revealed; though the good can be described from the things that are made, the mind cannot see that this good is triune. Accordingly, when we read Augustine writing in Book IX that the "certitude of faith at least initiates knowledge; but the certitude of knowledge will not be completed until after this life when we see *face to face* (I Cor 13:12),"³²⁸ we can now understand that the certitude of faith and the certitude of knowledge are two species of knowing belonging to the same genus.³²⁹ That is, knowledge that is grounded in the apprehension of what is unchanging is the species of knowing proper to man prior to his slide from the

³²⁷ Ibid., IV. 1.

³²⁸ Ibid., IX. 1.

³²⁹ Strictly speaking, it is redundant to use the phrase "the certitude of knowledge." To know something, for Augustine, is to be certain of its truth. That is why knowledge, properly speaking, is on the side of what is unchanging – the eternal substance of the triune God.

part into the whole,³³⁰ whereas the certitude of faith that is grounded in trust in the truthfulness of scripture is the species of knowing that is proper to humanity's fallen condition: "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."³³¹

Both, however, belong to the same genus insofar as they are, at bottom, the product of the action of the triune God on the mind of man, and thus the certainty that attends each is of the same kind.³³² Humankind's pre-lapsarian repose in the light of eternal wisdom depends no less on the self-giving presence of God than his return to that wisdom through faith in the saving missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, since it is only in the in-dwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that the mind truly recalls its Lord.³³³

Accordingly, the process of coming to know the triune God is made possible by the Trinity itself in the Holy Spirit through Christ and scripture.

Furthermore, as the above quotation from Book IX states, it is only from the certitude of faith that knowledge is initiated. This is because, as we noted in the Prologue, it is only in the loving presence of the Holy Spirit, directing man's thought to the incarnate Word Jesus Christ, that man is cured of the inordinate love of self in whose

³³⁰ Though Augustine thinks that the arguments of the Platonists for the existence of the forms of goodness, justice, and beauty are persuasive and grasped with relative ease, this ease is not to be confused with the sight of these forms themselves. Augustine repeatedly insists that any sight of these forms is extremely difficult to achieve – nearly impossible for man in his flesh-bound habit of thought. "Few have the acuteness of mind to reach these ideas, and when someone does manage to as far as possible to attain them he does not abide in them, because his very acuteness of mind gets blunted so to say and beaten back, and there is only a transitory thought about a non-transitory thing" (Ibid., XII. 23).

³³¹ Ibid., IV. 24.

³³² Therefore Augustine can be certain of the truth of the church's faith even though the Trinity can only be believed and is not yet seen. In Book VII Augustine writes: "For it is known with complete certainty from the scriptures and is thus to be devoutly believed, and the mind's eye can also achieve a faint but undoubted glimpse of the truth, that the Father is and the Son is and the Holy Spirit is, and that the Son is not the same as the Father is, nor is the Holy Spirit the same as the Father or the Son" (Ibid., VII. 9).

employ reason has been enlisted.³³⁴ By shedding its own love into the heart of man in the person of the Holy Spirit, the Trinity introduces the mind of man to the teaching of the church, thereby enabling scripture to nourish the mind's reason and understanding in order to raise it up "to the sublimities of divine things."³³⁵ In other words, only while giving faith in the Holy Spirit to scripture's identification of God as worshiped in the

³³³ Ibid., XIV. 21.

³³⁴ We will recall that in the Prologue (p 17) we asked how an individual is to determine whether she is being deceived through a misguided use of reason. This is because individuals hold certain beliefs just because they believe themselves not to be deceived in so believing. Furthermore, this does not seem to be a question that reason alone can resolve since it is reason itself that is disorientated. However, as we have seen, Augustine's understanding of man's failure to act rationally – to love the Good more than the created goods which are from it – is the product of the twisted direction of his loving activity. Thus, while the mind of man remains capable of desiring the Good from the things that are made, its full apprehension of what is unchanging is prevented because it loves itself more than the truth it seeks. Accordingly, the individual is only able to determine that she has been deceived through a misguided use of reason as her loving activity is reformed; more specifically, only within the context of faith – once one has been brought into right relationship with God by God himself – can this judgment of one's misguided love of reason be made. The mind itself is unable to cure its misguided use of reason apart from the introduction of divine love into the life of man. This is because, firstly, it fails to recognize, on account of its inflated self-love, that its use of reason is misguided. Secondly, that which is diseased cannot cure itself. Thus, while the mind "keeps something apart by which it can freely make judgments," the mind does not use its reason freely insofar as its loves are disordered. In other words, the mind that has habitually loved itself more than its Creator cannot find within itself what it has rejected from the beginning; that is, it can find within itself neither the knowledge nor the power necessary to affect its own healing.

³³⁵ Ibid., I. 2. We will remember that the three statements that we identified as central to the faith of the Catholic Church as presented by Augustine were the following:

- a) The Father the Son and the Holy Spirit are inseparable, and as such, they work inseparably. Accordingly, "the three are inseparably at work in each of the things which are mentioned as having the proper function of manifesting the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit," (ibid., IV 30) i.e., the Father's voice, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, and Jesus of Nazareth. Furthermore, being of one and the same substance, the individual who has been brought from faith to sight will see in any one person of the Trinity the other two. In the Father both the Son and the Holy Spirit will be seen since the Father cannot be separated from them.
- b) However, it was not the Trinity that was born Jesus of Nazareth, was crucified and rose on the third day, but the Son alone. Likewise, it was not the Trinity that was poured out on the day of Pentecost after the Son's ascension, but the Holy Spirit alone. It is through their temporal missions testified to in scripture that the Trinity is revealed "since they cannot be manifested inseparably by creatures which are so unlike them, especially material ones" (Ibid., IV. 30).
- c) Yet, in the Holy Spirit's taking up abode in the heart's of believers, the Father and the Son are also present. Through the Holy Spirit charity is poured out in our hearths, "and through it the whole triad dwells in us" (Ibid., XV. 15).

It is through the confession of this faith, ultimately captured in the single statement that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God sent from the Father, that knowledge is initiated. The same God from whom we receive the power to judge goodness, beauty, and justice also gives us in the missions of his Son and Holy Spirit the

church does man properly situate himself within the created order such that he might begin to remember and contemplate eternal truth.³³⁶ Finally, having come to know the depths of its weakness through scripture's testimony to the actions that the Son undertook on humankind's behalf, Augustine's assertion that the mind of man images its Creator becomes an injunction for the mind to model itself after Jesus Christ, thereby conforming its word(s) to the Word incarnate. Augustine's analysis of the mind as memory, understanding, and will is not simply a helpful psychological aid, but rather an exhortation for the mind to model the eternal Word as revealed in Jesus Christ through a reformation of its loving activity.

It is to a deeper examination of these conclusions that we will now turn through a probing of Augustine's understanding of the relationship between the individual's experience of divine love and the knowledge that God is triune. The purpose of this investigation is to show that for Augustine, knowing in faith that God is a trinity is always attended by the experience of love, while the experience of divine love is not only inseparable from, but contingent upon, confessing the faith of the church, and therefore that the church's faith is an ineradicable part of the activity of divine love revealing its eternal nature in human history through means appropriate to our fallen condition. However, before we turn to the specific activities that the Holy Spirit and the Son perform in leading the mind of man into the knowledge of God's eternal nature and the experience of love that accompanies this knowledge, we shall turn to a discussion of

true knowledge of our relationship with him. It is only in this apprehension of our relationship to the Creator that we can freely search for eternal truth.

³³⁶ See again Prologue p. 16. Here we noted in our examination of the opening of Book I of *De Trinitate* that the central question for Augustine is how man can properly exercise his mind for God.

scripture, faith, and Augustine's understanding of historical knowledge. For as we have now observed, it is not with the books of the Platonists that humankind finds the teaching necessary to "nourish our understanding and enable it to rise up to the sublimities of divine things."³³⁷ It is only through scripture that the mind of man is so enabled since, unlike the books of the Platonists, here we find the movements of eternal goodness in human history both revealing the fallen condition of man, and reconciling humankind to itself.

In Book IV of *De Trinitate* Augustine ridicules the claims of the Platonists concerning the intellectual heights they have reached:

But just because they can show very truly by the most persuasive arguments and convincing proofs that all temporal things happen according to eternal ideas, does it follow that they have been able to inspect these ideas themselves, and deduce from them how many kinds of animals there are, what are the seminal origins of each, what the measure of their growth, what the cycles of their conceptions, births, life spans, and deaths, how they are moved to seek what suits their natures and shun what harms them? Surely they have not sought their truth about these matters via unchanging wisdom, but by studying the natural history of times and places, and by believing what others have discovered and recorded.³³⁸

Augustine later continues:

³³⁷ Ibid., I. 1. This is not to say that scripture is simply a better textbook than those written by the Platonists. We will recall that in the Prologue we noted that for Augustine, the problem with the Platonic "third-type" is that in rightly understanding that God cannot be conceived in terms of created substances, the diseased desire to give the impression of knowing what one does not is left unrestrained. As such, reason is misguidedly used to defend the individual's own interests and loves rather than to search freely, at the cost of the individual's dearly held opinions, for God's truth. Thus the problem with the Platonist is not simply that they have been using an inferior guide in their search for truth, but rather than their heart remains unwise as they love themselves more than they object that they seek (thereby choosing their guides accordingly). Consequently, Augustine's exhorts man to turn to scripture not simply because herein we find a refinement of the Platonic method, but because scripture is an indispensable means given by God to man to cure him of his pride. Namely, it is in scripture that we discover in Jesus Christ both the striking reality of how much God loves us, and the equally striking reality of "what sort of people we are that he loves, in case we should take pride in our own worth, and so bounce even further away from him and sink even more under our own strength" (Ibid., IV. 2).

³³⁸ Ibid., IV. 21.

So then we should not consult the philosophers about the future succession of the ages or the resurrection of the dead, not even those who have understood to the best of their ability the eternity of the creator *in whom we live and move and are* (Acts 17:28), *because knowing God by the things that are made they have not glorified him as God, or given thanks, but calling themselves wise they have become fools* (Rom 1:20). They were not capable, of course, of fixing the keen gaze of their intellects so constantly on the eternity of that spiritual and unchanging nature that they could see in the wisdom of the creator and ruler of the universe the rolled up scrolls of the centuries, which *there* already are and always are, but *here* only will be and so are not yet.³³⁹

Thus we see from these passages that Augustine holds that it is a theoretical possibility that both future and past events can be known in the light of eternal truth. However, because of the impiety of man's heart, displayed in his failure to glorify God and give him thanks, man is unable to comprehend the depths of the divine wisdom into which he has been led.³⁴⁰ Thus, though the Platonist, in principle, may discover the truth or falsity of Jesus' death and resurrection by deducing it from the eternal ideas, he cannot. In fact, *all* historical knowledge remains outside the Platonists' understanding apart from the detailed and dirty work of "studying the natural history of times and places, and by

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, IV. 23.

³⁴⁰ One might also interpret Augustine to be saying that the philosophers are not to be consulted about past or future events because having not glorified God nor given him thanks, they cannot be trusted to report honestly what they have seen. The reason for this rather more idiosyncratic interpretation is that even though the Platonist's knowledge of the past and the future via these contemplative means may be extremely anemic, they still remain more capable than most to speculate. That is to say, given the theoretical possibility that the past and future can be known by consulting eternal ideas, it follows that the intellectually unsophisticated would have little recourse to doubt claims made by the Platonist concerning the "changes of mutable things and interwoven series of the ages" without these claims being directly disproved by future occurrences or by their own acquaintance with past events. However, this interpretation of Augustine's meaning should be resisted because Augustine does not believe, in fact, that the Platonists have, or ever will, plumb the depths of God's wisdom to the extent that the past can be seen and the future foretold. Again, this is not because knowing "the interwoven series of the ages" via eternal wisdom is a logical impossibility, but because their pride ensures their expulsion from the light of God's truth. In a word, the pride of the Platonists prevents them from seeing the whole of God's truth; it does not keep them from being honest about the whole that they see. (However, we might also say that sin keeps the Platonist from being honest about the part that he sees. Moreover, as a way of restating Augustine's repeated claim that pride keeps man from comprehending the whole of God's truth, we might say that sinful man is incapable of being honest *with himself* when he ascends to the light of God's truth.)

believing what others have discovered and recorded.” As Augustine notes, the steadfast, repeated, and habitual movements of animals remain outside their understanding – surely the sort of knowledge concerning “the changes of mutable things” that would be most easily deduced from the eternal ideas. “Small wonder then,” Augustine writes, “that they have not been able in any way to investigate the unfolding of the ages that stretch out ahead of us, or the turning point of the outward course which carries the human race down like a river, and the return from there to the end that is due to each one.”³⁴¹ Thus, the truth or falsity of Jesus’ death and resurrection (and the future bodily resurrection of all believers) is, and can only be, a matter of belief. The Platonist cannot postpone either his affirmation or denial of this historical event until its truth is verified in the light of the eternal ideas.³⁴² More specifically, he cannot reasonably escape the demand for belief

³⁴¹ Ibid., IV. 21.

Again, on strictly logical grounds the Platonist can assert that this claim is susceptible to verification or falsification, and that he cannot reasonably believe it until it is seen in eternal truth. However, on the basis of this reasoning, the Platonist would have to keep himself from believing everything he hears; stated otherwise, by this standard, what others have discovered and recorded concerning mutable things and the “interwoven series of the ages” cannot be believed by the rational man until these reports are verified in the divine light. Setting aside the absolute impossibility of refusing to believe everything one has heard unless it has been indisputably proven, the Platonist has no reasonable grounds to hold that the reports of others are never veridical. From the fact that the reports of others are, at times, mistaken, and from the fact that individuals, at times, deliberately deceive, it does not follow that the rational course of action is for one to refuse to believe these reports until they are verified by reference to the eternal ideas. As Augustine notes, if this were to be the epistemological course we were to map for ourselves, this would be to relinquish almost all that we know. He writes:

Far be it from us either to deny that we know what we have learnt on the testimony of others; otherwise we would not know the Ocean exists; we would not know that there are countries and cities commended to us by their celebrity and renown; we would not know that the men and their works which we have learnt about from our historical reading really existed; we would not know the things that are reported to us every day from all sides, which are confirmed by constant and consistent indications; finally we would not know where we were born or of what parents, because these are all things that we have believed on the testimony of others. If it is absurd to say such things, then it then has to be admitted that a very great deal has been added to our knowledge by the senses of other people’s bodies as well as of our own. Ibid., XV. 21.

Thus given the fact that he has failed to apprehend a single historical truth by inspecting the eternal ideas, and from the fact that he cannot hold that the reports of others are always mistaken or always designed to

placed on him by the claims of the church regarding the teachings and actions of Jesus Christ by claiming that the reasonable man (i.e., the Platonist), when confronted with a decision of such historical import, delays making his decision until indisputable proofs are at hand. Rather, his decision rests entirely on his predisposition to find these reports loveable.³⁴³ Stated otherwise, man's willingness to accept the resurrection of Jesus

be deceptive, the Platonist cannot reasonably postpone either believing or disbelieving the resurrection because it has not yet been verified in eternal truth.

³⁴³ Naturally there is also the question of whether the resurrection of the body is possible. More specifically, the question is whether bodily resurrection is a natural possibility, since it is clearly a logical possibility. On this point Augustine has less separating his views from those of the Platonists than it might first seem. Most importantly, both Augustine and the Platonist agree that God exists, that God is the Creator of all that is – without which there would be nothing, and that this God, at every moment, providentially sustains and supports all of life through his self-giving presence according to his eternal ideas. Hence, unlike the Humean rejection of miracles, where belief in miracles requires one to choose between upholding the laws of nature or denying the whole of one's experience (which one must do, according to Hume, if one bases his belief in God on the existence of miracles), for both Augustine and the Platonist, the laws of nature are rooted in divine law – in the mind of God. In other words, no unusual or rare event is a violation of the laws of nature since all events arise from the eternal ideas rooted in divine wisdom. Thus while some events might seem to be miraculous in that they are sit far outside man's ordinary experience of the world, from God's point of view, which both the Platonist and Augustine is straining to share, there is no such thing as the miraculous (when a miracle is defined as an event that violates the laws of nature). Thus the Platonist must agree with Augustine that the resurrection of the body is not only a logical but also a natural possibility. Therefore he must find different grounds upon which to object to the Christian's belief in the resurrection of Christ's body.

Perhaps the most powerful objection the Platonist can bring to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body, in particular, the resurrection of the bodies of all believers at the final judgment, is to argue that it is inconsistent with another, perhaps more central, Christian doctrine. Namely, the Platonist could argue that belief in the resurrection of the faithful is inconsistent with the belief that in eternity all believers will see the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on the grounds that where material realities are present there can be no lasting vision of God's eternal nature. This is because, as on earth, the attention of the believer's thought will necessarily be directed away from the light of God's truth. Moreover, since Augustine states eternal life *is* the vision of the Trinity, the Platonist could further argue that given the presence of material bodies, the believer's reward will not be eternal life, but only life everlasting – an infinite number of pasts, presents, and futures. It is important to note that this objection does not directly touch the truth or falsity of Jesus' death and resurrection. However, it does indirectly touch on the historical truth of Jesus death and resurrection insofar as Augustine holds that one of the reasons Christ died and rose from the grave is to model the bodily resurrection of humankind that is to come. Therefore, if the Christian cannot consistently hold that believers have perfected bodies in heaven then, depending on the centrality of this doctrine, the historical veracity of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth could thereby be questioned. Of course, a rejection of Christ's resurrection on these grounds is highly unlikely, and Augustine, of course, does not believe that our bodies will impede or prevent our face to face encounter with the triune God. This is because our wills, now perfectly attuned to the love of God's goodness, will no longer be inordinately attracted by these lesser goods, thereby occluding the soul's vision. In heaven both the light of bodies and the light of God's presence will be perceived with ease, the latter being both more powerfully present and more cherished than the former. In *The City of God* Augustine speculates that in

Christ is wholly related to man's willingness to accept his weakness and consequent need of divine aid. Thus the Platonist finds that though he has been able "to understand the sublime and unchanging substance of God by the things that are made," his decision to accept or reject the claims of the church rests entirely on his willingness to believe a fact which no number of ascents will compel him either to believe or disbelieve. Namely, that he needs to be cured of his pride, and that this cure is the resurrected Jesus of Nazareth the incarnate Son of God, identified in scripture and worshiped in the church.³⁴⁴

Having argued that the past and future cannot be apprehended by ascent to the eternal ideas, and therefore that God's wisdom and purpose in history remains entirely hidden from the philosophers, Augustine nevertheless asserts that the future can be known, but that "it makes all the difference how the future is foretold."³⁴⁵ He notes that the future "may be conjecturally forecast on the strength of past experience" or it "may

heaven, man will perceive God in several ways. He writes: "He will be seen in the spirit (whereby each of us will see Him within ourselves and in one another); He will be seen in Himself; He will be seen in the new heaven and the new earth and in every creature then existing; and, by means of our bodies. He will be seen in every material object toward which the eyes of our spiritual bodies happen to direct their gaze" (*The City of God* XXII. 29). In short, since all our seeing and doing both in the soul and in the body is rooted in one and the same divine law, it is within God's capacity to give us perfected bodies in our eternal home without diminishing our capacity to know and enjoy God's eternal nature. Our bodies need not impede our vision of God's eternal nature as even in them the light of eternal truth will be seen.

³⁴⁴ It may seem more accurate to say that Jesus Christ is identified in the church rather than in scripture, since the church's affirmation of the full divinity of Christ came to be established after nearly three hundred years of scriptural interpretation. Scripture itself does not supply rules for interpreting its statements concerning the identity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. (Likewise, as we noted in the Prologue, scripture does not provide the rule that God is improperly understood when conceived in terms of corporeal matter or created spirit.) Moreover, even if the gospel writers were to detail explicitly the manner in which their accounts were to be read, the question would remain as to whether one ought to read these accounts in the way their authors prescribe. However, by asserting that Jesus Christ is identified in scripture and worshiped in the church, I am not attempting to treat naively the history of the church's engagement with scripture. Nevertheless, once the church affirms that the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit is established in scripture, the church is naturally committed to the belief that this is the teaching of scripture regardless of whether or not it was there to discover (be taught) it. The fact that the church is the only entity that holds that scripture does identify God in this manner does not detract from the fact that the church holds that this scriptural identification is true, and is present in scripture, irregardless of whether it was established by this same God to worship and confess him.

be that things which are going to come about have already started happening, and are seen approaching from afar by sharp-sighted individual who promptly foretell them.”³⁴⁶ In addition, it may be that the angels are shown things by God through his Word, which they, in turn, foretell to some men. Finally, it may be that the “minds of men are raised so high in the Holy Spirit that that they see for themselves and not through angels the present causes of future things in the topmost citadel of all things.”³⁴⁷ It is the third possibility that Augustine endorses in explaining the prophecies of the Bible. Concerning the philosophers and their inability to deduce historical truths from the eternal ideas, Augustine writes that not only “were they quite incapable of seeing these things there, they were not either considered worthy of having them declared to them by holy angels, whether outwardly through the bodily senses, or by interior revelations impressed on their spirits.”³⁴⁸ Augustine continues: “This, though, is how these things were shown to our fathers, who were marked with true piety.”³⁴⁹ More specifically, given Augustine’s analysis of Romans 1:20-22 in *The Spirit and the Letter*, we can assert that it is to those who understood that all goods in their life are theirs by the grace of God that God revealed his divine purposes for the world. Accordingly, the individual who has come to discover his own weakness finds in scripture the purposes of God in history recorded by individuals who, like himself, earnestly implore God “to take pity and pull him altogether

³⁴⁵ *De Trinitate* IV. 22.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, IV. 22.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, IV. 22.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, IV. 23.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, IV. 23.

out of his pitiful condition.”³⁵⁰ It is for this reason that Augustine writes in Book XIV that the mind that has begun to perceive its own weakness and its need of divine aid comes to believe “the trustworthy documents of its God written by his prophets.”³⁵¹ In short, it is only by coming to know the piety of the fathers³⁵² that man comes to put his trust in the truthfulness of scripture, thereby coming to know the divine wisdom and its purpose in history. And as the prophecies of the fathers testify and anticipate, the complementary processes of becoming pious and arriving at the knowledge of divine wisdom’s activity in the temporal order are centrally focused on the person of Jesus Christ. It is in Jesus Christ that man is shown his absolute needfulness of God’s loving power to return to his proper place in the order of creation; it was because the fathers

³⁵⁰ This is not to say that these individuals discover, appreciate, and begin to seek divine aid for their weakness apart from scripture. As was the case with Augustine, scripture plays an integral role in convincing someone that they indeed are weak and in need of divine aid. Furthermore, as shown in our discussion of the Platonists failure to apprehend the past and future in eternal truth, there is no demonstrating the truth of the author’s claims; one has to believe and trust that they are true. And this belief is largely the product of the individual coming to find the events foretold by the fathers and recorded by the apostles to be loveable. This is a theme that Augustine explicitly discusses in connection with how readers might receive his confessions. Early in Book X of *Confessions* Augustine asks why his readers demand to hear from him what he is when they refuse to hear from God what they are (*Confessions* X. iii. 3). He notes that his readers have no way of telling whether what they hear from him is true; they might very well believe that he is lying. However, if they would but tame their inquisitiveness for hearing about the lives of others, and hear about themselves from God, “they could not say ‘The Lord is lying,’” because “To hear you speaking about oneself is to know oneself” (Ibid., X. iii. 3). For Augustine, to hear about oneself from God is to know the truth about oneself – to know one’s weakness and need of God’s loving self-presence. Moreover, instructed by God himself, the mind is neither able to resist these truths nor convince itself that they are false. Thus, anyone who has come to know himself and yet asserts that to hear God speaking about oneself is not to know oneself “must be a liar” (Ibid., X. iii. 3). In addition, Augustine notes that “‘love believes all things’ (1 Cor 13:7), at least among those that love has bonded to itself and made one” (Ibid., X. iii. 3). Thus, concerning his confessions, Augustine concludes that those “whose ears are opened by love believe me” (Ibid., X. iii. 3). Similarly, just as Augustine’s confessions may not be believed, so too might scripture’s claims concerning history and God’s purposes for it in Jesus Christ be considered a cosmic lie. But for the man whom God has begun to warm and bond himself to in the love of the Holy Spirit, there can no longer be any disbelief (distrust) concerning the events foretold and recorded in scripture. More pointedly, there can no longer be any disbelief concerning the actions and words of Jesus Christ as they communicate his relationship to the Father. Thus, by opening the heart of man in the love of the Holy Spirit, man comes to hear God speaking to him in history through the words and deeds of the incarnate Word recorded in the trustworthy documents of holy scripture.

³⁵¹ *De Trinitate* XIV. 21.

knew the need, but not yet the mediator, that the divine purposes for man in Christ were revealed to them.³⁵³ Augustine writes:

Everything that has taken place in time in “originated” matters which have been produced from the eternal and reduced back to the eternal, and has been designed to elicit the faith we must be purified by in order to contemplate truth, has either been testimony to this mission or has been the actual mission of the Son of God. Some testimonies foretold that he was going to come, some testified that he had come. It was only fitting that when he through whom every creature was made became a creature himself, all creation should bear witness to him.³⁵⁴

Therefore, we see that among the activities the Trinity undertakes in reforming the mind is to direct it towards scripture and lovingly prepare it to accept its truth. For it is here that God has revealed the movements of divine wisdom active in human history, orchestrating “the interwoven series of ages”³⁵⁵ to prepare for and testify to “the actual mission of the Son of God”³⁵⁶ and “from there to the end that is due each one.”³⁵⁷

We will now turn to examine the specific activities that the Holy Spirit and the Son perform in introducing the mind of man into the knowledge that God is triune and the experience of divine love that steadfastly attends it. Here we will not only note the activities that the Son and the Holy Spirit perform, but why, according to Augustine, these are the activities that belong to the Holy Spirit and the Son respectively. First, we will examine Augustine’s understanding of the particular role the Holy Spirit undertakes in leading the man into the knowledge of God and his love.

³⁵² That is, to know that the fathers are pious, and to know this piety for oneself.

³⁵³ See *De Trinitate* Book I. 23.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, IV. 25.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, IV. 21.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, IV. 25.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, IV. 21.

Having come to accept and love the movements of God in human history as they are recorded in scripture and taught in the church, the individual also comes to recognize that his introduction into the knowledge and love of God was possible only in the Holy Spirit. In Book XIV of *De Trinitate* Augustine writes: “But 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, and that it could not have fallen except by its willful undoing.”³⁵⁸ Likewise, as we read earlier in Book IV, it is only after receiving the Spirit and being aroused in his warmth that man is woken up to God and his need of divine strength. Finally, In Book XV Augustine writes that charity “causes us to abide in God and him in us, and we know this because he has given us of his Spirit, this Spirit of his is God charity.”³⁵⁹

However, despite what these statements might initially suggest, this recognition of the God’s action in the person of the Spirit in introducing us into the life and love of the divine Trinity is not possible apart from scripture. This is for two reasons. First, as Augustine states in Book I, “just as the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable, so do they work inseparably.”³⁶⁰ Accordingly, “It is to make us aware of the trinity that some things are even said about the persons singly by name; however they must not be understood in the sense of excluding the other persons, because this same three is also

³⁵⁸ Ibid., XIV. 21.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., XV. 37. In Book XV Augustine also writes: “So it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding from God who fires man to the 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 [John] says a little later, *Let us love because he first loved us* (1 Jn 4:19).” This brings to mind our analysis of *Confessions* Book VII. There we noted that with Augustine’s discovery that God providentially sustained his mind in its search for truth, the essence of piety was no longer simply confessing that God is immutable and does not suffer evil. Rather,

one, and there is one substance and godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”³⁶¹

Consequently, though the believer may indeed be certain that charity “causes us to abide in God and him in us,” and though the believer perceives in the Holy Spirit that “it cannot rise except by his gracious doing,” there is no knowing the Holy Spirit as a distinct person, consubstantial with the Father and the Son, apart from scripture. In other words, the believer is not able to determine on the basis of his own experience which person of the Trinity has been sent in virtue of which the other two are present – and in virtue of whose presence in the one sent man experiences divine love.³⁶² Only because scripture declares that the Son of God was born Jesus of Nazareth and was crucified and raised on the third day, and that only the gift of both the Father and the Son was poured out on the day of Pentecost, can the truth of the triad’s presence in the person of the Holy Spirit be affirmed.³⁶³

Secondly, it is important to keep in mind that because of the fall, the love that man affords to the eternal realities he describes is not commensurable with their objective value since in his pride he refuses to recognize his absolute need of them. As Augustine

piety fundamentally involves the acknowledgement that it is only thanks to the action of this immutable God that the mind is able to make this confession.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., I. 7.

³⁶¹ Ibid., I. 19.

³⁶² The believer is unable to comprehend in his experience of love both the unity and the distinctiveness of the persons of the Trinity. Only when man is brought into the sight of God by virtue of faith in Christ will he be unified with the Creator such that in that love he will comprehend both the unity and the distinctiveness of the divine persons.

³⁶³ See Chapter One p.47-49. In Book XV Augustine writes:

So the love which is from God and is God is distinctively the Holy Spirit; through him the charity of God is poured out in our hearts, and though it the whole triad dwells in us. This is the reason why it is most apposite that the Holy Spirit, while being God, should also be called the gift of God. And this gift, surely, is distinctively be understood as being the charity which brings us through to God, without which no other gift of God at all can bring us through to God. (Ibid., XV. 32)

demonstrates in Books VIII and IX of *De Trinitate*, the rational mind is capable of determining that it ought to love the good by which and for which it was made more than created goods,³⁶⁴ even the pagans are able to determine the proper orientation of their loving activity. Therefore, it is clear that man's emotional states can be either in step, or out of step, with reason, with the rational mind being prevented from cleaving to the good insofar as its disordered loves prevent it from fully loving (and therefore fully seeing) what it is capable of. These comments are intimately linked to Augustine's concern for how man can love what he does not know. Our experiences of love require that we know an object and determine the degree of love appropriate to it given its place in the order of creation. Again, it is the fact that man too highly elevates his own place in the order of creation that he fails to love properly, and thereby fully know, what his reason can descry and judge to be existentially prior to, and more valuable, than himself. Therefore, beyond the fact that the individual is not able to determine on the basis of his own experience which person of the Trinity has been sent in virtue of which the other two are present given their consubstantial inseparability, it is also clear that the believer's very experience of divine love depends on the Spirit directing his thought (reason) to those objects and events which, in his sin, he fails to love (and thus know) as he should. More specifically, knowing the love of the Holy Spirit demands that there be an object that this love is directed towards, and this object is the eternal Son become flesh in the man Jesus of Nazareth. It is only in the Holy Spirit that man begins to offer Jesus Christ the love commensurable to his objective value because in the Holy Spirit man is taken up into the

³⁶⁴ Ibid., VIII. 5.

love of God (the Holy Spirit) for God (the Son). In short, knowing and loving the love of God abiding within in the person of the Holy Spirit requires that the mind come to know the love of God revealed in the words and deeds of Jesus Christ as recorded in scripture. Augustine notes that we only love charity because “we love here loving something,” and thus “She is not charity if she loves nothing.”³⁶⁵ We only know and love the love that abides within us in the person of the Holy Spirit because this love is loving something – namely the Son of God, to whom she directs our attention in the form appropriate to our fallen condition, the man Jesus of Nazareth.

This point can be seen in two very similar passages from *Confessions* and *De Trinitate*. In Book IV of *De Trinitate* Augustine writes the following concerning Jesus’ death and resurrection.

First we had to be persuaded how much God loved us, in case out of sheer despair we lacked the courage to reach up to him. Also we had to be shown what sort of people we are that he loves, in case we should take pride in our own worth, and so bounce even further away from him and sink even more under our own strength. So he 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.³⁶⁶

Similarly, Augustine writes in Book VII of *Confessions*:

I began to want to give myself airs as a wise person. I was full of my punishment, but I shed no tears of penitence. Worse still, I was puffed up with knowledge (I Cor 8:1). Where was the charity which builds on the foundation of humility which is Christ Jesus? When would the Platonist books have taught me that?³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII. 12.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, IV. 2.

³⁶⁷ *Confessions* VII. x. 26. We will recall that Augustine opens his discussion of the books of the Platonists by writing that through them God eventually came to show him that he resists the proud and commends the way of humility in Jesus Christ.

What these passages suggest is that the individual's recognition that the love shed within him is the love of God in the person of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from coming to know Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word of the Father. Although Augustine records his awakening to the truth of the Platonists and his rescue from presumption following his failure to give thanks as the work of God himself, before coming to know the mystery of the Word made flesh, the charity of God by which he was upheld was unknown: "Where was the charity which builds on the foundation of humility which is Christ Jesus?" Therefore divine love, although operative well before the individual has come to confess Christ, only becomes known with its demonstration in Christ; it has as its goal the individual's acceptance of the mystery of the incarnation – it is neither contingent on that acceptance, nor fully known prior to it. Thus, as we noted above (n. 349), love believes all things, where the things that it believes are those events that foretell and reveal the eternal nature of that love in holy scripture. Therefore, we see that it is in the Holy Spirit that the mind is directed towards scripture and prepared to find its truths loveable. In this way, man comes to discover the charity that builds on the foundation of humility that is Christ Jesus, and that the power of charity is perfected in the weakness of humility.

However, one might question this characterization of how man comes to the knowledge of the divine persons in the love of the Holy Spirit by asking why the Spirit does not immediately enable the mind to contemplate God's eternal truth, thereby succeeding where the Platonists failed and avoiding the lengthy route offered in Christ

and scripture.³⁶⁸ Augustine's answer to this question can be seen both in his repeated insistence in *De Trinitate* that the vision of God is not possible in this life,³⁶⁹ and by his conspicuous silence concerning the fourth way in which the future can be known – by having one's mind "raised so high in the Holy Spirit" that one can see for himself "the present causes of future things."³⁷⁰ This answer, in a word, is that God does not use means foreign to humankind's sinful condition, thereby trumping man's will, in order to lead him into eternal truth.³⁷¹ It was to provide a path of return proper to man's fallen state that the Son, foretold and known in scripture, became incarnate. Augustine writes:

To sum up then: we were incapable of grasping eternal things, and weighed down by the accumulated dirt of our sins, which we had collected by our love of temporal things, and which had become almost a natural growth on our mortal

³⁶⁸ Naturally, this is a question whose answer can only be provided in the context of faith – in the midst of treading the mediating path presented in Jesus Christ

³⁶⁹ At least not possible to the extent that one can abide in divine wisdom, and resting there, become wise in the timeless love of God's truth. Though the Platonists have ascended to the sight of God, they know nothing about the course of history, their own sinfulness, and God's self-sacrificing love for humankind. Other than being certain about God's incorporeal beauty and their distance from it, his eternal nature remains foreign to them in their presumption.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, IV.

³⁷¹ In *The Spirit and the Letter* Augustine writes that a man's being without sin is possible, "if God's help be given and his own will not lacking . . ." (*The Spirit and the Letter* i. 1). However, though it is possible, Augustine expresses extreme skepticism concerning its actual occurrence because scripture strongly suggests that "no man in this life, free though he be to choose, is ever found without sin" (*Ibid.*, ii. 2). The reason for the absence of references in scripture to man's being without sin is because his will is frequently lacking; all too often man foolishly believes that he is no longer in need of divine aid. Concerning the individual awakened to his needfulness of God's strength, Augustine writes: "Only let him not believe himself to be what as yet he is not, and so fall into the offence of the Pharisee who gave God thanks for what he had but asked for nothing to be given to him – as though he stood in need of nothing for the increase and perfecting of his righteousness." (*Ibid.*, xiii. 22). Similarly, in Book X of *Confessions* Augustine writes that it is because he remains a burden to himself, loving what he ought not to and failing to love what he should, that he is unable to adhere wholly to God. "When I shall have adhered to you with the whole of myself, I shall never have 'pain and toil' (Ps 89:10), and my entire life will be full of you. You lift up the person whom you fill. But for the present, because I am not full of you, I am a burden to myself. There is a struggle between joys over which I should be weeping and regrets at matters over which I ought to be rejoicing, and which side has the victory I do not know" (*Confessions* X. xxviii. 39). Shortly thereafter, following his confession of his continuing struggles with the lusts of the flesh, Augustine concludes with a note of praise for the healing that God has begun while also anticipating its perfection in the future. "I 'exult with trembling' (Ps 2:11) in what you have granted me, and grieve at my imperfect state. I hope that you will perfect in me your mercies to achieve perfect peace which I shall have with you, inwardly and outwardly, when 'death is swallowed up in victory' (I Cor 15:54)" (*Ibid.*, X. xxx. 42).

stock; so we needed purifying. But we could only be purified for adaptation to eternal thing by temporal means like those we were already bound to in servile adaptation. 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.³⁷²

Augustine later continues:

Now until this happens [when sight and truth succeed faith] and in order that it may happen, and 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, *originated from the earth* (Ps 85:12) when the Son of God came in order to become Son of man and to capture our faith and draw it to himself, and by means of it to lead us on to his truth; for he took on our mortality in such a way that he did not lose his own eternity.³⁷³

Through his Son the Father captures the faith of man – faith which man naturally accords to things originated. In this way the mind of man is led into divine wisdom, not by being overwhelmed with the sight of his eternal truth, justice, and goodness, but rather by being coaxed to put his trust in holy scripture and the God identified therein.

Thus we can see that Augustine understands that the means and measures God uses to make perfect man’s imperfections necessarily requires – for reasons that will never be entirely clear to man in his impatience and too easily won sense of preparedness for God’s glory – the taming and re-orientation of his will through (painstaking) temporal created means. Both Jesus Christ and scripture – what Augustine calls more endurable

³⁷² *De Trinitate* IV. 24. See also XIII 13.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, IV. 24.

routes³⁷⁴ – are indispensable graces given to man by God for this purpose: “in Christ your Son our Lord and by your scriptures, commended by the authority of your Catholic Church, you have provided a way of salvation whereby humanity can come to the future life after death.”³⁷⁵ Through these means of grace man begins “transferring his love from temporal things to eternal, from visible to intelligible, from carnal to spiritual things; he is industriously applying himself to checking and lessening his greed for the one sort and binding himself with charity to the other.”³⁷⁶ The problem with the Platonist is that, because of his pride he has rejected the middle way offered by God in Christ and scripture. In Book XIII of *De Trinitate* Augustine writes:

That the only-begotten from the Father is the one who is full of grace and truth means that 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. But the most eminent heathen philosophers, who *were able to behold the invisible things of God, being understood through the things that he has made* (Rom 1:20), philosophized nonetheless without the mediator, that is without the man Christ, as they neither believed the prophets that he would come nor the apostles that he had. . . Established as they were at this lowest level of things, they could not but look for some middle things, by which to reach the topmost things they had understood.³⁷⁷

Likewise, to ask why the Spirit does not immediately enable the mind to contemplate God’s eternal truth, thereby avoiding the lengthy route offered in Christ and scripture, is to repeat the failure of the Platonists, putting our presumption before the humble and patient reception of God’s wisdom.

To conclude, it is necessary to emphasize that these comments concerning the action of the Holy Spirit in preparing man for, and directing his attention towards, the

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, I.

³⁷⁵ *Confessions* VII. vii. 11.

love that God shows for man in Jesus Christ in scripture are not meant to diminish the importance of the individual's experience of God's redeeming love in the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. It is only to state that the Holy Spirit, *as love*, leads the mind of man into the fullness of God's truth by directing his attention towards God's self-revelation in scripture through the testimony of the prophets and the mission of the Son. Accordingly, to know and love the love that one experiences in the person of the Holy Spirit is to know and love the identifying narratives of God in scripture, wherein God reveals his self-sacrificing love for man in his Son Jesus Christ and draws us into the love of that love through his Spirit whom the Son reveals.³⁷⁸ Thus, the significance of the individual's experience of God's redeeming love in the person of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from him becoming acquainted with the self-revelation of God in history as recorded in the scriptures.³⁷⁹ We shall now turn to the activity of the Son to show that the

³⁷⁶ *De Trinitate* XIV. 23.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, XIII. 24.

³⁷⁸ See *De Trinitate* IV. 29.

The knowledge of God that is necessary for our salvation – “This is eternal life, that they should know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (Jn 17:3)” (*Ibid.*, I. 17) – demands that the Holy Spirit be known as well since it belongs to the Father as Father to gift his Son with the power to give divine life. Neither the Son nor the Father are known insofar as the Holy Spirit remains unknown. Accordingly, by awakening us to our weakness and drawing the attention of our thought to the self-sacrificing love that the Father shows for us in Jesus Christ, the Spirit also reveals himself by directing our minds to the words of the Son concerning his eternal relationship with the Spirit (and thereby the Spirit's relationship with the Father). It belongs to divine love, originating from Father, revealed through the Son, and given to man in the Spirit, to introduce man into this love by making known the eternal relationships within the godhead.

³⁷⁹ One might reply that to assert that Augustine holds that the Holy Spirit leads man into the fullness of truth by directing his attention towards God's self-revelation in scripture is to give a modern interpretation to an ancient text. Namely, this statement might make it appear that I am placing Augustine's work on the side of those who hold that for the Christian to have an experience of God's love he must first have certain beliefs, since emotions, as intentional states (that is, they are about something – they have an object), demand that the he be able to refer to object in order to have an emotion. In theological circles, this thesis concerning the conditions of experience is commonly presented against the likes of Schleiermacher and Rahner who argue that the truths of the Christian faith concerning the love of God are symbolic expressions of inner feelings. While one might plausibly argue that Augustine belongs to the first of these two groups (see n. 96 above), the point that I am making here is a strictly theological point – its legitimacy does not hang on the philosophical debate between the everyday relationship between beliefs and experiences. As

recognition of Christ that is necessary for man's experience of divine love in the Holy Spirit is not possible without the Son actively working to introduce our mind to the truth of his eternal relationship with the Father as it is revealed in scripture. Thus, while the Holy Spirit directs us toward scripture and prepares us, in love, to find the God identified therein loveable, the truths of scripture are not simply read off the page.³⁸⁰ Rather, as we shall see, the Son actively gives these truths to the mind in order that we may begin to conform our words to him – the eternal Word of the Father.

Above we noted that according to Augustine, the Son of God came to capture the faith that man naturally accords to temporal things such that through faith in him we might be led into eternal truth. However, this is not to suggest that, according to Augustine, subsequent to his sending Jesus Christ is no longer active but instead passive, a model relegated to a moment in history captured by holy scripture for the benefit of our imitation. Rather, as the faith of the church insists, the Trinity works inseparably in everything, and as such, the Son is always actively working to introduce the mind of man into the knowledge of God that is our salvation; accordingly, his saving activity includes, but is not limited to, his incarnation in time. Augustine's understanding of Christ's active

will be seen below, the essential point is that owing to the characteristics proper to each person of the Trinity by virtue of their relationships, each person introduces the mind of man into the fullness of the knowledge of the divine love (truth) by appropriating this action to themselves in different ways. Thus, though the Trinity works inseparably in producing the knowledge of itself in the mind of man, it belongs to the Holy Spirit, as the gift of both the Father and the Son, to direct the attention of the mind to the Son and prepare the mind to accept humbly the love revealed in Jesus Christ. Accordingly, it belongs to the Word of the Father, who is "exactly and absolutely what the Father is" (Ibid., XV. 23) to reveal the divine love and introduce the mind of man into its truth by offering himself as a model "for the sick to get better by" (Ibid., IV. 5).

³⁸⁰ Beyond the fact that Augustine explicitly states that the Son is responsible for leading the mind into truth, one can see that the truths of scripture – if indeed they are true – must be sown in the mind of man, and thus known, just because these truths are no longer accessible to the sight of the rational intellect on

presence in the believer's life is seen when he writes, as we noted in Chapter One, that the eternal Word enlightens us by uttering to us "whatever needs to be uttered to men about herself and about the Father."³⁸¹ Furthermore, Augustine writes in Book XII that it is through being renewed in the spirits of our minds that we are made new men – sons of God. This renewal takes place primarily through baptism, concerning which Augustine writes that when we put on the new man in baptism, "it is of course Christ that we put on in faith."³⁸² Finally, Augustine writes the following in Book XIII:

Our knowledge therefore is Christ, and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with the truth about eternal things. Through him we go straight toward him, through knowledge toward wisdom, without ever turning aside from one and the same Christ, *in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col 2:3).³⁸³

These quotations make clear that Augustine believes that the Son is actively present in the life of the believer, introducing him into the knowledge of God's eternal nature, and thereby, into the experience of divine love that attends this knowledge.

account of sin. That is, these truths must be deposited in the mind in the absence of man occupying his rightful place in the order of creation.

³⁸¹ Ibid., VII. 4.

³⁸² Ibid., XII. 12.

³⁸³ Ibid., XIII. 24. We will recall that according to Augustine, knowledge is the rational cognizance of temporal things, while wisdom is the rational cognizance of eternal things. Faith belongs to knowledge because one puts faith in temporary, transient things; faith is no longer necessary when the realities with which one is concerned are eternal and unchanging and can be known immediately without need of the mediating accounts of others. Accordingly, believing the actions Jesus Christ performed and the words he spoke belongs to knowledge, whereas seeing the Son in eternity belongs to wisdom. Because the Son became incarnate, one and the same object is provided for both our knowledge and our wisdom. In the love of the Son in his incarnate form, man is prepared to know and love the Son in his eternity. In Book XIII Augustine writes:

if the difference between these two is that wisdom is attributed to divine things and knowledge to human, I acknowledge each of them in Christ, and so does every believer with me. . . Among things that have arisen in time the supreme grace is that man has been joined to God to form one person; among eternal things the supreme truth is rightly attributed to the Word of God. That the only-begotten from the Father is the one who is full of grace and truth means that 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 to contemplate him unchangingly in eternity. (Ibid., XIII. 24)

However, one might ask how the Son actively introduces the mind of man into the truth of the church's trinitarian identification of God when, as Augustine himself makes clear, it was only the Holy Spirit that was sent at Pentecost. It seems to be the case that the Spirit is the only active agent of salvation, since it is in his presence alone that the mind is enlivened to the truths recorded in scripture. Stated otherwise, it does not appear that the Son can actively intervene in the life of the mind when only the Holy Spirit has been sent to abide in it.

The immediate and obvious response to this problem is the third claim that we noted in Chapter One as being central to the faith of the church: that in the sending of the Holy Spirit the Son and the Father are also present. This is an active, not a passive presence; the Father and the Son do not belong to the memory of the Holy Spirit as persons belonging to past experiences. Rather the Father and the Son are always actively present, giving the Holy Spirit the gift of divine life.³⁸⁴ Accordingly, the Holy Spirit, taken singly, is wise, good, and great, just as the Father and the Son taken singly are wise, good, and great, just because he cannot be separated from them. This understanding of the divine life is captured by Augustine in Book XV when he discusses the Father and Son and Holy Spirit in terms of memory, understanding, and will – the image of God in man. He writes:

So here we are then with these three, that is memory, understanding, love or will in that supreme and unchangeable being which God is, and they are no the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit but the Father alone. And because the Son too is wisdom, begotten of wisdom, it means the Father does not do his remembering

³⁸⁴ Just as the Son is being eternally begotten, and the Father is eternally begetting, so too does the Holy Spirit eternally proceed from the Father and the Son (as the Father eternally gives the gift of giving the Holy Spirit to the Son). The persons of the Trinity are always and eternally active for one another.

for him or the Holy Spirit his loving any more than the Father or the Holy Spirit do his understanding, but he does it all for himself; he is his own memory, his own understanding, his own love, but his being all this comes to him from the Father of whom he is born. The Holy Spirit too does not have the Father for memory and the Son for understanding and himself for love, because he is wisdom proceeding from wisdom; and he would not be wisdom if another did his remembering and another his understanding for him, and he himself only did his own loving. No, he himself has these three, and he has them in such a way the he is them. But its being so with him comes to him from where he proceeds from.³⁸⁵

The Holy Spirit has the fullness of divine life because he is inseparable from the Father and the Son. Accordingly, without their active presence in his sending, the Holy Spirit could not introduce humankind into the life and love of God by taking up abode in the heart of man; without their active giving presence, there would be no Spirit to send.

These conclusions relate directly to the active role of *the Son* in leading the mind of man into the knowledge and love of God. We will study them more thoroughly by returning to Book XV of *De Trinitate*. Towards the close of this book, Augustine again revisits the image of God in man. As instructive as this discussion is for understanding the mind, it is most illuminating when it is read, as Augustine intends, for the light it sheds on the divine trinity. At this point in the treatise he recalls that “as far as the Holy Spirit is concerned, the only thing I pointed to in this puzzle as seeming to be like him is our will, or love or esteem, which is will at its most effective.”³⁸⁶ This leads Augustine to ask whether we are to hold “that when our will is right it does not know what to go for and what to avoid?”³⁸⁷ However, if we concede that a right will does know what to go

³⁸⁵ Ibid., XV. 12.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., XV. 41.b

³⁸⁷ Ibid., XV. 41. For Augustine to suggest that the will is right whether it does or does not know what to go for is to suggest that all wills are right (good) irrespective of what is willed. This would be to assert that a will is right simply by virtue of having the capacity to will. Of course, Augustine holds that all wills are good because they have the capacity to will the good, but a will only wills rightly (is right) when it knows

for and what to avoid, it follows that it “has its own kind and of knowledge, and this cannot exist without memory and understanding.”³⁸⁸ Augustine continues by suggesting that to hold that the will does not know what to go for and what to avoid is absurd: “Should we really even listen to someone who says that charity, which *does not act mistakenly* (1 Cor 13:4), does not know what it is doing?”³⁸⁹ Accordingly, after noting that there is understanding and love in memory, and that there is memory and love in understanding, Augustine writes: “so too the love which joins the sight settled in memory and the sight of thought that is formed from it, as parent and offspring, would not know what to love rightly unless it had some knowledge of desiring things, which it could not have without memory or understanding.”³⁹⁰ We can now turn from this understanding of the human will to the light it sheds on the Son’s active presence in the sending of the Holy Spirit.

That Augustine primarily has the divine trinity in mind in this passage, and in particular the Holy Spirit, is seen when we compare the above conclusion – that just as there is love and understanding in memory, and memory and love in understanding, so too is there memory and understanding in love – with an earlier account of the differences between the image and its archetype from Book XV.

and wills the good for itself. Accordingly, although Augustine suggests here that a will may be right while it does not know what to will, he is only making this suggestion to draw out his final conclusion.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., XV. 41.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., XV. 41. The fact that Augustine here is clearly discussing the love that is the Holy Spirit, rather than the love (will) that belongs to man’s rational mind, strongly suggests that in this passage Augustine is really concerned with the divine trinity rather than the image of God in the mind of man. Augustine uses the fact that the Holy Spirit wills faultlessly to show that the will of man is not without knowledge. Thus Augustine begins by asking whether our will knows what to go for and what to avoid. He turns to the perfection of the Holy Spirit to show that it does, and then uses this conclusion about the will of man to help us to understand more profoundly the eternal nature of the godhead.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., XV. 15.

Again, there is this enormous difference, that whether we talk about mind in man and its knowledge and love, or whether about memory, understanding, will, we remember nothing of the mind except through memory, and understand nothing except through understanding, and love nothing except through will. But who would presume to say that in that trinity the Father does not understand either himself or the Son or the Holy Spirit except through the Son, or love except through the Holy Spirit, but only remembers either himself or the Son or the Holy Spirit?³⁹¹

As we can see from this passage, the love that belongs to the image of God cannot be said to have its own memory and understanding in the same way that the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit is his own memory and understanding just as he is his own wisdom and goodness and divinity; the Holy Spirit taken singly is God, just as the Father and the Son taken singly are God. However, although we noted in Chapter Two that the mind *is* the consubstantial activity of the memory, understanding, and will, neither the memory, the understanding, nor the will taken singly is mind. Only the three taken together constitute the mind. Accordingly, when Augustine writes above that love has some knowledge of desiring things, the knowledge that love has is not everything that is contained in the memory (as the Holy Spirit has all the wisdom that the Father has). Rather, as Augustine showed in Book IX and Book XI,³⁹² the will has a kind of awareness of what is contained in memory, and with this awareness searches the stores of memory to find the sought object in its fullness. Only when the known thing is found and begotten in thought (understood) is the will satisfied in the contemplation of what it knows. This is because, as Augustine tirelessly repeats, you cannot love what you do not know. He writes:

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, XV. 12.

³⁹² Book IX. 18 and Book XI 12.

Now this appetite shown in inquiring proceeds from the inquirer, and it is left somewhat hanging in the air and does not rest assuaged in the end it is stretching out to, until what is being looked for has been found and coupled with the inquirer. This appetite, that is inquisitiveness, does not appear to be the love with which what is known is loved (this is still busy getting known), yet it is something of the same kind. (Ibid., IX. 18)

Unlike the will of man, the Holy Spirit never inquisitively searches the reaches of memory to find objects which, having been found, it then loves with the fullness of its being. Rather, the Holy Spirit always wholly loves the Father (as wisdom – “memory”) and the Son (as born-wisdom – “understanding”) because he always wholly knows the Father and the Son both in himself taken singly, and in the Father and the Son themselves. These conclusions can be drawn from the following passage from Book XV concerning the Father and the Son.

So the Word of God, the only-begotten Son of the Father, like the Father and equal to him in all things, God from God, light from light, wisdom from wisdom, being from being, is exactly and absolutely what the Father is, and yet is not the Father because this one is Son, that one Father. And thus he knows everything that the Father knows, but his knowing comes to him from the Father just as his being does. For here knowing and being are one and the same. And thus just as the Father’s being is not from the Son, so neither is his knowing. . . . So the Father knows all things in himself, knows them in the Son; but in himself as knowing himself, in the Son as knowing his Word which is about all these things that are in himself. Likewise the Son too knows all things in himself, that is to say as things that are born from the things that the Father knows in himself, and he knows them in the Father as the things from which are born all the things that he as Son knows in himself. Therefore the Father and the Son know each other, the one by begetting, the other by being born. (Ibid., XV. 23)

The Holy Spirit always knows, and hence always loves, the Father and the Son by proceeding from them; that is, he knows and loves them in himself, and knows and loves them as generating and generated wisdom from whom he receives the fullness of divine life. Finally, in his sending as in his eternity, the Holy Spirit knows the fullness of divine

life in both these ways; one manner of knowing is not proper to him in his sending while the other is proper to him in his eternity. This is because it is impossible for the Holy Spirit, consubstantially inseparable from the Father and the Son, to “come without them nor they without him.”³⁹³ The eternal relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are unchanged by the Spirit’s sending – in both the procession and the sending of the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son give the gift of themselves to the Spirit – and thus also remaining unchanged is the manner in which the Holy Spirit knows and loves the Father and the Son.

Given these considerations we can see again that in the sending of the Holy Spirit the Father and the Son are actively present. The Spirit is the formal cause of our salvation only because he knows and loves the Son and the Father (as the Son and the Father give themselves to the Spirit to be known and loved), and thus he lovingly directs us to words and deeds of the person Jesus Christ recorded in scripture.³⁹⁴ With this analysis in hand, we can now turn to determine, according to Augustine, which specific activities the Son undertakes, in giving himself to the Spirit and being actively present in his (not the Trinity’s) sending, to lead man into the knowledge that God is triune and the experience of love that attends it.

³⁹³ Ibid., I. 19.

³⁹⁴ Again, the means appropriate to humankind’s fallen condition, such that in coming to know Jesus of Nazareth man might come to know the Father whom Christ reveals.

With this analysis of the Spirit’s eternal relationship to the Father and the Son, unchanged in his sending, we see how the Spirit can undertake the actions that were attributed to him above: to lead the mind into the knowledge and love of God by lovingly guiding it towards the love of God’s self-revelation in Christ in scripture as it is known and worshipped in the church, thereby introducing us into the love of God (the Holy Spirit) for God (the Son), and in so doing, causing us to abide in God and him in us. In a word, it belongs to the Spirit to introduce man into God’s own self-giving love.

As we observed earlier in this chapter, man can know God only insofar as God allows himself to be known by man. God's eternal nature cannot be known unless that truth is made accessible to the mind of man. Furthermore, as has also been duly noted in this chapter, man is incapable of seeing the truth of God's eternal nature on account of his pride; if he could but free his mind from its inordinate love of itself and the greed for material objects that arises from this love, God's eternal truth would be as clear as the physical light around us.³⁹⁵ This is because, as we saw in Chapter Two, God is nearer to the mind than the mind is to itself; the mind's self-presence, constituted by its memory of itself in the present, cannot be extracted from its simultaneous memory of the intelligible realities to which it is subjoined without its very nature as a remembering, understanding, and loving thing being compromised. In short, the mind's presence to itself as image is given to it because God has subjoined the knower to himself. However, because of its sin, the mind's awareness of its relationship to the Creator has been forgotten; as Augustine states in Book X, the mind has forgotten itself.³⁹⁶ It is through the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit that God works to remind the mind of the true nature of its relationship to the Creator and thereby re-introduce man into right loving relationship with the good by whom and for whom it was made. More specifically, just as the love of the truths contained in scripture and worshiped in the church must be sown in man by the person of the Holy Spirit abiding within, so too must their truth.³⁹⁷ In particular, it

³⁹⁵ Ibid., VIII. 2.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., X. 7.

³⁹⁷ Broadly state, in the absence of the mind's repose in the divine light and the steadfast knowledge and love of God's eternal nature that is this rest, the knowledge and love of God must be sown in the mind through the missions of the Holy Spirit and the Son. As we noted above, the mind that has habitually loved itself more than its Creator cannot find within what it has rejected from the beginning – the truth of its

eternally belongs *to the Son*, active in the sending of the Holy Spirit, to instill this truth in the mind of man.³⁹⁸ That this belongs to the Son can be seen from the following passage from Book IV of *De Trinitate*:

So the Word of God is sent by him whose Word he is; sent by him he is born of. The begetter sends, what is begotten is sent. And he is precisely sent to anyone when he is known and perceived by him, as far as he can be perceived and known according to the capacity of a rational soul either making progress toward God or already made perfect in God. So the Son of God is not said to be sent in the very fact that he is born of the Father; but either in the fact that the Word made flesh showed himself to this world; about this fact he says, *I went forth from the Father and came into this world* (Jn 16:28). Or else he is sent in the fact that he is perceived in time by someone's mind, as it says, *Send her to be with me and labor with me* (Wis 9:10). That he is born means that he is from eternity to eternity – he is *the brightness of eternal light* (Wis 7:26). But that he is sent means that he is known by somebody in time.

This passage shows that according to Augustine, it belongs to Christ to introduce the mind of man into the knowledge of God, since to know Christ is to know that he is the Son born from the Father, to whom the Father has given the capacity to give the divine life in the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, as Augustine makes clear in Book IV, the fullness of God's self-revelation took place in the sending of the Son into the world when man perceived him in the body. Thus, though the Son can be said to have been sent when he is "perceived by the mind in the course of someone's spiritual progress in time," his

relationship to God. The mind that has loved itself and hated its Creator cannot, on its own, come to hate itself and love its Creator.

³⁹⁸ This is not to paint a dissociated picture of the Holy Spirit, where at times he performs actions that are proper to him – shedding the love of God within the heart of man and thereby preparing his mind to love the truths revealed in scripture – and at others times he must take on the work of the Son for the Son. Rather, as we noted above, the Holy Spirit's (knowing and loving) relationship to the Son is unchanged in his sending, and thus while abiding in the hearts of men the Holy Spirit knows the Son and the Father both in himself and in the Father and the Son. He does not come without them, and through him the Father and the Son dwell in us. Thus, both through himself and the Son who is present in his sending, the Holy Spirit introduces the mind into the truths recorded in scripture. The crucial point, however, is that it is because of the active presence of the Son that the Holy Spirit is able to do so. Therefore it is appropriate to say that

eternal relationship to the Father is only fully apprehended in the incarnation – that event which was predestined for this purpose. This was the means known by God to be best suited to man’s sinful condition.³⁹⁹ For as we saw with our analysis of Romans 1:20-22, the Platonic ascent is incapable of curing man of his pride; Augustine views the Platonic ascent with favor both because with it one comes to understand God as incorporeal immutable substance, and hence that the problem of the origin of evil does not touch God’s unchangeableness, and more importantly, that through the ascent God works to commend the route of humility in Jesus Christ. The ascent to the sight of God’s eternal nature is not a substitute for the worship of Christ, but rather a prelude to it. To reiterate, at no point in either *Confessions* or *De Trinitate* does Augustine claim to see (let alone know and love) the Father and the Holy Spirit in attaining to the sight of the Word.⁴⁰⁰

the Son in the Spirit actively introduces the mind of man into the knowledge that God is triune, for apart from his active presence, from whom the Spirit proceeds, man could not be introduced into these truths.³⁹⁹ In Book XIII of *De Trinitate* Augustine writes the following in response to those who ask whether there was no other way available to God to free men from the unhappiness of immortality than having his only-begotten Son put on human flesh and suffer death. In his response Augustine makes clear that this way was necessary because it was the means most appropriate to man’s condition.

we must also show [in addition to the fact that the incarnation was “good and befitting the divine dignity”], not indeed that no other possible way was available to God, since all things are equally within his power, but that there neither was nor should have been a more suitable way of curing our unhappy state. Nothing was more needed for raising our hopes and delivering the minds of mortals, disheartened by the very condition of mortality, from despairing or immortality, than a demonstration of how much value God put on us and how much he loved us. And what could be a clearer and more wonderful evidence of this than that the Son of God, unchangeably good, remaining in himself what he was and receiving from us what he was not, electing to enter into partnership with our nature without detriment to his own, 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 quite uncalled for generosity, without any good deserts of ours, indeed with our ill deserts our only preparation? (Ibid., XIII. 13).

⁴⁰⁰ A seeming necessary claim to make if one claims to have ascended to the Word’s immutable light, since in eternity, to see the Son is to see the Father and the Holy Spirit. However, as has been noted repeatedly, it is because of sin that man fails to comprehend the truth that he sees. Only with the incarnation does an individual apprehend the Word’s relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, lest it appear that the vision of God only belongs to the individual’s experience prior to confessing Christ, there is no reason to hold that the vision of God cannot be had following that confession; this may very well be a sign.

Thus, while the sending of the Word to man in time can indeed serve as an indispensable grace for some, it is only in the *body* and *blood* of Christ that both the Trinity and man's route of return to his place in the order of creation are made known.

In addition, while in this passage Augustine is discussing the sending of the Son, whereas we have been discussing the activity of the Son *in the sending of the Spirit*, it nevertheless remains the case that it belongs to the Son, in the Spirit, to introduce the truth of God's eternal nature to the mind of man:

Our knowledge therefore is Christ, and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with the truth about eternal things. Through him we go straight toward him, through knowledge toward wisdom, without ever turning aside from one and the same Christ, *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col 2:3).⁴⁰¹

While our introduction into the truth of God's eternal nature was primarily accomplished through his incarnation in time, the Son still works, in and through the Spirit, to introduce the mind to the truths revealed in this temporal act. Thus, while Christ plants faith in us by taking on human form, performing deeds in time that we believe and by teaching us through his words recorded in scripture, this faith is not simply sown in us through his manifest utterances, but also, as we noted in Chapter One, through his hidden utterances: "For the Father utters her [wisdom] to be his Word, not like a word spoken aloud from the mouth, or even though of before it is pronounced – such a word is completed in a

according to Augustine. of the rational soul making progress toward God as it transfers its loves from temporal to eternal things. However, whether the vision precedes or follows the individual's confession that in Jesus Christ God in the fullness of his divinity is present, the crucial point is that all visions of the Word in time (all "sendings" of the Word) either have this confession as their end, or take place within its context. As we noted earlier in this chapter, Augustine always couches the mind's inward turn towards itself, and thereby outwards towards God, within the context of faith. Eternal truth can only be apprehended when the heart becomes wise as it worships the triune God revealed in scripture in the person of Jesus.

space of time, but this other Word is eternal; and she by enlightening us utters to us whatever needs to be utter to men about herself and about the Father.”⁴⁰² According to Augustine, one cannot separate the true beliefs that one holds in virtue of trusting in the language of scripture and the manifest utterances of the incarnate Word from the action of God in planting their truth in us. Just as God’s self-disposal of himself to us in his eternal form is the manner of revelation proper to us in our purified state, so is God’s self-disposal of himself to us in the Son – in both kinds of “sendings” – the form of revelation proper to man while he needs purification.⁴⁰³ Faith is not simply read off the pages of scripture. Our belief in its truth must be sown in us by God through his Son who, in the Holy Spirit, is providentially present in every stage of the believer’s movement from faith to sight as he introduces the believer to the faith of the church through both his manifest and hidden utterances, thereby preparing the believer’s mind for contemplating eternal truth when he presents himself in eternity.

Finally, the Son actively introduces the mind to the (true) beliefs of the church’s faith in order that we may begin to conform our words to him – the eternal Word of the Father. Having been brought to the knowledge of God through the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, man also comes to know himself as image. Accordingly, the task set before the mind is to model the wisdom modeled for us by the Word himself; although Christ did not need to be renewed in the inner man and thereby, regaining wisdom, come to live justly where “nothing is better or more loved than the nature which created and

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., XIII. 24.

⁴⁰² Ibid., VII. 4.

established all other nature,⁴⁰⁴ in taking on human flesh he modeled that wisdom and renewal for us. Augustine writes:

And the reason why it was not God the Father, not the Holy Spirit, not the trinity itself, but only the Son who is the Word of God that became flesh (although it was the trinity that accomplished this), is that we might live rightly by our word following and imitating his example; that is, by having no falsehood either in the contemplation or in the operation of our word. However, this is a perfection of the image that lies some time in the future. To achieve it we are instructed by the good master in Christian faith and godly doctrine, in order that *with face unveiled* from the veil of the law *which is the shadow of things to come* (Heb. 10:1; Col. 2:17), *looking at the glory of the Lord through a mirror, we might be transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord* (2 Cor 3:13) according to our earlier discussion of these words.⁴⁰⁵

Because the Son is born-wisdom, the Father's eternal complete and perfect utterance of himself, it is fitting that he was sent into the world to model man's wisdom – the humility of weakness – such that in its imitation we might come to model the wisdom of him in his eternity: perfect correspondence to the Father.⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, as the above quotation asserts, the conformity and correspondence of our words to the Word is only to be achieved after we have been brought from faith to sight following the resurrection of the dead. Until that point, and to achieve that end, we are instructed “in Christian faith

⁴⁰³ See n. 279 above. God's eternal nature cannot be made captive to the mind of man. Rather, man's ability to know God depends on God's desire to dispose himself freely to the mind of man, which he has made receptive of his truth.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, XIV. 12.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, XV. 20. As further support for the claims made above concerning Augustine's understanding of the activities that the Son and the Holy Spirit undertake in leading the mind of man into the knowledge of God's triune nature and the experience of love that is contingent upon it, we see here that it is by the Spirit that we are transformed as we are instructed by the good master – Christ – in Christian faith and godly doctrine.

⁴⁰⁶ That is, so that we might attain the perfection proper to a creature. As we saw in our discussion of Romans 1:20-22, by humbling himself and freely accepting his mission from the Father, the Son models for us the humility that is necessary for man to regain his proper place in the order of creation. Only in the loving acceptance of Christ's humble self-sacrifice can man likewise humble himself such that he recognizes that all goods are present in his life by grace of God. His heart now having become wise in the love of God in Christ, man is able to “refer every ounce and particle of his life” to the “memory, sight, and love of this supreme trinity, in order to recollect it, see it, and enjoy it” (*Ibid.*, XV. 39).

and godly doctrine” by Jesus Christ. Hence, the individual’s knowledge of God’s triune nature and the experience of in-dwelling divine love that accompanies it has as its end the mind’s correspondence to the Word, who himself perfectly images the Father.⁴⁰⁷ Thus,

⁴⁰⁷ In Book XV Augustine attributes “truth” to the Son on account of his correspondence to the Father. He writes:

Hence it as though uttering himself that the Father begot the Word equal to himself in all things. He would not have uttered himself completely and perfectly if anything less or more were in his Word than in himself. . . . And the reason the Word is truly truth is that whatever is in the knowledge of which it was begotten is also in it; and anything that is not in that knowledge is not in it. And this word can never have anything false in it because it unchangeably finds itself exactly as he from whom it is finds himself. (Ibid., XV. 23)

The Son perfectly correspond to the Father, and as such can be said to be truth itself. Moreover, unlike the word of man born from the knowledge contained in the memory, the Son is not born from the Father’s wisdom, where that wisdom is different from the Father’s being. The Father is his own wisdom and knowledge just as he is his own life. Thus, in perfectly corresponding to what the Father knows, the Son perfectly corresponds to what the Father is. Accordingly, while the word of man is once removed from the object that is known (in the mind’s memory, understanding, and love of both physical and eternal realities, not in its memory, understanding, and love of itself) – that is, the word born in thought corresponds to the knowledge that is contained in memory, not to the known object itself – the Son perfectly corresponds to the known object since the known object is nothing other than the Father’s own self knowledge, which he eternally utters as his Word. Therefore, it is with the Son as the archetype (of truth) that Augustine discusses the word of man.

So when that which is in the awareness is also in a word, then it is a true word, and truth such as a man looks for so that what is in awareness should also be in word and what is not in awareness should not either be in word. It is here that one acknowledges the *Ye, yes; no, no* (Mt 5:37; 2 Cor 1:17; Jas 5:12). In this way this likeness of the made image approaches as far as it can to the likeness of the born image, in which God the Son is declared to be substantially like the Father in all respects. (Ibid., XV. 20)

Thus Augustine asserts that a word is true when, like the Son, it perfectly corresponds to that which it is a word of, which is for man the knowledge contained in the memory. However, there is another way in which the word of man is a true word. That is when its word corresponds to the Son – truth itself. This can be seen when Augustine writes the following after having stated that man does not work without first uttering a word (just as the Father made all things through his only-begotten Word).

Here too, if it is a true word, it is the beginning of a good work. And a word is true when it is begotten of how to work well, so that here too one may apply the *Yes, yes; no, no*; so that if it is yes in the knowledge by which one ought to live, it should be yes in the word through which one has to work, and if no, no. Otherwise, such a word will be a lie and not the truth, and from it will come a sin, not a right work. (Ibid., XV. 20)

Therefore, with these two passages we find Augustine asserting that for man to live truly is for the word of man to perfectly correspond to the knowledge abiding in his consciousness, where this knowledge is the knowledge of how one ought to live. Only then does the word of man approach eternal truth, the Son of God, not only in its form, but also in its content. And as we have seen, this is not possible without confessing Christ in the recognition of one’s weakness and absolute need of his divine strength; having no falsehood either in the contemplation or the operation of our word in eternity begins with the wisdom that acknowledges that all goods are present in one’s life by the grace of God alone. That is why, while Augustine asserts in Book XII of *De Trinitate* that wisdom is the rational cognizance of eternal realities, citing Job 28:28 in his favor – *Behold piety is wisdom, while to abstain from evil things is knowledge* – we

not only does the Son in the Spirit introduce the mind of man into the truth of God's eternal nature revealed in Jesus Christ and scripture (the faith of the church), but he also works to conform the words of man to himself. In short, the image of God is conformed to that which it is the image of because its archetype abides within in the person of the Holy Spirit who knows the Son – the true and perfect word of the Father having nothing in itself that is not from the wisdom of which it is born - both in himself and in the Son who comes with him.⁴⁰⁸

also find him writing the following immediately after this citation: “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” (Ibid., XII. 22). Here worship has no reference to eternal realities, but instead refers to Jesus of Nazareth. Worship is the love of Christ by virtue of which these realities are gained. Only then is the love of man straight and true.

⁴⁰⁸ According to Augustine, “all positive knowledge of quality is like the thing which it knows,” and thus “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” (Ibid., IX. 16). Thus, when the mind knows bodies, it has in its consciousness a kind of likeness of them “which is their images in the memory, and this likeness is “better than the reality of the body insofar as it is in a better nature” (Ibid., IX. 16). However, when the mind takes inordinate pleasure in these images it is made worse since its nature is superior to these images. However, by the same token, “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; yet it remains inferior to God because it is an inferior nature, our consciousness being a creature, but God the creator” (Ibid., IX. 16).

Consequently, although the distortion of the image and its reformation in the in-dwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is real, Augustine is not asserting that the image of God in man undergoes a change in its very substance, where through its love of what it knows its nature is changed either into the divine substance itself, or into that of the animals. Rather, the image of God in man is obscured in that the natural direction of its loving activity is perverted as the mind comes to love itself more than its Creator, and it is reformed in the Holy Spirit as the mind comes to know and love Christ, thus have the natural direction of its loving activity restored. As we have noted, according to Augustine the mind is always active, always forming words. These words are conceived “in love of either the creature or the creator, that is of changeable nature or unchangeable truth; which means either in covetousness or charity” (Ibid., IX. 14). As a consequence of its pride, the mind inexorably forms words in love of the creature (itself) rather than the creator. This is because it loves itself more than it is. According to Augustine, the mind that “loves itself more than it is, for example if it loves itself as much as God is to be loved, though it is itself incomparably less than God” sins by excess and “does not have a complete love of itself” (Ibid., IX. 4). Therefore, while the mind remains capable of inferring and glimpsing eternal realities, its native love for these realities has become anemic, and thus its image unclear, because of its incomplete love for itself (paradoxically the product of loving itself more than it should). Thus the mind becomes “loaded with error and in its private prodigality it is emptied of strength” (Ibid., XII. 15). In the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit the mind is restored to strength because in knowing and loving Jesus Christ it begins to know and love God as it should. Moreover, this is because the Son actively gives himself to us in the Spirit; just as we only come to know the love of Christ for us in the love of the Holy Spirit whom the Son, in love,

Thus the faith of the church is sown in the mind through the action of the Holy Spirit and the Son who undertake specific actions to introduce humankind into its, and their, truth. Namely, it belongs to the Holy Spirit to abide in the heart of man, and in so doing, lovingly prepare the mind to accept the truths that are revealed to it in scripture, while it belongs to the Son, actively present in the sending of the Spirit, and whom the Spirit knows both in himself and in the Son, to introduce the mind into the truth of God's eternal nature as identified in scripture and worshiped in the church. By undertaking these activities the Trinity itself guarantees the truth of the church's identification of God. Thus, while the faith of the church, according to Augustine's epistemological framework, lacks the certitude of knowledge since the beliefs that it holds to be true are not grounded in the mind's apprehension of God's triune substance, it nevertheless has the certitude of faith since the Trinity itself introduces the mind into its truth while it is not yet fit to contemplate – and in order that it may – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, as noted above, in being introduced by the Son in the Spirit to the knowledge of God, the believer is concomitantly introduced, in the Spirit, to the experience of divine love. As Augustine insists, you cannot love what is unknown, and thus as the mind is introduced into the truth of God's eternal nature in scripture by the Son sent from the Father, it is enabled to love, in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, the God whom it has come to know. In short, in the Holy Spirit who is sent from, and comes with, the Father and Son whom he always wholly knows and loves, the mind of man is introduced into God's very

eternally gives the gift of life and whom the Spirit eternally loves in return, so too do we only begin to know truth, and become sharers in this truth, as in the Spirit the Son, who knows everything both in himself and in the Father, introduces us into this truth, and thereby to the Father whose truth he is.

own knowledge and love of himself thereby coming to image that which it is the image of.⁴⁰⁹

Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis will put forward one final objection to this picture of the action of the Son and the Holy Spirit in introducing humankind into the knowledge and love of God. The purpose of this final section is to show Augustine's understanding of how the church can coherently make the above claims concerning the specific actions the Son and the Holy Spirit perform not only in guaranteeing the truth of its faith, but also in conforming man to itself – self-giving love.

As we saw in Chapter One with our analysis of Book V and VII, because of the simplicity of the divine substance, it follows that “whatever that supreme and divine majesty is called with reference to itself is said substance wise” and that “such is the force of the expression ‘of the same substance’ in Father and Son and Holy Spirit, that whatever is said with reference to self about each of them is to be taken as adding up in all three to a singular and not to a plural.”⁴¹⁰ Thus, the Father is wise, the Son is wise, and the Spirit is wise, without there being three wisdoms. The Holy Spirit is love, the Son is love, and the Father is love, without there being three loves. The same holds for the actions performed by God.⁴¹¹ The Father creates, the Son creates, and the Holy Spirit

⁴⁰⁹ See again *De Trinitate* Book XV. 32 and 37. Stated otherwise, the problem of man's inadequate knowledge and love of God is resolved as he is taken up, in the missions of the Son and the Spirit, into God's own self-knowledge and self-love through means appropriate to his condition.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, V. 9.

⁴¹¹ Edmund Hill writes:

creates, yet there is only one act of creation. Similarly, the Son redeems, the Father redeems, and the Spirit redeems, without there being three acts of redemption. Accordingly, we may rightfully ask how the Trinity reveals the truth of divine love, inseparable from coming to know that God is triune, when the act of revelation itself is an inseparable work of the three. Augustine's answer is that this revelation of the truth of divine love, although inseparably wrought by the trinity, belongs to each person in a different way based on the characteristics unique to each person by way of relationship.⁴¹²

It is important to note that both this problem and Augustine's solution to it are presented by scripture itself.⁴¹³ By virtue of trusting in the truthfulness of scripture and believing that the words "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit" are not metaphors or figures of speech, the individual comes to believe that each person is divine, and as such, that the godhead is not a monad but a trinity. This, in turn, leads to the recognition that the

It is a necessary consequence of the truth that the divine substance is identical with the divine attributes, that there is no composition in God. What is true of divine attributes, like wisdom and goodness, is also true of divine activities, such as creation, redemption, revelation, mission. God is his actions just as he is his qualities. It is because of this absolute identity of God's substance with his attributes and with his actions, that we cannot distinguish the divine persons either in terms of divine attributes or in terms of divine actions. (*De Trinitate* 92)

⁴¹² The Son is distinct from both the Father and the Holy Spirit because he is the only-begotten of the Father, begetting nothing himself. The Holy Spirit is distinct from both the Father and the Son because he proceeds from both, while having nothing proceed from him. The Father is distinct from both the Son and the Holy Spirit because he begets the Son, and in so doing, gives him the capacity to give the divine life. The Father neither is begotten nor does he proceed from another. The distinctiveness of the persons based on the characteristics unique to them by way of relationship (begotten, begetter, giver of the gift and gift of the giver) is noted by Augustine in the beginning of his treatise with his statement of the faith of the Catholic Church. See again Book I. 7.

⁴¹³ To be clear, the problem as it is stated above is not to be found in *De Trinitate*. Nevertheless, it is a natural consequent of Augustine's understanding of the faith of the church. I have simply presented this problem as an introduction to Augustine's understanding of how each person of the Trinity undertakes differently the action of introducing man into the truth of divine wisdom and love. Thus, the answer I am presenting is not to be found in any single location in *De Trinitate* as a response to this specific problem; rather, it is drawn from passages from Book VII and Book XV of *De Trinitate*.

Trinity works inseparably in everything since Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are of one and the same substance. However, this conclusion brings the rationality of the earlier trust into question since, because of their consubstantial inseparability, it does not appear that only the Son and only the Spirit could have been sent. Hence, the revelation of God's love in making known the eternal processions in the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit brings the very possibility of those missions, and thus the God identified by them, into question.

Augustine's solution to this problem can be seen in his asking of "why do the scriptures almost nowhere say anything about wisdom except to show it as either begotten or made."⁴¹⁴ Simply put, Augustine's solution is that scripture commonly speaks of wisdom in reference to the Son because of his eternal relationship to the Father. That is, the eternal relationship between the Son and the Father revealed in the Son's mission explains the attribution of wisdom to the Son. Moreover, with this understanding of why the scriptures "almost nowhere say anything about wisdom except to show it as either begotten or made," Augustine is also able to explain the sending of the Son. These conclusions deserves greater explication

First, as we have noted, according to Augustine Jesus Christ reveals that he is eternally begotten from the Father, light from light, truth from truth. As such, the Son images the Father perfectly: "Thus *Christ is the power and the wisdom of God* (I Cor 1:24), because he is power and wisdom from the Father who is power and wisdom, just as

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., VII. 4. This question that Augustine puts to scripture is logically equivalent to the question of how the Son alone was sent. This is because both assertions – that wisdom is begotten and that only the Son was sent – require that the Son is, and does, what can only exist, and be done, inseparably.

he is light from the Father who is light, and the fountain of life with God the Father who is of course the fountain of life.”⁴¹⁵ However, although the Father and the Holy Spirit are no less wise than the Son, scripture most commonly speaks of wisdom in connection to the Son because to be wise is to perfectly imitate and correspond to the fount of all wisdom.⁴¹⁶ Thus, scripture attributes wisdom to the Son because of the characteristics unique to him by virtue of the relationship revealed in his sending. Moreover, because wisdom primarily belongs to the Son given his eternal relationship to the Father, it makes sense that the Son was the person of the Trinity sent to model our wisdom for us, such that humbly recognizing his sacrifice of love we too might become wise imitating him, just as he is wise by perfectly imitating the Father. Accordingly, although our salvation is a work inseparably undertaken by the Trinity, this action belongs to the Son in a

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., VII. 4. See again n. 405 where we discussed Augustine’s attribution of truth to the Son. In Book VII Augustine also writes:

If the temporal and passing word that we utter declares both itself and the thing we are speaking of, how much more is this the case with the Word through whom all things were made? This declares the Father as he is, because it is itself just like that, being exactly what the Father is insofar as he is wisdom and being. Insofar as it is Word it is not what the Father is, because the Father is not Word, and it is called Word by way of relationship, like Son, which of course the Father is not either. (Ibid., VII. 4).

⁴¹⁶ That Augustine reasoned in this manner is shown by the fact that in answering why “the scriptures almost nowhere say anything about wisdom except to show it as either begotten or made,” he asserts that the Son serves a model for us even in eternity.

This then is the reason perhaps why it is the Son who is being introduced to us whenever mention is made of wisdom or description given of her in scripture, whether she herself is speaking or being spoken about. Let us copy the example of the divine image, the Son, and not draw away from God . . . we are image because we are illuminated with light; that one is so because it is the light that illuminates, and therefore it provides a model for us without having a model itself . . . To the pure intellectual spirits who did not fall by pride he offers a model *in the form of God* and as *equal to God* (Phil 2:6) and as God. But in order to offer a model of return to man who had fallen away and was unable to see God on account of the impurity of sin and the punishment of mortality, *he emptied himself* (Phil 2:6), not by changing his divinity but by taking on our changeability, and *taking the form of a servant* (Phil 2:6) *he came into this world* (1 Tim 1: 15) for us, though he was already *in this world* because *the world was made through him* (Jn 1:10). Thus he could be model for those who can see him as God above, a model for those who can admire him as man below a model for the healthy to abide by, a model for the sick to get better by; a

different way than it does to the Father or the Holy Spirit because of his eternal relationship to the Father. Namely, it belongs to the Son to reveal the divine love such that our hearts might become wise in the recognition of our absolute needfulness of God, and thus humbly modeling his humility, we might be purified to perceive God's eternal nature, thereby, like the Son, becoming wise in the contemplation of the Father's eternal truth. Thus, although it is by means of his being sent that we come to understand the reason for the attribution of wisdom to the Son, and thus the unique manner in which he, inseparable from the Father and the Holy Spirit, works for our salvation, the action of his sending is not the *cause* of the attribution since the attribution is appropriate without reference to salvation history. Augustine writes in Book XV:

And yet it is not without point that in this triad only the Son is called the Word of God,⁴¹⁷ and only the Holy Spirit is called the gift of God,⁴¹⁸ and only the Father is called the one from whom the Word is born and from whom the Holy Spirit principally proceeds. I added "principally," because we have found that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Son. But this too was given the Son by the Father – not given to him when he already existed and did not yet have it; but whatever the Father gave to his only-begotten Word he gave by begetting him. He so begot him then that their common gift would proceed from him too, and the Holy Spirit would be the Spirit of them both. *This distinction then within the inseparable trinity must be diligently looked into and not casually taken for granted. It is this that allows the Word of God also to be distinctively called the wisdom of God, even though both the Father and Holy Spirit are also wisdom.*⁴¹⁹

These same conclusions hold for the Holy Spirit. It is by virtue of the Spirit's eternal relationship with the Father and the Son that charity is attributed primarily to the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, though the work of bringing man to the knowledge of God is

model for those who are going to die not to be afraid, a model for the dead to rise again, *in all things holding the first place of God himself* (Col 1:18).

⁴¹⁷ See Book VII. 4.

⁴¹⁸ See Book V. 12.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., XV. 29 – emphasis added.

inseparably shared by the Trinity, on the basis of its relationship to the Son and the Father this work belongs to the Spirit in a different way than it does to the Father and the Son. Namely, it belongs to the Spirit to awaken us to our weakness and lovingly draw our attention to the incarnate Word and his demonstration of both how much we are loved by God, and what kind of people we are that he loves. Thus the Holy Spirit draws us into his love for the Son, thereby causing us to abide in God and him in us.⁴²⁰ Augustine presents these conclusions in the following passage from Book XV:

As then holy scripture proclaims that charity is God, and as it is from God and causes us to abide in God and him in us, and as we know this because he has given us of his Spirit, this Spirit of his is God charity. Again, if there is nothing greater than charity among God's gifts, and if there is no greater gift of God's than the Holy Spirit, what must we conclude but that he is this charity which is called both God and from God?⁴²¹ *And if the charity by which the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father inexpressibly shows forth the communion of them both, what more suitable than he who is the common Spirit of them both should be distinctively called charity?* This, surely, is the most sensible way for us to believe or understand the matter, that the Holy Spirit is not alone in that triad in being charity, but that there is a good reason for distinctively calling him charity, as shown above.⁴²²

⁴²⁰ Ibid., XV. 37.

⁴²¹ “Just then as we distinctively call the only Word of God by the name of wisdom, although the Holy Spirit and the Father are also wisdom in a general sense, so the Spirit is distinctively called by the term charity, although both Father and Son are charity in a general sense” (Ibid., XV. 31).

However, unlike the Son who is openly called wisdom – “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (I Cor 1:24) – the Holy Spirit is not explicitly called charity. Nevertheless, according to Augustine “we can find where the Holy Spirit is called charity if we carefully examine the words of the apostle John” (Ibid., XV. 31). Augustine notes that in John 4:7 the writer makes it clear that the love that is from God is God itself. Accordingly, since both the Son and the Holy Spirit are from the Father, “the natural question is about which of them we should here take it as said, that love is God” (Ibid., XV. 31). This question is resolved by reference to I John 4:13, where the writer asserts that we know that we abide in God and he in us because he has given us his Spirit. “But,” Augustine asserts, “this is precisely what love does” (Ibid., XV. 31). Accordingly, he concludes: “He then is the gift of God who is love” (Ibid., XV. 31).

⁴²² Ibid., XV. 37 – emphasis added. Rowan Williams writes:

But we may say of the Spirit in particular what is true of divinity in general (*dilectio*, donum) because it is through the Spirit that the life of love and gift which is God is lovingly given in the specific history of our salvation and to concrete and diverse individuals. It is because of the Spirit that we have access as redeemed creatures to *sapientia*, because of the Spirit that we may be taken up into the life of self-impartment which we recognize as the ground of our very relation to

Therefore, while the Father is wisdom and love, the Son is wisdom and love, and the Holy Spirit is wisdom and love, each person of the Trinity draws to himself what is true of divinity in general based on the characteristics unique to him by way of relationship. It is for this reason the scripture primarily calls the Son wisdom and the Holy Spirit charity. Likewise, while the Father saves, the Son, saves, and the Holy Spirit saves, the work of revealing the knowledge of God that is man's salvation belongs to each person of the Trinity in a different way on account of their eternal relationships. Thus, the Son reveals the love of God for man by humbly taking on human form and modeling our wisdom for us, whereas the Holy Spirit reveals the knowledge of God by lovingly abiding within us such that we come to find the words and actions performed by the Son to be loveable. However, just as the Son is not wisdom to the loss of the Father's and the Holy Spirit's understanding, nor the Holy Spirit charity to the loss of the Son's and the Father's love, neither is the Father or the Spirit absent from the Son's sending, nor the Father or the Son absent from the Spirit in his. Thus the revelation of divine love that is man's salvation, though inseparably wrought by the Trinity, is inseparable from

ourselves. "Sapientia and the Trinity" Reflections on De Trinitate (*Collectanea Augustiniana*. Louvain: Leuven University Press. 1990) pp. 317-332.

Williams is no doubt right that, according to Augustine, it is through the Spirit that the life of love is given to humanity. However, he is mistaken in asserting, if he is indeed speaking for Augustine here, that what is true in general of divinity is said of the Spirit in particular because of his role in salvation history. Rather, as we have seen in our discussion of Augustine's understanding of the manner in which the Trinity reveals itself in introducing man into the knowledge of divine love based on the characteristics proper to each person by way of relationship, the Holy Spirit is called in particular what is true generally because of his eternal relationship to the Father and the Son. And it is on account of this relationship that the act of bringing man to the knowledge of God, although inseparably undertaken by the Trinity, belongs to the Holy Spirit in a different way than it belongs to the Son. In short, it is proper to call the Word wisdom and the Holy Spirit charity apart from any reference to salvation history – and it is because of the characteristics proper to each by virtue of their eternal relationships that they undertake the actions ascribed to them.

coming to know, and being conformed to, the triune God – self-giving love that exists in three persons.

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