

THE TRINITY AND CREATION: AUGUSTINE AND BOFF

THE TRINITY AND CREATION: AUGUSTINE AND BOFF ON
MONARCHY, GOVERNANCE AND DOMINION

By

SCOTT A. DUNHAM, B.A., M.A., M.DIV.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

© Copyright by Scott A. Dunham, September 2005

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2005)
(Religious Studies)

McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: *The Trinity and Creation: Augustine and Boff on
Monarchy, Governance and Dominion*

AUTHOR: Scott A. Dunham, B.A. (University of New
Brunswick), M.A. (Acadia University),
M. Div. (Acadia University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Peter J. Widdicombe

NUMBER OF PAGES: vii, 214

ABSTRACT

The Trinity And Creation: Augustine And Boff On Monarchy, Governance And Dominion

This dissertation explores the relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of creation by examining the two predominant approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity – the classical model and the social model. A representative theologian of each approach is discussed in terms of their account of the divine-world relationship. The project has two parts. In the first part, I examine Leonardo Boff's liberationist-ecological critiques of the classical doctrine of the Trinity and the traditional concept of divine creation and governance. I also analyse his own proposal for a alternative social doctrine of the Trinity that reflects the need for ecological justice. I then analyze Augustine's classical doctrine of the Trinity, paying special attention to how the doctrine of the Trinity influences his account of creation and providential governance in Genesis 1, and whether it is susceptible to Boff's critiques. Then, I consider how the Augustinian understanding of humanity's dominion over the creation is conceived in light of his trinitarian doctrine of creation. From this analysis of Boff and Augustine the limitations and the potential explanatory power of the classical and social understandings of the Trinity are articulated and explored as they relate to contemporary concerns in ecological theology.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

adherere Deo bonum est

I thank my committee for their direction in this project, especially the patient guidance from my supervisor Dr. Peter Widdicombe.

This research was aided by Ontario Graduate Scholarships and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada doctoral fellowship.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DESCRIPTIVE NOTE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
Chapter	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
The Ecological Problem of Dominion and the Doctrine of God	
The Context of Eco-Theological Ethics: Interrelatedness in Ecology	
The Problem of Hierarchy in Modern Theology	
Trinitarian Theology in the Ecological Age	
Augustine's Trinitarian Doctrine of Creation	
2 BOFF'S TRINITARIAN ECOLOGY	17
Ecology and Liberation Theology: A Common Cause	
The Starting Point of Liberation Theology: The Poor	
Boff's Eco-Liberationist Methodology	
Analysing Ecological Sin	
Conclusion	
3 BOFF'S SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY	38
A Critique of the Eastern Trinitarian Doctrine	
A Critique of the Western Trinitarian Doctrine	
A Critique of Biblical Monotheism	
The Trinity and Lordship	
The Trinity and Perichoresis	

Transforming the Model of Trinitarian Creation	
Conclusion	
4 AUGUSTINE AND SUBORDINATIONISM IN THE TRINITY	64
Modern Critiques of Augustine’s Doctrine of the Trinity	
Subordinationism and the divine missions	
Conclusion	
5 MODALISM, HIERARCHY, AND LOVE IN AUGUSTINE’S DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY	84
Monarchy, Simplicity, and Relations of Origin	
Modalism	
Hierarchy and Love in the Trinity	
Conclusion	
6 THE TRINITARIAN FOUNDING OF CREATION	108
The Structure of <i>The Literal Meaning of Genesis</i>	
Naming the Trinity in Genesis One	
How the Trinity Forms the Creation	
How the Trinity Converts and Perfects Creatures	
Conclusion	
7 THE TRINITARIAN GOVERNANCE OF CREATION AND CREATURELY PARTICIPATION IN GOD	139
Participation in Augustine’s Theology	
God’s Providential Governance and Creaturely Motion	
Participation in the Trinity Through Measure, Number and Weight	
Formless Matter and the Question of Passivity	

Conclusion	
8 RESTING IN GOD AND THE IMAGE OF GOD IN HUMAN DOMINION	169
Resting in God	
Use and Enjoyment	
The Work of Human Dominion and the Image of God	
Dominion and Power	
Conclusion	
9 CONCLUSION	195
WORKS CITED	200
Primary Sources	
Secondary Sources	

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation addresses the question of how to understand the doctrine of the Trinity in relationship to the understanding of divine governance, that is, God's providential care over creation, in the doctrine of creation. Our primary focus will be an examination of Augustine's doctrines of the Trinity and creation, and specifically how he developed his doctrine of creation in light of his trinitarian understanding of God, in a manner that highlights Augustine's view of the goodness of creatures and the centrality of the trinitarian providence by which the goodness of creatures is maintained. From his understanding of the trinitarian conception of creation, we then will explore how Augustine interpreted the commandment to practice dominion in Genesis 1:26 in light of his conception of the Trinity's providential care of the creation.

This task will be undertaken in response to modern criticisms that classical theologies of the Trinity and creation were not well-formed, because they were founded upon problematic understandings of God that were monotheistic and patriarchal in character. Such foundations, it is sometimes argued, led to severe restrictions on how God could be conceived as related to the creation, and also were used to justify imbalanced power relations between human beings and between humanity and non-human creatures. Augustine, in particular, has been severely criticised in modern theology as primarily responsible for undermining a proper conception of the doctrine of the Trinity, and thus preventing the development of a deeper understanding of the trinitarian underpinnings of the doctrine of creation, which, it is maintained, has had negative consequences into the modern era. One such criticism summarises well the portrait of Augustine that has come to the fore among certain interpreters:

... in Augustine's theology of creation ... the Christological element plays little substantive role, and the pneumatological even less. The result is that the way is laid open for a conception of creation as the outcome of arbitrary will [of the Father]¹

The analysis of Augustine that will be undertaken here will show that, in fact, the opposite is the case. Augustine's trinitarian doctrine of creation is profoundly oriented toward discerning the Trinity's close involvement in the creation, in both the creation's beginning as an act of the Trinity, and the creation's continued existence through the Trinity's providential care for the creation.

A principal figure in contemporary theology who believes that the classical

¹ Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 54.

formulation of the Trinity has led to unfortunate social and ecological consequences is Leonardo Boff. He argues for a social doctrine of the Trinity that can engage more responsibly the social and ecological plights that have arisen in part because of the deficient doctrines, as he sees them, of the past. We will begin by considering how ecological thought has been utilised in the theological work of Boff, and how his critique of classical traditions concerning the doctrine of the Trinity relate to his understanding of God and lordship in his ecological theology. It is in light of Boff's ecological-trinitarian model, which is built upon his critique of the classical traditions, that one is able to see how classical theology is often set against the possibility of positive retrieval for modern problems. However, in presenting Boff's views on the Trinity and creation, we will see that not only is his portrayal of classical theology less than adequate, and that in the case of Augustine there are more substantial resources for conceiving of the Trinity and creation, but that questions can be raised as to the coherence of Boff's own ecological conceptions of trinitarian doctrine. It should be noted, though, that such questions of coherence will be only of secondary focus in this dissertation. They will be painted with only the broadest brushstrokes. Before proceeding with Boff's work on an ecological theology, we will consider the general context in which connections have been drawn between ecology and theological/moral thought. In doing so, we will be in a better position to understand some of the reasons why Boff develops trinitarian and process theological approaches for understanding creation, when we take him up in the next chapter.

The Ecological Problem of Dominion and the Doctrine of God

A substantial amount of attention has been given to whether the biblical doctrine of human dominion over the world can be ecologically sound. This ecological question, focussed on the divine command for humans—who are created in the divine image—to have dominion in Genesis 1:26-28, has been a significant thread in biblical and theological thinking for several decades now. Lynn White's epochal 1967 article "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" tried to address how the West's religious roots had contributed to the environmental destruction that faces the world, and indirectly took up the problem of dominion and stewardship.² Since his article, many theologians have made claims for how to understand human dominion over the earth.³ At issue for environmental thinkers is how the claim that humanity is to

² "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-07.

³ This dissertation will not tackle directly the contemporary historical-critical debates about the meaning of dominion in the text of Genesis 1:26-28, though aspects of those debates will surface from time to time. For now, it will suffice to note that recent books have delved into the substance of these debates and have produced helpful summaries and applications for discussions about religious approaches to

exercise dominion over creation can be ethically positive (divinely mandated or not) since it would seem to imply a sense of superiority that can only undermine a positive relationship of human beings with the rest of creation.

Now, to be sure, an ecological reading of Genesis 1:26-28 had not dominated the interpretation of this text in the history of Jewish or Christian thought until recently.⁴ Nevertheless ecofeminist theologians such as Rosemary Radford Ruether⁵ and Anne Primavesi⁶ have attempted to draw out a correspondence between dominion (and more generally the place of the human being in a theology of creation) and the anthropocentric, androcentric, and patriarchal structures that they argue contribute to a

ecology. See, for example, Jeremy Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It: The Ancient and medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); William P. Brown, *The Ethos of the Cosmos: The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), esp. ch. 2; Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994); and Michael Welker, *Creation and Reality*, trans. J. F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 60-73. The application of the command to have dominion, while sometimes interpreted negatively as a license for domination, is understood in a significant amount of current literature as a command to exercise care, or stewardship, for the earth. In general, throughout this dissertation, the assumption will be that dominion should be interpreted in an ecologically positive sense as ‘stewardship’ or ‘care taking’.

⁴ For example, see Cohen, *Be Fertile*, who finds little in the history of classical and medieval interpretation on dominion that relates to stewardship or care taking. What he does find is that many theologians understood dominion primarily as a way to interpret the claim that human beings are made in the image of God, often by exercising a rational rule over non-rational creatures.

⁵ *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1983); *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992); *New Woman/New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975); and *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).

⁶ *From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); and “Ecology and Christian Hierarchy,” in *Sacred Custodians of the Earth: Women, Spirituality, and the Environment?* ed., A. Low and S. Tremayne, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 121-139.

negative understanding of nature.⁷ In their estimation, to attempt to form an environmentally sensitive ethic founded upon traditional concepts such as dominion faces the problem of also having to overcome such negative structures. Because understandings of God often are tied to these oppressive structures of thought and practice, it is argued that a revision of traditional understandings of God is required in order to find a way in which Christianity can contribute to the removal of these destructive structures in contemporary society. In this way, the Christian doctrine of God is perceived by ecofeminists to be tied to the anthropocentric ideas that have contributed to the ecological crisis about which White wrote.

The Context of Eco-Theological Ethics:

Interrelatedness in Ecology

An important theme that has taken root in religious ecological thinking concerns the interrelatedness of all of nature, including humans, within and through overlapping ecosystems.⁸ In ecology, such interrelatedness fundamentally refers to self-organising relationships within and between ecosystems. When something happens within an ecosystem, its effects reverberate throughout the system and condition the whole (and vice versa). A similar relationship exists between ecosystems, which themselves are nestled within wider systems. This idea of smaller systems nestled within larger ones extends to the description of the planet as an ecosystem made up of numerous smaller ecosystems. One feature of the interrelatedness of ecosystem components is self-perpetuating development. For example, just as an organism can respond to the stimuli around it as part of its survival mechanism by developing attributes to protect itself against other organisms, so ecosystem components develop characteristics as they encounter new stimuli. This self-perpetuating development of

⁷ Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, trans. P. Berryman (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), relies on their work as he puts forward his own interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity in an eco-theological worldview.

⁸ Arthur Tansley, "The Use and Abuse of Vegetational Concepts and Terms," *Ecology* 16 (1935): 284-307, coined the term ecosystem in an effort to avoid anthropomorphic language, such as 'community', when describing the nonhuman world. He understood the composition of ecosystems in terms of the flow of energy and changes in chemical compositions. G. E. Likens defines an ecosystem as "a spatially explicit unit of the Earth that includes all of the organisms, along with all components of the abiotic environment within its boundaries," in *The Ecosystem Approach: Its Use and Abuse*, Excellence in Ecology 3 (Oldendorf/Luhe, Germany: Ecology Institute, 1992), quoted in The Ecological Society of America, "The Scientific Basis for Ecosystem Management," 09/15/1997, <<http://www.epa.gov/ecocommunity/tools/ecosysmn.pdf>> (accessed July 2004).

ecosystem components affects the whole ecosystem. Some ecologists go so far as to describe ecosystems, including the earth, as a complex organism.⁹

It is now a widely accepted assumption in the field of environmental ethics that the interrelatedness of ecosystems is not just a biological or mechanical explanation of how the world works, but that interrelatedness also forms part of the basis for normative explanations favouring the development of ethically sound human activities in response to current ecological crises.¹⁰ To this end, some eco-ethicists will

⁹ This understanding of ecosystem uses descriptors such as ‘organism’ and ‘self-organisation’. Boff follows this trend of using the language of relationality to explain the science of ecology and cosmology by adopting the concept of Gaia—an understanding of the earth as a “living superorganism” with its own biological reasoning and consciousness. In fact, he extends the concept beyond earth to encompass the entire universe as a living organism, *Cry of the Earth*, 15-20, 53-56. Fritjof Capra, “Systems Theory and the New Paradigm,” in *Ecology*, ed. Carolyn Merchant (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994), 334-41, describes this change, from definitions that indicate more the mechanical and physicalist aspects of ecosystems to more organismic and relational ones (as Boff uses them), as a paradigm shift that began in the early twentieth century. Also see David Bohm, “Postmodern Science and a Postmodern World,” in *Ecology*, 342-50.

¹⁰ Roderick Nash traces the development of environmental ethics in the United States, including some of the dynamics of the relationship between scientific research and ethical reflection, in *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989). The essay by the Ecological Society of America, “The Scientific Basis for Ecosystem Management,” is part of the literature that The United States Environmental Protection Agency makes available on the discipline of ecology, for the purpose of promoting the development of an environmental ethic of management. The EPA essay assumes that a relationship inheres between scientific research and ethical practices, beginning with the guiding statement: “We should manage so as not to deny future generations the opportunities and resources we enjoy today.” This clearly sets out moral implications that arise from scientific research, namely, the promotion of the moral good of enjoyment for present and future generations. The science of ecology is important for ethically sound management, though the essay stops short of claiming that ecology is a moral discipline. While leaving the moral ramifications of the research to others who wish to make use of it, they do make an effort to present their research as part of the solution to a larger moral question. Ruether, in *Gaia & God*, goes beyond this cautious attempt to link science and ethics, stating simply that science is to be used “as normative or as ethically prescriptive” (47). Her claim is that the earth (Gaia) is an evolving consciousness through human evolution and human consciousness. Conscience, which is part of human consciousness, is also part of earth-consciousness, developing through evolution. Therefore, science, which tracks evolution, is a key part of the description of

describe ecosystems as communities. By describing them as communities, it also is possible to introduce the discussion of rights and duties with respect to ecosystems in ways that are similar to how human communities are described in law and by social ethicists.¹¹ In particular, eco-theologians tend to favour this mode of speech for describing ecosystems. The conception of the interrelatedness of ecosystems, which they see as not only a modern scientific description but also as a basic building block for a Christian understanding of the world, entails certain duties to be performed by humankind in relation to the planetary ecosystems. By using the results of scientific research on ecological interrelatedness, and linking it to analogous religious perspectives on personal and social interrelatedness, eco-theologians, such as Ruether, Boff, and James Nash,¹² hope to promote a religiously sensitive understanding of nature, and ecological virtues.

James Nash puts forward an eco-theological approach that finds the concept of interrelatedness within and between ecosystems germane to ethical practice. In order to maintain a healthy ecosystem in the face of ecological crises, he describes the moral imperative of ecological integrity. Ecological integrity is

the ‘holistic health’ of the ecosphere and biosphere, in which biophysical support systems maximally sustain the lives of species and individuals, and, reciprocally, in which the interactions of interdependent life forms with one another in their ecosystems preserve the life-sustaining qualities of the support systems. The concept is relative and dynamic, since not only do all human actions have ecosystemic effects but “natural” change is also a normal part of the process. The concept also implies moral constraints on human behavior to maintain the dignity of all life to the fullest possible extent.¹³

consciousness and conscience. Scientific knowledge must be taken into account as one attempts to understand what is ethically prescriptive. For a more detailed analysis of Ruether’s use of Gaia and ethics, see Steven Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening of Theology: The Ecological Models of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Joseph Sittler, and Jürgen Moltmann* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), chs. 2 and 5.

¹¹ Thus, Roderick Nash, *The Rights of Nature*. An example of how ecosystems can be characterized in an environmental ethic using terminology that includes ‘community’ and ‘health’, is Conrad Brunk and Scott A. Dunham, “Ecosystem Justice in the Canadian Fisheries,” in *Just Fish: Ethics and Canadian Marine Fisheries*, ed. H. Coward, R. Ommer, and T. Pitcher (St. Johns: ISER, 2000), 9-33.

¹² *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*, Publications of the Churches’ Center for Theology and Public Policy (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991).

¹³ James Nash, *Loving Nature*, 18.

While others may want to extend or limit what Nash says here, he nonetheless is an example of how an eco-theologian moves from describing the integrity of ecosystems (emphasising interrelatedness) to a corresponding moral responsibility. He relates this to theology by arguing that creation is unified: “Since God is the source of all in the Christian doctrine of creation, all creatures share in a common relationship.”¹⁴ In other words, the coming into existence of the universe from a single source—God’s creativity—is the basis for its ecological unity, namely, the common relationship all creatures share. This theocentric understanding of creation in Christian doctrine has moral implications since the Bible affirms the goodness of all that God creates. The intrinsic goodness of all creation requires action that promotes that goodness which God intends for the whole creation. Thus, for Nash, upholding the health and integrity of ecosystems is simply a modern, scientific way of describing such moral activity.

Nash’s methodology moves from modern, scientific ‘facts’ to moral imperatives (developed as a list of ecological virtues¹⁵) and then finally to a study of whether “Christian theology and ethics support and nurture these ecological virtues.”¹⁶ He appeals to the contextual nature of ecological ethics as a contemporary phenomenon rooted in ecological science, but also relates the implications of traditional Christian theology and ethics to this context. He presents the contribution of theology for ecological ethics by locating implicit ideas and background assumptions about the intrinsic goodness of creation and the interrelatedness of people and nature found within traditional doctrines,¹⁷ in order that those implicit assumptions may be applied to ecological concerns.¹⁸ The adoption of ideas from ecology, especially about interrelatedness, is a key part of the foundation for such theological reflections.

The Problem of Hierarchy in Modern Theology

While the theme of interrelatedness aids in the construction of certain types of Christian responses to specific ecological problems, it also can be used to justify the

¹⁴ James Nash, *Loving Nature*, 95.

¹⁵ James Nash, *Loving Nature*, 63-67.

¹⁶ James Nash, *Loving Nature*, 67.

¹⁷ E.g., the significance of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ for creation (108-11), the work of the Holy Spirit in creation (111-16), and the idea of human responsibility toward nature as expressed in the command to have dominion in Genesis 1:26-28 (102-08).

¹⁸ E.g., by means of his definition of Christian love in chs. 6-7.

negative assessment of any ecological moral theory that is founded upon stewardship (dominion) as a unique and positive human activity. One may cite as an example the criticism levelled against Douglas John Hall's retrieval of a theology of stewardship that has strong environmental overtones.¹⁹ By advocating a biblical model of stewardship, or care for the creation, over against the domination approach to ecology that Lynn White criticized, Hall has met with the criticism that he simply has watered down what is still a domination theology because he sees the human being as having a special place in the care of non-human creation. For example, Catherine Roach, from an ecofeminist perspective, asks how humanity, which is clearly part of the world and dependent upon it, can be stewards over it, especially in light of the negative impact of human activity in recent centuries.²⁰ She argues that the stewardship model advocated by Hall gives human beings a special status as caretakers, which implies an unhealthy hierarchy of humanity over the rest of creation. It is because of the anthropocentric hierarchy found in the stewardship model of ecological ethics, which gives human beings authority over other creatures because of their creation in the image of God, that she claims it contradicts an ecosystem approach to ethics that recognises the inter-relatedness of all creatures.

Deep ecologists, like George Sessions²¹ and Bill Devall,²² hold that the non-human environment has intrinsic value independent of human interests. They react against anthropocentric conceptions of the environment, which place primary value on promoting human interests. Deep ecologists argue that the value of human activities must always be understood relative to the larger environmental context.²³ The concern to avoid hierarchy in ethical theories as deep ecology and ecofeminism have described them results from the suspicion that ideas such as stewardship and human uniqueness arose in a context where the attitude of domination was perpetuated by claiming human distinctiveness (often tied to humanity being created in the image of God) in terms of superiority²⁴ and arrogance.²⁵ The history of Christianity typically is one of the

¹⁹ *The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) and *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

²⁰ Roach, "Stewards of the Sea: A Model for Justice?" in *Just Fish: Ethics and Canadian Marine Fisheries*, 67-82.

²¹ "Ecocentrism and the Anthropocentric Detour," *ReVision* 13 (1991): 109-15.

²² "The Deep Ecology Movement," *Natural Resources Journal* 20 (1980): 299-313.

²³ A survey of deep ecology is Allan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, ed., *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995).

²⁴ Val Plumwood, "Ecosocial Feminism as a General Theory of Oppression," in *Ecology*, 207-19.

sources claimed to have fostered such a heritage.²⁶

Jürgen Moltmann, in *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*,²⁷ suggests that Augustine's understanding of dominion and the image of God is precisely about the rule of dominating power over nature. This is based on Moltmann's reading of Augustine on the superiority of the male who is created in the image of God, over the female.

The soul ... which dominates the body, and the man who dominates the woman, correspond, and in actual fact constitute the human being's likeness to God. *Imago Dei* is then on the one hand a pure analogy of domination, and on the other ... a patriarchal analogy to God the Father.²⁸

This judgement of Augustine is meant to show that in the end Augustine has developed a doctrine of the Trinity that is not so much trinitarian as it is monotheistic, giving pride of place to the Father, and interpreting the Father in terms of patriarchal and dominating power. Such a hierarchy, where God the Father is at the top of a pyramid of power relations that are essentially about the domination of those below one in the hierarchy, is about exercising one's superiority through control.²⁹ In

²⁵ For example, Boff, *Cry of the Earth*, 79.

²⁶ For example, Sessions, "Ecocentrism and the Anthropocentric Detour."

²⁷ Trans. M. Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 236-40.

²⁸ *God in Creation*, 240. This understanding of Augustine as a theologian of domination fits within Moltmann's broader understanding of the political roots and consequences of monotheism in the early church, as discussed in *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, trans. M. Kohl (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), 192-200. This judgement is repeated by Boff, *Cry of the Earth*, 79-80, though Boff's critique is more sweeping as he suggests that even Moltmann (225, fn.38) fails to face up to the unacceptable monotheism and anthropocentrism (i.e., ecological imperialism of the human over everything else) that pervades Scripture. We will take up this monotheistic problem in the next two chapters.

²⁹ Sallie McFague, "A Square in the Quilt," in *Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment Is a Religious Issue, an Interfaith Dialogue*, ed. S. C. Rockefeller and J. C. Elder (Boston: Beacon, 1992), 49ff, has contended similarly that the historical Christian expression of God as king, exercising dominion over creation, does two things. First, it makes God appear distant and untouchable, like a human monarch who rules, at best, through a kind of disinterested benevolence (understood to be the price of understanding God as transcendent and uninterested in the creation), or, at worst, through an exercise of dominion that is tantamount to sheer domination. Second, the expression of God as king fails to take seriously God's relationship to the whole

contradistinction to this hierarchical, anthropocentric view of reality and the human claim to power attributed to classical theology, ecological science has been interpreted by many, including Moltmann and Boff, to support a different view of relations between humans and the rest of the world/universe that gives priority to interdependence and egalitarian relations.

Trinitarian Theology in the Ecological Age

One way of meeting the challenge of describing the human-nature relationship, in light of these criticisms about hierarchical conceptions of humanity over nature, is to argue that the doctrine of the Trinity provides a means for speaking of relationships that promotes sensitivity and equality. In chapter two, we will consider how liberation theologian Leonardo Boff thinks that Christian theology can integrate modern ecological findings so as to transform the church's understanding of creation and how to live wisely in it. Boff's writings cover several aspects of doctrine. We shall be primarily concerned with his ecological writings, of which the two main texts are *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*³⁰ and *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, and his trinitarian writings, *Trinity and Society*,³¹ and *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*.³²

He suggests that ecological science has much in common with a liberationist theological method, since the poor and oppressed of human society are used without thought for their welfare, just as the earth and its creatures are also exploited for their utility in supporting human ends, usually by turning a deaf ear to the cry of the earth. We will see how Boff takes up the ecological disciplines and cosmological science, with their stress on the interrelationality of all things, and connects them with the search for spirituality. In light of his establishment of this common ground between spirituality and ecology/cosmology, we will then examine his eco-liberationist theological method, paying particular attention to his critique of the Christian tradition's lack of positive notions of relationally egalitarian models. Specifically, we will focus upon the environmentally negative attitudes in the history of Christianity that reveal the desire of the powerful to dominate those who are weaker. We also will briefly consider how

creation. According to McFague, a human monarch, while claiming dominion over lands, nonetheless is concerned primarily with the rule of human beings. From a monarch's point of view, other creatures are largely irrelevant apart from their utility for human purposes. At the very least McFague's description of kingly rule lacks nuance.

³⁰ Trans. J. Cumming (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995).

³¹ Trans. P. Burns (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988).

³² Trans. P. Berryman (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000).

Boff sees the potential to reinterpret Christian doctrine so that it meshes with ecological interrelationality by appealing to the trinitarian conception of perichoresis.

The introduction of perichoresis as an entry point by which Christian doctrine can be reinterpreted to fit into an ecological worldview also leads into Boff's understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity—indeed, trinitarian perichoresis is mirrored in creation in the ecological interrelatedness of all creatures. In Boff's estimation, the classical doctrine of the Trinity is one of the primary areas of doctrine that needs reinterpretation, because historically, as he sees it, the classical Christian conception of God has been used to justify the oppression and domination of people and the earth, along the lines noted above with reference to ecofeminist critiques of anthropocentrism. If the doctrine of the Trinity is not conceived in such a manner as to produce a just society, then its meaning is limited for the poor, if not harmful.

Boff's emphasis on the Trinity in his theological thought stands in the context of a wider interest in that doctrine. The doctrine of the Trinity received considerable revival in the theological discourse of the twentieth century, beginning with Karl Barth's move to make the conception of God's triune nature the point from which systematic theology must proceed.³³ Barth's reappraisal of the doctrine of the Trinity was complemented by Karl Rahner, who contributed an important thesis that "the 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity."³⁴ This thesis functions as a methodological touchstone for many subsequent theologians who have claimed that the doctrine, in its later Patristic and Medieval forms, was shaped more by philosophical ideas than biblical teaching concerning God's work in the creation. Rahner's axiom has been especially significant in the rise of the social doctrine of the Trinity, a conception of the doctrine that locates personality and self-consciousness in the three *hypostases* rather than in the one God (ironically, both Rahner and Barth held that it was the one God where self-consciousness resided). It is from within the social trinitarian framework that Boff works.

Social trinitarianism builds upon a foundational claim that the biblical picture of God assumes that the three *hypostases* are individual centres of consciousness, and that the oneness of God refers to a communal or social unity. The social trinitarian position stands in contrast to the so-called classical Western trinitarian position (typically identified as beginning with Augustine's writings on the Trinity) that relied upon a traditional Greek metaphysics of substance, which, it is argued, stressed the priority of oneness and unity in the godhead over against the reality of the three

³³ *Church Dogmatics*, ed. and trans. G. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 1975), I.1.295ff.

³⁴ *The Trinity*, trans. J. Donceel (Wellwood: Burns and Oates, 1970), 10-24.

hypostases.³⁵ Boff extends the social trinitarian perspective to an ecological worldview, thus providing a link between both the trinitarian and ecological critiques of classical theology. In chapter three, we will consider how he reinterprets the Trinity not only in his explanation of a social understanding of the trinitarian persons, but also in his critique of Christian tradition. This critique of the classical doctrinal tradition forms a central means by which Boff justifies the need for a new understanding of the Trinity. We will also consider how the Trinity is related to creation in his ecological theology, drawing out some of the key ways that God's relationship to the creation can promote a more healthy relationship between human beings and between humanity and the earth.

In taking up Boff's trinitarian and ecological thought, and specifically how he develops it in opposition to the forms of thought that he considers to be built upon dominating and oppressive structures, we have an example of the contrast between classical and contemporary theological expression. However, while Boff is an example of the contrast of the classical and the contemporary, he is not simply a "straw man." In fact, he appreciates at least portions of Augustine.³⁶ In that respect, when we turn to Augustine, we will engage other theologians who have more directly criticised Augustine using the same general portrayal of the classical theologies of the Trinity and their relationship to a doctrine of creation that Boff utilises. An examination of Boff's thought is appropriate, however, because he concisely and clearly shows where the fault lines have been drawn in ecological theology between the contemporary and the classical understanding of God as triune creator. Furthermore, his breadth of writing on both the Trinity and ecology means that he provides more detailed discussions of the Trinity than many ecological theologians.³⁷

Augustine's Trinitarian Doctrine of Creation

In chapters 4 and 5 we will turn to Augustine, examining his doctrine of the Trinity, and whether the contemporary critiques of his Western approach does justice to his model of trinitarian relations. The primary text will be his *The Trinity*,³⁸ as well as

³⁵ See Colin Gunton's argument in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 1-15; and Moltmann's *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, esp. 10-20, 129-77.

³⁶ See, for example, *Ecology and Liberation*, 152; and *Cry of the Earth*, 156.

³⁷ The other exception is Moltmann, who also has written on both the Trinity and ecology. Boff and Moltmann often develop their ideas in ways that are parallel to the other.

³⁸ The translation to be used throughout the dissertation will be *The Trinity*, trans. E. Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, part I, vol. 5 (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991). The Latin text will be referred to as necessary.

some of his later anti-Arian writings, particularly *Answer to Maximus the Arian* and *Answer to the Arian Sermon*.³⁹ In both chapters, we will deal with how Augustine develops his understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, in chapter 4 as he develops it according to the economic work of God as revealed in Scripture; in chapter 5 as he develops it according to his understanding of the simplicity of divine being. We will focus on how Augustine explains his doctrine with an emphasis on how the Son and the Holy Spirit are from the Father, who is the beginning of the godhead, which is typically associated with Eastern trinitarianism but is, as we shall show, also true of Augustine's doctrine. We will also consider the nature of the Son's and Holy Spirit's relations of origin from the Father, and how they relate to Augustine's discussion of divine substance and love. This understanding of the Son and Holy Spirit as originating from the Father is often rejected by modern interpreters, particularly social trinitarian thinkers, who argue that relations of origin lead to a hierarchical conception of the Father over the Son and Holy Spirit, and of oneness over plurality. We will argue that for Augustine relations of origin indicate the logical ordering of the persons based on the revelation of that order in the divine economy described in Scripture. Furthermore, their origin from the Father confirms the eternal equality of substance of the persons, without denying their individual identity.

Then, in chapters 6-8, we will see how Augustine relates his conception of the doctrine of the Trinity to the doctrine of creation, examining in detail his *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*.⁴⁰ The primary focus will be on his description of the Trinity's act of creation, how it influences his conception of the goodness of creation, and what the implications are for conceiving of a moral order within the creation. In Augustine's doctrine of creation, God is over the creation as the creator of everything from nothing, and as the Lord of creation who sustains its continuing existence. A key term in Augustine's description of the sustaining activity of God is the divine 'governance'

³⁹ Both works are found in *Arianism and Other Heresies*, trans. R. J. Teske, The Works of Saint Augustine, part I, vol. 18 (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1995), which will be the translation used in this dissertation.

⁴⁰ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. J. H. Taylor, Ancient Christian Writers, no. 41-42 (New York: Newman Press, 1982). The Taylor translation will be used throughout the dissertation. Quotations and references to his other major commentaries on Genesis, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* and *Unfinished Literal Commentary On Genesis*, will be from the translation by Hill, *On Genesis*, The Works of Saint Augustine, part I, vol. 13 (Brooklyn: New City Press, 2002). We also will consult *The Confessions*, trans. H. Chadwick, The World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) and *The City of God*, trans. R. W. Dyson, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

(*administratio*) of creation.⁴¹ It also can be translated as ‘lordship,’ ‘rule’ or ‘dominion’. These translations are provocative terms in this dissertation, since the issue of God’s monarchy in the Trinity and the divine rule over creation are problems that eco-theologians such as Boff have with the classical understanding of the doctrine of God. They often suggest that the problematic idea of rule as absolute control by a monarch is attributable to classical philosophical and political ideas that infiltrated the church’s theology. In contrast, they see the best alternative to be egalitarianism or some other ‘relational’ forms of political relationships, such as democracy. Where the Trinity is thought to be a positive example of such egalitarianism, the Western (Augustinian) approach to the doctrine is usually rejected because of its supposed conception of God as an absolute monarch from which all hierarchies are derived.⁴² However, a case can be made that a concept such as divine governance, understood within the context of Augustine’s *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, does not promote a theological basis for conceiving the human relationship to nature in a dominating or totalitarian fashion.

Chapter 6 will trace the explanation of divine creation as Augustine identifies the threefold creative work in Genesis 1-2. Augustine developed, in his explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity, a conception of divine activity as a perfect, unified operation of the three persons. God’s works are not individual actions by any one person of the godhead, though the proper missions of the Son and Holy Spirit in the New Testament show particular persons at work in the world. The emphasis Augustine places upon the unity of divine action does not minimise the importance of each of the divine persons in the divine economy. In this chapter, we will examine how his description of God’s creative work is thoroughly trinitarian in scope, and how each of the divine persons is identified in Genesis 1-2.

In chapter 7, the relationship of God to creation will be considered in terms of creation’s status under God’s ongoing providential work of governing the creation. The origin of creatures in the trinitarian activity, from the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, forms the basic shape of Augustine’s understanding of creation. However, the creation is not of the same substance by which the Son and Holy Spirit are begotten and proceed as equals of the Father. Instead, creation is from God, but also less than God is. The lesser status refers to creation’s difference from the divine substance and to its necessary dependence on God’s love and goodness for its continued being. This dependence is explained as the participation of creation in God,⁴³ through a creature’s place within the order of creation according to its measure,

⁴¹ E.g., *The Literal Meaning*, I.9.17, III.10.14, III.17.26, III.22.34, IV.12.22-23, V.4.10-5.12, and V.11.27.

⁴² For example, see Primavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis*, 203. Similarly, see Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 388-400, esp. fn.74.

⁴³ E.g., *The Literal Meaning*, I.5.10, IV.24.41-25.42, V.13.20 and XI.13.17.

number and weight.⁴⁴ The relationship between creature and creator is manifest in the divine ordering of creation according to creaturely participation in the divine being. Unlike the inner trinitarian relations, where the three persons possess their divine being in eternal equality from the Father and in themselves, creation possesses its being only from ‘outside’ God’s substance, and never in itself but always in dependence upon God’s ongoing sustaining providence.

In chapter 8 we will consider the providential ordering of creatures in relation to each other, and how dominion—understood as the exercise of the image of God—enables humanity to enjoy God’s love and goodness in the proper use of creation. Augustine’s idea of a hierarchy of creatures is presented in terms of ordered relationships by which different created substances participate in the divine being in different ways according to the creator’s design.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, all creatures have their own goodness, perfection and beauty relative to other creatures. The realisation of that goodness in God limits the ways in which a hierarchical conception of the order of creation should be understood to affect the role of dominion, as does Augustine’s recognition that while individual creatures are declared good by God, the creation in its entirety is called very good, with the implication that dominion is worked out in light of the goodness of the whole of creation.⁴⁶

Methodologically, this dissertation will examine how Boff and Augustine develop their doctrines of the Trinity and creation through a close examination of the major texts of each that we have just mentioned, and how those texts fit within the broader context of each theologian’s work. This is not meant to be a direct comparison of the authors. To do so would be anachronistic, since Augustine was engaged in setting out both the doctrines of the Trinity and of creation in detail, whereas Boff attempts to understand how the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of creation can be rehabilitated for contemporary liberationist and ecological needs. The impetus for examining Augustine’s trinitarian theology is to see whether it is susceptible to Boff’s overarching critique of the general development of classical theologies of the Trinity and creation (he does not engage any classical author in much detail for that matter).

Given the characterisations of the Western theological tradition by Boff (and others, such as Gunton and Moltmann), do Augustine’s theological writings reflect the conception of the Trinity in terms of the Father’s superiority in the godhead, and a predilection for placing unity ahead of plurality, along the lines of the anthropocentric and patriarchal conceptions of power relations? If not, then what does Augustine’s trinitarian conception of creation say about the relationship between God and creation,

⁴⁴ E.g., *The Literal Meaning*, III.16.25 and IV.3.7-6.13.

⁴⁵ E.g., *The Literal Meaning*, II.1.2 and I.17.34.

⁴⁶ *The Literal Meaning* III.24.37.

and between humanity and other creatures? By analysing Augustine's work in the light of Boff's critique of the classical tradition, we may begin to explore the question of the general ecological implications that arise from Augustine's theology. As well, we will consider whether Boff's attempts to reconfigure the language of Trinity and creation in terms of a relational portrayal of God and creatures results in a significantly different outcome from that of Augustine.

CHAPTER TWO

BOFF'S TRINITARIAN ECOLOGY

Leonardo Boff's work in eco-theology is representative of the attempt described in the introduction to integrate theological themes with an ecosystem approach for understanding nature, which stresses the interrelatedness of human beings with the creation in order to promote a positive ecological ethic. Boff has been influenced by ecofeminist and deep ecologists, freely adopting their readings of ecological and cosmological theories like Gaia, as well as trying to address their critiques of Christian doctrine. By incorporating various ecological and liberationist concepts and critiques in his theology, he hopes that theological thinking (and church doctrine) can be revised to fit within the context of ecologically-based knowledge, where the stress is upon the interrelationship and equality of everything in an evolving universe.

In his recent books on ecology,¹ Boff has argued that scientific knowledge about the universe requires a new paradigm for theology—it must become creation-centred, by which he means that theological reflection should begin with the revelation of God that has been opened up by ecological and cosmological science. There are some aspects of theology that resonate with scientific and ecological knowledge already, but the discipline of theology must be thoroughly renovated in order to ensure that theological knowledge and praxis are in step with this new paradigm. Boff's work follows the general approach that was sketched out above, with reference to James Nash's situating of theology within the context of the broad framework of questions about ecological practice. However, whereas Nash is concerned with providing a Christian response to current policy issues, Boff has the more far-reaching goals of reconfiguring theological method and theological content itself. He wants to build a contemporary trinitarian theology (a social doctrine of the Trinity) as an alternative to classical theology, which he views as ecologically unfriendly. By presenting Boff's arguments for an ecological theology, we will have a context in which then to look at why he views the classical doctrine of the Trinity as an instance of an ecologically problematic doctrine. In this chapter, we will examine Boff's theological response to environmental crises, focussing on how he understands ecological knowledge to be a challenge to Christian praxis and belief. Then, in the next chapter, his conception of a social doctrine of the Trinity will be considered as an alternative to a classical formulation of the doctrine, and as a key for developing a holistic ecological theology of creation.

¹ Mentioned in the Introduction, namely *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm* and *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*.

Ecology and Liberation Theology: A Common Cause

Boff's two books on ecology are methodological and doctrinal in emphasis, rather than programs of action directly related to particular problems in environmental ethics.² His assessment of the relationship between theology and ecology in these books is that ecology provides a new basis on which to undertake theological investigation. Ecological knowledge, which developed in light of the devastating environmental crises of the twentieth century, opens up the beginning of a new paradigm of knowledge and consciousness that is community-based and conceives of all creatures as inter-connected to one another in the forward moving cycle of life. This new paradigm of knowledge points toward the resources needed not only to deal with ecological problems, but also to propel the universe forward to a new stage in its journey toward its final destination in God.

Ecological science is at the vanguard of the development of this paradigm, providing concrete knowledge that can be appropriated to reshape life on earth and in the universe itself. Boff defines ecology as the “art and science of interaction,” where one learns that “the concept of nature from an ecological standpoint is that everything is related to everything else in all respects.”³ This inter-relatedness of everything includes the remembrance and retrieval of older and traditional forms of knowledge that still linger in the human consciousness, though they are often suppressed (i.e. primeval religious feelings and experiences), which still provide sources for understanding the radical connectedness of everything. Boff sees in this new scientific paradigm potential for the liberationist program of establishing a revolutionary utopia for the poor because it can take to a new level that liberative desire for experiences of relatedness and communion for which the poor long.⁴ Boff is aware that his ecological arguments could sound out of place in the midst of the poverty and oppression of his Brazilian homeland, where ecology may be viewed as merely a preoccupation of the elite.⁵ He thus attempts to show that ecology in its constitutive elements is related

² Though note chapter 4 in *Cry of the Earth*, where he not only describes ecological devastation in the Amazon region, but offers examples of how different systems of decision-making and ethical values could have been practiced.

³ *Ecology and Liberation*, 9-10. We will see in the next chapter that his conception of trinitarian perichoresis functions as a divine parallel to the interrelatedness that is described in ecology.

⁴ G. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. C. Indra and J. Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 135-40, defines utopia, based on the eschatological hope of the poor, as “a qualitatively different society ... [it is] the aspiration to establish new social relations among human beings” (135). As such, the liberationist concept of utopia is “subversive of the existing order” (136).

⁵ *Cry of the Earth*, 12-13 and *Ecology and Liberation*, 12-15.

materially to issues of the oppressed and the oppressors. The title of his book, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, highlights this new ecological interest by pointing to how the destructive use of the earth is another instance of exploitation, one that results in the earth's own cry for liberation from destructive human domination of world, alongside the exploitation of the poor who also cry out for liberation. He argues that in ecological thought the liberationist has an ally against oppressive structures that affect both the human and the non-human world. To do this, he grounds his argument for an ecological epistemology upon his liberationist theological method.

Boff describes his theological approach to ecology in the essay “Liberation Theology and Ecology: Alternative, Confrontation, or Complementarity?”⁶ He begins by suggesting that the relationship which humanity has with the earth ought to be viewed in a manner similar to the relationship which exists between people. Just as all human beings are brothers and sisters—sharing a common beginning in God—so the earth and all of its inhabitants are brothers and sisters, since their beginning also is in God. The common source that the whole creation shares—the creator—is the basis for understanding ecology as a theme for liberation theology. The oppressed creation needs liberation, so that it has the freedom to realise its end in God, just as the poor need to be liberated to realise their utopian dreams in God.

One finds this bridge between ecology and liberation by means of three sub-disciplines, which developed in the history of ecology, and that now constitute it: environmental ecology, social ecology, and mental ecology.⁷ Environmental ecology is concerned with the preservation and conservation of the ecosphere—the physical world—which is under attack and oppression as it faces the disappearance of species through human exploitation. Social ecology (also commonly referred to as ‘environmental justice’) is the study of how social exploitation is related to the exploitation of nature, and of the relationship between social experience and environmental experience (e.g., the poor, but not the wealthy, often live near toxic waste sites).⁸ Finally, mental ecology is concerned with

⁶ In Boff and Elizondo, ed., *Ecology and Poverty: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, Concillium 5 (London: SCM and Orbis, 1995), 67-77. Also see *Cry of the Earth*, chapter 5 and *Ecology and Liberation*, chapter 1.

⁷ A brief statement of how the ecological disciplines fit into Boff's understanding of a new “ecological age” is set out in *Ecology and Poverty*, 67-70. This will be discussed later in the chapter. Boff has an expanded list of ecological sub-disciplines in *Cry of the Earth*, 5-8 and 26-27. Their exposition is not necessary for our purposes. However, he does give a prominent place to ecofeminism as a sub-discipline, particularly showing the influences of Ruether and Primavesi.

⁸ An example is provided by M. Jerrett, et al. “A GIS–Environmental Justice Analysis of Particulate Air Pollution in Hamilton, Canada,” *Environment and Planning A* 33, 6 (2001): 955–73. They show how higher concentrations of air pollution and lower

the realization that nature is not external to human beings, but internal, in our minds, in the shape of psychic energies, symbols, archetypes and models of behaviour that embody certain attitudes of aggression towards or respect for and acceptance of nature.⁹

Reality as a whole affects the psychological aspect of human existence, and through analysis of one's psychological make-up one may discover the source of negative and positive attitudes toward nature. Of these three sub-disciplines, the study of social ecology most clearly relates to the liberationist impulse, since it explicitly identifies the poor in its study of ecological injustice.

Ecology, with its three sub-disciplines, is part of the larger scientific understanding of reality. According to Boff, science—by which he means primarily a cosmology founded on physics, chemistry, biology, and astronomy—in the twentieth century has provided a “coherent view of the universe” that he calls the “ecological age.”¹⁰ This general scientific paradigm has three major points: First, it provides a new vantage point, where the earth is seen in its cosmic homeland: a small planet in one solar system, itself part of a galaxy that is only one of many in the universe. Thus, in contradistinction to past scientific interpretations which posited the earth and its human inhabitants to be at the centre of the universe, contemporary science relativises human particularity and calls into question anthropocentric arrogance. Second, the new scientific paradigm allows for a new intuition of the unity the earth (rather than simply viewing it as the sum of constituent parts) by which humanity recognises that nothing exists by itself, but only in “inclusion and reciprocity” as a single organism. Thirdly, the new paradigm accepts that humans are of the earth, rather than on it, so that it is “the earth itself that, through one of its expressions—the human species—takes on a conscious direction...”¹¹ Humanity does not merely occupy the earth as a temporary tenant, but is the manifestation of the earth's evolving consciousness. This idea of planetary consciousness likewise is influenced by the Gaia hypothesis that the earth is a living, conscious superorganism.¹² The ecological disciplines all confirm the interconnectedness of life on earth, and, in Boff's view, cosmological science has discovered the same interconnectedness of everything in the universe.

socio-economic status are related in neighbourhood demographics (though without similar results according to race, which seem typical in the United States).

⁹ *Ecology and Poverty*, 68.

¹⁰ *Ecology and Poverty*, ix-xii.

¹¹ *Ecology and Poverty*, 69-70.

¹² See J. E. Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life On Earth* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); and R. Ruether, *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992).

For Boff, the cosmological and ecological worldviews culminate in a unification of science with spirituality. This unification is unavoidable because scientists have analyzed the “phenomenological side” of the universe so well that even in the scientific field there is recognition that “spirit belongs to nature and nature is permeated with spirit.”¹³ For example, in the new physics, the dynamic nature of the universe reveals cosmogenesis, which is the evolution of the universe toward a greater complexity that includes the development of universal consciousness.¹⁴ Cosmogenesis is built upon the theory that the universe is an open system, developing through time in a self-transcending process (meaning that the universe continually produces more complex beings and order).¹⁵ This has led to the anthropic principle,¹⁶ which states that the universe is so finely balanced that human beings cannot be understood outside of the complete development of the universe. Through humanity, even the universe has consciousness.¹⁷ The anthropic principle also has led to the metaphorical Gaia

¹³ *Cry of the Earth*, 28.

¹⁴ Boff is building on the theory of Teilhard De Chardin, concerning a cosmogenesis that ends in an eschatological omega point; see *The Phenomenon of Man*, rev. ed., trans. B. Wall (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

¹⁵ Boff notes that one of the characteristics of the self-transcendence of the universe is autopoiesis, which refers to the theory of the universe’s power for self-organisation, which is indicative of the spiritual depth of the universe, *Cry of the Earth*, 28-29 and 50f.

¹⁶ Boff refers to B. Carter, “Large Number Coincidences and the Anthropic Principle in Cosmology,” in *Confrontation of Cosmological Theories with Observational Data*, ed. M. S. Longair (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1974), 291-98. Also see F. J. Tipler, “The Anthropic Principle: A Primer for Philosophers,” in *Proceedings of the 1988 Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, ed. A. Fine and J. Lepli (East Lansing: Philosophy of Science Association, 1989), 27-48.

¹⁷ *Cry of the Earth*, 20-26. Boff also writes, Consciousness is driving the universe toward accelerating the pace of evolution, toward being more highly organized and more directed [upward].... Consciousness is thus not a quality of matter but a relationship between elementary particles (in their wave aspect) so complex and of such intensity that they are all superimposed and create a single and stable whole...Through our consciousness human beings fully mesh with the overall scheme of things (*Cry of the Earth*, 56).

Boff goes on to explain his understanding of the universe becoming conscious to itself in humanity (57). This consciousness is unique to human beings as they have received it through evolution; but it is also universal in that the whole universe, through the

hypothesis mentioned above, which postulates the earth as a superorganism—an interconnected network of relationships of energy—whose parts evolve in tandem, such that the whole is greater than their sum, and in which the historical consciousness of humans is an aspect of the superorganism’s evolving consciousness.¹⁸

This picture of the universe’s complex evolutionary trajectory is the scientific way of describing the universe as an open system developing through self-transcendence. The religions of the world attribute the status of absolute transcendence to God, by which is meant a self-determining reality who is wholly open and ordered to the future.¹⁹ Thus, scientists have arrived at the same concept of an open system by phenomenological analysis of the universe, while religions have arrived at such a vision of God through spiritual and mystical reflection on the mysterious transcendence that beckons creatures to follow it through greater consciousness and self-transcendence. Just as science is unable to get behind the ‘big bang’ to the origin of the universe, and to the reason why the universe is an open system that is developing toward greater order and consciousness, so God is the absolute mystery that religious reflection cannot penetrate. Science and religion converge at the point of experience of the absolute transcendence that is pure mystery. Boff wants to equate both mysteries.

For Boff, the recognition of the universe’s cosmogenesis toward greater complexity and consciousness is sufficient proof that science and spirituality have finally merged. The religious language of spirit (for Boff ‘spirit’ is a synonym for ‘life’),²⁰ which was developed to explain religious intuition (or, ‘feeling’), is now ontologically grounded in the encompassing experience and knowledge that ecological and cosmological science has uncovered concerning the radical interrelationship of all reality. All human experience exists primordially in what precedes human beings, who

anthropic principle, contains the primordial conscious that allowed human beings to develop human consciousness that now helps to “co-create” the universe as a self-conscious whole (56-59). The consciousness of the universe also can be related to the concept of God via quantum physics, which has shown that everything that exists is energy in the form of wave packets (59). As these wave packets are observed, they collapse into a particular particles. Since everything started from one singularity, which must be energy in the form of a wave packet, it is reasonable to ask who or what the observer is who enabled the universe to come into being in the particularity that led to the current universe. Boff contends that it must be an “absolute outside observer” whose “nameless name is God-Mystery” (59).

¹⁸ *Cry of the Earth*, 13-20.

¹⁹ *Cry of the Earth*, 21.

²⁰ *Cry of the Earth*, 158.

are connected to everything preceding them, and will continue to exist in all that proceeds after them.

In order to reflect ecological sensitivity, which sees all reality as interconnected and unified, liberation theology needs to adopt the implications of this new scientific paradigm, including its implicit spirituality.²¹ Boff describes the task of theology in the ecological age in this way: “Our task ... is to attempt to build a representation of the Divinity that may be combined with our cosmology, and at the same time may be connected with the spiritual history of humankind and of our culture.”²² He recognises that the experience of the poor is within a universe that now is understood differently (because of the new paradigm represented in contemporary cosmology) than what was understood when liberation theology came into existence.²³ God is the God not primarily of the history of human culture, but of a universe that is of one piece—only properly understood in its whole, not through mere analysis of its parts or with priority given to humanity. Therefore, according to Boff, the liberationist description of God needs modification to reflect better the creator of such a unified reality.

The Starting Point of Liberation Theology: The Poor

Before examining how Boff’s liberationist theology looks within this new, ecological view of reality, one should note how he perceives the basic methodological difference of his liberation program from what he perceives to be the traditional approach to theology. Liberation theology, rather than beginning with “doctrines, revelation, or tradition,” begins with the “anti-reality” of the cry of the oppressed. By listening to the poor, one understands how their reality is disrupted by oppression; in response to this cry, one should exercise an “option for the poor ... [by] assuming the place of the poor, their cause, their struggle, and at the limit, their often tragic fate.”²⁴ Definitions of theological terms, such as God, Christ, grace, history, or mission, only find shape from the experience of the poor. The traditional, or classical, starting points of doctrine are simply a “backdrop to illuminat[e] convictions and [function] as the

²¹ *Ecology and Poverty*, 69-70.

²² *Cry of the Earth*, 41.

²³ The new paradigm of contemporary science developed out of the “modern paradigm” of mechanistic science in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A discussion of the historical background of contemporary science and some salient features of the scientific paradigm as they relate to religious belief are discussed in I. G. Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997).

²⁴ *Cry of the Earth*, 107.

flooring to reflection.”²⁵ For Boff, revelation, doctrines, and traditions are foundational reflections from history that act as catalysts for inspiring theological reflection that leads to committed action (orthopraxis) in the present, where such action begins with the poor.

He does not want to emasculate the value of those traditional starting points, since they aid in the stimulation of the church’s thoughts about who God is, how God acts, and the nature of the church as a community committed to liberation. These traditional starting points provide the Church with a sense of identity. Thus, when Boff writes about the doctrine of the Trinity, he spends a significant amount of space reflecting on the development and meaning of the doctrine in the early church. He then attempts to build on it, rejecting the false starts and bringing the truths that the historical doctrine contained into the perspective of the poor who demand to be taken seriously.²⁶ Theology is part of the search for a utopian perfection, and the option for the poor brings to theology the present context of the human experience of imperfection as a guide and critic.

While historical doctrines, and concepts such as revelation, God, and grace, have critical value in Boff’s liberationist methodology, he is hesitant to assign them an authoritative starting point for theology. He senses that there is a more basic starting point by which people actually know God. Therefore, that meeting place of the divine and people needs to be assigned primary value for theological reflection. For example, in the liberationist methodology, one must define the concept of God according to the experience of the poor, since God meets them where they are.²⁷ For the liberationist, theology is a “category of analysis ... socio-analytical rationality.”²⁸ As such, it functions as a way of reflecting upon an experience, because “theology is never more than the second word.”²⁹ By this, Boff means that liberation theology is a reaction to, and reflection of, an already present experience and that it must relate to that experience in its analysis of the situation first, not according to prior dogma. For example, the doctrine of the Trinity is a second order (reasoning) reflection that developed out of the church’s initial experience of God in doxology (worship and praise). As Christians began to think about the God they worshipped, and what they

²⁵ *Ecology and Poverty*, 71-72.

²⁶ His understanding of the Trinity will be spelled out in the next chapter.

²⁷ *Ecology and Poverty*, 71.

²⁸ “The Contribution of Liberation Theology to a New Paradigm,” trans. M. Kohl, in *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future*, ed. H. Küng and D. Tracy (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 409.

²⁹ “The Contribution of Liberation Theology,” 409.

believed about that God, their reasoning led them to the doctrine of the Trinity: “Doxology (praise) had changed into theology (reflection on God), and faith had made room for reason.”³⁰ The experience of the cry of the poor is the primary value for liberation theology, not some past doctrine or non-contextual conceptual authority that may or may not apply to the experience of oppression.

The ongoing value of doctrine and tradition rests in its power to remind the church of its mission of liberation. Boff notes how the christological foundation of liberation theology rests in its understanding of Jesus’ life and message as a liberator, in opposition to the “official piety of Christ, the heavenly monarch.”³¹ Christian belief in Jesus Christ as Lord offers a means to reflect theologically on the problem of oppression, because Jesus directed his message and mission toward the poor. His proclamation of the Kingdom of God had a political element that contained themes of liberation and change from the oppression they experienced, which he himself lived out in a social emphasis on ministry by feeding and healing the outcasts of society.

Within this emphasis on beginning with the experience of the poor, there is a parallel emphasis on the unity of the experience of the poor from different cultural and religious backgrounds. There are a variety of ways that persons of all cultural backgrounds experience the ultimate mystery of life, called God. The poor and oppressed bring to human cultures a particular experience of God that needs attention. Boff traces all religious experience back to an undefined universal experience of mystery encountered, or felt, by human beings: “Religions use the term God or myriad others for that inexpressible reality in order to identify the essential question connecting everything.”³² Boff finds a place for religion in the ecological age because the eternal message of all religions is that God is the mystery which science comes up against when it can go no further (i.e. beyond the initial ‘big bang’). Within this idea of religion as the human definition of mystery, salvation lies in the religious experience of something ultimate that moves the person to a new way of living.³³ Liberationist methodology, by giving priority to joining with the poor in their struggle for utopia, works from their experience of that mystery and the motivation of hope against their oppression.³⁴

³⁰ *Trinity and Society*, 2.

³¹ “The Contribution of Liberation Theology,” 410. See further Boff’s *Jesus Christ Liberator*, trans. P. Hughes (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978), especially 49-79, and 238 ff., where he discusses the kingdom of God as part of Jesus’ message to the poor.

³² *Cry of the Earth*, 41; compare *Ecology and Liberation* 78-80.

³³ *Ecology and Liberation*, 62.

³⁴ L. Boff and C. Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, trans. P Burns (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), 49-56 and 93-95.

Boff's Eco-Liberationist Methodology

Boff lists four stages in the eco-liberationist theological method: 1) experiencing the cry of the poor, 2) analytically judging sin, 3) engaging in “transformative action” for the poor and against the oppressive structures of society, and 4) celebrating the hope of eschatological liberation.³⁵ Of these four stages, the second is of especial concern in this chapter, because Boff’s analysis also serves as a way to outline his ecological worldview and his understanding of the theological response that the church can make to ecological crises. After treating the four stages more generally, we will then return to the analytical judgement of ecological sin, looking more closely at how Boff’s ecological worldview takes shape in his discussion of ecological sin.

The first stage, corresponding to the general liberationist starting point just described, is that one experiences the cry of the poor—that is, existentially seeing, feeling, and suffering the passion of oppression.³⁶ As we have just seen above, Boff assumes that hearing this cry is an important precursor to the systematic reflection on the church’s praxis—which is theology. The challenge for an ecological liberationist theology is to bring into theological perspective the cry of the human and the non-human poor, so that the church (which welcomes those poor) will think about that experience and incorporate it into its theology. Theology comes after experience, as reflection on that experience, and then builds on a previous theological approach or rewrites an existing approach (especially when it is implicated in contributing to the cry of the oppressed), which has preceded that experience.³⁷

In the ecological worldview one looks not only to the experience of oppressed people and communities in human society, but toward the oppression of the earth as a basic experience that needs theological reflection. As noted above, the movement from the perspective of earlier liberationism to ecological liberationism takes place in the realisation that there is a social dimension to ecology, the oppression of people by structures of “profit and social manipulation” which also destroy the earth. In *Cry of the Earth*, Boff spells out this experience of ecological suffering of the poor—both people and the earth—by describing the ecological disasters in the Amazon at the hands of capitalist developers (often from North America) seeking profit solutions in manufacturing.³⁸ Such ecological disasters not only harm the environmental stability

³⁵ Leonardo Boff follows closely the methodological structure of Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations*, trans. R. Barr (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987).

³⁶ *Ecology and Poverty*, 72.

³⁷ *Ecology and Poverty*, 72.

³⁸ Chapter 4.

that existed previously, but ultimately they displace and harm large numbers of people who depended on that prior stability. The problem with unsustainable development is that it harms both nature and humanity, especially those who are too poor to oppose such oppression.

The correlation of the human poor with the rest of creation as demonstrated in social ecology does not involve a dualistic notion of reality. The liberation of people and the liberation of the creation are not two separate things, but two aspects of one problem. The well-being of people depends on the ecosystems of the earth, just as the earth depends on the ecologically sustainable actions of people. The ecological theme of interdependence as demonstrated in social ecology reorients one's attentiveness to be able to hear the cry of the earth that at times is unable to resist oppression just as people who must struggle under the burden of oppression are often unable to resist. Ecological science renders futile any attempt to partition knowledge of human oppression from ecological oppression.

The second stage of eco-liberationist methodology is the analytical judgement that sin causes the oppression. After encountering the cry of the poor and their suffering, one must analyse the situation with the critical tools that allow one to both understand and interpret the causes of the oppression. By means of this analysis, one then is able to judge concretely how the oppression of the poor is sin, and to prepare for an effective engagement of transformative action.³⁹ Understanding sin refers to the analytical task of utilising the appropriate social scientific disciplines (including Marxist analysis⁴⁰) to identify the cause-and-effect process that creates oppression. The interpretation of those causes and effects as sin involves the hermeneutical mediation of faith, by which he means the data of revelation, tradition, and practice, by which the church recognises oppression as a countermovement to God's plans. To recognise that God's design for the world is not being carried out leads to the condemnation of oppression as being against God's will. In addition, just as faith mediates the historical awareness that oppression is not part of God's plan, so also the fact of oppression reveals that God's intervention is required, because the structures of society do not work properly. The poor are a revelation of the sacramental presence of God, who appears as a suffering saviour to spur on transformative action.⁴¹

³⁹ *Ecology and Poverty*, 72.

⁴⁰ "It has been the merit of Marxist rationality to have shown that the poor are oppressed, people who have been dehumanized by an objective process of exploitation that is economical, political, ecological, and cultural in nature" (*Cry of the Earth*, 109). By the term 'rationality' one would assume that Boff means method of analysis. He is aware that there are both benefits to be derived from and limitations to using a Marxist analysis within a Christian framework (*Introducing Liberation Theology*, 27-28).

⁴¹ In Boff's writings, God's sacramental presence in creation occurs through several signs—as the Spirit of life, as the Christ, as the suffering poor, as the energy

The causes of ecological suffering are made clear by the ecological sciences, the nexus of physical, social, and psychological disciplines, oriented around an ecological worldview, which provide an understanding of how and why the ecological crises have come into being. Religious understanding also can facilitate an understanding of the causes of ecological suffering by investigating religious tradition for those teachings that undermine a positive ecological worldview that is necessary for ecological wholeness. One interprets those religious causes as sin by recognising, through the doctrine of creation, how God is related to the universe, and how humankind should relate to God's creation, which is infused by God's sacramental presence. The recognition that God's design for the world is not being carried out then leads to the condemnation of oppression as being against God's will—a judgement of the ecological sins perpetrated against God and creation.

The third stage of eco-liberation methodology is to engage in “transformative action” for the poor and against the oppressive structures of society in the light of the understanding developed in stage two.⁴² Transformative actions are at the level of the revision of theological symbols and liturgy, so that these become more oriented toward

that resides as deep archetypes in the human psyche, as the primal energies of African and Melanesian religions, etc. These various forms of sacramental presence include the incarnation of the Son among them. This raises questions concerning the uniqueness of the incarnation, and the distinctions between the incarnation and other forms of sacramental presence. It is not without reason that Boff prefers an emphasis on sacramental presence, since his foundational understanding of religious knowledge is based on the universal experience of mystery that transcends cultures and is present to all of them in particular and unique forms (see for example, *Cry of the Earth*, 116-17). In fact, for Boff, the incarnation is not “a random deed, resulting from an *ad extra* intervention by God” (*Cry of the Earth*, 178). Instead, the incarnation of Christ “is already present at the beginning of the universe” (*Cry of the Earth*, 178). By this Boff means that the incarnation is not a unique divine action made present only in the life of Jesus Christ by a God who is separate from the creation, but is the universal act of God, who is part of the evolutionary process. This reflects his panentheistic understanding of the divine-creation relationship, where God is described as intrinsically transparent (*Cry of the Earth*, 152-54). God's intrinsic transparency to the creation is another way of pointing to God as the “Mystery of the universe-in-process” (*Cry of the Earth*, 154). Boff's panentheism, and the language of the universe's evolution as God, are taken from P. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu: An Essay On the Interior Life*, trans. B. Wall (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), esp. pp. 125-32. The pages which Boff cites are primarily reflections on moving toward God in the inner life, but in the context of understanding that the inner life of the individual is also part of the life of the universe. For Boff, the life of the universe is part of God's life.

⁴² *Ecology and Poverty*, 72-73.

the poor and their needs. This transformative action can bring about political change in the state, but Boff is particularly concerned about transformative action that leads, first of all, to ecclesial reform. Through its cultural and symbolic power, the church carries great influence that can be utilised for wider social and political transformative action, but it must happen within the church as well as outside of it.⁴³ In the ecological age, the transformative action of the church should result in a restating of its theological understanding of God's relationship to creation, as well as the church's place in the creation. It is at this stage that Boff sees a place for a new proposal for understanding the Trinity as a communion of persons, a trinitarian model for society and for how society lives with the rest of the creation.⁴⁴ He suggests that the reorientation of theology happens by connecting theological insight to the overarching interrelatedness of the creation, itself a transformative action whereby theology's traditionally exclusivist posture is exchanged for one of openness and inclusivity.⁴⁵ As our experience of God is redefined by our experience of the universe as a vast communion of beings, according to an ecological epistemology (which itself is justified because all of creation is discovered to be a sacrament of the Spirit), all is changed for the better. This, in turn, will be of benefit to the poor and to oppressed nature.

The fourth stage of the eco-liberationist methodology is the celebration of

⁴³ Boff links ecological reform and ecclesial reform not only at the level of symbolic references to creation in the liturgy or the ways that the churches deal with environmental issues such as recycling. He also sees the power structure of the Roman church, its ordering of ecclesiastical authority in a hierarchy from the Pope through Cardinals, Bishops and priests to the laity, as a source of rule that simply reinforces the idea of controlling people and the world in oppressive ways. It is such a hierarchy, justified by a model of the divine-world relationship that portrays God in the form of a monarch or emperor, which promotes the values of domination and authoritarianism. These values and attitudes need radical reform for the good of the poor, who ought to share in the church's power. On the relationship between church structures and political power, see Boff's *Church, Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, trans. J. W. Dierchsmeyer (London: SCM Press, 1985) and L. Boff and C. Boff, *Liberation Theology: From Dialogue to Confrontation*, trans. R. Barr (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986). Extending the range of the critique in these texts from the social dimension to the ecological dimension would not be difficult, since Boff argues that social reality is integral to ecological reality. This has already been referred to in terms of social ecology, and will be discussed again below.

⁴⁴ The ecological implications of the church's understanding of the Trinity will be provided in the next chapter as part of the exposition of Boff's doctrine of the Trinity.

⁴⁵ *Cry of the Earth*, 157.

hope that arises out of transformative action.⁴⁶ While transformative action results in ecclesial, social and political change and advancement, which deserve celebration, Boff's focus is upon the celebration of advancement that goes beyond immediate change and points forward to the eschatological reign of God that is the final form of redemption. Celebration is a symbolic act of anticipating utopian liberation, and a sign of the mediation of divine redemption in particular "historical-social liberations", which show the process of God's redemption in the unfolding of the universe.⁴⁷ This final stage reflects the most practical of the steps, since it is the application of theology's insights back into Christian doxology.⁴⁸ Indeed, the signs and rites of celebration contribute to the perpetuation of transformative actions by giving them a form that the whole doxological community can celebrate together. For example, Boff calls the church to celebration through its practice of the ecological virtues of St. Francis, who ministered to the animals and the earth, because it was in them that he could see and worship the God who lived in his heart.⁴⁹ St. Francis was able to find the link between the outer ecology of the physical creation and the inner ecology of the heart, both of which are alive in God's Spirit. It is this discovery of the ecological unity of creation that has resulted in his becoming the patron saint of ecologists.⁵⁰ Now, his example reminds the church that the worship of God includes right living in the world. "Francis has left his heart in the heart of the world so as to be in the heart of all who seek a new covenant of the heart of all things."⁵¹

Analysing Ecological Sin

We return now to the second stage of Boff's eco-liberation method, and seek to understand how his analysis of ecological crises reflects his own ecological worldview and his understanding of the theological response that the church can make to ecological crises. In doing so, the basis for developing a trinitarian conception of God as part of his ecological worldview will be established, which we will then explore in the next chapter.

As understood by Boff, theological interpretation of ecological crises involves two steps, as was shown above. First, one comes to an understanding of the causes

⁴⁶ *Ecology and Poverty*, 72-73.

⁴⁷ *Ecology and Poverty*, 72-75.

⁴⁸ *Cry of the Earth*, 110.

⁴⁹ *Cry of the Earth*, ch. 11.

⁵⁰ *Cry of the Earth*, 203.

⁵¹ *Cry of the Earth*, 220.

and effects that have led to ecological crises, especially through analysis using the ecological disciplines.⁵² This analysis leads to the second step of interpreting the crises as sins, since human beings, so intimately connected to the universe through the ecological kinship of interrelatedness, are not living as God intends.⁵³ The analysis used to discover the cause and effect relationships that lead to ecological crises include historical analysis. He particularly traces how religious traditions have shaped contemporary approaches to the environment, thus identifying religious aspects of ecological sin. After this analysis, he is then in a position to offer a revised understanding of doctrines and religious symbols (the third stage).⁵⁴

In Boff's analysis, two key tendencies in the evolution of Western society helped to promote an imbalanced understanding of the relationships between people, and between people and nature. First, the anthropocentric tendency of Western thought and praxis placed humanity at the centre of all concerns, as manifest in the Nietzschean analysis of the will to "worldwide domination...buried in the collective unconscious of Western culture."⁵⁵ Second, when one probes beneath this orientation toward anthropocentrism, one finds an even more basic tendency, namely androcentrism. The androcentric tendency rejects the natural relationship between the feminine *esprit de finesse* and the masculine *esprit de geometric*, which constitutes the nature of the universe, by taking account only of the latter.⁵⁶ The domination of the masculine by the masculine effectively disrupts the balance that humans can have with each other, and makes the struggle against nature an unavoidable battle, since the dominion

⁵² Examples of how Boff uses scientific and social scientific understandings of the ecological crisis are found in *Ecology and Liberation*, 15-18; and *Cry of the Earth*, chapters 3-4. Boff is primarily concerned with the analysis of ecological devastation in South America, especially in the Amazon. The economic and political forces that are often found to be linked to causes of ecological disasters in South America typically have ties to North America and Europe, since the economic and political forces of the North usually have a hand in the economic and political directions of the South, directly and indirectly. Boff cites several examples of North American and European connections to ecological destruction, *Cry of the Earth*, 91-98.

⁵³ Boff designates humanity, because of its ecological sins, "demons of the earth" (*Ecology and Liberation*, 15ff.) and "Earth's Satan" (*Cry of the Earth*, 69, 111).

⁵⁴ The major aspect of transformative action that he undertakes to analyze concerns the basic Christian understanding of how God is related to the world, especially the proposal for a new conception of the doctrine of the Trinity.

⁵⁵ *Cry of the Earth*, 69-70.

⁵⁶ *Cry of the Earth*, 71.

of the world is fuelled by the masculine *esprit de geometric*. For Boff, the structure of Western civilisation itself—pitting the masculine against the feminine, and making the human being the centre of reality—works against nature through an ontologized hierarchy of anthropocentrism and androcentrism.⁵⁷

The tendencies of anthropocentrism and androcentrism in Western society are upheld by religion, which is also the “deeper reason for the contemporary ecological disaster and its possible redemption...”⁵⁸ Boff gives a fivefold list of how the Judeo-Christian tradition has contributed to modern ecological disasters. First is the patriarchal attitude of religion. In the Bible, male values dominate the text. The most obvious example is the naming of God as Father, which is a human, patriarchal construction. Human society upset the gender and ecological balance that was naturally inherent in the universe, in part, by the projection of a male-dominated understanding of God in patriarchal religions.⁵⁹ Ecofeminism, in particular, provides a strong critique and challenge to Christianity on this level.⁶⁰

Second, the monotheistic understanding of God has provided a basis for the ecological alienation of humanity from nature. Building upon Lynn White’s analysis, Boff sees the vanquishing of polytheism as ecologically unfortunate (though it happened for theologically sound reasons, such as recognising the difference between creature and creator), since monotheism led to nature, and especially the “energy centers” which functioned as “powerful archetypes of the depths of the human being,” being desacrilized.⁶¹ In this desacrilization the creator was separated too absolutely from the creation, which resulted in the loss of recognition and understanding of those energy centres that traditionally had been associated with the traditional sacramental presence of the gods. This loss of recognition and understanding has effectively cut off

⁵⁷ *Cry of the Earth*, 71-75.

⁵⁸ *Cry of the Earth*, 75.

⁵⁹ *Cry of the Earth*, 78, 169-72. The theological solution is to realise that the feminine aspect of God, the Holy Spirit, became hypostatically united to Mary (*Cry of the Earth*, 170-71). This can aid in bringing balance to the doctrine of the Trinity in two ways. First, by highlighting how the economic activity of the Trinity is revealed in both Mary and Jesus, instead of the emphasis falling mainly on Jesus. Second, by also emphasising the work of the Spirit in Mary, one then may project a gender balance between the masculine and feminine aspects of God in the immanent Trinity. See Boff’s *The Maternal Face of God: The Feminine and its Religious Manifestations*, trans. R. Barr and J. W. Dierchsmeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

⁶⁰ *Cry of the Earth*, 26-27.

⁶¹ *Cry of the Earth*, 79.

a means by which the divine can be understood by people in the West.⁶²

Third, Christianity and Judaism teach anthropocentrism.⁶³ There is no other way to understand texts such as Genesis 1:28, “God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’”⁶⁴ To Boff, it is best to face up to such texts, recognising their anthropocentric worldview that excludes nature as valuable in itself, in favour of “limitless demographic growth and unrestricted *dominium terrae*.”⁶⁵ While the creation story does have some ecologically positive ideas, such as the ideas of humanity being gardeners and guardians of earth’s gardens,⁶⁶ which Boff wants to appropriate, they do not offset those negative texts that promote a dominion of “savage conquest” which also shapes the biblical view of nature.⁶⁷

Fourth, the “tribal ideology of election” allows the conferral of a unique message upon a chosen few, that has led both to arrogance and an exclusionary attitude to others, including the idea that the chosen ones can subject others to their “vision of things” and to wage wars with those who oppose them.⁶⁸ Boff sees in this biblical message of tribal election a doctrine that can only be bad for the ecological reality of

⁶² Boff cites St. Francis as one who recognised the spiritual value of polytheism because it provided a sacramental understanding of nature as a touch point for divine energy (*Cry of the Earth*, 204-06). He thinks that Francis’ love of the world, and his ability to recognise God’s presence in its creatures, is a way by which a good polytheism could be reintroduced into Christianity. Boff seems to think that the theory of energy held in physics is similar to “energy centers” discussed in depth psychology, and that both are analogous to the divine energy that gave rise to creation. By moving freely between these different concepts of energy, he has a way of uniting humanity, the earth, and God back into a relational whole.

⁶³ *Cry of the Earth*, 79-80.

⁶⁴ He also cites Genesis 9:2, 9:7, and Psalm 8:6-8.

⁶⁵ *Cry of the Earth*, 79. Also see p. 225, n.38, where Boff criticises Moltmann’s attempt to relativise and soften the negative meaning of these biblical texts in *God in Creation*, 215-25.

⁶⁶ “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15), cited in *Cry of the Earth*, 80.

⁶⁷ *Cry of the Earth*, 79.

⁶⁸ *Cry of the Earth*, 80.

“universal solidarity.”⁶⁹

Fifth, a belief in the fall of nature is the worst religious cause of ecological alienation because it entails the notion that the whole universe has fallen, and not only humankind, due to original sin. One result of nature’s fall is that the earth is no longer viewed as sacred, nor as the temple of the Holy Spirit. The curse appears in Genesis 3:17: “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.” For Boff, this verse confirms that the Bible is founded on a “limitless anthropocentrism” which results in the original sin of humankind usurping original grace in the history of Christianity.⁷⁰ He suggests that the doctrine of original sin and the fall of nature in Paul, Augustine, and Luther, while consistent with Scripture, nevertheless is ecologically wrong because it contradicts the history of the earth, since scientists have shown that “earthquakes, annihilation of species, and death already existed before human beings even appeared on the face of the Earth.”⁷¹ This means that the curse in Genesis 3:17 (along with a similar text in 6:13) is anthropocentric and false, because such natural processes cannot be linked to human sin if they are prior to human existence.⁷²

Based on these problematic religious ideas and teachings, Boff judges elements of the Judeo-Christian worldview as sinful because they have contributed to the ecological crises through their privileging of humanity over other creatures. They arose because of anthropocentric and androcentric tendencies that allow for a dualistic understanding of the world and a violent attitude toward it, where the non-human is an enemy, or at least a passive object to be conquered and dominated.

Boff, in his description of sin, in keeping with his criticism of the scriptural idea of a ‘fall of nature’, rejects any concept of a fall. Rather, he suggests replacing the traditional belief of a fall with a conception of evolutionary development. The natural “becoming” of things, according to God’s intention, may appear to be a fall into sin,

⁶⁹ *Cry of the Earth*, 80.

⁷⁰ *Cry of the Earth*, 80-81.

⁷¹ *Cry of the Earth*, 81.

⁷² Boff’s criticism seems a rather literalistic interpretation of the story in Genesis 3:17, however, and one which he will fail to recall just a few pages later when he accepts a certain Pauline understanding of sin that requires precisely the account of the Genesis story he has just rejected. He seems to have allowed his ecological agenda to justify his rhetoric, rather than pursuing a careful and consistent reading of the text. See more narratively sensitive accounts in Brown, *The Ethos of the Cosmos*, 150; and Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 190.

but in fact it is always a fall “on the way up.”⁷³ Thus, when Paul writes of nature’s being cursed to futility in Romans 8:20 (“for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it”), the words need not actually point to a fall of nature. Rather, the condition of the creation as it evolves toward its fulfillment in God seems futile because it has not reached the end for which it was created.⁷⁴ The curse of futility, traditionally said to have resulted from the fall, no longer needs to be seen as a curse at all, since death and struggle are necessary in evolution. Furthermore, death actually allows humans back into life, since evolution does not end in entropy or annihilation, but rather continues to higher levels of organization in the open system that is the universe: “Death is thus not a loss but a transition that must be made in order that life may achieve its purpose and reach another level of the evolutionary process.”⁷⁵

Nevertheless, according to Boff, one must still speak of sin, including the ecological sins of Judeo-Christian tradition. Original sin refers to the idea that sin originates in human beings, because of “their grounding and radical sense of being” which makes them conscious of the freedom of an evolving reality.⁷⁶ The human sense of its own being and the evolving being of the whole creation can lead to sin when humanity rebels against its grounding in the evolving, changing reality. Sin, then, is not only about moral acts. Sin has an “ontological dimension that has to do with the human being understood as a node of relationships in all dimensions.”⁷⁷ Humanity always sees that things could be better. Sin arises when humankind retreats from reality into the dream of controlling life for its own specific ends. Sin is

to be closed to the evolutionary process, to refuse to accept mortality, to refuse to accept death in oneself as a necessary transition toward life beyond this life. This sin disrupts connectedness with all things and with God’s design, which has so disposed the trajectory of everything that issues from God’s heart,

⁷³ *Cry of the Earth*, 83.

⁷⁴ In support of this interpretation, Boff notes that the basic meaning of *mataiotēs*, futility, is “the ineffectiveness of that which does not obtain its goal” (*Cry of the Earth*, 83). For a thorough discussion of the various ways that this verse may be interpreted, see for instance, C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, 2 vols. (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark; 1975), 1:413.

⁷⁵ *Cry of the Earth*, 85.

⁷⁶ *Cry of the Earth*, 81.

⁷⁷ *Cry of the Earth*, 81-82.

passes through time, and through death returns to that heart.⁷⁸

This sinning leads to the futility of nature, which is forced to evolve along circuitous paths that are more convoluted than need be. All of the ecological sins for which Christianity must bear responsibility result from this basic attempt to act against the tide of evolution and death, which is God's will.

Conclusion

Boff has developed his eco-liberationist theology in response to the challenge he perceives to have arisen from modern ecological crises and the subsequent development of ecological science in conjunction with cosmology. The primary goal of eco-liberationist theology, Boff argues, is to aid in the preservation of the unity of the creation, especially of those beings whose very existence is threatened, namely, the poor and those without voices in Western society. Hearing their cry is required of the church, and the church's proper response includes understanding its own place as a cause of oppression, and its role of providing liberation for the oppressed. To do this, Boff points out, is to prepare the way for transformative action that aids the poor in the realisation of their utopian dreams.

The new story of creation that ecological science and cosmology tells is of the interrelatedness of all beings in the universe. Boff perceives the interrelatedness of all beings in terms of the universe's cosmogenesis, that is, its evolution toward greater complexity and consciousness where all beings contribute to the cosmogenesis of the whole. The interrelatedness of reality points to an ontology where the dynamic event of the universe evolving forward and upward toward God is the most basic way to understand the universe.⁷⁹ Effective, transformative action will happen as the church takes up this truth of interrelatedness into its theological reflection and its ecclesial life in such a way that the poor and oppressed are included in fellowship and liberated from oppression. Eco-liberationist theology can contribute to transformative action by providing resources for the reinterpretation of symbols of religious discourse so that they reflect the new understanding of the interrelationship of all things.

Boff takes ecological research, beginning with the ethical critiques of social ecology, and finds a place for religion within it. He then applies liberationist methodology to help reform theology, so that it may become a meaningful way of expressing the cosmogenic process of the universe and an option for the human poor.

⁷⁸ *Cry of the Earth*, 85.

⁷⁹ Such an ontology stresses the dynamism of reality, as opposed to a more static understanding which seeks the changeless aspects of reality as its most basic constituents. The universe, not just human beings, has a history that is going somewhere. "Nature comes to be seen as a process of self-transcendence" (*Cry of the Earth*, 21).

By including the broader context of all beings evolving in the cosmogenesis of the universe, he sees theology as having a contribution to make to the ecological health of a world under attack.

As we will see in the next chapter, the notion of the perichoretic, triune God of Christianity speaks both the language of the local context and the universal language of science, because all reality is created by and in the image of a God of inclusivity and relational embrace. God is the “All in All” of the new ecological understanding of reality.⁸⁰ From here we turn to Boff’s treatment of the Trinity as the focus of both ecological critique and ecological hope. After a survey of the modern discussion of God as Trinity, Boff’s own understanding of Trinity will be taken up. His thought represents the contemporary challenge of social trinitarianism to classical trinitarianism and an attempt to fit such a conception of God within a larger ecological worldview. The exposition of his doctrine of the Trinity will entail consideration of both doctrinal debates and the ecological implications of those debates.

⁸⁰ *Cry of the Earth*, 140-57.

CHAPTER THREE

BOFF'S SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

In this chapter, we will explore how Boff builds his argument for a social trinitarian model, in part, on the basis of a criticism of classical trinitarian doctrine.¹ His criticisms touch upon several points. Following a schema of doctrinal development along the lines of an East-West polarity, he argues that each side developed the form of their trinitarian thought with a particular emphasis on either the plurality (Eastern) or the unity (Western) of the godhead. These two emphases were developed in response to the potential problems of subordinationism (Eastern) or modalism (Western), though Boff does not think they managed to avoid either one. We will look at his criticisms of the Eastern and Western forms of classical trinitarianism in turn, including specific terminological and conceptual problems that arose from the classical traditions which he argues have negatively affected subsequent trinitarian reflection. We also will look at his criticism of biblical monotheism, which influenced both the Eastern and Western traditions. According to Boff, it is especially the monotheistic tradition that led to hierarchical and patriarchal conceptions of God, and of God's relationship to creation. Finally, we will look at Boff's proposed solution to the problems of the biblical and classical traditions, namely, what he considers to be a more balanced and egalitarian conception of the doctrine of the Trinity found in the social trinitarian model, particularly in light of his eco-theology. We also will consider how he understands the perichoretic relationship of divine persons and his conception of the God-world relationship.

Critique of the Eastern Trinitarian Solution

Boff suggests that the form of trinitarian doctrine found primarily in the Eastern churches begins with an emphasis on the Father as the fount of divinity. Patristic references to the Father's place in the Trinity, as fount of the Son and the Holy Spirit, are rooted in Scripture, such as when God is named as "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" in Matthew 28:19. The idea that the Son and the Spirit proceed from the Father is known as relations of origin, since the Son and the Spirit are understood in terms of their relationship to the Father who is their origin. One thus could speak of the Father's monarchy, because the Father was the first (*monas*) principle (*arche*) of the Son and Holy Spirit.² Below the surface of the language of monarchy and relations of

¹ Our main texts will be his treatments of the doctrine of the Trinity mentioned in the Introduction, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community* and *Trinity and Society*.

² See T. F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 141. Boff defines monarchy as "the unique causality of the Father; it is the Father alone who generates the Son and spirates (as the Father of

origin, Boff contends, lingers the problem of subordinationism. The reason is that when one conceives of the Son and the Spirit existing from a common origin (the Father), it is like calling the Son or the Spirit an effect of the Father's will, whereby they are reduced to the status of creatures, rather than being co-equals of God.³ This diminishes the Son's and Holy Spirit's status because they are under the Father in terms of priority of being.⁴

If a hierarchy of the Father over the Son and Holy Spirit remained a constant and potential threat in the trinitarian debates of the Eastern churches, it was despite the scriptural example of an egalitarian Trinity. In fact, in the scriptural presentation, the divine persons are an example for the church, which is to "live the ideal of union proposed by Christ himself: 'that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us' (John 17:21)."⁵ Boff's concern is that an emphasis on relations of origin does not adequately account for the equal emphasis that Scripture teaches concerning the oneness of Father and Son in their economic activity together, which is to bring the church into the same divine fellowship.⁶ Instead, relations of origin focus upon the numerical oneness of the three as a single substance, where priority is given to the Father. If the scriptural understanding of unity as equality is lost, then the potential for a hierarchy that stresses the one over the many can arise, through an appeal to the Father's basic priority in the godhead. This ordering could easily reinforce the tendency toward patriarchy in the church, where one person who acts as the earthly head (just as the Father is the first in the Trinity) dominates the many members of the body of believers.⁷ An explanation of divine unity that is based

the Son) the Holy Spirit: a characteristically Greek Orthodox expression" (*Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 121).

³ *Trinity and Society*, 7 and 81-83.

⁴ *Trinity and Society*, 4, 47-49.

⁵ *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 43-44.

⁶ *Trinity and Society*, 5-6. It will be seen in the next two chapters how Augustine also understood the nature of the oneness of the Father and the Son according to their common work of uniting the church in their divine life, just as the Son cleaves to the Father in the immanent Trinity. However, he does so by stressing the one substance/being that is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

⁷ A summary of such a danger for different aspects of society is described in *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 7-9. He uses the terms 'totalitarianism', 'authoritarianism', 'paternalism', and 'machismo' to explain what is here covered under the term 'patriarchy'. In *Trinity and Society*, 15, he refers to the focus on the Father over against the other two persons as manifesting itself in society as patriarchy.

on the ordering of the persons of the godhead from one person is clearly not egalitarian and leads to subordinationism even though the relations of origin were not intended to lead in that direction.⁸

Critique of the Western Trinitarian Solution

For Boff, the second form of trinitarian doctrine, found primarily in the Western tradition (especially from the time of Augustine), started from an emphasis on the one “divine, spiritual nature” (conceiving God either as absolute Spirit⁹ or as the highest good¹⁰) and reasoned from this nature to an explanation of the three persons.¹¹ Unity is basic to God’s nature, and the relations of the persons are the triune logic of that unity. Such a starting point for the doctrine of the Trinity has a tendency to favour a static metaphysics inherited from Greek thought, where truths about God are derived from deductive reasoning that conceives of God as unchanging and without direct relationship to an ever-changing created reality.¹² God is an immutable first principle.

Such an approach falters by removing the dynamism of the economic Trinity from history, effectively shutting out the biblical experience of God for understanding the doctrine of the Trinity.¹³ The danger of this is modalism, whereby the persons

⁸ *Trinity and Society*, 21, 82, 120-22 and 172-73. Boff is suspicious of a potential, lingering subordinationism despite his recognition that the egalitarian language and definitions of the ecumenical and Roman councils stressed how none of the persons is of lesser relationship or inferior to the others (*Trinity and Society*, 81). For example, Boff sees in Gregory of Nazianzen’s explanation—that monarchy is “the unity of the Father, from whom and through whom the other persons are counted”—the kernel of a distortion that points away, albeit unintentionally, from their equality (*Trinity and Society*, 83). His quotation of Nazianzen is from *Theological Oration*, 42.15 (see *Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen*, trans. C. G. Browne and J. E. Swallow, ed. P. Schaff and Henry Wace, NPNF² vol. 7 (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1888; reprint, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 385-95).

⁹ Which Boff refers to as the Thomistic theme of the Western church, *Trinity and Society*, 79-80.

¹⁰ Which Boff refers to as the Augustinian theme of the Western church, *Trinity and Society*, 80.

¹¹ *Trinity and Society*, 4.

¹² *Trinity and Society*, 17-18.

¹³ For Boff, Rahner’s axiom (see chapter 1, above), in conjunction with an ontology of “history, process, and freedom,” provides a more adequate methodology for the development of the doctrine of the Trinity (*Trinity and Society*, 112).

simply become manifestations of the One.¹⁴ Boff recognises that this problem may be overcome through an explanation of real and distinct relations between the persons, which both Augustine and Thomas tried to explain.¹⁵ However, subsequent Western tradition still emphasised the One over against the three, and continued to favour a tendency toward reducing the one God to one mind, which then led to the Barthian and Rahnerian mistakes of reading modern theories of subjectivity into the unity rather than into each of the three persons.¹⁶ Furthermore, the same problem arises with the Western model as with the Eastern model, where oneness becomes such a strong focus that it pervades the social and political aspects of life. The threat of totalitarianism by one (or a few) over the many finds justification in an understanding of God whose plurality is more of a logical problem than a reality.¹⁷

Critique of Biblical Monotheism

According to Boff, the primary emphasis that guided both the Eastern and Western traditions when developing the doctrine of the Trinity was that of monotheism. Maintaining God's unity (oneness) was necessary in order to keep to the monotheistic teaching of Scripture. For Boff, monotheism is an aspect of classical thinking that posed significant difficulties for truly grasping an egalitarian understanding of the Trinitarian persons.¹⁸ He argues that monotheism "maintained that God is absolutely whole, without division or multiplication" and was "the matrix from which the doctrine of the Trinity was struck."¹⁹ This monotheistic understanding of God influenced the way people acted by producing a religion of the Father.²⁰

God is presented as Great Father because he created heaven and earth. As such he is the supreme authority of the universe, from whom all other religious

¹⁴ *Trinity and Society*, 46-47.

¹⁵ *Trinity and Society*, 80.

¹⁶ *Trinity and Society*, 112 and 117-18.

¹⁷ *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 31.

¹⁸ *Trinity and Society*, 16-17.

¹⁹ *Trinity and Society*, 16-17.

²⁰ Boff points to studies that make a direct correlation between classical Christian theologies and patriarchy, such as R. Ruether, *Religion and Sexism*, M. Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), and Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 118-22.

and civil authorities derive, in descending orders of hierarchy. As there is only one eternal authority, so the tendency to have only one authority in each sphere of the world is confirmed: a single political leader, a single military chief, a single social leader, a single religious head, a single guardian of truth, and so on. God is presented as the great universal Superego, alone and unique. Much of the atheism of developed societies today is no more than a denial of this sort of authoritarian God and of the patriarchal sort of religion that follows from it and obstructs the development of human freedoms.²¹

The problem is that a monotheistic doctrine of God can be used to justify an oppressive political agenda because that is the way that God wants people to be “God’s image” in the world.²² In history, this has led to totalitarian rule, rooted in unhealthy hierarchies. Boff cites both the rule of the pope over the church and monarchs over states as examples of totalitarianism that have been justified using a monotheistic belief in the “great patriarch, supreme Father and absolute Lord.”²³

In Boff’s view, it would have been wiser to reinterpret monotheism to fit the revelation of God’s name, “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,”²⁴ because the unity of God is understood better by recognising it as the eternal communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The unity of God as one Lord is attested in even the earliest biblical writings (e.g. Deuteronomy 6:4), but is not the sole description of God in Scripture. One also must keep in mind that the revelation of God as three began in the New Testament period.²⁵ In fact, according to Boff, the Trinity became a doctrine of the

²¹ *Trinity and Society*, 169. Cf. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 236-40.

²² *Trinity and Society*, 11.

²³ *Trinity and Society*, 20-23. Boff cites the example of Genghis Khan’s claim to authority based on monotheism, “In heaven there is but one God, and on earth but one Lord, Genghis Khan, the Son of God” (quoted in J. Moltmann, “The Inviting Unity of the Triune God,” trans. R. Nowell, *Concilium* 177 (1985), 51). John O’Donnell argues that it is problematic to reject biblical monotheism because of select incidents where some have attempted to justify oppressive political monarchianism and totalitarianism by it. As a counter-instance he points out that the Hebrew prophets “had severely criticised the exploitation of the poor on the basis of the sovereignty of God,” in “The Trinity as Divine Community: A Critical Reflection Upon Recent Theological Developments,” *Gregorianum* 69 (1988), 18.

²⁴ *Trinity and Society*, 16-17.

²⁵ *Trinity and Society*, 25-6. The gradual recognition, revealed over time, of the three persons of the godhead fits well with Boff’s understanding of the evolution of all knowledge in a cosmogenic process, an understanding that informs his ecological theology, described in the previous chapter. The Trinity chose to reveal itself gradually,

church because of the church's attempt to understand how the biblical witness to Jesus and his Spirit affected the unity of the godhead. Boff wishes to maintain the biblical description of the economy as central to the doctrine of the Trinity, since it is the Trinity's relationship to humanity which can help advance the liberation of the poor, whom the Trinity has created and to whom they direct their eternal love.²⁶ The doctrinal challenge was, and is, to have an integrated understanding of the three while also avoiding an emphasis on any one person. To have an integrated understanding of three persons, the best conception of unity is one founded on communion rather than on the idea of God as an unchanging, absolute, indivisible whole.²⁷ Thus, the classical definitions of the Trinity, by holding to monotheism and a metaphysical emphasis on unity, could not "postulate a society that can be the image and likeness of the Trinity."²⁸ However, a modern understanding of society, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts,²⁹ can yield a better basis upon which to conceive of the integrated unity of the three.³⁰

Boff's critique of monotheism relies heavily on Moltmann.³¹ Both Walter Kasper³² and W. Pannenberg³³ have criticised Moltmann's treatment of monotheism.

as humanity evolved in its capacity to know. See *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 100-101, and *Cry of the Earth*, 163ff.

²⁶ On the importance of the economy as a foundation for the doctrine of the Trinity, see *Trinity and Society*, chapter 2, and 76-84.

²⁷ *Trinity and Society*, 10-16.

²⁸ *Trinity and Society*, 11.

²⁹ *Cry of the Earth*, 13-20.

³⁰ The best way to speak of an integrated Trinity of divine persons is by their communion with each other (in Boff's case this is called perichoresis, which will be taken up below). Communion is not only a description of the three persons in fellowship amongst themselves, but also indicates that their interrelationality spills over into their creation of the universe, which joins in their fellowship (which will also be taken up below).

³¹ Particularly, Boff uses Moltman's *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 129-50 and 192-200. Moltmann, in turn, is indebted to E. Peterson, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem* (Leipzig: Jakob Hegner, 1935).

³² *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. M. J. O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1994) 295, 379 fn. 183.

Kasper, on the one hand, sees tritheism as the logical result of Moltmann's rejection of monotheism, since the unity of the godhead is undercut in favour of the three persons.³⁴ Pannenberg's criticism, on the other hand, is more generous, simply suggesting that Moltmann is "guilty of a wrong terminological decision" that makes it seem as if he rejects "trinitarian monotheism," when he really means only to reject problematic nineteenth century conceptions of pre-trinitarian monotheism.³⁵ Trinitarian monotheism, as understood by Pannenberg, is distinct from the monotheism criticised by Boff and Moltmann, is the idea that God's unity is crucial for a trinitarian theology, in order to avoid tritheism, subordinationism and modalism. In other words, one must account for God's ontological oneness as taught by Scripture.

Boff's criticism of monotheism, like Moltmann's, may not lead to tritheism as Kasper thinks, since Boff seems to understand the three persons to be a unity of eternal, unbroken communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.³⁶ In other words, the distinctness of the three persons does not take precedence over their eternal unity, which is an ontological reality. It might be fair to say, following Pannenberg's terminology, that Boff is attempting to present a form of trinitarian monotheism, in opposition to the pre-trinitarian monotheism that he thinks makes the unity of God the primary divine characteristic, and which conceives threeness as merely a logical problem.³⁷ As pointed out above, the primary reason that Boff criticises pre-trinitarian monotheism doctrine is that it is linked to political oppression. Liberationist methodology seeks to transform oppressive forms of doctrine into forms that are sensitive to the plight of the poor. His ethical critique does not necessarily entail a wholesale rejection of the ontological understanding of oneness found in classical versions of trinitarian doctrine, but it does entail a shift of emphasis away from the terminology of divine ontology as 'substance.' In the place of 'substance' he prefers to

³³ *Systematic Theology*, trans. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991-1998), I.335-36 fn. 217.

³⁴ *The God of Jesus Christ*, 295, 379 fn. 183. Kasper's criticism sees Moltmann's rejection of monotheism primarily as a rejection of the traditional ontological basis for oneness, and claims that Moltmann's theory of social unity has not sufficiently taken account of all that is required to replace the concept of divine oneness that monotheism entails.

³⁵ *Systematic Theology*, I.335-36 fn. 217.

³⁶ E.g., *Cry of the Earth*, ch.7.

³⁷ We will show, with respect to Augustine, that this is not the case in the next two chapters.

explain ontology by employing terms such as “history,” “process” and “dynamism,”³⁸ all of which point to God’s unity as a communion or movement of the divine persons.

The shift of terminology leads Boff to favour speaking of the “Trinity” rather than of ‘God’ because the latter term is, for him, too closely associated with traditional, negative understandings of monotheism, whereas the former term brings out a more positive understanding of persons who are a unity in their eternal and loving communion with each other:

The very fact of speaking of Trinity rather than simply of God entails going beyond a single-chord substantialist vision of divinity. The Trinity centers on a vision of relationships, reciprocities, and inter(retro)-communions. This is a metaphysics of another kind, a processive and dynamic metaphysics rather than a static and ontic type.³⁹

What Boff means is that traditional substance metaphysics tended to lead to an understanding of the three persons in terms of a series of abstract relationships within the one divine being, rather than as a communion of loving persons. The emphasis upon eternal, unbroken communion is formulated to underscore the process of unity, in opposition, as he perceives it, to the static, unmoving unity of pre-trinitarian monotheism. This contrast between classical and contemporary terms is not necessarily a valid one though, as will be shown in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

The Trinity and Lordship

Boff’s concern about the negative hierarchical relationship that could be inferred from a traditional model of the Trinity—one that conceives of the Father (or the divine substance) as the ground of the other two persons—is extended to how the Trinity is described in relation to the creation. In particular, he does not readily embrace the language of divine lordship over the creation.⁴⁰ When reflecting on how to talk of the Trinity in relationship to the creation, he rarely employs terms that portray God as a sovereign or Lord, because a picture of God as the dominating ruler over the creation is open to misuse by those who would justify the oppression of human rulers claiming to act on God’s behalf.⁴¹ In this section, we will begin with a focus on Boff’s

³⁸ *Trinity and Society*, 112-13, 118-19.

³⁹ *Cry of the Earth*, 155.

⁴⁰ In our discussion of Augustine, we will refer to God’s ‘rule’ or ‘governance’ over creation. Lordship is used as a synonym of governance and rule.

⁴¹ This hesitation to speak of God’s rule is natural, given that the monotheistic idea of God emphasises the oneness of God over and against all others. Boff claims that “some religious and political leaders invoke this single-focus understanding of

discussion of divine lordship, and how he minimises the biblical language of lordship as much as possible, particularly in relation to how he understands the Father's place in the Trinity's lordship over creation. By doing so, he is faced with the task of finding appropriate language to conceive of the Father that does not emphasise the Father's lordship over creation. In the face of this challenge, we then will move to a discussion of Boff's conception of the Father's place in the immanent Trinity and in the economy of creation. The relationship between lordship and fatherhood is only one instance that could be taken up in Boff's reconception of language about the immanent Trinity and the Trinity's relationship to creation. The reason for using this focus instead of others is that it most clearly brings out the problem that Boff sees in classical trinitarian theologies that describe the persons according to relations of origin from the Father. Therefore, the specific roles of the Son and Holy Spirit are only touched upon here as they relate to lordship and fatherhood.

This is not to say that Boff never refers to God's rule over the creation, but rather that he prefers other terminology. At times, because of biblical language about God, he is unable to avoid referring to lordship. In those cases, he is careful to find ways to convey the meaning of God's lordship without also reinforcing traditional monarchical implications. For instance, when he describes the New Testament references to the kingdom of God, he notes that in the context of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom, the rule of God is the "power to liberate [one] from everything that denies or rebels against God and to bring God's final plan to fruition."⁴² The power of liberation is not like the power claimed by an absolute monarch of any earthly political form, but is of a different character, as is shown when the Lord God gathers the creation together for a feast at which God also serves the meal. The examples of the Lord's Supper—a symbol of pouring out life for those who are most threatened—and of Jesus' servanthood are signs of the Father's kingdom, and proof of the communal nature of God, since Jesus saw himself as an essential part of the Father's rule, even though he calls the kingdom his Father's.⁴³ Boff prefers that the language of lordship, if it is used, be understood as a trinitarian rule of inclusivity and servanthood, and not as the rule of the Father. The Father's place in the Trinity's lordship is relative to the other two persons.

God to justify their authoritarianism and exclusionary attitude and practice" (*Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 111).

⁴² *Trinity and Society*, 28-29.

⁴³ *Trinity and Society*, 167, 180. In a brief essay, "The Trinity," trans. R. Barr, in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed., I. Ellacuria and J. Sobrino (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), 389-404, Boff describes the "reign of the Holy Trinity" that is established by the Holy Spirit in the eschaton; thus he identifies all three persons in the establishment of the kingdom.

If Boff prefers to apply the concept of lordship to the Trinity, and not primarily to the Father, then how does he speak of the Father's relationship to creation? In relation to the Father's creative work, he uses terms like "mystery" and "limitlessness." Because the Father is mysterious (not having made himself visible as the Son and the Spirit have been made visible), Boff also suggests that he has "a thousand other [names] as well," because all religions that name God are naming that mystery they perceive must exist.⁴⁴ Yet, despite Boff's allusion to the thousand ways that various religious traditions have named the Father as a mystery,⁴⁵ it would appear that his naming the Father's work in the creation becomes more challenging when one eliminates the Father's 'lordship' or 'rule,' which was basic to the biblical and classical theological tradition. Boff can speak easily of the work of the Son in his incarnate form and of the visible Spirit (the Son is Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is "hypostatically united" to Mary⁴⁶), and of both in cosmic processes (the cosmic Christ, the Spirit of life-giving breath), without direct need of the language of divine lordship. Their works are understood in terms of giving life and providing liberation. However, notwithstanding the brief discussion of lordship in relation to the New Testament references to the Father's kingdom in *Trinity and Society*, Boff usually has less to say about the Father's role in relationship to the creation (especially in his ecological writings), preferring instead to call him a mystery. Even though Boff minimises the scope of what he might say about the Father by not exploring the concept of lordship in more depth, we will see below that he still does have a way of showing the Father's engagement with the creation.

Writing on the immanent Trinity, Boff refers to the Father as the "unoriginated origin" out of deference to tradition.⁴⁷ However, he is careful to speak

⁴⁴ *Cry of the Earth*, 140-41, 142, 148, respectively. He also describes the Father as the unfathomability of the Trinity (167).

⁴⁵ The Trinity is not a uniquely Christian doctrine in Boff's estimation, since God's trinitarian nature is experienced in all the religions, though they do not express that experience of the Trinity in the same manner as Christian doctrine does. Boff is persuaded by the research of R. Pannikar *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973); see examples in *Trinity and Society*, 243, fn.4 and *Cry of the Earth*, 154, 232, fn.25.

⁴⁶ He refers to the Spirit being "hypostatically united" to Mary, and also to her being "hypostatically assumed" by the Spirit just as Christ was the "*assumptus homo* of the eternal Son" (*Cry of the Earth*, 170-71, *Trinity and Society*, 210-212).

⁴⁷ *Trinity and Society*, 171, and especially 173. When he speaks of the kingdom of God arising from the unoriginated origin of the Father, Boff does not mean that the lordship of God is found only in the Father instead of in the three, as if it were the Father's kingdom without the Son and the Holy Spirit. Instead, he means, by the

of the unity of the three persons on the basis of the experience of the three in their equality. Thus, he defines unity as the product of eternal communion and avoids any potential traces of causality and subordination that could occur by relating it directly to the Father as the source of divinity, which was a potential implication of the idea of relations of origin in classical trinitarian theology.⁴⁸ In this respect, Boff's understanding of fatherhood in the immanent Trinity revolves around the name 'Father'. God is never alone, since the name implies a necessary relationship with the Son (though not with creation, since God could exist without creating).⁴⁹

Turning to the Father's work in the divine economy of creation, he develops a twofold understanding of the Father's work. First, corresponding to the discussion of the Father's name in the immanent Trinity, Boff speaks of the Father's creative work in relationship to the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father's creative work consists of "loving correlations" of all three persons of the Trinity in the unfolding of creation's evolutionary harmony.⁵⁰ Boff explains this notion by using Saint Francis's idea of divine sonship to develop the notion of a loving Father. Saint Francis explained that the Father is only Father in relation to the Son and Holy Spirit, because the name is defined relationally—one always is a father of someone. The Father's love for the creation is demonstrated by creating it as different from himself, and then loving it with the filial affection that exists in the relationship of the persons of the Trinity.⁵¹

unoriginated origin, that the Father is not revealed in Scripture as having an origin from anything else, and that his kingdom is established through the Son and the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁸ *Trinity and Society*, 165, 173.

⁴⁹ *Trinity and Society*, 174. Boff's distinction between the trinitarian language about God the Father and monotheistic language about the God as Father of creation is similar to that made in Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 162-66.

⁵⁰ *Ecology and Liberation*, 48.

⁵¹ *Ecology and Liberation*, 52-54. That Boff means the creation is brought into a loving relationship with the Father through the Son and Spirit in the same way that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist in an eternal, loving relationship is unclear. If Boff's panentheistic conception of God (that God is always in the creation and thoroughly and transparently involved with everything, see the previous chapter, p.43 fn.41) is meant to suggest this, then he is departing from the trinitarian understanding of creation developed in classical theology which posited a basic distinction between Creator and creature (see for example, the discussion of how Origen and Athanasius described creation in trinitarian terms in Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God From Origin to Athanasius*, rev. ed. [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2000]). Since Boff dismisses the incarnation as God's response to sin, and prefers to understand it as a

This relationship between creator and creation is possible because the incarnate Son and Spirit reveal the divine love, including its source in the mystery of the Father. Boff contrasts this understanding of a loving, adoptive fatherhood, with the patriarchal idea of the fatherhood as a *monarchy*—the solitary source of everything—which provided the “ideological support for authoritarianism” and “political manipulation” in the classical religions.⁵² The adoption of creation into the Trinity’s love is rooted in the love that the Father has for the Son, who created the universe in the Spirit. Thereby all creatures are brothers and sisters because they all have their origin and relationship through the eternal Son who created them, and who relates them to the love of the Father from whom the Son comes.⁵³ The work of the Father can be summed up as being the source of “everything to do with creating and originating” through the Son and the Spirit.⁵⁴

Second, Boff also speaks of the Father’s work in creation as an expression of his mysterious and unfathomable fecundity. As the mystery of the Trinity (that is, the unoriginated origin), the Father eternally and simultaneously begets the Son (and spirates the Holy Spirit), who as the eternal Word projects the Father’s thoughts of the beings he creates in the Word.⁵⁵ Beyond these affirmations nothing can be said as to how this happens, thus making silence about the Father the proper response before such an invisible mystery.⁵⁶ Just as the Father is the mysterious and invisible source of

natural affirmation by the Trinity that creation is permeated by divine love (*Cry of the Earth*, 185; *Trinity and Society*, 187), one suspects that he has blurred the distinction between creature and creator. While it is not clear what the limit is of the creaturely imitation of the divine love in the Trinity through the Cosmic Christ, the eschatological utopia that the creation hopes for might indicate that there will be a time when the gap between divine and creaturely love will be bridged.

⁵² *Trinity and Society*, 169.

⁵³ *Trinity and Society*, 187.

⁵⁴ *Trinity and Society*, 167, 175.

⁵⁵ *Trinity and Society*, 175. While the Word projects the Father’s thoughts, Boff does not link this to the modalistic tendency of reducing the Son to a function of the Father’s mind (*Trinity and Society*, 117-18). Rather, what we know of the unoriginated origin is known through the Son/Word. We will note below, though, that the Father is not really unoriginated in Boff’s theology, since the Son and the Holy Spirit are eternally the source of the Father’s fatherhood (Boff employs the term *patreque* to denote this).

⁵⁶ *Trinity and Society*, 171-72, 174; see also *Cry of the Earth*, 156-57.

the Son and the Spirit in the immanent Trinity, so with respect to the Father's work in creation mystery is also a key. Initially, in the early history of evolving human awareness of the divine, the Father was experienced as "an intimate and at the same time transcendent, cosmic force."⁵⁷ However, through the revelation of the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Father's relationship to creation is revealed as the creative force that works through them. The Father, who is so closely associated with origin and fecundity, is most often related to work in creation in the past tense (by which Boff means "the age of ignorance of the trinitarian nature of God ..."⁵⁸) when human culture and religion began to take shape. This formative stage of human cultural development belongs to the mission of the Father, which mission resulted in the "thousand different names" of God the Father in the world's religions.⁵⁹ Boff does not mean to relegate the Father to the past tense, though, since the eternal Trinity is always at work in the creation.

Trinitarian creation includes divine lordship, then, inasmuch as the divine persons' eternal communion is the basis for the creation's being. Boff does not simply reject lordship out of hand. However, he does take pains to find different ways of speaking about the Trinity's relationship to creation that do not involve lordship—as we have seen in terminology such as servanthood and adoption, with an emphasis on the work of the Son and the Spirit. The Father is part of trinitarian creativity, but for Boff the Father is not the first or prior source of creation (as, Boff thinks, the language of lordship would suggest). Instead, he is the mystery of the Trinity. The reconception of trinitarian language away from so-called classical conceptions of lordship—whether ascribed to the Trinity or to the Father—creates a need for a trinitarian terminology that avoids problematic terms like lordship and substance. We turn, then, to Boff's explanation of how the creation is part of the divine communion of persons through perichoresis.

The Trinity and Perichoresis

Boff moves away from earlier conceptions of the Trinity, associated with monotheism and the priority of divine unity in the Father (or in a concept of substance), toward a conception of the Trinity that begins with the plurality of the divine persons. Only then, he argues, can one answer the question of how divine unity is to be conceived without favouring some sort of overarching or dominating oneness. Boff's answer is to conceive of divine oneness as an integrative unity of community based on the classical conception of perichoresis. Boff describes the unity of the divine nature as the revelation of each person to the other in eternity:

⁵⁷ *Trinity and Society*, 175-76.

⁵⁸ *Trinity and Society*, 175-76.

⁵⁹ *Trinity and Society*, 175-76.

Instead of causal terminology, we could use the biblical terminology of revelation and recognition: the three Persons reveal themselves to themselves and to each other. One is the condition for the revelation of the others, always in eternal love and reciprocal communion. This implies accepting—and this is my basic thesis—that the three divine Persons are simultaneous in origin and co-exist eternally in communion and interpenetration. Each is distinct from the others in personal characteristics and in the communion established by that Person in everlasting relationship with the others, each revealing that Person's self to itself and the self of the others to them.⁶⁰

This is the essence of what Boff means by trinitarian perichoresis—that each divine person reveals himself to himself and to the others, and that they in turn recognise themselves in the other's revelation because it is in knowing the other as distinct from themselves that they may know themselves. This whole process of revealing and recognising is founded on the presupposition that the three are engaged in the process eternally and simultaneously, and therefore, perichoresis is a description of eternal interrelationality, by which they are one God.⁶¹

As well, on the basis of this perichoretic understanding of the Trinity, Boff sees that the relatedness of the persons of the Trinity is manifest in the creation.

By the joining of the three Persons in creating (perichoresis), everything comes interwoven with relationships, interdependencies, and webs of intercommunion. The cosmos is shown to be an interplay of relationships, because it is created in the likeness and image of the God-Trinity.⁶²

The creation is like its creator. Interrelatedness is part of the Trinity, so that in its creative work all three are involved (“the joining of the three Persons in creating”). Interrelatedness is not merely a description of God the Trinity as three persons in a relationship who create something. Their creative work brings to existence a cosmos

⁶⁰ *Trinity and Society*, 142.

⁶¹ Interestingly, Boff uses Augustine to explain perichoresis in his ecological writings. He does not use Augustine in his discussion of perichoresis in his trinitarian writings, which were produced at an earlier stage in his career. He cites the following description of the persons' unity from *The Trinity* VI.12: “Each of the Divine Persons is in each of the others, and all are in each one, and each one is in all, and all are in all and all are only one” (quoted in *Cry of the Earth*, 156). As we will see in the next two chapters, what Boff here understands as Augustine's description of the process of revealing and recognition, Augustine explained as the divine substance which each of the three persons are. Moreover, Augustine never used the term perichoresis (or its Latin equivalents) to explain the unity of the Trinity.

⁶² *Cry of the Earth*, 167.

that also reflects their interrelationality. We shall take this up again later in our discussion.

The term perichoresis seems first to have been employed regularly as a technical term for trinitarian relations in the sixth century by Pseudo-Cyril and in the eighth century by St. John Damascene, while its original usage was in Christology where it was used to explain how Christ's two natures co-inhered.⁶³ The meaning of the term expresses the "interpenetration or interweaving of one Person with the others and in the others."⁶⁴ Boff understands perichoresis to reflect a dynamism that is expressive of the biblical term for fellowship (*koinōnia*), which he defines as "a permanent process of active reciprocity, a clasping of two hands: the Persons interpenetrate one another and this process of communing forms their very nature."⁶⁵ By employing perichoresis to explain the unity of the Trinity so that it reflects the biblical idea of communion, Boff is able to maintain a direct link to classical terminology, while providing an alternative to what he perceives to be the problematic conceptions that classical theology worked under in its use of relations of origin and ontic conceptions of substance.⁶⁶

The doctrine of the Trinity was meant to address the problems of subordinationism and modalism, and in doing so classical trinitarian language reflects those problems as well as the natural limits of human language, which cannot completely convey the idea of an eternal Trinity. The language of the doctrine carries both potential pitfalls and explanatory power. Rather than dismissing all traditional trinitarian language completely, Boff moves in another direction and tries to re-contextualise the language through the grid of perichoresis. In effect, because of the eternal, mutual interpenetration of the three persons, he applies to each person, not only to the Father, the language of origin:

⁶³ *Trinity and Society*, 135-36. For a more detailed description of the origins of the term and how it was employed see G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1936), 291-99; and V. Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 35 (1991): 53-65.

⁶⁴ *Trinity and Society*, 136.

⁶⁵ *Trinity and Society*, 136.

⁶⁶ R. E. Otto argues that Boff is correct to use perichoresis to explain the divine unity of the Trinity, since "any use of perichoresis apart from the essential unity of divine nature is vacuous," in "The Use and Abuse of Perichoresis in Recent Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54 (2001), 377. In pointing this out, he is showing how Boff takes a different approach than Moltmann, who, Otto believes, is unconcerned with divine unity, using perichoresis merely to describe a Hegelian concept of "coming-to-be" (374).

One Person is the condition for the revelation of the others, in an infinite dynamism like a series of mirrors endlessly reflecting the image of the Three. This emphasis on communion and perichoresis, the always triadic relationship operating between the Persons, avoids the risk of tritheism. This perichoretic communion does not result from the Persons, but is simultaneous with them, originates with them. They are what they are because of their intrinsic, essential communion. If this is so, it follows that everything in God is triadic, everything is *Patrefque, Filioque* and *Spirituque*. The conjunction ‘and’ applies absolutely to the three Persons: ‘and’ is always and everywhere.⁶⁷

Boff’s point is that to speak of the Father as the “unoriginated origin” highlights the limitations of human father language, where an originator refers to one who is a first cause resulting in the effect of a son. The descriptive power of the word Father cannot be applied without ambiguity, since God is not a finite being (who is the beginning of the Son and Spirit as a human father is of children) but an eternal, infinite communion of three persons. The language of fatherhood and origin in the Trinity must be re-contextualised to describe the eternal relationship between the divine persons. Fatherhood, then, cannot be understood in terms of the Father as a cause of the Son or Holy Spirit because the divine persons’ eternity by definition has no beginning.⁶⁸ Just as the Son issues from the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit issues from the Father and the Son, so also the Father must issue from the Son and the Spirit. The three have always existed in relationship, if they exist eternally.⁶⁹

Catherine LaCugna wonders whether Boff’s proposal for a model of perichoresis where relations of origin are replaced by his understanding of *Patrefque, Filioque* and *Spirituque* is adequate for the task of promoting a coherent social doctrine of the Trinity. She perceives in Boff’s thought too much speculative theology and not

⁶⁷ *Trinity and Society*, 146.

⁶⁸ *Trinity and Society*, 213 and *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 57-58. T. G. Weinandy, *The Father’s Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), criticises Boff for describing the Trinity of persons as eternally simultaneous because he sees this as causing Boff’s discussion of the intratrinitarian relations to be “vague on the need to maintain an order of origin and derivation founded upon the Father” (81, fn.44). That is Boff’s point, though, since the ordering of persons from the Father, as he sees it, leads to other problems, as discussed above.

⁶⁹ In *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. M. Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), Moltmann argues that the monarchical ordering of the persons from the Father leads to the unacceptable relegation of the Holy Spirit to the last place. He claims that such an ordering does not explain the eternal and simultaneous communion of the three, where any ordering at all is acceptable. His proposal is that it be “Spirit-Father-Son” (304).

enough biblical justification. Her critique can help to clarify the way that Boff attempts to rehabilitate the Trinity. LaCugna argues that his understanding of intratrinitarian relations

is without a doubt an extreme version of scholastic trinitarian theology, a speculation on intratrinitarian relations so divorced from biblical testimony to the quite distinctive role of each divine person, that it is really no more than a highly reified account of divine substance.⁷⁰

In other words, Boff's rejection of the problematic language in the classical tradition is undermined because his "scholastic" methodology still finds priority in unity (in Boff's case, by perichoresis). The result is that he posits a distorted vision of the Trinity that maintains what he wants to disavow, namely a metaphysical and speculative conception of divine eternity as the basic starting point to describe the trinitarian persons' unity. According to LaCugna, such a move fails to take seriously the divine economy.

LaCugna thinks the whole endeavour is founded on an account of substance rather than relations, because discussion of the communion of persons according to their eternity places them outside of the relational matrix of the economy of creation/redemption and into a traditional metaphysical matrix of an undifferentiated eternal substance that cuts off authentic relationality. As LaCugna points out, Boff's idea of perichoresis leads him to describe the unity of mutual relations so that "the Father 'begets' the Son virginally in the maternal-virginal womb of the Holy Spirit."⁷¹ In this sense, she correctly identifies in Boff's use of perichoresis a speculative account of how the three persons are revealed to one another, which is not found in the economy of salvation. Even though their eternal unity may be one of revealing each to the other, Boff's description of it still uses a highly figurative language of substance—in this case the Holy Spirit who is the Father's womb from which the Son is begotten. The primacy of the incarnation of the Son in Jesus and the hypostatic union of the Spirit and Mary recede into the background, once Boff takes up his description of the eternal relations. It is hard to see how this revelation of the divine persons to one another in the womb of the Holy Spirit does not actually draw upon some prior substance. Somehow, in the transition from Boff's description of the economy of salvation to his proposal of trinitarian perichoresis, he has allowed the figurative nature of the language to blur the economic contours with which he claims to work.⁷² She

⁷⁰ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 277.

⁷¹ *Trinity and Society*, 147.

⁷² His description of the economy is found in *Trinity and Society*, chapter 2, and is related to his understanding of perichoresis on pp. 76-84. A more thorough critique of Boff cannot be undertaken here. The coherence of his doctrine of the trinity, and

sums up her judgement with an intended negative comparison: “In this respect the resemblance to Augustine’s Trinity is striking.”⁷³ When metaphysics becomes the basis for theology, as LaCugna perceives the matter, then theology has lost its bearings.⁷⁴

Despite LaCugna’s criticism of unnecessary speculation about eternity, Boff’s account of perichoresis does allow him to develop an egalitarian, social conception of God while explicitly maintaining the divine unity. Perichoresis aids him in his argument that there is a positive analogy of the Trinity with society (as opposed to the patriarchal analogy he criticises), and allows him to ground his social ethics in theology. Boff takes this perichoretic understanding of the divine persons a step further in his ecological theology, as we will see in the next section.

Transforming the Model of Trinitarian Creation

How does he relate his understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity to his ecological worldview? The trinitarian relationship with creation, according to Boff, can be understood in contrasting ways. By working within the classical monotheistic framework that was discussed above, one can posit that creation is merely an exercise of the absolutely free divine will, and that creation is without effect upon God. In this classical approach, God’s omnipotent being is above a creation that is both contingent and *ad extra* to the Trinity—“a manifestation of divine play, of the overflowing glory of the eternal Being.”⁷⁵ In this regard, one can understand how Boff would be concerned about speaking of God’s lordship as the exercise of absolute power over the creation, since God’s glorious will is sheer power without boundary, conquering all in its

his assumptions about the eternity and egalitarian nature of God, require more careful delineation. LaCugna, though, seems to be right in her questioning of how Boff’s use of perichoresis relates to the economy of salvation.

⁷³ LaCugna, *God with Us*, 277. We shall see in the next two chapters that she (following Gunton’s criticisms) characterizes Augustine as conceiving of the Trinity as a substance that is somehow prior to the divine persons.

⁷⁴ In LaCugna’s own analysis of the doctrine of the Trinity, she favours the unity of the immanent and economic Trinity in such a way that the distinction between them finally disappears. Not surprisingly, her discussion of the trinitarian relations contains no discussion of God’s eternity, despite the occasional reference to the Trinity as eternal. It seems to remain an assumption, but without any content or reflection as to its meaning or application. Her proposal does not account for how the finite creation is distinct from the eternal triune God.

⁷⁵ *Trinity and Society*, 220.

“play.”⁷⁶ He suggests that this understanding of creation is flawed in its location of the creation outside of the Trinity, when the very nature of God’s being is perichoretic, that is, a mutual indwelling of others within the self and *vice versa*. If the nature of God is an inclusivity expressed by the eternal, loving communion of the three persons, then the separation of *opera ad intra* (eternal communion) from *opera ad extra* (communion with the creation) neglects the fundamentally unitive nature of God. The result of making a distinction between God’s absolute will and creation’s contingent being is to ignore the basic, inclusive understanding of the Trinity’s economic activity as a reflection of the immanent Trinity (Rahner’s axiom).

For Boff, in contrast to the classical understanding of the relationship between God and the creation, a promising way to understand a trinitarian doctrine of creation is by seeing the creation as the expression of God’s love, which by its perichoretic nature is “communicative and effusive.”⁷⁷ God’s nature is creative at its heart, and seeks to enter into communion with the other. Two points inform Boff’s perichoretic understanding of the creation in relationship with the Trinity. First, he argues that the Father in generating the Son (and, with the Son, spirating the Spirit) “expresses himself completely by knowing himself and representing himself in the totality of his being.”⁷⁸ This is described in Scripture in terms of the Son as the Word of God. The Word is not simply an “instrument of communication,” but is “the whole structure of meaning of reality and of the spirit.”⁷⁹ By describing the Son as the totality of meaning, Boff can highlight the idea of the Son as the Father’s perfect image, projected outside of the Father. In other words, the projection of the Son highlights the real distinction of the Son from the Father (and thus the possibility for their real communion with each other, since the Son is not merely a psychological process of the Father). And it is in the Son/Word that the creation is projected, that is, creation is “the sons and daughters of the Son.”⁸⁰ In the creative Word, from which the creation is brought forth, exists the very idea of creatures from the Father. What Boff is getting at here is how the relationship of the Son to the Father is the basis upon which one can then understand the relationship of the creation to the Son, and hence to the Father.

⁷⁶ This is proximate to Gunton’s description of Augustine’s understanding of creation as the result of divine power that Gunton called “the outcome of arbitrary will,” which was noted at the beginning of this dissertation. See Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 54.

⁷⁷ *Trinity and Society*, 220.

⁷⁸ *Trinity and Society*, 184.

⁷⁹ *Trinity and Society*, 184.

⁸⁰ *Trinity and Society*, 175.

Likewise, the Spirit is the breath of life that comes from the Father who speaks the Word. It is the Spirit who is the animating life that links the Word to its source.⁸¹ Similarly, in creation, the Spirit moves through creatures, uniting them to their creator in love.⁸² The creation is not simply an act of the will, but is an expression of the immanent communion of the eternal Trinity, just as the Son is not an act of the Father's will, but an expression of his total being.⁸³ The creation is created for communion with the divine persons.

Second, the act of creation is not that of the Trinity as a whole (i.e. the Trinity as one subject), but is an act of the three persons who are one in their communion. It is important to stress that creation is an act of the three persons, so as not to risk appropriating the creative activity to any one person. Each of the divine persons are creators, just as they are each constitutive of the perichoretic Trinity.⁸⁴ That is why Boff points out how the eternal projection of all creatures by the Father in the Son and through the Spirit makes creation itself (i.e. creation not yet created) an eternal idea and thus an *opera ad intra* of the Trinity. However, Boff also makes clear that the creation (i.e. creation as actually created) is an *opera ad extra*, since it is made out of nothing and is finite. Creation is an expression of God's perichoresis, and is dependent upon the perichoresis of divine communion. In this explanation, Boff actually follows the classical doctrine of creation from nothing very closely.

Boff's emphasis on the importance of perichoresis provides him with a way to transform religious discourse so that it is in harmony with an ecological understanding of the world and can promote ecological values like those discussed in the previous two chapters. He has already established a point of commonality between ecological understanding and the idea of God by appealing to the religious intuition of mystery (and the need for communion with that mystery) as the reality that science cannot comprehend behind the 'big bang'.⁸⁵ That universal intuition of mystery finds particularly helpful expression in Christian theology, where the mystery was named 'God the Trinity', with particular emphasis on perichoresis.⁸⁶ The ecological sciences have shown that, following the 'big bang', an increasingly complex reality of beings in a multitude of relationships with each other is evolving. According to Boff, this same

⁸¹ *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 88-89, *Trinity and Society*, chapter 11.

⁸² *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 92-95.

⁸³ *Trinity and Society*, 175, 221-23.

⁸⁴ *Trinity and Society*, 223.

⁸⁵ See chapter 2, for our discussion of this.

⁸⁶ *Cry of the Earth*, 167.

reality, as expressed by Christian doctrine, is founded upon the creative work of a God who is a complex relationship of three persons. He introduces a new use for Christian perichoresis in the ecological worldview by defining it as an understanding of relationships between beings “that strive for dialogue in all directions and at all times.”⁸⁷ He also describes perichoresis as a “circularity and inclusion of all relationships and of all related beings.”⁸⁸ The dialogue of all creatures is the inclusive relationships of beings. It is by these inclusive relationships that new, complex forms of life are produced. Perichoresis becomes a statement not only of how a Trinity of persons creates the cosmos, but how the nature of the cosmos is intended by God to be relationally engaged in a dialogue of co-creativity (i.e. with each other and God), which is the cosmogenesis of the universe toward its eschatological goal of life in God.⁸⁹

One can understand the relationship between the Trinity and creation not only by the scriptural and historical doctrine of the Trinity, but also by seeking out the divine revelation in the creation. In his ecological writings, Boff advocates a “creation-centered” theology, by which he means that a scriptural doctrine of creation is to be explicated in light of the scientific reading of reality, which he describes as the “book of creation.”⁹⁰ To do this in the ecological age means adopting the ecological worldview founded on an evolutionary cosmology (cosmogenesis), as described in the previous chapter. The following quotation sets out his agenda for building a creation-centered theology that conforms to such an ecological worldview.

A creation-centered theology requires the overhauling of all religious and ecclesial institutions. They must be at the service of the cosmic revelation, which applies to all; they must recover original grace above and beyond original sin; they must extend to the cosmos theological claims that have been applied only to human beings (theological anthropocentrism) but are valid for the entire universe, such as grace, final destiny, divinization, resurrection, eternal life, and the reign of the Trinity.⁹¹

One notes how Boff attempts to provide a means by which Western Christianity can refocus its knowledge of God and reality in this quotation. It is accomplished by allowing an ecological worldview to have epistemological priority over religious texts

⁸⁷ *Cry of the Earth*, 24.

⁸⁸ *Cry of the Earth*, 24.

⁸⁹ See point #9, *Cry of the Earth*, 33.

⁹⁰ *Cry of the Earth*, 151.

⁹¹ *Cry of the Earth*, 151.

and traditions, by submitting religion to “the service of the cosmic revelation, which applies to all” because ecological science is based on a knowledge of the world and therefore functions as a common ground of knowledge for all people to know God’s revelations. To understand why Boff says this, one must note that just prior to this quotation, Boff argued that religious traditions and texts first developed and found their confirmation in response to the knowledge of reality (i.e. knowledge of the universe, the earth, etc.). In other words, all religious traditions are readings of reality, which contains God’s revelation for humanity.⁹² The particularity of religions and religious texts (specifically of Western Christianity) should not detract from this overarching agenda for understanding God’s general revelation in reality. When Boff writes that religious institutions “must recover original grace above and beyond original sin,” he is referring to how Western Christianity can discover a deeper understanding of God’s universal revelation through adopting an ecological worldview. This can be achieved by moving from a narrow, exclusive focus on the particular revelations of Jesus and Spirit in Scripture for the salvation of human beings, to include the broader ecological and cosmological vision of the Cosmic Christ and universal Spirit, who reveal divine communion and redemption for the whole of reality.⁹³

When one begins with an ecological epistemology as well as religious traditions and texts, a new understanding of the universe emerges. It is possible to perceive in ecological cosmology answers to questions of destiny that once were thought to be the special provenance of the church. The evolution of the universe is a movement and development toward a final goal (cosmogogenesis)—which in traditional religious doctrines were called “grace, final destiny, divinization, resurrection, eternal life, and the reign of the Trinity.”⁹⁴ The reign of the Trinity encompasses everything in the end, not just humanity. By seeing an analogy between the perichoretic unity of divinity-in-itself (the three in an eternal communion of revelation and recognition) and the ecological universe (where everything relates to everything else because nothing is independent of the whole), Boff can posit that the creation’s final goal is to relate to its triune creator, just as the Trinity of divine persons relate to each other.

⁹² *Cry of the Earth*, 151.

⁹³ On the Cosmic Christ, see *Cry of the Earth*, chapter 9. In his discussion of the Cosmic Christ, besides the influence of P. Teilhard de Chardin’s writings mentioned in the previous chapter, Boff also cites M. Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988). On the universal Spirit, see *Cry of the Earth*, chapter 8. Among the major influences on Boff’s understanding of the universal Spirit are Y. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. D. Smith (New York: Crossroad, 1997), and J. Moltmann, *God in Creation*.

⁹⁴ *Trinity and Society*, 151.

Religious perceptions of God's triune community and the divine message of redemption are discoverable in the ecological worldview, on a wider and general scale. Boff's uses the term panentheism to convey his understanding of trinitarian perichoresis. He writes,

God is present in the cosmos and the cosmos is present in God. Theology in the early centuries expressed this mutual interpenetration with the concept of perichoresis Modern theology has coined another expression: *panentheism* ... that is, God in all and all in God.⁹⁵

The Trinity's perichoretic relations, the eternal process of revealing and recognising each self and the others through the others, also forms the cosmic character of the creation, such that creatures know themselves and God through God's presence in the creation and the creature's presence in God. Each is distinct from the other—he dismisses pantheism—but creator and creature are present in each other through perichoresis. This means that the modern, cosmogenic understanding of the evolution of the universe can be properly interpreted as an evolution toward knowing God fully and in the way that the divine persons know each other. "When this happens reality becomes transparent. God and the world are therefore mutually transparent."⁹⁶ The basis for this is the recognition that reality is so thoroughly interrelational that nothing exists apart from anything else. Thus, for Boff, the perichoretic understanding of divine unity results in a doctrine of the Trinity which not only can supply a model of egalitarian relations for human political needs, but which also explains the whole of reality in the fullest possible sense—going beyond mere ecological knowledge of the world as described by science to an understanding that the relationship of the creation with the Trinity is a perichoretic relationship.

Furthermore, Boff relates the ecological unity of the world to God by employing the biblical idea of the image of God.⁹⁷ However, in a departure from traditional theological thinking, Boff relates the image of God to the whole creation not just to humanity or individual persons, because humanity does not exist (as God's image or in any other way) apart from the rest of the creation. Creaturely interrelationality and interdependence means that everything is dependent upon everything else in the dynamic, processive world. Because the unique identity of humanity is bound up with the rest of the creation (the necessary context in which identity is formed), one must then see that biblical language about the image of God must, by logical and material necessity, include the whole of creation. To locate it in humanity alone would be to fall into the trap of anthropocentrism mentioned in

⁹⁵ *Cry of the Earth*, 153.

⁹⁶ *Cry of the Earth*, 153.

⁹⁷ *Cry of the Earth*, 167.

chapter 2.⁹⁸

Put another way, because Boff conceives of God panentheistically, emphasising the immanence of God's presence in every part of creation without God being identified with the creation (i.e. pantheism), it makes sense that the whole creation is the image of God, because the whole is permeated by God's presence.⁹⁹ Moreover, the result of this is that one must reject the use of the image of God to authorise human dominion over the rest of creation.¹⁰⁰ Instead, as Boff conceives it, the dominion that is rightly inferred from creaturely imaging of God is the activity of evolving according to the pattern of creation that God has made. This corresponds to his idea of sin being opposition to evolution. When creation works as a whole, evolving toward its intended life in God, it is exercising the stewardship that Boff thinks an ecological reading of scripture requires. Any other attempt to rehabilitate the idea of dominion, outside of the parameters of cosmic evolution, would be to favour anthropomorphism.¹⁰¹

While Boff stresses a holistic understanding of the universe—both the holism of all creatures being interrelated and the creation's relatedness to God—he also argues that particularity, the importance of individual beings, is not being undervalued because the good of the particular is related to the larger common good. Liberation theology is concerned that the cry of the poor and the oppressed is not ignored, but also that the poor and oppressed take their proper place in world. Likewise, non-human creatures need to be valued for themselves. In fact, if individual beings are

⁹⁸ In Boff's trinitarian writings, he describes the image using Augustine's analogies (*Holy Trinity*, 38-39). However, this should not be taken as contradictory to his ecological understanding of the creation as the image of God. Boff does not want to obliterate the meaning of describing humanity as being created in the image of God. Presumably, Boff thinks it is possible to describe the image in its particular instance in humanity, as well as in its general instance as applying to the whole of creation.

⁹⁹ *Cry of the Earth*, 152-154.

¹⁰⁰ *Cry of the Earth*, 79.

¹⁰¹ Of course, in putting forward the idea that evolution can be adhered to by all humanity (and when they do not do so they are sinning) through the natural interrelationality of all things, he is assuming that it is possible to know where the evolution of the universe is 'heading' at any given point. This raises questions about how much human beings can know about the evolutionary trajectory (trajectories?) and how they choose to fit (or not) into the evolutionary trajectory that is proper to the creation. One important question is whether Boff is claiming to know more than is warranted about evolution, and whether that knowledge can really be of assistance in overcoming human resistance to the natural evolution of the universe.

oriented to the “harmony and synergy” of the whole, then their particularity finds affirmation within the good of the whole.¹⁰² If the harmony of the whole is hindered by the few who unduly try to control other beings for their own selfish interests, then individuals and the whole (whether it be an ecosystem or the creation) will suffer.¹⁰³ That is why Boff describes sin in terms of working against cosmic evolution. The value of the particular and the whole is bound together by the idea that “everything is charged with energy at various degrees of intensity and interaction” which constitute and are constituted in force fields. The fields are so dynamic that “everything is related with everything, at all points and at all moments.”¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

In this chapter we have considered the ways Boff analyses the doctrine of the Trinity in its biblical and historical beginnings, and have identified the ways that he sees the classical form of the doctrine to have perpetuated oppressive ideas. We have also seen his own proposal for a transformed model of the Trinity that can avoid those oppressive ideas inherited from the classical tradition. Boff’s criticism of the classical doctrine—both in the Eastern and Western forms—focuses on their hierarchical and patriarchal presentation of the Trinity, where the Father has the priority of being in the godhead, and thus serves as an unhealthy model for both ecclesial and social hierarchies. Furthermore, Boff criticises the monotheistic orientation of Scripture as a basic starting point for understanding the Trinity, since the temptation is to favour unity and oneness over plurality. If this happens, then the stress laid upon unity can function as an unhealthy model for ecclesial and social order, by providing divine justification of the rule of the one over many.

However, when Boff proposes his alternative, where the three persons are the starting point for constructing a model of the Trinity, he argues that their eternal distinctness is the basis for their intratrinitarian communion. Eternal communion provides the ground for unity and a model for an egalitarian relationship of all three persons. The unity of the three emerges out of their eternal communion, not the three out of one immutable substance—whether it is the Father or a divine essence. His trinitarian explanation does not simply abandon the classical insights that gave rise to the doctrine of the Trinity, but rather seeks to transform the doctrine so that its weak points are strengthened. Nevertheless, one may ask whether he goes far enough in his transformation of the doctrine. LaCugna, as we have seen, thinks not, claiming he is far too Augustinian, by which she means speculative. The relationship between

¹⁰² *Cry of the Earth*, 33.

¹⁰³ *Cry of the Earth*, 33-34.

¹⁰⁴ The cosmological grounding of Boff’s understanding of interrelationship is summarised in *Cry of the Earth*, 31-34.

oppressive tradition and contemporary praxis does guide his discussion, yet his criticism of the development of the doctrine in the early centuries of the church does not result in a thoroughly renovated conception of the Trinity. We also took note of how he integrates his understanding of the Trinity into the doctrine of creation and ecology according to a liberationist method, linking trinitarian perichoresis to his ecological panentheism, and seeing the whole of creation as imaging the eternal trinitarian communion.

We have not set out to criticise Boff's ecological epistemology or his doctrine of the Trinity, but rather to describe them in such a way that his understanding of the relationship between the Trinity and creation is made clear. In doing so, we have been able to see how he thinks of ecological trinitarian theology as an answer to contemporary problems. As well, his theological concepts are built upon a rejection of classical theological models, which he sees as problematic in terms of their anthropocentric and patriarchal orientation, and their emphasis upon monotheism and power. In doing so, we now have a fairly characteristic contemporary portrayal of classical theology on the basis of which we may reconsider Augustine's doctrines of the Trinity and creation.

The next several chapters will investigate how the classical doctrine of the Trinity was expressed in Augustine's theology, and how he related his understanding of the Trinity to the doctrine of creation. In chapter 4, we will begin by noting some of the specific criticisms that have been made of Augustine's conception of the Trinity, and then will examine Augustine's attempt to explicate the doctrine of the Trinity according to scripture in order to answer the subordinationist critics of his day. This attempt will be shown to provide a strong biblical foundation for explicating the doctrine of the Trinity with due respect for both the plurality and unity of the divine persons. In chapter 5 it will be argued that Augustine, who is typically closely identified with the Western tradition, has been unfairly criticised for a conception of the Trinity with modalistic tendencies because of his discussion of substance and divine simplicity. We will show that a key part of his conception of God as substance related to his understanding of trinitarian love. Then, in chapters 6-8, Augustine's application of his doctrine of the Trinity to the account of creation in Genesis 1-2 will be investigated, especially how divine lordship over the creation is conceived both in itself and in relation to the command for humanity to exercise dominion in Genesis 1:26-28.

CHAPTER FOUR

AUGUSTINE AND SUBORDINATIONISM IN THE TRINITY

An ecological worldview fits well with the trinitarian conception of God, Boff argues, because the universe is composed of matter whose existence is characterised by relationships of mutual influence with all other matter. This is similar to trinitarian perichoresis, whereby the divine persons are dependent upon one another through their mutual indwelling, and where none is first or has priority of being.¹ In fact, Boff thinks that the perichoretic focus of social trinitarianism is indispensable for an ecological worldview, representing a unification of the intellectual, the spiritual, and the material aspects of reality, which the rise of modern science had torn asunder, leaving the spiritual aspect of reality diminished.² Boff's argument for the centrality of the perichoretic relationship of the persons of the Trinity is based upon a criticism of the classical formulations of the Trinity as incomplete, because rather than conceiving the Trinity according to an order of three equals, those formulations were founded on the priority of one person or of a common divine substance.

Boff's critique is twofold. First, Western theologians in the Patristic era tended to emphasise the unity of substance of the Trinity, so that that divine substance became the logical and metaphysical basis for talking about three persons. This formulation potentially could lead to modalism, whereby the divine substance is prior to the three persons, who are manifestations of it. Secondly, in the Patristic era Eastern theologians tended to structure their formulation of the Trinity according to relations of origin from the Father as the source of the Son and Holy Spirit. That ordering potentially could lead to subordinationism, whereby the Son and Holy Spirit are secondary to the Father either metaphysically or logically.

Boff also argues that both the Western and Eastern attempts to describe the doctrine of the Trinity are rooted in the problematic monotheistic assumption of Scripture, that God is the one Lord over creation. According to Boff, this was used to justify coercive oppression in the name of the One God, by those who see themselves at the top of the temporal hierarchy, which is modeled after the divine hierarchy. By proposing a social trinitarian model founded on perichoretic unity, Boff thinks that not only do the inherent problems of subordinationism and modalism (and their social and

¹ Thus, because of their equality, the 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' can also be called 'Son, Spirit, and Father,' or 'Holy Spirit, Father, and Son'. Their interdependence requires that no ordering be made preferential to another. To do so is, for Boff, to deny their equality and individuality.

² *Cry of the Earth*, 1-13, 196-202.

political consequences of hierarchicalism) find resolution, but also that modern ecological understandings of reality can be embraced without contradiction of the doctrine of the Trinity.

(Augustine's work on the Trinity has functioned something like a lightning rod for those in modern theology seeking out the shortcomings of the classical formulations.) Based on Boff's schema of an East-West division in the understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, Augustine potentially inherits the modalist tendency. However, Gunton, following a similar division between East and West, also detects Arianism, Eunomianism, and modalism in Augustine's "Western method."³ Whether Augustine falls prey to subordinationism (Arianism) or modalism is the topic of this and the next chapter. We will concentrate in this chapter on whether Augustine was able to address the threat of subordinationism, which for him shapes the question (in the first four books of *The Trinity*) of how to conceive of the doctrine of the Trinity. After this, we then will take up, in the following chapter, the question of how the concept of the Father's monarchy and the simplicity of the divine being formed the foundation for Augustine's understanding of the unity of the Trinity. In doing so, we also will address the charge of modalism. We then will consider how Augustine understood of the order of persons in the godhead, and whether it resembles the hierarchy of rule (i.e. lordship) which Boff ascribes to classical thought. In both chapters we will deal primarily with Augustine's *The Trinity* and some of his later anti-Arian writings.⁴

Modern Critiques of Augustine's Doctrine of the Trinity

To begin with, however, we shall consider the modern criticism of Augustine more fully. Modern critics of Augustine's trinitarian theology link his apparent failings to the decline of the doctrine in the history of Western theology. They see his failure

³ Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 55.

⁴ See chapter 1, pp. 18-19. *The Trinity* is often divided into two parts in modern discussions, the first part comprising books I-VII, and dealing with the biblical picture of God, and the philosophical question of how to formulate the doctrine using the language of substance (The second half, comprising books VIII-XV, then enters into a more speculative, inward search for trinitarian analogies.) This division is not without merit, since in book VIII Augustine himself explains that he will change from attending to the more traditional and repetitious matters of the doctrine to "a more inward manner" of understanding (VIII.1). Nevertheless, in accepting a twofold structure of *The Trinity* (one must be careful not to lose sight of the importance of the first seven books in providing the context for Augustine's reflections in the second half. After all, he intended the book to be read as a whole) see J. Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De Trinitate*," *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 103-23.

as, on the one hand, misunderstanding and not adequately following the earlier trinitarian developments, and on the other hand, of (importing an overwhelming emphasis on divine unity that undermines the threeness of God. These failures led to the problems of subordinationism and modalism.) We shall address these criticisms in our exposition of *The Trinity*.

(Monarchy is a key concept associated with the Nicene tradition of thinking about the doctrine of the Trinity. It refers to the Father's uniqueness as the source (*archè*) of the Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as to the unity of the persons in their divinity because they are from one (*monās*) divine source, which is the Father.⁵ The term (*monarchia*) was first employed by early Patristic writers, particularly the economic trinitarians, who detected in the dispensations of the divine economy a relational pattern (*taxis*) between the divine persons in which the Father was the origin of the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁶ In Athanasius' writings, the Father's monarchy related to the logic inherent in the names 'Father' and 'Son,' since to be a father implies having a son, and to be a son implies having a father, in an order where the Father is the source of the Son.⁷ From this understanding of the Father-Son relationship comes the phrase

⁵ Athanasius played a key role in developing a theological understanding of the Father as the origin of the Son and the source of divine unity, see Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*, 174-75. (Likewise, in post-Nicene orthodoxy the Cappadocians maintained the emphasis on the Father as the "sole *archè*," see B. Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, trans. M. Westerhoff, ed. A. Louth (Collegeville: Michael Glazier, 1993), 146.)

⁶ Examples of how the concept of monarchy was used by Hippolytus and Tertullian to indicate the Father as the beginning of the Son and the Holy Spirit are noted in J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1976), 111-12. For a fuller explanation of monarchy and divine unity in Tertullian, see B. de Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History*, trans. E. J. Fortman, Studies in Historical Theology, vol. 10 (Petrsham: St. Bede's, 1982), 81-85. In its earliest usage, monarchy simply referred to monotheism, so that the one God of Israel was not mistaken as just another god among the many gods of Mediterranean polytheism; the term also denoted that God was not co-eternal with created matter. See J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600) (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971), 36ff.

⁷ De Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History*, ch.4. Athanasius' arguments for the Father as the source of the Son, without reducing the Son to a creature, or conceiving him as a brother, are discussed in Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*, ch. 9. Widdicombe explains how the filial distinction between Father and Son was a contentious issue. The understanding of the place of the Holy Spirit in the ordering of the godhead was more difficult because the name 'Holy Spirit' does not fit the familial

'relations of origin', since the divine relations (and the unity of the godhead) are described from their source in the Father's monarchy. The phrase continues to be used in modern theology as a means of expressing the conception of the Father as the source of divine unity.⁸

Looking to Augustine for help in understanding how the classical conception of the Father's monarchy functioned in the doctrine of the Trinity may not seem a promising path to take. It has not been untypical in modern systematic theology to judge him as breaking away from the Nicene theological framework that rooted divine unity in the Father's monarchy. LaCugna, for example, argues that Augustine departed "from the biblical and patristic doctrine of the monarchy of the Father."⁹ It is claimed that he replaced the monarchy of the Father with an approach that is concerned with abstract oneness and divine substance. Whereas in the monarchical conception of the Trinity the unity of the godhead was understood in terms of the Father's generation of the Son and spiration of the Holy Spirit, Augustine allegedly begins with a unitary substance and then tries to fit the three persons within that substance.¹⁰

Colin Gunton concludes that two problems which arose in the Western church, "the problem about the knowledge of God and of the relegation to secondary status of the doctrine of the Trinity," can be answered "by enquiring how far responsibility for the state of affairs is to be laid at the door of St. Augustine."¹¹ The conclusion of his analysis is that Augustine completely misunderstood and misused the doctrine that had been skilfully developed by economic theologians such as Irenaeus, and later by the Cappadocians, who developed the doctrine through reflection on the scriptural revelation of God's activity through the Son and the Spirit rather than through reflection on Greek philosophical theology. In particular, following the

pattern that 'Father and Son' follows. For more on this see A. I. C. Heron *The Holy Spirit* (London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1983), 63-90.

⁸ Pannenberg, for example, still assumes that the Father's monarchy is necessary for explicating the doctrine of the Trinity, *Systematic Theology*, I.324-27.

⁹ LaCugna, *God For Us*, 99.

¹⁰ See Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 31-57. Similar objections are raised by T. R. Martland, "A Study of Cappadocian and Augustinian Trinitarian Methodology," *Anglican Theological Review* 47 (1965): 252-63; H. Kung *On Being a Christian*, trans. E. Quinn (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 475; and R. W. Jenson, *The Triune Identity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 115-20, 126-36. M. R. Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 237-50, traces the origins of this recent interpretation of Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity.

¹¹ *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 32.

argument of Wolfson,¹² Gunton claims that modalism is the result of Augustine's work on the doctrine of the Trinity: "The only conclusion can be that, in some sense or another, it is divine substance and not the Father that is the basis of the being of God, and therefore, *a fortiori*, of everything else."¹³ However, going further than the charge of modalism, Gunton suggests that Augustine simply does not have the "conceptual equipment" to deal with the problems that face the doctrine of the Trinity—namely, the problems of Arianism, Eunomianism, and modalism—all of which his position finally collapses into at one point or another in *The Trinity*.¹⁴

Thomas Marsh succinctly states a similar position when he writes,

But where that tradition [the monarchical] would have maintained a strong sense of the divine monarchy ... Augustine abandons this position and understands the one God to mean the one divine substance or nature which then is verified in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹⁵

Thus, the *taxis* of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is treated as of secondary importance in Augustine's understanding of the Trinity, which orders the divine persons according to an immutable substance. Marsh takes Augustine's statement in the opening book of *The Trinity* as the basic evidence for this:

In this way let us set out along Charity Street together, making for him of whom it is said, *seek his face always* (Ps 105:4). This covenant, both prudent and pious, I would wish to enter into in the sight of the Lord our God with all who read what I write, and with respect to all my writings, especially such as these where we are seeking the unity of the three, of Father and Son and Holy

¹² H. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 357.

¹³ *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 54.

¹⁴ *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 55.

¹⁵ *The Triune God* (Mystic, CN: Twenty-Third Publications, 1994), 132. Later in the chapter (p. 137), in criticism of the so-called "double-procession" of the Holy Spirit, Marsh quotes from *The Trinity* XV.29 regarding the Father being the principal source of the Son and the Holy Spirit. He notes that this is one of the "rare" occasions that Augustine acknowledges that tradition. These two comments taken together would seem to suggest that Augustine does not follow the Nicene tradition because he does not state it frequently. Of course, such a critique is suspect, since how often one says something also can be an indication of the degree that it has become an assumption that need not be frequently stated. It will be shown below that Augustine's adherence to the Father's monarchy is a key to understanding his arguments.

Spirit.¹⁶

In this passage, according to Marsh, Augustine makes clear that unity is the primary focus of trinitarian doctrine, in distinction from the Eastern approach which stresses the *taxis* of the three persons. He claims that Augustine describes this as a unity of substance a few lines later: “The purpose of all Catholic commentators ... 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.”¹⁷ The net result of Augustine’s Western approach to the Trinity is that the three persons are lost in speculation about substance and unity that will pave the way for the later separation of the economic and immanent trinities, which then will render the doctrine irrelevant to Christian piety.¹⁸

It should be noted, though, that in terms of Augustine’s method for understanding the doctrine of the Trinity in *The Trinity*, one also sees in I.7 a commitment to exploring trinitarian faith using the received tradition of Nicea, as well as the necessity of grounding such an exploration in the biblical revelation of God’s identity. This method is stated succinctly when he describes *The Trinity* as an answer to those who doubt the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity: “we shall undertake ... to give them the reasons they clamour for ... But first we must establish by the authority of the holy scriptures whether the faith is in fact like that [God being a Trinity]. Only then shall we go on, if God so wills and gives his help....” Here he indicates that the understanding of the triune nature of God, known specifically from Scripture, is his starting point, as part of the task of establishing a basis on which to give the “reason-mongers” the answer they seek. Rather than making oneness or unity the overarching focus for his work, it is the scriptural basis for threeness.¹⁹ Moreover, Augustine does

¹⁶ *The Trinity* I.5.

¹⁷ *The Trinity* I.7.

¹⁸ *The Triune God*, 140-42. K. Rahner, *The Trinity*, 10-12, reaches a similar conclusion—that Christian piety loses its connection to the Trinity beginning with Augustine’s doctrine of the Trinity.

¹⁹ On the authoritative value of the scriptures for understanding who God is, and God’s works of creation, providence, and redemption, see such examples as *The Literal Meaning* IV.21.38, where Augustine indicates his belief in the trustworthiness of the scriptural witness, “there can be no error in Scripture” He also understands the origin of scripture to be related to the work of the Holy Spirit, “But as much has been told as was judged necessary by the Holy Spirit as He inspired the writer, who put down those things” (V.8.23). In *The City of God* XI.III, Augustine writes, that Jesus Christ “established the Scriptures These have the most eminent authority, and we trust them in all matters of which it is not expedient for us to be ignorant but which we are not capable of knowing for ourselves.” The scriptures reflect the trinitarian nature of their origin, and their authority for understanding the nature of the trinitarian

not merely appeal to scripture (and tradition) alone as his concern, or to the triune nature of God alone as his primary focus, but rather to both—that is, to the scriptural evidence for the triune nature. The foundations provided by biblical faith are at the heart of the answer that Augustine uses in response to those who would seek other rational models and theories to explain God's threeness.

The emphasis that Augustine places upon the scriptural basis for the doctrine of the Trinity is not at the expense of a rational explanation of doctrine, to which he also held. The two were inseparable for Augustine. The classical philosopher was committed to living the rational life, but this did not necessitate opposition to theological explanation. Similarly, the explanation of the faith did not preclude reference to philosophical ideas, when they could clarify the meaning of biblical faith.²⁰ Augustine's own background included training in scepticism and Neo-Platonism, and his generally platonic philosophical approach had a profound effect upon his theology, though after his conversion, no philosophical school (i.e. that of Plotinus or Porphyry) can be said to have pride of place, but all were subjected to the critique of scriptural faith.²¹

God is essential to Augustine. For further reflections on the importance of history and scriptural faith for Augustine, see Basil Studer, "History and Faith in Augustine's *De Trinitate*," *Augustinian Studies* 28 (1997), 7-50.

²⁰ For example, the importance of the Nicene Creed in the patristic church centred around the controversial, and non-biblical, term *homoousion*, which was associated with Greek philosophical tradition (though Augustine rarely referred specifically to the Nicene Creed), as shown in J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (New York: Longman, 1972), 242-62.

²¹ On the influence of philosophy on Augustine, see C. N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture a Study of Thought and Action From Augustus to Augustine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), 376-98, and ch. 11, where Cochrane discusses Augustine's trinitarian theology and platonism. That Augustine was influenced by philosophical thought cannot be denied, as one sees throughout his *Confessions*, where he describes his journey to conversion as including the influence of several philosophical writers including, Cicero and Plotinus. However, to speak of their influence is not the same thing as to say that they were more foundationally critical to his method than his faith in the risen Christ, and the biblical explanation of God's work of salvation. With regard to the philosophical and theological resources in the method of inquiry in *The Trinity*, see R. D. Crouse, "St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*: Philosophical Method," in *Studia Patristica* 16, ed. E. A. Livingstone, 501-10 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985). Some related comments are found in E. Muller, "The Dynamic of Augustine's *De Trinitate*: A Response to a Recent Characterization," *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995): 65-91. The possibility that Augustine's understanding of the relationship of philosophy and faith was balanced, with each accorded its proper

In contradistinction to the schema that makes a division between the East and the West in Patristic thinking about the Trinity, then, Augustine states a method that will follow the Nicene path of starting with Scripture and recognising the need to protect the plurality of the godhead in trinitarian doctrine. Who are the “reason-mongers” that have compromised the correct reading of biblical revelation, and developed misleading, alternative doctrines of the Trinity? According to Michel R. Barnes, Augustine directed *The Trinity* against, in part, Latin, anti-Nicene, homoean (subordinationist) theologies. These subordinationist interpretations of the Son’s and Holy Spirit’s relationship to the Father were based on interpretations of Scripture that were developed in ongoing debates in the post-Nicene church.²² Not only does Augustine place himself within the historical tradition of Nicea, but he also writes with a polemical edge, in order to defend the orthodoxy he claims to uphold.²³

place (as opposed to the assumption that he simply downplayed the theological-biblical traditions of the church in favour of philosophical method), is briefly outlined by J. M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), esp. 5-10. Rist’s book provides a bibliography of sources for those interested in Augustine’s philosophical foundations.

²² Michel R. Barnes, “Exegesis and Polemic in Augustine’s *De Trinitate* I,” *Augustinian Studies* 30 (1999): 43-59. He uses a detailed analysis of the scriptural passages Augustine focuses on in the first book of *The Trinity* to develop a picture of homoean theologies, on the theory that Augustine develops his argument in the first seven books according to the polemical climate of the time. He also compares Augustine’s defence with earlier homoean writings, and with pro-Nicene theologians such as those of Hilary. Also helpful is Michel R. Barnes’ “The Arians of Book V, and the Genre of *De Trinitate*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 44, (1993): 185-95; and Michel R. Barnes, “The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon,” in L. Ayres and G. Jones, ed. *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric, and Community* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 47-67. For the wider historical context see R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 557-97, who provides a detailed picture of Homoian Arianism up to 381.

²³ Examples of modern research that assumes Augustine was simply engaged in doctrinal speculation, without polemical intentions against other trinitarian models, are Ernst Troeltsch, *The Christian Faith: Based On Lectures Delivered at the University of Heidelberg in 1912 and 1913*, trans. G. Le Fort (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 105; James J. O’Donnell, “The Trinity,” *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995): 159-62; Hill’s introductory remarks in his translation of *The Trinity*, 20; and P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: University of California, 1967), 277. A detailed challenge to this assumption is found in K. Roland, “‘*Fidei Contemnentis Initium*’: On Certain Positions Opposed by Augustine in *De Trinitate*,” in *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993), 322-28.

Therefore, while Marsh is correct in noting that unity of substance is a concern for Augustine, it is not because he has accepted the primacy of the concept of divine substance over the biblical presentation of God's economy in three persons, or that he wishes to subsume questions of trinitarian relations to a theory of substance.²⁴ Rather, the plurality of the divine persons is the basis for Augustine's attempt to come to an understanding of the idea of unity of substance that does not dissolve the reality of the three into a prior substance, or reduce the Son and the Holy Spirit to creatures of the Father. Augustine conceives the unity of substance as an issue with regard to two questions: firstly, how the unity of divine substance is related to the Father's begetting the Son and spirating the Holy Spirit;²⁵ and secondly, how one can talk of the unity of substance in terms of the three persons' common activity.²⁶ Rather than conceiving of unity in terms analogous to human nature, where the begetter and begotten can be greater and lesser in relation to each other, Augustine will show how talking about divine unity as eternal, simple Being can shed light on how God could be three and one. He will do this by exploring the scriptural basis for speaking about the Trinity (following the Nicene tradition of the Father as origin of the Son and Holy Spirit),

²⁴ While Augustine does use the term 'substance' (*substantia*) throughout *The Trinity* V-VII, to refer to God's 'being', he prefers other terms such as *essentia*. In *The City of God*, XII.2, Augustine explains that *essentia* is a relatively new Latin technical term to express the meaning of the Greek *ousian*. Lewis Ayres, "The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine's Trinitarian Theology," in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honor of Gerald Bonner*, ed. R. Dodaro and G. Lawless (New York: Routledge; 2000), 51-76, points out that Augustine preferred the terms 'essence' (*essentia*) or 'divinity' (*divinitas*) to express the meaning of the Greek term, instead of 'substance' (*substantia*), which he thought could be misleading if one thinks of substance as a "unitary 'reality' apart from the three persons" (62). Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, Radical Orthodoxy Series (London: Routledge, 2003), concurs with this idea, noting that though Augustine is notorious for lacking a technical vocabulary and sometimes refers to God colloquially as *substantia*, in non-colloquial speech he explicitly rejects the designation of *substantia* as improper, instead preferring *essentia*, since the former term implies that 'God subsists, and is a subject, in relation to his own Goodness' (154).

Substantia potentially can be thought to be different from the three persons, which is precisely what Augustine wants to avoid (e.g., *The Trinity* VII.5.10). Thus, one needs to be careful to recognise that Augustine's use of the term to speak about God's being is done with full awareness of the potentially improper ways that it might be used.

²⁵ E.g., *The Trinity* I.7-8.

²⁶ E.g., *The Trinity* I.8-10.

without subordinating the other persons to the Father²⁷ or making the Father (or some other underlying divine substance) the true God of which the other persons are simply manifestations.²⁸ In short, Augustine's focus on unity of substance begins and ends with the monarchy of the Father rather than precluding the relations of origin.

In *The Trinity* I.7, one can detect the methodological premise on which Augustine proceeds. After the quotation we noted above (“The purpose of all Catholic commentators ... 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”²⁹), Augustine continues his explanation of what he understands the “purpose of all the Catholic commentators” to be:

It was not however this same three ... 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 as 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 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.³⁰

Augustine places his understanding of the trinitarian faith within the Nicene tradition by giving direct reference to the Creed in the first lines of this quotation (“born of the virgin Mary, crucified and buried under Pontius Pilate, rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven”), with his own explanation of its trinitarian significance. He also

²⁷ *The Trinity* I-IV.

²⁸ *The Trinity* V-VII. The modalist problem is one that is not taken up exclusively in these books. Rather, Augustine attempts to lay out, throughout the first seven books, ways of understanding the Trinity that do not subordinate the Son and Holy Spirit. Arianism is the primary object of Augustine's arguments. Nevertheless, he does argue, especially in V-VII, against a position where the three are indistinct from a prior divine substance, and where the Son and Holy Spirit are not clearly distinct from the Father (VII.9).

²⁹ *The Trinity* I.7.

³⁰ *The Trinity* I.7.

cites scriptural events where each of the three divine persons are explicitly associated with the particular action. His use of both Scripture and the Creed reveal that for Augustine the problem of triune being is not simply about defending the unity of the divine substance, but more specifically of understanding how the threeness of the persons is both particular (i.e. the works of each in the economy) and inseparable. He sees explanation of the trinitarian nature of God to include the belief that all three persons are indeed the one God of Scripture, but not in such a way that the three became incarnate in Jesus. As well, the three were not all manifest in the dove at Jesus' baptism or in the tongues of fire at Pentecost, which belonged to the work of the Holy Spirit; and it was not the three who addressed the Son at his baptism and at the transfiguration, but the Father alone. Nevertheless, the Catholic faith that Augustine also claims as his own faith also understands the three to work inseparably.³¹ Therefore, the challenge is to explain the way in which in the three are one substance, but in a way that also affirms the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit's work as it is portrayed in Scripture and summarised in the Creed. In other words, he is interpreting his primary sources, Scripture and the Nicene tradition, as affirming the unity of God and recognising the threeness of the godhead, without dividing unity from plurality and plurality from unity.

Subordinationism and the Divine Missions

(In the first four books of *The Trinity* Augustine focuses his argument on defending the scriptural basis for maintaining the equality of the persons, given their distinctiveness as Scripture reveals it, when formulating the doctrine of the Trinity.) He argues that Paul, in Philippians 2:6, distinguishes between the human and divine form of the Son, thus giving a basis for interpreting seemingly subordinationist passages without requiring the Son to be less than the Father: "In the form of a servant which he [the Son] took he is the Father's inferior; in the form of God in which he existed even before he took this other he is the Father's equal."³² (The human form of the Son

³¹ The importance of the inseparable, common activity of the three persons for Augustine's understanding of the Trinity is discussed in Lewis Ayres, "Remember That You Are Catholic" (serm. 52.2): Augustine On the Unity of the Triune God," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000): 39-82. M. R. Barnes links Augustine's use of this conception of common activity to the Nicene tradition (and especially to the Cappadocians) in "Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity," in *The Trinity: An International Symposium On the Trinity*, ed. S. T. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 145-76.

³² *The Trinity* 1.14. The importance of the Philippians' passage for Augustine has been commented on by J. Pelikan, "*Canonica Regula*: The Trinitarian Hermeneutics of Augustine," in vol. 12/13, *Proceedings of the PMR Conference at Villanova University* (Villanova University: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1987-1988), 17-29.

is a creature, finite and limited, and therefore to be considered less than the eternal Father. However, the Son in his eternal nature is equal to the Father. For Augustine, when interpreting biblical passages that refer to the Son's inferiority (e.g. of knowledge or of power), one will find that they are to be ascribed to his human form rather than his eternal form.

This rule—to interpret Scripture according to the Son's divinity or to his humanity—is not meant to be employed alone, as if that were all that is needed to interpret correctly the Son's relationship to the Father in isolated texts.³³ Instead, by “keeping in view the whole range of scriptures” (i.e., remaining attentive to the general shape and message of the scriptures, whose shape and message are discovered when one reads them within the traditions of the Catholic faith), the rule will help to guide one to a proper understanding of the relationship between the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. He immediately gives an example of how the form of the eternal Son is described in John 1:3 as “the Word *through whom all things were made.*” He then provides, as an example, how one needs to interpret Paul's reference to the incarnate Son in Galatians 4:4 according to the form of a servant because Paul wrote of “one *made of woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law.*”³⁴ Whereas in the John 1:3 passage the eternal maker of creatures is being referred to, and therefore the passage is to be interpreted according to the Son's divine form, in the Galatians passage the Son's incarnation as a servant is being referred to and thus ought to be interpreted according to the Son's human form. Indeed, Augustine understands this rule to be part of his inheritance from the faith of the church, and thus he can refer to it as a *canonica regula*.³⁵

Even this rule, which helps to clarify problematic passages that appear to subordinate Jesus Christ to the Father, does not address many other passages, including the Old Testament theophanies. The theophanies were traditionally interpreted as manifestations of the Son, and so constituted a powerful body of evidence that the Son always is portrayed as the sent one.³⁶ If all of the instances of the Son being sent by the invisible Father are taken together, then the picture painted from

³³ *The Trinity* 1.14. The rule therefore is supplemented by other principles of interpretation. For example, at II.4 he suggests that if one cannot decide in a passage that talks of the Father sending the Son (e.g. John 7:16), between whether it should be understood according to the rule of being less in the form of a servant or to the rule of equality because he is from the Father, then either can be affirmed.

³⁴ *The Trinity* 1.14.

³⁵ *The Trinity* II.2.

³⁶ See Hill's Introduction in *The Trinity*, 47-48; a brief discussion of the importance of the theophanies in the Apologists' discussions of the Father-Son relationship is presented in J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 96f.

the beginning to the end of the scriptures would be that the invisible Father is true God, while the visible Son is subordinate to the Father, because (it is the Father who remains invisible and sends his Son as the servant or messenger.³⁷) According to Augustine, the potential for ambiguity and confusion about the status of one who sends and one who is sent gives rise to the subordinationist reading of Scripture, which the Arians use to find a foothold from which to perpetuate their heresy.³⁸ The Son being sent from the Father does not seem to support the equality of the Father and Son, because the one who sends (and is not sent³⁹) seems to be the superior who gives orders while the one sent is an obedient servant to the superior.⁴⁰ Augustine's conclusion about the Old Testament theophanies is that unless the context provides sufficient grounds to associate a theophany with a particular person,⁴¹ then (the theophany is to be understood as the inseparable work of the whole Trinity acting through physical symbols or signs that convey the significance of the received message.⁴²) The theophanies potentially reveal a message from any of the three, or the three together, to the intended recipients. In claiming this, Augustine intends to make the incarnation the primary instance of the Son being sent.⁴³ Then, in book IV he will argue that the idea of being sent in the incarnation is not subordinationist.

Furthermore, to make clear that the theophanies are not to be understood in the same way as the incarnation, or as the Holy Spirit appearing in the form of a dove or as fire (even though these latter events were temporary, like the theophanies),⁴⁴ he

³⁷ As Hill notes in his Introduction in *The Trinity*, 47-48.

³⁸ *The Trinity* II.7.

³⁹ *The Trinity* II.12.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.9. Here Augustine argues against Maximus' characterisation of the Father commanding the Son as one commands a servant.

⁴¹ *The Trinity* II.17-35 is a sustained discussion of whether one can identify particular theophanies with particular persons. Augustine's conclusion is that one should never be dogmatic about who is manifest in a theophany because of the text's ambiguity with regard to the identity of the particular divine person.

⁴² *The Trinity* II.35.

⁴³ He will also introduce his understanding of the Holy Spirit being given to the church as a proper mission in book IV.

⁴⁴ *The Trinity* III.27.

develops an argument in book III that the common work of the three persons is better understood as mediated by angels.⁴⁵ In other words, there are strategies for understanding the Old Testament theophanies in ways that do not require a single interpretation of all the passages as the sending of the Son into the creation. Moreover, (any divine ‘appearance’, whether through the work of angels or in the proper missions, is the work of the whole Trinity, thus undermining the subordinationist reading of Scripture, which fails to see that the Son, even in his mission, remains equal to God, uncreated and invisible.⁴⁶)

For Augustine the New Testament missions of the Son and the Spirit are unique and therefore to be understood as distinct in kind from the theophanies of the Old Testament. The missions reveal something of the particularity of the persons themselves and their relationship to the Father,⁴⁷ while the theophanies cannot always be clearly associated with particular persons. In books II-III he has only shown that the theophanies need not be interpreted as the corporeal manifestation of the Son in creation, and that arguments can be made for sometimes identifying one of the three with different theophanies, or even the Trinity. The question still remains as to why the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament do not entail their subordination to the Father. (In particular, while the mission of the incarnate Son is at once the work of all three, since the three act inseparably,⁴⁸ nevertheless why is it proper to the Son to be the mediator?⁴⁹) The essence of his argument for the Son’s and Father’s equality in book IV is rooted in soteriology:

So God became a just man to intercede with God for sinful man ... So he applied to us the similarity of his humanity to take away the dissimilarity of our iniquity, and becoming a partaker of our mortality he made us partakers of his divinity.⁵⁰

Humanity’s salvation requires lifting humanity up to God by God. Christ’s work of salvation thus reveals his divinity.

⁴⁵ *The Trinity* III.22-27.

⁴⁶ *The Trinity* I.11-13.

⁴⁷ *The Trinity* IV.30. Note the centrality of the monarchy of the Father for Augustine’s taxonomy of relations of origin. We will take up the nature of the Father’s monarchy in the next chapter.

⁴⁸ *The Trinity* I.12, I.25, II.9.

⁴⁹ *The Trinity* IV.12-23.

⁵⁰ *The Trinity* IV.4.

Likewise, “the Lord Jesus gave the Holy Spirit twice, once on earth for the love of neighbour, and again from heaven for the love of God.”⁵¹ Here the Holy Spirit is explained as being the one who perfects the Christian in loving their neighbour and loving God.⁵² Like Christ, then, the work of the Holy Spirit unites the believer to God because saving belief is “in Christ by the gift of the Holy Spirit.”⁵³ The importance of the Spirit’s work in the salvation of humanity is reiterated in book V, where he describes the Spirit as “of the Father and Son” who gave the Spirit so that humanity could receive holiness. The Spirit’s giftedness for perfecting human holiness makes it appropriate for the church to speak of the Holy Spirit as “our Spirit” because the Spirit is given to humanity for the sake of grace.⁵⁴ One does not mean, though, that the Spirit originates from the Father and Son in the manner of creaturely origination from the Trinity. The Spirit is not a creature.⁵⁵

The mission of the Spirit, like the mission of the Son, is related to creaturely salvation. The saving missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are the means by which humanity can understand the divine relations. Books I-IV lead to the conclusion in IV.27-32 that the New Testament missions reveal the eternal processions of the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Trinity. In short, the Son and the Holy Spirit (who proceeds from both the Father and the Son, though principally from the Father) were sent from the Father who is never sent. These missions are parallel with the Son being Son because he is eternally begotten from the Father who is unbegotten, and the Holy Spirit eternally being Gift because he proceeds from the Father and also is given by the Son.⁵⁶

It should be noted that Augustine does not mention the Holy Spirit being from the Father and the Son until he has first described the Spirit as proceeding and being sent from the Father. Thus, just as the Son is begotten by the Father, so the

⁵¹ This reasoning, found in *The Trinity* XV.46, is only alluded to in IV.29.

⁵² Cf. R. Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine* (Heverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993), esp. pp. 301-30, which deals primarily with *The Trinity* VI, VII, and XV.

⁵³ *The Trinity* IV.29.

⁵⁴ *The Trinity* V.15.

⁵⁵ *The Trinity* V.15.

⁵⁶ *The Trinity* IV.29. Again, we see how the Father, who is never sent, is the source of the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, just as he is the sole beginning of them in the immanent Trinity. The taxonomy is ordered according to the Father’s monarchy.

Spirit proceeds from the Father, because the Father is the origin of deity.⁵⁷ However, after establishing that the origin of both the Son and Holy Spirit is from the unique source, namely, the Father, Augustine then distinguishes between the origin of the Holy Spirit and the origin of the Son, so that they are not conceived as brothers (which would raise the question of how exactly the Son and Holy Spirit really are different from one another).⁵⁸ (Augustine recognises that the Holy Spirit proceeds principally from the Father, because of the Father’s monarchy, but also that the mission of the Holy Spirit is described in Scripture as proceeding from the Son, who gives the Spirit to the disciples.⁵⁹) In terms of the eternal relations of the three persons, the Holy Spirit is given by the Father and the Son, as Augustine deduces from the missions described in Scripture. (In assuming that the missions reveal something about the prior reality of the eternal relations, one then has a basis on which to interpret the missions correctly.) The Holy Spirit is not subordinate to the Son, but is equal by being from the Father just as the Son is from the Father. In establishing the Holy Spirit’s origin from the Father (Augustine maintains the received orthodoxy that the Father is the eternal source of divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit, and thus the basis of unity of the three persons in one godhead because they originate from him.⁶⁰)

⁵⁷ See *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.1. In this section, Augustine makes clear that the Father’s monarchy is the basis by which the divine relations of origin are to be understood.

⁵⁸ *The Trinity* V.15.

⁵⁹ *The Trinity* IV.29.

⁶⁰ We will discuss the Father’s monarchy in the next chapter. In *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XVII.4, Augustine describes the origin of the Son and Holy Spirit from the Father, but in such a way that the three are one beginning of the creation they have made, as a way of explaining John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word”:

The Father then is the beginning without beginning, and the Son the beginning from the beginning. Both together are not two, but one beginning, just as God the Father and God the Son are both not two gods, but one God. Nor will I deny that the Holy Spirit who proceeds from each of them is the beginning. Rather, I say that these three together are one beginning just as they are one God.

The generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father (who is the “beginning without beginning”) is eternal, and the three are one beginning (of the creation) with the Father. Augustine says this because the Father is not a beginning before the beginning (i.e. the Son), which would contradict his understanding of the eternal nature of the Father and the Son. Another way to make this point is to remember that one aspect of divine eternity is simultaneity, since the indivisible nature of the divine being excludes the idea that the eternal nature is able to be broken down

In *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.1, Augustine describes the double procession this way: “The Father begot a Son and, by begetting him, gave it to him that the Holy Spirit proceeds from him as well.” In this way, he is able to maintain the monarchy of the Father and explain Jesus’ sending of the Holy Spirit to the disciples (John 20:22). The eternal origination of the Holy Spirit in the Son has its beginning in the Father, who, in his eternal begetting of the Son, gives it to the Son that the Spirit also would proceed from the Son, just as the Spirit proceeds from the eternal Father (John 15:26). Logically speaking, the Holy Spirit is first from the Father, and then from the Son, to whom it is given that the Spirit would proceed from him. However, as will be shown in the next chapter, the simplicity of the godhead, such that there is no division in it, means that a logical distinction between the origination of the Spirit in the Father first and in the Son second is only true conceptually. The unity of the Father and the Son in eternity, revealed in the divine missions, is the basis for Augustine’s understanding of the double procession.

The equality of the persons in the godhead is revealed by the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Father. But Augustine does not understand the missions to be the Father’s begetting of the Son and procession of the Holy Spirit. Rather, on the one hand, when Scripture speaks of the Son and the Holy Spirit being sent, he takes it to indicate that those to whom the Son and Holy Spirit have been sent have perceived from whence they have been sent, namely, from the Father for the salvation of humanity; on the other hand, being begotten or proceeding from the Father also refers to their eternal origin in the Father.⁶¹ The correspondence between

into constituent parts (see the previous chapter). One understands the begotten Son to be from the Father in eternity because being begotten requires the Son to be from the Father but not *vice versa*. This eternal begetting of the Son does not substantially prioritise the Father over the Son or put him before the Son, but describes the relationship of the Son from the Father (i.e., the relations of origin from the monarchy of the Father). However, when turning to the creation’s beginning in God’s creative work, the eternal Trinity is the one creator. The three persons are a simultaneous beginning of the creation, not the Father creating before or after the Son. And the Holy Spirit is one beginning with the Father and the Son, thus implying the Spirit’s co-eternity with them as well.

⁶¹ For example, in *The Trinity* IV.28, he writes, “That he [the Son] is born means that he is from eternity to eternity—he is *the brightness of eternal light* (Wisdom 7:26). But that he is sent means that he is known by somebody in time.” In this quotation, Augustine is noting that the eternal nature of the Father, from whom the Son is begotten, provides the context by which one can understand the eternal begottenness of the Son. The message of the New Testament about the Son’s being sent into the world, however, is not a reference to the eternal begetting of the Son, but to the human experience of the Son’s being sent. Whereas the eternal begetting is understood according to the nature of eternity, the biblical revelation of the Son’s

the begetting and the sending of the Son is predicated on an understanding of the scriptural description of the Son as the Word of the Father, rather than on an understanding which collapses their eternal relations into the economic activity of the godhead. (As the Word of God, the Son must be sent from the Father, because a word does not precede the one who speaks it. However, the divine Word can be eternally one with the divine Father who speaks it, because of the divine simplicity.⁶²) As further evidence for this, Augustine also argues that when the Father is known in time by a creature, Scripture never refers to the Father as having been sent since there is no one for him to be from.⁶³ The correlation of eternal begetting and sending into the creation reflects Augustine's recognition that in the ordering of the missions is seen the eternal order of divinity, but that the former does not constitute the latter.

The mission of the Son and Holy Spirit is to impart a saving knowledge of the Father to humanity. Such saving knowledge leads creatures to be able to know and contemplate the divine being—which the divine persons share equally.⁶⁴ Thus in IV.29

sending is presented as an experience by a creature of the Son's being sent into the creation. They are two different contexts, and so the sending is not confused with the eternal begetting, though the sending does provide the basis for the knowledge of the eternal begetting, as we noted earlier.

⁶² Building on the correspondence of the Son's begetting with his being sent, Augustine points out in *The Trinity* IV.28 that "of the Holy Spirit he [wisdom] says, 'He proceeds from the Father (Jn. 15:26), but the Father is from no one.'" According to Augustine, the Holy Spirit sent to the disciples as the Advocate in John 15:26 is sent by the Son (named wisdom by Augustine). However, when the Holy Spirit is sent by Jesus in this passage, Augustine notes how the Holy Spirit is described by Jesus as proceeding from the Father. This is the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit, rather than the sending of the Spirit. Thus, he has shown that both the Son and Holy Spirit are revealed to be from the Father in eternity, and also that the Son has sent the Spirit. He then notes, *The Trinity* IV.29, how scripture not only describes the Spirit as the Spirit of the Father (an eternal relation), but also as the Spirit of the Son (Galatians 4:6, "the Spirit of his Son"). Therefore, he understands the Spirit to be from the Father and the Son, as well as being sent by the Son. Finally, at the end of *The Trinity* IV.29, he completes the correspondence of begetting/proceeding with sending by showing how scripture also states that the Father has sent the Spirit (John 14:26, the Holy Spirit, "whom the Father will send in my name").

⁶³ *The Trinity* IV.28. The Son and the Holy Spirit, however, are both said to be sent.

⁶⁴ This saving knowledge from the eternal God, who is above the sinfulness of creatures, could not be attained by creatures in their finitude. That is why Augustine's argument in Book IV emphasises how the Son came as the mediator sent by the

Augustine explains that

just as being born means for the Son his being from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to be from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to be from him. 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.

“Being from the Father” refers to the Son’s and Holy Spirit’s eternal generation from the monarchy of the Father. Augustine understands their economic activity as the basis for thinking about the eternal Trinity, and specifically an eternal Trinity in which the Son and the Holy Spirit have their relations of origin from the Father (who sends them but is never sent). The key word, though, is “being known,” which shows how Augustine’s argument in books I-IV has been to focus on the Son’s and Holy Spirit’s work as revealed in Scripture, so that humanity’s reconciliation to God takes them from ignorance of God into true knowledge of God. Recognising the Son and Holy Spirit to be eternally from the Father is a direct implication of their missions.⁶⁵ Directly related to this correspondence between the missions and the immanent Trinity is Augustine’s understanding of the equality of the three, since the missions disclose the relationship of the Son and the Holy Spirit to the eternal Father. He reiterates this point later when he writes,

We should understand that these sendings are not mentioned in scripture because of any inequality or disparity or dissimilarity of substance between the divine persons, but because of the created visible manifestation of the Son and the Holy Spirit; or better still, in order to bring home to us that the Father is the source and origin of all deity.⁶⁶

The basis on which the Son and Holy Spirit are known to be from the eternal Father is through their missions as described in Scripture; in effect their identities are described according to their relations of origin from the Father. The Father’s monarchy is true not merely with regard to the Son’s and Holy Spirit’s visible manifestations (which is also true of all created beings), but because their visible manifestations as presented in

Father. If the equality of eternal divinity were not his just as he received it from the Father, then he could not impart the saving knowledge that creatures need because he also would be a creature. This is summed up in *The Trinity* IV.24-26.

⁶⁵ As Studer puts it in “History and Faith in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*,” 39, in his summary of the argument of *The Trinity*, books I-IV, “In a word, the fact that the Father was not sent, that the Son was sent only from the Father, and the Holy Spirit was sent from the Father and the Son demonstrates their eternal status.”

⁶⁶ *The Trinity* IV.32.

Scripture point beyond their mission to their direct origin in the Father. Their relations of origin from the Father, which Augustine affirmed with his Nicene forebears, are discovered through their economic activity.

It makes no sense, then, to assert that Augustine's conception of the Trinity is based firstly on anything like a metaphysical conception of unity at the expense of plurality (as claimed by Marsh), since (his understanding of the Trinity is founded on the economic activity of the Son and Holy Spirit, who are sent by the eternal Father.) His so-called Western orientation to conceive of God as the one, supreme good (as described by Boff) does not take priority over the so-called Eastern understanding of the Father's monarchy. Moreover, to argue that Augustine conceives of some type of abstractly conceived divine substance apart from the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit (as asserted by Gunton and Jenson) is to ignore that for Augustine knowledge of God is precisely knowledge gained from the biblical presentation of the Father in the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

The thoroughgoing defence of the equality of the Son and Holy Spirit with the Father, gained through knowledge of the economic activity of the Son and the Holy Spirit, based on Augustine's interpretation of Scripture (which presents the economy of salvation) in books I-IV, is followed in books V-VII by an analysis of how one can speak of three equal, eternal divine persons as one substance without necessarily implying subordinationism or modalism. We will take up his understanding of substance in books VI-VII in the next chapter, paying particular attention to how Augustine relates his understanding of substance to his understanding of the Father's monarchy, and his conception of the perfection and simplicity of the godhead. We will see how his understanding of divine unity in terms of the Father's monarchy and simplicity, a key component of the Nicene tradition, helped to provide him with a way of speaking about the oneness of God's substance (being) while also holding to the distinctness of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Then, we will turn from the concept of the Trinity and substance to the broader question of whether there are hierarchical problems in Augustine's trinitarian thought—a problem we have answered here based on his understanding of the economic activity of the Trinity, but which can also be approached on the basis of his understanding of the divine substance as love.

CHAPTER FIVE

MODALISM, HIERARCHY, AND LOVE IN AUGUSTINE'S DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

In the previous chapter a trend in modern systematic theology was discussed, which identifies Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity with a Western methodology that begins with an abstract conception of unified divine substance and then attempts to reconcile the scriptural account of three persons in the godhead with it.¹ We noted that despite this claim, Augustine begins his major work on the doctrine, *The Trinity*, with a statement of his method that affirms the scriptural and creedal traditions of the classical church. We then examined how the problem of subordinationism, one of the major issues that gave rise to the trinitarian debates of the classical church, was dealt with by Augustine in the first four books of *The Trinity*. As we did this, it became clear that the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit were identified by Augustine to be from the Father, and that from the economic work of the Trinity the immanent relations could be understood. Thus, the Father's monarchy was central to his understanding of the relations of origin.

Despite Augustine's careful examination of the biblical texts, the criticisms levelled against him, and his so-called abandonment of the Eastern understanding of relations of origin from the Father, tend to focus on his argument in books V-VII of *The Trinity*, where he considers how one can speak of divine substance without losing the threeness (and specifically the equality of the three persons) of the godhead that he has defended in books I-IV. In this chapter, we will take up the problem of divine substance to see how Augustine's defence of the Father's monarchy using the language of substance is carried out in books V-VII. Then, we shall return to the question of how his understanding of the Trinity in terms of the model of relations of origin relates to modern critiques of hierarchy.

Monarchy, Simplicity, and Relations of Origin

Given Augustine's method in the first four books of *The Trinity*, and how his commitment to a pro-Nicene doctrine points to an affirmation of the Father's monarchy, we can turn now to his detailed explanation of how relations of origin are based on a *taxis* that begins with the Father's monarchy. It should be noted that Augustine does not use the Latin *monarchia* to describe the Father's monarchy,

¹ E.g., Marsh, *The Triune God*, 132-42, Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 31-57, LaCugna, *God For Us*, ch. 3. These critiques assume a general and problematic Western approach to the doctrine of the Trinity similar to the one explained by Boff, whom we discussed in chapter 3.

preferring instead the Latin terms *principium* and *principaliter*, which mean ‘origin’.² To get at a clear understanding of monarchy, we must first take into account Augustine’s explanation of divine simplicity, which refers to the Father as having his being fully and undivided in himself. The Son’s being also will have this attribute of simplicity by virtue of his being eternally begotten from the Father, since begetting a Son whose being is not simple would mean that the undivided being of the Father can be divided, thus destroying the divine simplicity. Therefore, the Son’s being must be simple like the Father’s. If the Son did not have the fullness of being undivided then he could not be from the Father whose being is undivided.³ In *City of God*, Augustine writes concerning the divine persons, “In respect to Himself, however, and not to the other, each is what he has: thus, in respect to himself He is said to be alive, for He has life, and He is Himself the life which He has.”⁴ Each of the three persons has life that is not separable from their being. The indivisibility of the being of the Son and the Holy Spirit is because they are eternally from the Father. This is a foundational concept for Augustine’s conception of the Father’s monarchy.⁵

The reason that divine simplicity has an important place in Augustine’s theology is that it helps to guard against basic mistakes in how one conceives of God. For example, he recognises that human thinking about God can become confused when the mutable, divisible, and temporal structure of human reason distorts the invisibility and immateriality of God’s perfection by applying spatial limits to God.⁶ That is why, in Letter 120, he writes concerning the misleading language of spatial limits:

² In *The Trinity* he employs these terms at IV.29, V.14-15, VI.3, XV.29, and XV.47. A similar passage is in *Answer to the Arian Sermon XVII*. He also uses other terms that have a similar meaning, such as in *The Trinity* VII.4 where he refers to the Father as the fount of life. Hill, in a footnote to his translation, p. 85 fn.112, notes Augustine’s terminological preferences; also see Basil Studer, *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo: Christocentrism or Theocentrism?*, trans. M. J. O’Connell (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), 105.

³ See *The Trinity* VI.8-9.

⁴ *City of God* XI.10.

⁵ An in-depth analysis of how simplicity functions in Augustine’s conception of God is found in Ayres, “The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology.” A helpful, condensed analysis of Augustine’s trinitarian logic is found in John Millbank, “Sacred Triads: Augustine and the Indo-European Soul,” *Modern Theology* 13 (1997): 451-74.

⁶ See further explanation, including commentary on Letter 120, in Ayres “The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology,” 61-62.

Let us not believe ... that ... the mass of these three great Persons, which are limited on however large a scale from above and below and round about, have a single godhead as if it were a fourth person, not like any of them, whereas it is common to all as the divinity of all in all, and wholly in each one; through which sole Godhead the same Trinity is said to be God.⁷

In this passage, Augustine denies that the godhead (that is, the divine substance) is something distinct from the three, functioning as the basis by which they are identified as divine. Divine simplicity, which does not divide the godhead into parts, functions as a guard against the imposition of corporeal limits (such as spatial imagery) which human language naturally works within.

Later in Letter 120, he again notes how human language, which expresses its ideas according to the corporeal context of human existence, can lead to a distorted conception of the three divine persons, by arguing that that thinking

... is to be unhesitatingly rejected by which it is held that the substance of the Father, whereby the Father is one Person of the Trinity, is in Heaven, but the divinity is everywhere and not in heaven only—as if the Father were one thing and his divinity something else, something which He shares with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Trinity itself would be somehow corporeal and subject to corporeal space.⁸

The context of this quotation is Augustine's explanation of Jesus' words to Mary in John 20:17, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father." He argues that Jesus' words do not indicate that the Father lives in the heavens, while divinity as such exists apart from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as well as within each divine person as something of which they each share a part. Such an idea fails to account for the simplicity of divine being by locating the three persons in places ("heaven," "everywhere") as if they were divided from each other. In other words, Augustine is pointing out that John 20:17 does not speak of God according to creaturely conceptions, so that divinity is divisible like a corporeal object which can be divided into constituent parts. Each person's divinity is not separate from their being. Augustine goes on to make this very point by writing,

For, if their nature existed—and God forbid that in the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit the nature should be different from the substance—if their nature could exist, doubtless it could not exist more largely for anyone of Them than it does in their substance, but if the substance is different from Themselves, it is another substance, and this plainly is a completely false

⁷ Letter 120.2.7 in *Letters* (vol. 2, 83-130), trans. W. Parsons, Fathers of the Church 18 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 305-06.

⁸ Letter 120.3.16 in *Letters* (vol. 2, 83-130), 313.

belief.”⁹

The Latin word *qualitas* is translated here as “nature.” This is confusing in this context, where Augustine is explaining how the divine *qualitas* is not different from the divine substance. A better translation would be simply “quality”¹⁰ since “nature” also can suggest the divine substance/being. What Augustine is arguing in the quotation is that the way one speaks of divine qualities is also the way that one speaks of divine substance. For example, while human beings can have a quality attributed to their being, such as wisdom, they can also lose that quality and become foolish (i.e. one without wisdom). Qualities are not inseparable from created being. However, in God, whose being is simple, all qualities are inseparably part of God’s substance, because quality and substance are not two different things.¹¹ Augustine recognises that speaking of the unity of quality and substance in a perfect, indivisible, simple substance protects against this idea that substance is distinct from the three persons and their qualities. To separate quality from substance would destroy the very idea of a Trinity because there would be three persons plus one substance, rather than three who are one substance. To use the corporeal language of created being, which is divisible, without the safeguard of a concept such as divine simplicity, brings confusion into theological language.

Keeping in mind this discussion of divine simplicity, and how the divine substance is not different from the divine qualities, we can begin to see how

⁹ Letter 120.3.16.

¹⁰ As is the case in the new translation of Letter 120.3.16 in *Letters 100-155*, trans. R. Teske, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, part II, vol. 2 (New York: New City Press, 2003).

¹¹ In a footnote to his translation of the *Confessions* XIII.iii.4, Chadwick defines Augustine’s reference to God’s “absolute simplicity” in this way:

The concept of ‘simplicity’ for Augustine and the Neoplatonists means freedom from any element of distinction between substance and accidents or attributes, and has overtones of being without need. Goodness is therefore no attribute of Plotinus’ One, but is inseparable from the One (fn.4, 275).

Chadwick’s use of the classical philosophical term “accidents” is the same as our speaking of “qualities.” An example of how this distinction relates to creatures and to God can be explained using Chadwick’s example of goodness. Whereas a human being can be said to be good at some point, but also not good (or without the quality of goodness) at some other point, the case is different when speaking about God. God’s being is goodness. It is not something God possesses at one moment but potentially does not possess at another moment. Divine simplicity, then, refers to how the divine nature is not divisible into parts, so that one can distinguish between substance and accidents in the way that one can do with a human being.

Augustine's conception of the Father's monarchy works. At *The Trinity* VII.4, in discussing how the Son is the wisdom of God, he describes the unity of divine being in terms of the Father as the fount of life:

Thus *Christ is the power and wisdom of God* (1 Cor 1:24), because he is power and wisdom from the Father who is power and wisdom, just as 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 ... Because *just as the Father has life in himself, so he has given the Son to have life in himself* (John 5:26).

Augustine is attempting to explain how Christ can be called the wisdom of God, without meaning that divine wisdom is only Christ's (so that the Father's wisdom is Christ, but that the Father cannot be said to have wisdom in himself; or that wisdom is an attribute common to the divinity of the two as if there were a common divinity apart from the two) instead of properly belonging to each.¹² By speaking of the Son's being from the Father ("the fountain of life," which is a reference to the Father's monarchy), one can also speak of wisdom predicated of the Son himself, just as the Father has it in himself. For wisdom, which is identical with the simple, divine substance,¹³ exists in the Father, who is the origin of the Son.¹⁴ The Son's wisdom is the Father's wisdom because it originates from the Father just as the life of the Son originates from the Father (that is, from the Father's monarchy)—thus Augustine's use of the quotation from John 5:26, where Christ declares that the Son only has life in himself because the Father has given him to have life in himself. Since wisdom is identical with God's being because of the divine simplicity (nothing exists in the Father separate from who he is), the Son must also have that wisdom as his being, since he is eternally begotten of the Father.

The argument from the divine simplicity, based on the Father's monarchy in *The Trinity*, finds a parallel in Augustine's *Answer to Maximus the Arian*:

The Father did not lose the life he gave to the Son ... The one's life is identical with the other's. Because he is the true Son, because he is the perfect Son, because God the only Son is not inferior to God the Father, he is equal to the Father.¹⁵

¹² See *The Trinity* VII.1. Studer, *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God*, 104-09, provides a brief but helpful explanation of how the distinction between talking about "common" and "proper" attribution helps Augustine develop his trinitarian logic.

¹³ The identity of substance and wisdom is spelled out in *The Trinity* VII.2

¹⁴ *The Trinity* IV.29, V.14-15, VI.3

¹⁵ *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.7. We shall describe the context of this work later in this chapter, when we take up the question of hierarchy in Augustine's

The life of the Father and Son is identical only if the Father does not lose life in communicating it to the Son. Otherwise, the divine life would be divisible, which contradicts the simplicity of divine being. As a result, if the Son is begotten from the Father, then he must have what the Father has perfectly in himself because the eternally begotten Son is equal to the Father. Having identically what the Father has in himself requires that the Son has the same simple, divine nature and life in himself. If it were otherwise, the Son would not be identical in being with the Father, but would be either merely the same as the Father (which would be tantamount to modalism)¹⁶ or radically different from the Father (i.e. a creature, which would be subordinationism). In both *The Trinity*¹⁷ and *Answer to Maximus the Arian*, he develops his argument for their equality of substance by emphasising that the wisdom and life of the Father is not different from wisdom and life in the Son, because the Son is identical in being with the Father, from whom he is begotten.

Modalism

Modalism is a conception of the three persons of the Trinity not as distinctly subsisting persons, but as manifestations of the one God, whether the Father or a divine substance. For example, Saebellius apparently held that the one God of Scripture is God the Father, the creator of the world and lawgiver, while the Son is the mode of God's redemption, and the Holy Spirit is God's mode of imparting life and grace.¹⁸ The Son and Holy Spirit are not different from the Father, but are displays of his work, since monotheism requires one person in the godhead, not three eternally subsisting persons.¹⁹

thought.

¹⁶ *Answer to the Arian Sermon XXXIV.32* indicates that Augustine does not hold that the Son is the same as the Father: "The Sabellians say that the Son is the same one as the Father; we say that the Father who begets and the Son who is born are two persons, but not two different natures. Hence, the same one is not the Father and the Son, but the Father and Son are one."

¹⁷ Some of these arguments are similar to the exchanges he had with Arians in letters from the same (or slightly earlier) period. He began *The Trinity* in 399 and corresponded with two Arians, Pascentius and Elipidius, between 395 and 404. Thus, Arianism was fresh in his mind during the writing of *The Trinity*. On dating the letters, see A. Fitzgerald and J. C. Cavadini, ed., *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), s.v. "Epistulae."

¹⁸ Saebellianism, rooted in modalistic monarchianism, is discussed in J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, 176-82.

¹⁹ Modalism can lead to other problems, like patripassianism. This is the claim

If one has a tendency toward modalistic thinking about the Trinity, then even though one affirms the three persons, it may be in such a manner that their distinctness appears to be of secondary importance to the preservation of divine unity. Thus, Augustine's so-called prioritising of the unity of the divine substance over the three persons favours a modalistic tendency, where the three are experienced in the divine activity in the creation, but are not of fundamental priority when speaking of the godhead, where substance is given the priority for talking about God. The result of such a methodological starting point is that one's trinitarian theology appears to treat the description of the three persons as a linguistic problem to be solved in order to preserve the unity of the immanent Trinity. Jenson detects such a modalistic tendency in Augustine, describing his trinitarian logic in this way:

The consequence is that the three persons are not only equally related to the one substance, but *identically* related, so that the difference between them, that is, the relations, are irrelevant to their being God When the Nicenes called the Trinity as such God, they so named him *because* of the triune relations and differences; when Augustine calls the Trinity as such God, it is *in spite* of them.²⁰

According to this reading of Augustine, the divine substance, which is called God, is understood not only as the basis for then talking about who the three persons are, but as a means of insuring that their relations do not undermine the divine substance as the true basis on which one can understand divinity. Therefore, to Jenson's dismay, as he perceives Augustine's trinitarian thought, the three persons, singly and together, are equally God because the divine substance is identically present in each singly and the three together (this is the principle of divine simplicity, where the divine substance is not divisible into parts).²¹ According to Jenson, because of the idea of a simple divine substance, Augustine sees in the threeness of God simply a logical problem, but does not consider the persons to be ontologically distinct in the godhead.

Augustine, however, wants to avoid exactly this kind of misunderstanding whereby there is thought to be an underlying substance, either distinct from the three persons or ontologically more real than the divine relations of the persons. He understands the three persons to be equal with each other in substance,²² and each alone to be equal with all three together:

that the Father suffered on the cross, rather than Christ who is distinct from the Father. In *Heresies* XLI, Augustine describes patripassianism as part of Sabellianism; see *Arianism and Other Heresies*, trans. R. Teske, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, part I, vol. 18 (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1995).

²⁰ Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 118-19.

²¹ Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 118.

²² *The Trinity* VI.9.

Since therefore the Father alone or the Son alone or the Holy Spirit alone is as great as Father and Son and Holy Spirit together, in no way can they be called triple, or three by multiplication.²³

This thoroughgoing understanding of equality provides a basis for understanding how he avoids a conception of the Trinity in modalistic terms, since the equality of the persons is such that neither the idea of a difference in substance between any of the three, nor the idea that the divine substance exists apart from the three, can be thought of (keeping in mind his understanding of the Father's monarchy):

In God, therefore, when the equal Son cleaves to the equal Father, or the equal Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son, God is not made bigger than each of them singly, because there is no possibility of his perfection growing. Whether you take Father or Son or Holy Spirit, each is perfect, and God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is perfect, and so they are a three, a triad or a Trinity rather than triple or three by multiplication.²⁴

Here, when Augustine speaks of 'God' he means the Trinity, rather than specifically the Father. He claims that the perfection of God the Trinity—the fullness of simple, divine being—is not affected by the action of the Son cleaving to the Father, nor of the Holy Spirit cleaving to the Son and Father, because these three are perfect (i.e. simple and indivisible) God, just as they are each perfect in themselves. The image of cleaving is taken from 1 Corinthians 6:17,²⁵ where Paul uses the image of the Christian clinging to Christ and thereby becoming one spirit in him, to argue against sexual relations with prostitutes. What is of interest to Augustine is how being made 'one spirit' describes the result of a Christian cleaving to Christ. Augustine notes that the Christian grows in his or her spirit by being united with Christ, but that Christ does not grow bigger because the Christian unites with him.²⁶ Augustine's main point is not that the Christian's spirit is made larger, but rather that the soteriological activity of

²³ *The Trinity* VI.9.

²⁴ *The Trinity* VI.9.

²⁵ "But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him." This passage is also taken up in *Answer to Maximus the Arian* I.X; II.X.2, and II.XXII.2.

²⁶ In Letter 241, in *Letters* (vol. 5, 204-270), trans. W. Parsons, Fathers of the Church 32 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1956), 213-14, Augustine makes the same argument to Pascentius, but notes that the idea of Christ 'clinging' to the Father is not the ideal language, since there never was a time when Father and Son were not joined, nor could they ever be separated by distance. Thus, he is constantly aware of the need for analogies that are spiritual in nature and avoid the idea of a separation or division of the divine being into temporal or corporeal parts.

Christ in the believer's life also has implications for how to conceive of the nature of God. The reason that the Christian grows in his or her spirit, but that Christ does not, is because Christ is divine and therefore perfect in being. His salvific work perfects the creature.²⁷ However, there is nothing in the human-Christ relationship that would effect growth in Christ because he is already perfect in his divinity. Likewise, therefore, the Father-Son relationship does not make Christ (or the Father for that matter) bigger, because Christ is the divine Son begotten of the divine Father. Theirs is already a relationship of eternal, divine perfection, where both are perfect, including perfectly equal.²⁸

²⁷ This change, whereby a creature who cleaves to its creator is made better, follows Augustine's conception of the creature's fulfillment—receiving its “form and conversion”—from participating in God the creator. See the description of how the Trinity works in giving the creature its form and conversion in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 1:1.5.11. For a definition of participation in Augustine's usage see Vernon J. Bourke, *Augustine's View of Reality* (Villanova: Villanova Press, 1964), 117-23.

²⁸ It has been noted how Gunton is concerned that Augustine's assumption that God is an indivisible (and unchanging) substance makes the relations of the divine persons merely logical rather than real and dynamic in the godhead (*The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 38-42). In this quotation, though, we see how Augustine describes their unity in terms of the Son cleaving to the Father, which is hardly an abstract, logical or static description of divine relations. Furthermore, the cleaving of the Christian to Christ, which leads Augustine to then speak about Christ's cleaving to the Father, is taken from the Pauline discussion of the sexual cleaving of a man and woman. Augustine takes over this language of cleaving to describe the Father-Son relationship. This is not to suggest that the Father-Son relationship is one of sexual love, but rather that the dynamic language of cleaving is not eschewed by Augustine. It can be used to talk about different orders of relationships, including human relationships, human-divine relationships, and the inner-trinitarian relationships. By itself, Augustine's discussion of the Son cleaving to the Father in *The Trinity* VI.9 is not sufficient to explain what the relationship between the Father and the Son is—a relationship of love, which is the essence of God. (The divine substance has already been asserted by Augustine to be love at *The Trinity* VI.7. Also, note *The Trinity* VIII.11-12.) However, the passage does indicate that even in his discussion of the logic of the triune relations, those relations are more than the speculative logic concerning some abstractly conceived substance, because love is an activity between the persons whose unity of being is in their relations of origin from the Father. On this see Rowan Williams, “*Sapientia* and the Trinity: Reflections On the *De Trinitate*,” in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Melanges T. J. Van Bavel*, ed. B. Bruning et al (Leuven: Peets, 1990), 323. For more on the divine essence as love in Augustine see Lewis Ayres, “Augustine, Christology, and God as Love: An Introduction to the Homilies On 1 John,” in *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological essays on the love of God*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer

In the second half of the quotation from *The Trinity* VI.9, reproduced here again, Augustine draws his conclusion about what the meaning of the three person's relations of perfect equality means for speaking about the godhead:

Whether you take Father or Son or Holy Spirit, each is perfect, and God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is perfect, and so they are a three, a triad or a Trinity rather than triple or three by multiplication.

What they are in common is unchanging perfection, because each is unchanging perfection in themselves (i.e. singly or properly). The Son and the Holy Spirit have this simple being in themselves because they have it from the Father (i.e. from the monarchy) who has perfect being in himself.²⁹ Augustine speaks this way about the equality of each person with the others and with the whole not because he understands the Trinity to be a substance without distinctions between the persons (so that the three are the whole but do not subsist distinctly), but because the idea of divine simplicity enables him to conceive of the three as each having being in themselves perfectly and equally. Put another way, the three persons are the divine substance—it is not something that underlies them—and the divine substance is a perfect, simple unity of three persons. Likewise, he denies that the three persons are a Trinity “by multiplication” since their substance is not divisible. One cannot add them together to get the Trinity, as if divinity were a corporeal object that could be explained according to mathematical formulae.³⁰ Rather, the three persons are a Trinity because each

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 67-93.

²⁹ On the Father's monarchy, see *The Trinity* IV.29, V.14-15, VI.3. The Son and Holy Spirit have the same substance, which is from the Father, but not in any manner that alters that substance (e.g., by degree). Thus he avoids the Arian understanding of the Son and Holy Spirit as originating from the Father in such a manner that they are less than the Father in substance. Instead the three are equally one and also distinctly three.

³⁰ Augustine also relates this relational description of the inner Trinity to the problem of modalism in his *Answer to Maximus the Arian*. There he responds to Maximus' conception of how the Father is related to God's divinity (which Maximus apparently understood as distinct from any of the persons): “You say, ‘Then God the Father is part of God.’ Heaven forbid!” Augustine's counter-explanation is to explain the equality of the three and unity of substance using 1 Corinthians 6:17. At the conclusion of his argument he sums up his understanding of the usage of substance for speaking of the three persons thus:

In the Trinity, then, which is God, the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and these three are all together one God. One is not a third of this Trinity, nor are two of them a greater part than one, and all of them are not something greater than each of them, because their greatness is

properly and equally is divine.

Augustine's conception of the Father's monarchy and the related idea of divine simplicity are signposts of his attempt to explicate trinitarian doctrine according to the received Catholic faith and Scripture. He did not depart from his forebears, but instead sought to uphold their faith. The criticisms outlined in this chapter, of Augustine's so-called Western approach to the Trinity with a starting point in an abstract conception of divine substance, do not adequately take account of his own stated method. We have already seen how he set out to explain the doctrine in light of the scriptural presentation of the missions. As well, the criticisms about how his substance language was based upon a modalistic conception of God do not account for how his substance-language was shaped relative to his understanding of the Father's monarchy and divine simplicity. The equality of the persons with each other and with the Trinity as a whole does not mean that the persons are flattened out into an indistinct substance, since the persons' equality is such that the three persons are each divine in themselves, and together are one God. The one substance is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who are each in themselves what the others are, without being them. How does this understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity relate to the more general criticism that has been raised about the hierarchical nature of classical theological thought? It is to this question that we now turn.

Hierarchy and Love in the Trinity

Boff argues that beneath the attempted rejection of subordinationism and modalism in the classical debates about the Trinity is an understanding of order and unity that is hierarchical and patriarchal. He suggests that the attempt to understand the Trinity through a rigid, unidirectional order of relations (rather than the mutual dependence of each person upon the other in no particular order) is due, in part at least, to the monotheistic view of God in the Hebrew Scriptures. When God is conceived as "absolutely whole, without division or multiplication" (and only

spiritual, not corporeal (*Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.X.2).

This conclusion is consistent with those non-modalist descriptions of substance cited above in Letter 120 and *The Trinity*. The image of cleaving between the believer and Christ is contrasted with that of the Father and Son, because a change in the substance of the Father and Son is not possible, without dividing them into parts, which in this conclusion he describes by the terms 'thirds', 'parts', and 'wholes' which are corporeal in nature, and thus misleading in application to an incorporeal Trinity. Instead, one should understand the language of substance and oneness as referring to the spiritual nature of God as perfect wholeness. The cleaving of believer to Christ raises up the believer into a oneness of spirit that perfects him or her, but the cleaving of Father, Son and Holy Spirit with each other is the perfection which is called God. But if the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are God, then none is less than either of the others or the whole, since perfect divinity is indivisible.

subsequently as trinitarian), the result is a totalitarian political perspective that favours unity over plurality, and which produces an unhealthy hierarchy of one over many. The rule of one pope over the church and a monarch over a state are examples of patriarchalism and totalitarianism that appeal to the monotheistic impulse of Scripture. Similarly, the so-called trinitarian God actually is cast as the “great patriarch, supreme Father and absolute Lord,” because the plurality of the persons is subsumed by the overpowering unity of God the Father.³¹ Even if the trinitarian debates led to a rejection of subordinationism, we saw in chapter 3 how Boff thinks that the churches of the Patristic era nevertheless could not rid themselves completely of the understanding of the Trinity that was implicitly hierarchical and patriarchal. Here, we shall discuss how Augustine’s understanding of the divine substance of the immanent Trinity is conceived along lines of loving relations, rather than along the lines of a modern portrayal of classical trinitarianism as a hierarchical monarchy of the Father that implicitly precludes equality.

Boff understands hierarchy to be the ordering of persons over other persons, or over the creation,³² so that that some enjoy the ability to exercise controlling power according to their discretion. The pervasiveness of hierarchy in human societies is a given in Boff’s assessment, and according to him has affected the way that Christians think and act, including their theological reasoning.³³ It follows that Augustine, then, was prone to accept the pervasive hierarchicalism of his day and read it into his theology. A survey article by Basil Studer considers the relationship between Augustine’s understanding of divine fatherhood on the one hand and patriarchal ideas and images of human fathers (biological and political) as dominant overlords in classical society on the other.³⁴ Studer finds that Augustine worked carefully and simultaneously with exegetical methods, philosophical concepts such as ‘substance’ and ‘lordship’, and metaphorical images in describing God’s fatherhood.³⁵ The first

³¹ *Trinity and Society*, 20-23.

³² For example, see his concerns about anthropocentric and androcentric attitudes toward the world, and the use of the world as primarily a source for human pleasure. See *Cry of the Earth*, 71-75.

³³ See the example of hierarchy in the church in Boff’s *Church, Charism and Power*.

³⁴ “*Deus, Pater et Dominus Bei Augustinus Von Hippo*,” in *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity: Essays in Tribute to George Christopher Stead*, ed. L. Wickham and C. P. Bammel (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1993), 190-212.

³⁵ Studer notes studies on Augustine’s philosophical and exegetical methods, including E. Z. Brunn, “L’exégèse augustinienne de ‘Ego sum qui sum’ et la métaphysique de l’exode,” in *Dieu et l’être : Exégèses d’Exode 3, 14 et de Coran 20, 11-24*

person of the Trinity is both Lord (*dominus*) and Father (*pater*), corresponding to the scriptural experience of God as eternally powerful over the creation and the merciful one who loves his children (though that love can seem harsh, when the righteousness of God is challenged by the sins of his creatures). The pastoral image of God that is found throughout Augustine's sermons, that of the *pater familias*, comes from the technical term for the Roman father (which was not limited to the father of a family household, but also encompassed the political sphere of the ruler over a city or an empire). This is part of Augustine's indebtedness to his context. The image of the *pater familias* serves Augustine's pastoral purposes by expressing his exegetical findings that the God of Scripture is humble and merciful (which includes God's *disciplina paterna*), while not undermining his need for language about God that conveys the eternal and ineffable nature of the divine that is sought out by philosophers. Studer's article presents the modern scholar with a challenge to recognise that within the limits of an individual sermon, exegetical work, or treatise, Augustine's portrayal of God worked on various levels, depending on the question he was investigating and the audience to whom he was communicating. Even when Augustine uses the Roman concept of father, the metaphor does not overpower the rich layers of biblical and philosophical ideas that also informed his understanding and experience of God. Any attempt to reduce Augustine to merely a patriarchal thinker is to miss the complexity of Augustine's thinking.³⁶

Narrowing the focus from Augustine's broader conceptions of God's fatherhood in relation to the creation, to the Father's place in the doctrine of the Trinity, one is reminded of Augustine's emphasis on the Father's monarchy, whereby the Son and Holy Spirit are described in terms of their relations of origin from the Father. It has already been shown from books I-IV of *The Trinity* that his understanding of the Father stressed the divine persons' equality rather than the Son's and Holy Spirit's subordination to the Father. Furthermore, it also was noted that the argument in books V-VII rejected any conception of the persons relations that undermined their equality of power or goodness.³⁷ In fact, the equality of the persons is of such an order, because of their unity of substance, that the idea of the Trinity can even be said to resemble a type of mutuality, rather than a patriarchal or totalitarian ordering. To develop this further we will consider a passage from Augustine's *Answer to*

(Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1978), 141-164; and S. Poque, *Le langage symbolique dans la prédication d'Augustin d'Hippone*, 2 vols. (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1984).

³⁶ Studer highlights the contribution of S. Poque, *Le langage symbolique dans la prédication d'Augustin d'Hippone*, I.193-224, as supporting his thesis that Augustine's use of the Roman concept of Father does not undermine his theological work, nor uniformly force him into patriarchal ideas.

³⁷ See the previous chapter.

Maximus, where he explains his understanding of relations of origin from the Father with specific attention to the equality and goodness of the order of the divine persons. This builds upon the reasoning of books V-VII of *The Trinity*. We will note that Augustine's understanding of the Son as the word of God does not entail that the Son is less than the Father because he receives commands from the Father, but rather that he is the Father's Word and command and is thereby equal to him. Building on this, Augustine then explains how the Word of God is related to the expression of God's love, which the Father and Son mutually have for each other.

In the *Answer to Maximus*, which we have had occasion to look at in this and the previous chapter, Augustine is following up a public debate with an Arian bishop (circa 427/8). The work comprises two books in which Augustine goes through the written record of the public disputation and expands his responses, which were apparently cut short due to Maximus' lengthy speeches. As such, the work is structured as a point by point response to the list of topics that were debated, rather than as a single logical argument or treatise. Some topics receive repeated comment, because they arose in different forms during the debate, and other topics are passed over briefly because they received less attention in the debate than other topics.³⁸ In this work Augustine repeats many of the arguments concerning the equality of substance that he had developed already in *The Trinity*.

In one section of a long discussion of the equality of substance, he specifically turns to the question of hierarchy.³⁹ Here Augustine defends the idea of Christ's equality with the Father, using several references to Gospel passages (John 1:41-42; 6:11; 9:4; Matthew 26:26; Mark 8:6) where Christ is presented as speaking of his own submission to the Father, and as doing things which are pleasing to the Father (John 8:29). Maximus had argued that these passages pointed to the Son being an inferior substance.⁴⁰ Against this reading, Augustine invokes the rule of "the form of a servant" as the correct way to interpret such language.⁴¹ Then, in further explanation of this rule, he specifies that one ought to be careful not to confound the begetter-begotten relationship with the sending of the Son in the form of a servant by the Father (though the Son is sent just as the Son is begotten; while the Father is not sent, just as the Father is not begotten).⁴² As an alternative, Augustine shows that the distinction

³⁸ For more background on the work see the introduction by the translator in *Arianism and Other Heresies*, trans. R. J. Teske.

³⁹ *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.8.

⁴⁰ *Debate with Maximus the Arian* 15.14, in *Arianism and Other Heresies*, trans. R. J. Teske, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, part I, vol. 18 (Brooklyn: New City Press; 1995).

⁴¹ Cp. with *The Trinity* I-II.

⁴² This is a brief development of the idea also found in *The Trinity* IV.28.

between the Son as begotten by the Father and the Son in the form of a servant (i.e. in the sending) is between that of creator and creature: the Son in the form of a servant is a creature who is less than God, because he is created by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; but the inequality of substance between a human being and God does not hold when one talks about the relationship of the Father and Son in the form of God. Augustine explains:

What Christian does not know that the Father sent and that the Son was sent? It was not fitting that the Begetter be sent by his Son, but that the Son be sent by his Begetter. This is not inequality of substance, but the order of nature; it does not mean that one existed before the other, but that one has his origin from the other. Hence, the one who was sent had to do the works of the one who sent him, but what works does the Father have that the Son does not have as well?⁴³

The reason that Jesus attributes his works to the Father (John 11:41-42; John 9:4) is that “he is mindful of him from whom he has his origin.”⁴⁴ This can be said in the form of a servant, where the inequality of substance requires such submission. The order is hierarchical because the dependence of the creature upon God is a constant dependence of a mutable, created existence upon the immutable, eternal source of creaturely being.⁴⁵ Nor does the Son forget from whom he is in the form of God. The order of nature between Father and Son is not the same as the order between God and creature because the Son is begotten of the Father in eternity, in perfect equality from the Father.⁴⁶

⁴³ *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.8.

⁴⁴ *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.8.

⁴⁵ The dependence of the creature upon God for its existence will be discussed more fully in chapters 6-7.

⁴⁶ Hence, in his discussion of Jesus only doing things which are pleasing to the Father (John 11:41-42), Augustine invokes the equality of the Father and Son in the rhetorical question, “What things are pleasing to the Father that are not pleasing to the Son?” (*Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.8). If one does not keep in mind the implications of the eternal equality of Father and Son, then one will misunderstand the desire of Jesus to please the Father as a subordination of the Son to the Father in their eternal relationship. The doctrine of the Trinity helps guard against this mistake by investigating the meaning of the Son being begotten from the Father. This, of course, is spelled out in detail in *The Trinity*. Augustine is not reproducing the argument here again, but is reminding Maximus that the implications of trinitarian doctrine can then clarify how to read such scripture passages correctly.

Another way to look at the question of hierarchy is by considering Augustine's description of the Son using the traditional language of *logos* Christology, which he takes up in the next section of his *Answer to Maximus*.⁴⁷ He answers a charge concerning Jesus' statement in John 10:18,

I have the power to lay down my life, and I have the power to take it up again. I have this command from my Father. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down by myself, and I take it up again.⁴⁸

In the original debate, Maximus used this scriptural passage to claim that if Christ received power from the Father by the Father's command, then he must be less than the Father.⁴⁹ For how does one receive what he did not have, unless he is lacking something, in other words, that he are inferior? Augustine answers this challenge by describing the begetting of the Son by the Father in terms of the Father speaking the Word

All of God's commands are contained in the only Word of God. He gave them to the Son when he begot him; he did not give them later after he had begotten him as one who needed them.⁵⁰

The Son, the Word of God, is not commanded by the Father, rather he is the Father's command—a command being a certain type of word. Augustine concludes from this (the Son as the Father's Word, or the Father's command) that he could not be subordinate to the Father because the Father

begot one as great as he himself is, because he begot the true Son out of himself and begot him in the perfect fullness of divinity, not as one to be made perfect by an increase of age.⁵¹

If the Son is the fullness of God, that is, is equal to God who is complete and indivisible divine substance, then he is not one who is in need of further words or commands because he is already eternally perfect.⁵²

⁴⁷ *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.9.

⁴⁸ *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.9.

⁴⁹ *Debate with Maximus the Arian* 15.14. One might also interpret the passage as Jesus receiving the Father's command in the form of a servant.

⁵⁰ *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.9.

⁵¹ *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.9.

⁵² The eternal perfection of the begotten Son's divine substance is its simplicity. See the previous chapter where the simplicity of God is discussed.

While the ordering of the Father and Son has logical consequences for how to speak about the Trinity of persons, it does not provide a basis to claim that order means a difference of substance, or inferiority. The Son could receive the commands of the Father and yet be one substance with the Father because he himself is the command of the Father. The Son, then, is not inferior to the Father in the sense of being below him in a hierarchy of beings, but is the same substance as the Father. The Son is not after the Father, but is eternally from the Father. Creatures are of a different, mutable and temporal substance than the Father. They are wholly dependent upon God for their being. But the Son is equal to the Father, having what the Father has because they are one substance, whereas creatures need what they have from the Father because they are a created substance. The relation of Father and Son is one of equality. The relation of creature and God is one of hierarchy. Having set up this basic equality of the Father and the Son/Word, Augustine now carries his argument a step further when he introduces the importance of the relationship between the Father and the Son in terms of love.

Augustine again takes up the idea of the Word as the Father's command in *Answer to Maximus* when he addresses Maximus' interpretation of the love of the Son for Father as less than the love of Father for the Son.⁵³ In the debate, Maximus had argued that Jesus' statement of his love for the Father in John 14:31, "so that this world may know that I love the Father, and I do just as he has commanded me," should be interpreted as hierarchical because the Son's love is known through his obedience to the Father's commands.⁵⁴ Augustine counters that the Son's love for the Father is not less than the Father's love for the Son. As in the previous argument about the Son being the Word of God, here he argues that the Son as incarnate Christ obeys the commands of the Father because he has taken on the form of a servant and is therefore less than the Father because of his created substance. But in the form of the eternal Son, he is not the recipient of the commands of the Father, rather, he is "the command of the Father, because he is the Word of the Father."⁵⁵ In this case, Augustine does not repeat the argument concerning how the Son's relationship to the Father (as the Word) is not subordinationist.⁵⁶ Instead, he notes that because the Son is the Father's command, which he has already shown to mean they are of an equal

⁵³ See the whole of *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XXIV.

⁵⁴ *Debate with Maximus the Arian* 15.24.

⁵⁵ *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XXIV.

⁵⁶ Many of Augustine's earlier arguments against subordinationism are rehearsed throughout *Answer to Maximus the Arian*. In the passage under consideration he assumes the equality of the Father and Son so that he can demonstrate how their equality of being points to their equality of love for each other.

substance,⁵⁷ “you should also admit that the Father’s love is no greater than the Son’s ... they love each other equally.”⁵⁸ One love does not overpower or control the other’s love. The reason why one should accept this is because “they are equal in the nature of their divinity.”⁵⁹ To refer to the Son as God’s Word or Command is to refer to the Son as the Father’s equal in terms of their nature.⁶⁰ Even though one can specify a logical order within the godhead—the Son is from the Father—the love of the one person for the other is equal because they have the same divine nature. The divine love is not only from the Father to the Son, but also from the Son to the Father.

Augustine’s conception of the reciprocity of love between the divine persons, with regard to the hierarchical problem, is summarised by Ayres: “The Father is *principium* in the Trinity but is the originator of a truly self-giving reciprocal communion, not a hierarchy of powers.”⁶¹ Ayres refers to the divine love as “reciprocal communion,” and suggests that the Father’s monarchy is where this communion of love originates.⁶² Following the reasoning used to explain the Father’s monarchy in *The Trinity* VII.1-6, one understands that the Father is the source of the Son, but the Son is not a different or lesser substance than the Father. Everything the Father has in himself, the Son also has in himself, because he has the indivisible simplicity of the Father’s substance himself, such that when one speaks of the Son loving the Father, he loves with a perfect love from the Father.⁶³ The love that the

⁵⁷ *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.8-9.

⁵⁸ *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XXIV.

⁵⁹ *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XXIV.

⁶⁰ Thus, Augustine implies that if one refers to the Son receiving the Father’s words or commands separate from his being begotten, this would indicate the Son is indeed of a different nature than the Father, and therefore is less than the Father. This is what Maximus does.

⁶¹ “Augustine, Christology, and God as Love: An Introduction to the Homilies on 1 John,” 88.

⁶² This quotation from Ayres is part of his summary of results from his exegesis of Augustine’s homilies on 1 John. We are using the quotation as a helpful summary of what lay behind Augustine’s assumption about the equal love of Father and Son in his comments against Maximus, and informed his thought in *The Trinity* as well.

⁶³ *The Trinity* VII.1-4. In *Letter 170.8, Letters* (vol. 4, 165-203), trans. W. Parsons, *Fathers of the Church* 30 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1955), 66, Augustine writes to Maximus concerning Christ:

Father has for the Son, the Son also has in himself to give back to the Father, because he has it from the Father. The reason why the mutual love between the Father and Son effectively conveys their complete equality rests not only in Augustine's use of the traditional idea of the Father's monarchy to explain how the Son and the Holy Spirit have the one divine being that is from the Father. In *The Trinity* VII.6, Augustine points out how the very nature of God—God's substance—is love. Working with 1 John 4:8, 16, "God is love," Augustine argues that what the three persons hold in common because of their one substance—which the Son and Holy Spirit have from the Father—is in fact love.⁶⁴ There is not one who loves more than another, nor do any of the three persons offer to another love which is not reciprocated. The love they have is the love that each is in their very being, and which they mutually share with each other.

The love of each for the other—what Ayres called their "self-giving reciprocal communion"—is alluded to in Augustine's use of the word 'cleaving' in *The Trinity* VI.9. This may also be translated as 'union', in the sense of a husband and wife who are joined in marriage. That the Son and Father cleave in a movement toward the other in "absolutely inseparable and eternal mutuality,"⁶⁵ and that they do so in the Holy Spirit who is their common charity,⁶⁶ describes how the three are related in their substance. Each is turned toward the other. Mutuality refers to a union of interdependence, not only as a description of their eternal being, but also as a moral example, to be imitated, for the believer of how human relationships (and the human-divine relationship) are to be founded in the unity of love.⁶⁷

Augustine calls the Holy Spirit the common love between the Father and the

All He has and can do He attributes to his Father, not to himself, because He is not of himself but of the Father. For he is equal to the Father and this also He received from the Father, but He did not receive His being equal as if He had previously been unequal and was born equal, but, as he is always born, so he is always equal.

Similarly, the Son's and the Father's mutual love is equal. The Father receives nothing from the Son that is not already the Father's. That the Son receives everything he has from the Father is not a sign of his lacking anything in himself. Instead, it is to be understood as the proof of his having everything in eternal fullness because he has it from the eternal Father.

⁶⁴ *The Trinity* VII.6.

⁶⁵ *The Trinity* VI.6.

⁶⁶ *The Trinity* VI.7.

⁶⁷ *The Trinity* VI.7.

Son in the godhead.⁶⁸ This can be a confusing statement if one understands by it that the Holy Spirit is the divine substance that the Father and the Son hold in common, as if the Holy Spirit's substance had an ontological priority over the Father and Son. However, a closer look at Augustine's explanation reveals that the Holy Spirit's unique identity as the "supreme charity conjoining Father and Son to each other"⁶⁹ serves to show the Spirit's equality of being with the Father and the Son.

Two steps show that the Spirit is equally God in the same way that the Father and the Son are one God. First, Augustine cites two passages from 1 Corinthians: 3:16, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and the Spirit of God dwells in you?", and 6:19, "Do you not know that the temple of the Holy Spirit in you is your bodies? You have him from God and so you are not your own. For you have been bought with a great price. So glorify God in your body."⁷⁰ In regard to the first citation, Augustine states that only God dwells in his temple and that one would be mistaken to assume that the Holy Spirit dwells there as someone other than God, like a minister in a church of God. Rather, it is better to recognise the assumption of the passage, which is pointing toward the understanding of the Holy Spirit being God. He then cites the second passage to buttress this idea. Calling the human body God's temple in 3:16, and then the Holy Spirit's temple in 6:19, leads Augustine to the conclusion that to glorify God is to glorify the Holy Spirit, because Scripture reveals them both to be divine. However, the name 'Holy Spirit' does not signify the Spirit's personhood as obviously as do the names 'Father' and 'Son', because both words in the Spirit's name refer to what the three have in common in their divine substance (each is holy, each is spirit).⁷¹ Augustine uses another name to help make clear the nature of the Holy Spirit, namely, "gift."

We have noted that Augustine's identification of the Holy Spirit with the name "gift" appears in book IV of *The Trinity*.⁷² The giving of the Holy Spirit by the Father and also by the Son in the economy of salvation is taken by Augustine to be indicative

⁶⁸ *The Trinity* VI.7, VII.6.

⁶⁹ *The Trinity* VII.6. Augustine continues the quotation with "and subjoining us to them." This addition helps us to see that it is in the human experience of the divine economy of salvation that the understanding of the eternal godhead is made possible. The Father and Son's work of uniting humanity to God through the Holy Spirit is the basis on which humanity can begin to grasp the person of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Father and the Son.

⁷⁰ *The Trinity* VII.6.

⁷¹ *The Trinity* V.12.

⁷² See our discussion, in chapter 4, 122-127.

of the eternal ordering of the Spirit, principally from the Father and also from the Son who is given by the Father to give the Holy Spirit. Then, in book V.12-13, Augustine again finds several scriptural passages demonstrating the association of the Spirit with gift.⁷³ He notes that “gift,” like Holy Spirit, poses some difficulties because it also does not correspond with the language of fatherhood and sonship, since “[we do] not say the father of the Holy Spirit” or “the Son of the Holy Spirit”; however, while “we cannot say Father of the gift or Son of the gift ... [to] get a correspondence here we [can] say gift of the giver and giver of the gift.”⁷⁴ From the meaning of the name of Gift (which indicates the Spirit’s procession from the Father and the Son) the name of Holy Spirit also can then be seen to be the name appropriate to the third person, because the third person is given uniquely from the Father and the Son. From this affirmation of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, Augustine’s second step toward affirming the Holy Spirit’s equality of being with the Father and the Son is to recognise that if the Holy Spirit is God, and God is love, then the Holy Spirit also is the love which the Father and the Son are in their substance.

Given that Augustine recognises the Holy Spirit to be equally God with the Father and the Son, and therefore to be love, just as the godhead is love, what does he mean when he calls the Spirit the “supreme charity conjoining Father and Son to each other”?⁷⁵ Turning to *The Trinity* VI.7, one finds Augustine’s answer. First, he notes that the Holy Spirit is distinguished from each of them, because it is by his love that they are joined together.⁷⁶ The point, Augustine explains, is that the unity of the Father and the Son (in the Holy Spirit) is not something they participate in as if it were some sort

⁷³ On the Spirit as gift, see Rowan Williams, “*Sapientia* and the Trinity: Reflections On the *De Trinitate*,” esp. 327-29. Williams brings Augustine’s discussion of the Spirit in books IV-VII of the Trinity, which we are focussing on here and in what follows, together with some of Augustine’s reflections in books XIV-XV, which strengthens the points being made here.

⁷⁴ *The Trinity* V.13.

⁷⁵ *The Trinity* VII.6.

⁷⁶ *The Trinity* VI.7. He quotes Ephesians 4:3 in support of this, “They keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” The Father and the Son keep their unity that is “of the Spirit” in a bond of peace. Augustine seems to understand ‘peace’ to be the divine love which is the unity of the Spirit. The verse in its original context refers to the relations of members of the Ephesian church, not to the godhead. On the assumption that the “unity of the Spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit’s work in the Ephesian church, Augustine is consistently following his principle that the divine economy reveals the eternal godhead.

of substance other than them, but rather it is “of their own very being.”⁷⁷ Their unity is in their gift of their own being to each other, which is the Holy Spirit. He then goes on to write,

Call this [communion of the Holy Spirit] friendship, if it helps, but a better word for it is charity. And this [the Holy Spirit/charity] too is substance because God is substance, and *God is charity* (1 John 4:8, 16), as it is written.⁷⁸

By the friendship/charity between the Father and the Son Augustine means to refer to the divine substance, as opposed to a quality of a substance, “because with God it is not a different thing to be, and to be great or good, etc.”⁷⁹ This, of course, is justified on the grounds of divine simplicity, since the divine being is indivisible: God is what he has. Therefore, the love that is between the Father and the Son—the unity of the Spirit—is of the divine substance.⁸⁰

Keeping in mind that the name “charity” is associated with the activity of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation in the same manner as “gift,” because the Holy Spirit unites the believer to God by the gift of love⁸¹; and keeping in mind that if charity is a name for the third person, it also is equally true that the divine substance is charity, so that when one speaks of the persons’ mutual love for each other one is speaking of their very being; then one can see how Augustine does not use love as a

⁷⁷ *The Trinity* VI.7. Participation is the means to explain how creatures have their being by dependence on something outside of themselves, namely, God. God, however, has no need of anyone else, since the divine being is simple, and therefore indivisible, eternal, and entirely self-sustained. The importance of the concept of participation will be taken up in subsequent chapters.

⁷⁸ *The Trinity* VI.7.

⁷⁹ *The Trinity* VI.7. We have already encountered this idea in the previous chapter, especially in Letter 120.3.16, where Augustine notes that the simplicity of the divine substance requires human language about qualities to apply to the divine substance, because unlike created beings, in God qualities are the divine substance.

⁸⁰ The opposite case would be human friendship and love, because human beings can be unfriendly and without love. The Holy Spirit’s love which unites the Father and the Son is not something that can be absent from Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. Rather, the love of the Holy Spirit for the Father and the Son is also the love that the Father has for the Son and *vice versa*.

⁸¹ *The Trinity* VI.7. Also see *The Trinity* XIII.14, where Augustine cites a favourite verse, Romans 5:5, “The charity of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.”

passive concept to explain what unites the Father and Son,⁸² but instead uses love in its active sense: the Holy Spirit (the subject of the loving) brings about the love of the Father and the Son by uniting them in their substance because he himself is of the same substance. The apparent synonymy of friendship and love in *The Trinity* VI.7 indicates that the love between the Father and Son refers to a mutual turning of one toward another through the Holy Spirit's actions, since friendship is not self-centred, but other-centred as two persons cleave to one another.⁸³ The Holy Spirit brings about the love of the Father and the Son. His action is efficacious because he himself is of the same loving substance as they are.

Conclusion

We have seen, then, how Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity is constructed along Nicene lines, following a pattern that begins with the Father as the beginning of the Son and Holy Spirit. He attempts to come to an understanding of the unity of substance and the distinctness of the persons through a careful analysis of scriptural statements concerning the divine activity of salvation. In doing this Augustine distances himself from modalism and from the challenges posed by the Arian opponents he encountered in his African context. By addressing both of these problematic trinitarian positions, Augustine shows both an awareness of their pitfalls for a robust conception of God and an ability to work within the context of a larger dialogue shaped by church tradition. Within the complex discussion of how the triune God is a single, simple and perfect substance he also maintains a firm grasp on the Trinity as three persons who are united in mutual love. He does this not by philosophical speculation divorced from the economic work of the divine persons, but through a careful analysis of the economic activity of God, who is known to be a Trinity through the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit who unite the believer to God.

⁸² As if two things are stuck together by a third object, like two pieces of wood united by glue. Such a passive image conveys no sense of the activity of loving that happens between the three persons.

⁸³ See Augustine's definition of friendship in *The Confessions* IV.iv.7, where he also attributes true friendship to the work of the Holy Spirit, who bonds two persons who cleave to one another (again citing Romans 5:5). On the connections Augustine made between friendship and love as substance terms in the godhead, and their unique attribution to the Spirit as derived from his understanding of the divine economy of salvation, see Joseph T. Lienhard, "The Glue Itself Is Charity": Ps. 62:9 in Augustine's Thought," in *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, ed. E. C. Muller, R. J. Teske and J. T. Lienhard (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 375-84. Indirectly related to this topic is Lienhard's article on human friendship, "Friendship in Paulinus of Nola and Augustine," in *Collectanea Augustiniana*, 279-96.

Before moving on to the discussion of how Augustine understands the Trinity as creator, we can step back and see how Augustine's trinitarian thought relates to Boff's criticisms of the classical conception of the Trinity. For Boff, it is unlikely that one will find helpful resources in the classical doctrine of the Trinity for interpreting reality according to the egalitarian witness of the Gospel, given that the very structure of the doctrine promotes an emphasis on conformity to an overarching 'one'. The doctrine of the Trinity that reduces the three to one is rooted in historical circumstances where those who had the power to control others (one, or at least a few, over the many) articulated the doctrine so that it reflected their own values of domination, control, and inequality between persons. Such a conception, as he sees it, not only is the basis upon which oppression is generated against other people, but is the basis on which people attempt to dominate all reality. Boff thinks that a social doctrine of the Trinity can foster a spirit of equality in people, where mutuality is the basis upon which community is established. However, this can only be the case when one overcomes the classical emphasis of a metaphysic of the one over the many.

Augustine, of course, did not think about the doctrine of the Trinity in the sociological and ecological framework within which Boff wants to rethink traditional doctrine. Yet there is little indication in Augustine's writing that he has minimised the persons' equality of being by emphasising God's 'oneness'. In fact, the divine relations are formulated according to the terms of Son's and Holy Spirit's work of redemption, as presented in Scripture. For example, in book IV of *The Trinity* Augustine explores the mediatorial role of Christ as the central point from which to explore the importance of the equality of the persons of the Trinity for the Christian understanding of salvation (the Son's mission is a divine mission from the Father). Similarly, in book VI, he links the redemptive work of the Spirit (who unites believers to one another to God) to the mutual love of the three persons. God's economy allows the believer to see how the relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are relations of one divine being of love.

Just as knowing that the Son is sent from the Father provides insight into how one can conceive of the Son as begotten of the Father, so too the mutual love of the persons is a basis for understanding God's love for creation. The next step in our analysis of Augustine's thought will be to look at how he sees God and creation as they are portrayed in Genesis One. In the examination of his *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, one can see how he understands the Trinity as involved in a dynamic relationship with the creation. The trinitarian relations explained in these next chapters will clarify how Augustine thinks about God as creator, and also how he thinks about the way in which God's love is communicated to the creation. By delineating these aspects of his thought, we will be in a better position to judge his trinitarian understanding of creation in light of Boff's proposal for how the Trinity and creation ought to be conceived.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TRINITARIAN FOUNDING OF CREATION

Just as Augustine finds his doctrine of the Trinity upon the divine economy of redemption revealed in scripture, so also is his doctrine of creation founded upon the divine work of creation as revealed in Scripture. The biblical record is the authoritative basis for Augustine's discussion of the nature of God's creative work of calling the creation into existence and of divine providential government.¹ Just as the biblical record of God's redemptive activity was key to Augustine's conception of the doctrine of the Trinity, so the interpretation of the biblical account of divine creation also will involve a trinitarian account of God—for it is the same God who is shown in Scripture to be creator and redeemer. If he cannot show that the threeness of God makes a difference for the understanding of God's work of creating the world in a foundational scriptural text about that work, then his whole trinitarian project would seemingly fall apart.²

In fact, a major concern for Augustine, as he reflects upon the creation of the world, is the triune nature of God's creative activity. The one act of creation by the Trinity reflects the unity of substance of the immanent Trinity, but just as importantly, the three persons mirror in the act of creation the same pattern of (non-hierarchical) relations that Augustine discussed in his explanation of relations of origin.³ Augustine shows this correspondence of immanent and economic relations in the opening verses of Genesis by describing God's creativity as his speaking, by the Word of God, and seeing, by the divine goodness of his Holy Spirit. As well, in his discussion of the ongoing providential governance of creation, he again describes it as God's work in the Word and Holy Spirit. In this chapter we shall examine the correspondence of the divine activity of creation with the eternal trinitarian relations through a close examination of Augustine's thinking about the activity of divine

¹ For examples of Augustine's understanding of the trinitarian nature of Scripture, and its authority and trustworthiness for constructing doctrine, see our discussion p. 109, fn.19.

² One way that Augustine's trinitarian project might fall apart, for example, would be if he fails to attend to (or at least minimises) the threeness of God in the act of creation because of a more basic commitment to monotheism. A potential for this in classical theology was described by Boff, as we noted in chapters 2-3. Also see Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 54, 120f., and 138, for more criticisms of Augustine as a monotheist who gives negligible attention to God's threeness.

³ See chapters 4-5.

creation in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. In the next chapter we will consider the providential governance of creation. In the first several pages of this chapter, we will consider the wider context of Augustine's writings about creation, and the general structure of Augustine's argument in *The Literal Meaning* about how God is described as creating in Genesis 1. Then, an examination of the trinitarian character of God's creation of the world will be explored in the rest of the chapter.

Augustine spent considerable time reflecting on the doctrine of creation, especially in taking account of the narrative in the opening chapters of Genesis. He wrote three independent commentaries on those chapters—*On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*, the *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, and *The Literal Meaning*—as well as giving substantial space to Genesis 1-3 within other works.⁴ Unlike his first commentary, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* (which was an answer to the Manichaean claim that matter is inherently evil), his two attempts at literal commentaries, the *Unfinished Literal Commentary On Genesis* and *The Literal Meaning*,⁵

⁴ In the final three books of the *The Confessions*, for instance, he included a reflection on God as creator that covered the first chapter of Genesis. Books XI-XII of *The City of God* also treat aspects of the creation story. On the dating of these works, see *La Genèse au sens littéral en douze livres (I-VII)*, trans. and ed. P. Agaesse and A. Solignac, in *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, vol 48, Bibliothèque Augustinienne (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1972), 25-31. For further treatment of the range of works in which Augustine discusses the doctrine of creation, see M. A. Vannier, "Creatio," "Conversio," "Formatio," chez Augustin, *Paradosis* 31 (Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, 1991), 83-89.

⁵ *The Literal Meaning* differs from his *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, as he points out in *The Retractions*, trans. M. I. Bogan, *Fathers of the Church* 60 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1968), I.17, because he did not yet have the knowledge to address the questions raised in such a commentary, in part due to his lack of time for research as a result of his pastoral duties. Therefore, he did not finish his first attempt at a literal commentary on Genesis. Six years later, having developed a greater understanding of the issues and the types of answers that could be applied to interpreting the text literally, he again set about the task of writing a commentary. He considered his first attempt at a literal commentary unsuccessful, but did not reject the results of it as being without merit. Thus, rather than destroying the work, he made an emendation at its conclusion, and left it for those who might find some of its ideas helpful. That emendation concerns one of the significant theological differences between the *Unfinished Literal Commentary* and *The Literal Meaning*, namely, how he related the doctrine of the Trinity to an understanding of the image of God. In the *Unfinished Literal Commentary*, he had argued that the image of God in humanity was based on likeness to the Word—the Son of God (*Unfinished Literal Commentary* 16.60). However, after rereading this account as he was composing *The Retractions*, Augustine decided to add a final

did not give preference to an allegorical reading of Scripture, but rather to a literal interpretation. For Augustine, a literal interpretation tries to understand the historical events as they have been “recounted” by the author, that is, as those events actually happened. An allegorical interpretation, for Augustine, is one that tries to understand the text’s meaning, “when [it is] understood as being said figuratively,”⁶ by which he means as the events recorded in a text are interpreted “according to future events which they foreshadow.”⁷

Augustine did not understand the literal/historical interpretation of Scripture to be opposed to an allegorical/figurative interpretation. Rather, he saw them as complementary perspectives on the meaning of Scripture. For him, the Bible is a text that requires different interpretative tools to understand the fullness of its meaning as God intends it to be understood.⁸ At times, the search for a literal meaning of the text even blurs into what seems, to a modern reader, like a figurative interpretation. For example, when Augustine attempts to understand the meaning of the creation of

paragraph to the *Unfinished Literal Commentary*, putting forward a “preferable choice of meaning” (16.61). He explained that the likeness of the image in humanity is to the Trinity itself, rather than to the Word alone. Thus, he harmonised the final paragraph of the *Unfinished Literal Commentary* with *The Literal Meaning* III.19.29. The image of God will be addressed in chapter 8.

⁶ *Unfinished Literal Commentary On Genesis* 2.5. Augustine goes on to explain two other types of interpretation that may be used to understand Genesis, the analogical and aetiological: “analogy, when the harmony of the old and new covenants is being demonstrated; aetiology, when causes of the things that have been said and done are presented.” The relationship of the various forms of scriptural interpretation, and how Augustine employed and understood them, are discussed by B. de Margerie, *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis*, vol. III, *Saint Augustine*, trans. P. de Fontnouvelle (Petersham: Saint Bede’s Publications, 1991); K. E. Green-McCreight, *Ad Litteram: How Augustine, Calvin, and Barth Read the “Plain Sense” of Genesis 1-3*, *Issues in Systematic Theology*, vol. 5 (Peter Lang: New York, 1995), 32-94; F. Van Fleteren, “Principles of Augustine’s Hermeneutic: An Overview,” in *Augustine: Biblical Exegete*, ed. F. Van Fleteren and J. C. Schnaubelt (Peter Lang: New York, 2001), 1-32; and T. Williams, “Biblical Interpretation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. E. Stump and N. Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 59-70.

⁷ *The Literal Meaning* I.17.34. This explanation of the literal and allegorical/figurative interpretations of Genesis is discussed with detailed references in Hill’s introduction to *The Literal Meaning*, in *On Genesis*, pp. 158-161.

⁸ Van Fleteren, “Principles of Augustine’s Hermeneutic,” 8.

“light,” “evening,” and “morning” (Genesis 1:3-5) as they would exist prior to the creation of the sun and moon (Genesis 1:14-15), he does not simply dismiss the “corporeal” interpretation of light that the physical eyes can see,⁹ but he reasons that a better interpretation would take into account the fact that such terms are not actually recounting the historical process of creating physically perceivable light, since that is said to have come later.¹⁰ Therefore, he interprets the light of verses 3-5 as indicating the angelic knowledge of creation.¹¹ Such a metaphysical reading of the text is not taken by Augustine to be figurative; rather, it is a literal reading of the text within a wider scope than that implied by a merely corporeal signification of the words.¹²

At other times, both a literal and a figurative interpretation seem equally well-suited to a text. For example, in *The Literal Meaning* VIII.1.1, he notes that the story of Adam and Eve in paradise is sometimes interpreted historically and sometimes spiritually (e.g., as an account of how Adam is a type for Christ, as explained by Paul in Romans 5:14). He advocates an approach that sees both interpretations as valid, since God can relate events that are recounted in the past to future meanings. In this case, a description of Adam living with Eve as it actually occurred, and as a future indication of Christ, are not mutually exclusive choices when interpreting Genesis 2.

When we turn to Augustine’s description of the trinitarian persons’ creative activity in the opening verses of Genesis, we see that he tries to understand the narrated story in its own historical context (e.g., by explaining where the water was located that was gathered together so that dry land could appear in Genesis 1:9), but also how the context of Genesis 1 contains metaphysical truths (such as the description of the trinitarian persons’ work using the language of God speaking and seeing). This is not merely spiritualising a text that was intended to recount past historical processes. He views his interpretation as literal because the Trinity reveals itself through the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is therefore reasonable for Augustine to ask how Scripture recounts their creative presence in their initial creative work, just as they are present in their later redemptive work. The creative work of the Trinity can be literally recounted just as the history of the corporeal world can be recounted, though because the Trinity creates time and space along

⁹ Thus he considers at length how God might create corporeal light and darkness, *The Literal Meaning* I.9.15-12.24 and II.8.16-19.

¹⁰ *The Literal Meaning* I.11.23, and IV.28.45-30.47.

¹¹ Of course, this also allows him to account for the creation of angels, with which the Genesis text does not deal.

¹² *The Literal Meaning* IV.28.45-30.47. See Green-McCreight, *Ad Litteram*, 44-48.

with everything else, the work of the Trinity transcends creation's mutable history.¹³

The Structure of *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*

The Literal Meaning divides into three parts. In books I-V, Augustine considers the creation narratives up to Genesis 2:6, and includes in this treatment the trinitarian framework of creation, an explanation of the days of creation, a proposed relationship between the two creation narratives, a discussion of God's providential government and rest, and a detailed explanation of the causal reasons by which creation unfolds in its historical development. In books VI-XI, among other things, he treats the creation of humanity, original sin, the origin of the soul, the relationship between men and women—especially in marriage—and the relationship between spiritual and natural bodies. Book XII is an essay on the visions of Paradise, which he added after he completed the original commentary.¹⁴

Books I-V will be the primary focus for our analysis, as they provide a concentrated reflection on how God the Father creates through his Word and the divine goodness of the Holy Spirit. Augustine's explanation of this trinitarian activity also forms the basis for his understanding of the moral implications of human action in the creation: since all that the trinitarian God creates is made according to the purposes of divine goodness and love, the ends of creatures are to conform to the nature of this goodness and love. The exercise of human action, including dominion, is meant to conform to this moral nature of God's creation. In chapters 7 and 8 we will take up this question of the moral character of human activity more fully, especially how the dominion exercised by human beings is related to God's trinitarian image in them.

Before considering Augustine's conception of the trinitarian creation in Genesis 1, we will look briefly at the overall structure of Augustine's argument in the first five books of *The Literal Meaning*. Modern scholars generally divide Genesis 1-3 into two distinct creation stories that have been joined together.¹⁵ Augustine also recognised two distinct narratives, the first ending with the description of God's rest in Genesis 2:3 and the second beginning with the statement that "This is the book of the creation of heaven and earth when day was made," in 2:4a.¹⁶ He suggests that this introduction to the second narrative of creation in 2:4 confirms that the seven days described in Genesis 1 were seven human days that were created simultaneously in

¹³ Hill, introduction to *The Literal Meaning*, in *On Genesis*, pp. 159-160.

¹⁴ See his comments in *The Retractions* II.50.

¹⁵ See Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. D. A. Hubbard et al (Dallas: Word Books, 1987), vol. 1, *Genesis 1-15*, by, xxx-xl, 5, 39f., 49.

¹⁶ *The Literal Meaning* V.1.1.

one act, signified in the phrase “when day was made,” because God’s work of creation is indivisible.¹⁷ Thus, Augustine interprets God’s creative work as it is described in Genesis 1, including the creation of time, from a metaphysical perspective that situates those works “before” (prior to) human historical perception, namely, the creation of the day in which the seven days are all included.¹⁸ Augustine’s interpretation of Genesis 1 in the first four books of *The Literal Meaning* is literal in terms of the metaphysical reality being described. From Genesis 2:4ff., Augustine believes, the creation narrative is to be understood as the historical explanation of creation as it actually unfolded in humanly perceived time (history). Thus, when he takes up Genesis 2-3 in *The Literal Meaning* VI-XI, he interprets the text according to the idea of literal interpretation that a modern reader might expect, because he is then dealing with the historical narrative of the first human beings as they existed in time and space.

The first four books of Augustine’s commentary describe creation according to metaphysical reality. He does not doubt that there were actually seven days of creation, or that the sequence of creatures that are made by God happened in the order described in Genesis 1. So, he also discusses how these days must have unfolded in time, given the scientific knowledge he had available to him. However, from the perspective of a creation that is brought into existence by an eternal creator, the seven days were created simultaneously, which is different from humanly perceived historical reality of how seven days would progress, and so the metaphysical perspective must also be employed.

In Augustine’s interpretation of Genesis 1, he develops his understanding of God’s activity in relation to creation according to two phases, the founding and governance of creation.¹⁹ Augustine does not distinguish the two phases by means of

¹⁷ *The Literal Meaning* V.1.1-3.6.

¹⁸ Thus, Augustine writes in *The Literal Meaning* V.1.1, “But now the sacred writer says [in 2:4], *This is the book of creation of heaven and earth when day was made*, thus making it quite clear, I believe, that here he does not speak of heaven and earth in the sense in which he used these words in the beginning before mentioning the creation of day, *when darkness was over the abyss*. Now [in 2:4ff.] he is speaking of the creation of heaven and earth when day was made, that is, when all parts of the world had been made distinct and all classes of things had already been formed, and thus the whole of creation, fittingly arranged, presented the appearance of what we call the universe.”

¹⁹ E.g., *The Literal Meaning* V.11.27, “... there are two moments of creation: one in the original creation when God made all creatures before resting on the seventh day, and the other in the administration of creatures by which he works even now.” “Governance” is another way to translate God’s *administratio* of creatures.

a limited set of terms, but instead employs a variety of terms within the general framework of the two phases, some of which, as we shall see, occasionally are used in both of the phases for different purposes. The first phase is God's work of bringing creation into existence from nothing, which we will refer to throughout the dissertation as the founding of creation,²⁰ and which he explains in books I-III of *The Literal Meaning*. The second phase is God's ongoing governance of and care for creation once it has been brought into existence, which he explains in books IV-IX of *The Literal Meaning*. His concept of divine governance, as we shall see, is based on the statement of Genesis 2:2f., where God is said to have rested on the seventh day. Augustine asks how it is that God is said to rest there, but also is said to work again in Genesis 2:6ff., and also is said to work in John 5:17, where Jesus claims that "My Father works even until now, and I work."²¹ The answer to this apparent puzzle, he suggests, is to distinguish between God's work as creator (i.e. the founding) and God's ongoing work of governing the creation as it unfolds in history.²² Augustine's discussion of God's governance allows him to affirm that God never ceases to care for the creation that he has made.

The first phase, the founding of creation, is divided into two stages by Augustine. The first stage is the establishment of all creatures from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) in God's Word (that is, creatures as the "eternal reasons", as he calls them at IV.24.41). This we might think of as his idea of creation from nothing proper. The second stage is the conversion (also termed perfection) of creatures from the formless void mentioned in Genesis 1:2, i.e., from their state as ideas in the Word, to their being actual substantial creatures in their material and spiritual forms.²³ He

²⁰ Augustine uses the verb *condere*, meaning 'to found,' 'to form,' 'to fashion,' throughout *The Literal Meaning*. For example, see V.20.41, "It is thus that God unfolds the generations which he laid up in creation when first he founded it." In V.12.14, he shows that he does not use just one term to describe the founding of creation, but rather a variety of similar terms: "Among those beings which were formed from formlessness and are clearly said to be created, or made, or established, the first made was day."

²¹ See *The Literal Meaning* IV.11.21-12.23.

²² See *The Literal Meaning* V.11.27.

²³ The invisible and formless void from which the creatures are converted into their spiritual and physical forms does not occupy a significant amount of Augustine's discussion in *The Literal Meaning*, see I.14.28-15.30. It receives some attention in *Concerning the Nature of the Good*, where he identifies it with the platonic *hyle*. Rather than treat it in our discussion of how Augustine interprets Genesis 1 in *The Literal Meaning*, we will discuss the *hyle* in chapter 7 in relation to its supposed passive quality in God's controlling "hands."

thinks of the establishment and conversion of creatures in the six days of creation as simultaneous and non-temporal, inasmuch as God transcends time and creates from nothing.²⁴ Establishment and conversion should be treated as non-temporal, causal stages which aid Augustine as he attempts to discuss clearly God's indivisible work of creating.²⁵

Augustine does not divide the second phase, the governance of creation, into stages. However, he does employ the language of conversion and perfecting in his discussion of this phase of God's activity, especially when he is considering the role of the Holy Spirit in it.²⁶ Before we turn to the discussion of the triune structure of

²⁴ On the creation of time, see *The Literal Meaning* I.2.4-6, V.5.12 and V.17.35. On creation from nothing in Augustine's thought, see T. Van Bavel, "The Creator and the Integrity of Creation in the Fathers of the Church especially in Saint Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 21 (1990), 4-7; and W. A. Christian, "The Creation of the World," in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. R. W. Battenhouse (New York: Oxford, 1955), 332-36. We noted above, briefly, that he understood the first day to refer to the creation of angels. Augustine describes at length the formation of angels (they are the light of Genesis 1:3-5), who then witness the creation of the eternal reasons and their subsequent unfolding in their physical forms (the sky, earth and other celestial bodies, and the various earthly creatures [Genesis 1:6-2:1]). The angelic knowledge of other creatures, as those creatures exist in the Word, are the angels "daytime," while their knowledge of those creatures, as they exist in themselves, are the angels "evening" because the angels turn from their apprehension of creatures in the Word to the existence of those same creatures in bodies (*The Literal Meaning* II.8.16-19 and IV.22.39-25.42). The creation of the angelic realm is of one part with the establishment of the creation from nothing and the physical universe's conversion from of the formless void. The movement of the creation from a divine idea to physical reality, as observed by angels, is discussed by Taylor, p. 233 fn.22.

²⁵ E.g., *The Literal Meaning* I.15.29 and V.5.12.

²⁶ For an indication of how conversion is employed by Augustine to explain several aspects of God's creative activity, see D. J. Hassel, "Conversion-Theory and *Scientia* in the *De Trinitate*," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 2 (1962): 383-401. Hassell sees "three principal moments of conversion" in Augustine's doctrine of creation: 1) "The creature issues from God's creative hand," which corresponds with the establishment of creation; 2) "the creature is impelled to turn back" to the Word, or "is formed out of formlessness," which corresponds with our second stage of the founding work and also to God's governance; and 3) the creature has "growth in perfection" (384-85), which corresponds with God's work in the divine governance. In Hassell's description of the first two moments, all creatures are included, and the divine act of conversion requires no free decision on the part of the creature. The

God's calling of creation into existence from nothing and its conversion from the formless void, the topic of this chapter, we should briefly lay out what is entailed in Augustine's concept of divine providence. Part of the discussion of God's governance in book IV has to do with how creatures are manifest in different times and spaces, even though God creates nothing new after the seventh day. As we have noted, Augustine thinks that the whole of creation—including time—was founded and converted simultaneously and from nothing. However, not all creatures were immediately present in their material bodies—their conversion from ideas in the Word to physical creatures is according to the timing set out by God in the beginning. Creatures were created at once in the Word of God as “eternal reasons” and were planted in the world (at its conversion from the formless void) as “causal reasons,” much like seeds that are sown in the ground. It is out of these “causal reasons” that all things take their shape in time and space.²⁷ God's governance, then, includes the appearance of creatures at their proper times. The discussion of Genesis 2-3 (in books VI-XI) is a continuation of Augustine's doctrine of creation, because it is a treatment of how God never ceases from governing the creation, even though he rests from creating, that is, establishing and converting, anything new.²⁸ The governance of creation is essential since all creatures depend on God for their being. If God did not continue to govern creation, it would cease to be by descending back into the chaos of the formless void.²⁹ The order of creation is maintained through God's governance. The governing of creation will be considered more fully in the next chapter in terms of the creation's participation in God. In this chapter the triune

third moment is applicable only to spiritual creatures, because it refers to a conversion of their wills. Both the second and third moments extend through time as part of God's governance of all creatures, though the second moment “begins” in the founding of creation, inasmuch as the forming of creatures from the formless matter requires God's ongoing governance for their existence to continue.

²⁷ E.g., *The Literal Meaning* IV.33.51-35.56 and VI.6.11. For further analysis of the eternal and causal reasons, and their correspondence to the creation of everything and its subsequent governance, see Taylor, *The Literal Meaning*, 252, fn.67; B. Studer, *The Grace of Christ*, 110-12; and D. X. Burt, *Augustine's World: An Introduction to His Speculative Philosophy* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), 208-18. On the causal reasons and their compatibility with aspects of modern evolutionary thought see M. J. McKeough, *The Meaning of the Rationes Seminales in St. Augustine* (Washington: Catholic University of America Dissertation, 1926).

²⁸ *The Literal Meaning* V.23.45.

²⁹ *The Literal Meaning* IV.12.22. Also see Burt, 210-12.

structure of God’s work of bringing creation into existence from nothing, i.e., the establishment and conversion of creation, will be taken up.³⁰

As we examine more closely in the remainder of this chapter how Augustine describes God’s work as creator, we will see that his trinitarian model for creation is patterned on the same structure as his conception of the inner trinitarian relations, which he derived from the revelation of God in the divine economy. Furthermore, by maintaining a conception of God as one, expressed in terms of God’s perfect simplicity and indivisible nature, he understands the divine activity of bringing creation into existence to be one action rather than three actions. The three, in their threeness, are God. Yet, there is only one God who acts, not three gods. The Father, speaking his Word, the Son, creates by calling the creation into being from nothing. The Father’s Son carries out the Father’s will to create, and brings it toward its fulfillment. Likewise, the Father sees the goodness of creation, in which he delights, through his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit loves creatures and perfects them in accordance with the forms that the Word gives them. Just as the Spirit’s charity in the Trinity unites the Father and Son in the bond of love, so in creation the Spirit is the fulfillment of the Father and Son’s work, and the unity of the creation as one work.

In a particularly rich passage from book I, Augustine lays out a summary of why he understands the establishment and conversion of creation to be triune in shape, which, as we have already argued, was a necessary part of his commitment to the authority of Scripture that formed the basis for his doctrine of the Trinity. The rest of the chapter will be devoted to an analysis of this passage, drawing on other parts of *The Literal Meaning* to explicate its meaning:

It is the Blessed Trinity that is represented as creating. For, when Scripture says, *In the beginning God created heaven and earth*, by the name of “God” we understand the Father, and by the name of “Beginning,” the Son, who is the Beginning, not for the Father, but first and foremost for the spiritual beings He has created and then also for all creatures; and when Scripture says, *And the Spirit of God was stirring above the water*, we recognise a complete enumeration of the Trinity. So in the conversion and in the perfecting of creatures by which their species are separated in due order, the Blessed Trinity is likewise represented: the Word and the Father of the Word, as

³⁰ To sum up these phases and stages, the following chart will help:

God’s work as creator = founding and governance

1st Phase, founding = { (stage i) establishment of the creation from nothing
and
(stage ii) conversion of creatures into substantial forms

2nd Phase, governance = providential care for creation (to be discussed in chapter 7)

indicated in the statement, *God said*; and then the Divine Goodness, by which God finds pleasure in all the limited perfections of his creatures, which please Him, as indicated by the words, *God saw that it was good*.³¹

Augustine begins by noting that his understanding of the trinitarian shape of creation is “represented” in the text of Genesis itself,³² citing how Genesis 1:1-4 represents the Trinity in the twofold establishment and conversion of creation. The first stage of God’s creative activity, beginning with the phrase, “For, when Scripture says,” and ending with the statement, “we recognise a complete enumeration of the Trinity,” is the establishment of creation from nothing. The second stage of the act, presented in the text beginning with the phrase, “So in the conversion and perfecting of creatures,” and running to the end of the quotation, refers to the conversion of creatures from their form as eternal ideas in the Word to their own substantial existences in the universe as they are shaped out of the formless matter. These two stages of triune creativity (the founding of the creation) explain how the Trinity brings about the creation.

We will proceed with our examination of this passage by looking at how Augustine names each of the three persons in the establishment and conversion of creation, and then turn to a fuller explanation of how Augustine understands the establishment and conversion of the creation to take place. We will see that the

³¹ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

³² In *The Literal Meaning* I.21.41, Augustine suggests that a literal interpretation of Scripture should correspond as closely as possible to the authorial intention, but also should not depart from the “the firm basis of Catholic belief.” In fact, conformity to such religious norms has more weight than authorial intention in the interpretation of Scripture. This is not to say that normative religious belief is superior to, or more important than understanding authorial intention. Rather Augustine gives priority to interpreting Scripture in light of authoritative religious belief because he recognises that sometimes authorial intention can be notoriously difficult to ascertain, and also that the truth of something (e.g. God’s creation) can encompass more than the words of an author on the subject (i.e. Moses may not have spoken the complete truth in writing the creation accounts of Genesis, though he certainly spoke nothing false or in error, *Confessions* XII.23.32-32.43). Therefore, one must carefully and humbly investigate other meanings. Where authorial intention is in question, then one ought to attempt to understand the text in ways that do not contradict normative beliefs. In the case of Genesis 1, assuming the authority and truth of Scripture (cf. IV.21.38), the story of God’s creative works should be interpreted so that it does not depart from the normative and biblical belief in God the Trinity. In other words, Augustine’s belief in the necessity of trinitarian doctrine (itself established through Scripture) must bear upon his interpretation of the biblical text.

Father as God, the Son as beginning, and the Holy Spirit as hovering over the deep, together effect the creative triune act of bringing about the creation through its two aspects of establishment and conversion.

Naming The Trinity In Genesis One

Augustine sees in Genesis 1:1, “*In the beginning God created heaven and earth,*” a reference to both the Father and the Son as establishing the creation from nothing. The subject of the sentence, God, is the name by which is understood the Father in the language of trinitarian doctrine.³³ Usually, one should understand the Father when Augustine refers to God.³⁴ Here, creation originates in the Father. There is both a similarity and a dissimilarity to be drawn between the Father who is the source of the Son and the Holy Spirit in the inner Trinity, and the Father who is the origin of creation. The logical understanding of the inner trinitarian relationships reveals the Father as the source which itself has no beginning, while the Son is always from the Father and the Holy Spirit is from the Father principally and through the Son.³⁵ A similar trinitarian pattern holds here, where the creation’s source is the Father who creates all creatures from nothing through his coeternal Son and Holy Spirit. However, if the creation has its origin in the Father, nonetheless, the Father’s origination of the creation also is dissimilar to his origination of the Son and Holy Spirit. For, unlike the divine persons who are coeternal and equal with the Father, the creation is made from nothing and is not equal to him.

Augustine next argues that the remaining phrase of Genesis 1:1, “in the beginning,” refers to the Son. This means that God the Father created everything in his Son (who is this beginning). He clarifies how the Son is understood as beginning in relation to God the Father when he writes, “by the name of Beginning, [we understand] the Son, who is the Beginning, not for the Father, but first and foremost for the spiritual beings He has created and then also for all creatures.”³⁶ Augustine attributes to the Son the name “Beginning” not in reference to the inner trinitarian relations, but rather in reference to the Son’s relationship to creation.³⁷ The name

³³ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

³⁴ See Studer, *The Grace of Christ*, 110.

³⁵ See our discussion of the trinitarian logic in chapters 4 and 5.

³⁶ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

³⁷ It already has been indicated above that when Augustine names God as the Father in Genesis 1:1, it is in part because he understands the Father as the source which itself has no beginning—both in the inner Trinity and in the divine work of creation from nothing. In the context of *The Trinity*, however, when Augustine uses the word ‘beginning’ as a name, it usually was in reference to the Father who is the

“Beginning” refers to how God creates everything in his Son. This identification of the name of the Son with the name “Beginning” is not self-evident from the text of Genesis alone, but is justified by what Augustine finds said about divine creation in the Johannine prologue.³⁸ He notes John’s claim that everything is created through the divine Word of God, who is the coeternal Son of the Father and not a creature of the Father.³⁹ The Son with the Father is at the beginning of all created things.⁴⁰ For Augustine, this suggests that the opening phrase of Genesis (“In the beginning”) refers both to the Word of God and (indirectly) to the Father, since it is through God’s Word that all is created, with God being the Father. If the Word is the Son, following John 1:2, then it follows that the “Beginning” of Genesis 1:1, in which everything is created by God, is also a reference to the Word because the “Beginning” is set out as the means by which God the Father created everything—there is nothing that is not created in the Beginning. Anything not created in the Beginning is eternal and divine.

Similarly, Augustine identifies the Father and the Son in the work of conversion by explaining the phrase “God said” as referring to “the Word and the Father of the Word.”⁴¹ God is the Father, and this time, the Son is identified with the verb “said.” What is “said,” of course, is the Word that the Father speaks from eternity, who is his Son.

Augustine makes the connection between the Spirit of God and the Holy Spirit, in reference to the establishment of creation, in his interpretation of Genesis 1:2 when he writes, “and when Scripture says, *And the Spirit of God was stirring above the water*, we recognise a complete enumeration of the Trinity.”⁴² He goes one step further though, in the next section, on the conversion of creatures, and identifies the

beginning of the Son (e.g., *The Trinity* I.9, II.27, and VI.3).

³⁸ The referencing of John 1 in relation to the opening words of Genesis happens in *The Literal Meaning* I.2.6. Augustine also relates Genesis 1 to John 1 in the *Lectures or Tractates on the Gospel According to St. John*, in *Augustin: Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies*, trans. J. Gibb and J. Innes, ed. P. Schaff, NPNF¹ vol. 7 (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1888; reprint, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), Tractates IX.5-6, XXVI.8, and XLIII.17.

³⁹ John 1:18.

⁴⁰ *The Literal Meaning* I.2.6.

⁴¹ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

⁴² *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

Holy Spirit with God's love and goodness.⁴³ The identification of the Spirit with love and goodness also is made in relation to the establishment of creation. For example, in *The Literal Meaning* I.7.13, he writes, "There is mention of the Spirit of God [*stirring above the water*], whereby the Divine Goodness and Love are to be understood." This explicitly links the Holy Spirit to the names goodness and love. Augustine continues in I.7.13 to note that creaturely "love is generally needy and poor, so that its outpouring makes it subordinate to the objects that it loves." However, God's creative works are not to be taken as an indication of God's need for something to love, because God has no need of anything outside himself. To describe the Spirit as goodness and love, in light of this divine self-sufficiency, requires that the Holy Spirit be described as stirring above the creation, so as to indicate that God's love is poured out, or given, "out of the largeness of his bounty." God's love is not needy, but overflows from the divine being.

In another passage Augustine writes, "Certainly *the Spirit of God was stirring* above this creation. For all that He had begun and had yet to form and perfect lay subject to the good will of the creator . . ." ⁴⁴ The creator [the Father] has subjected the creation to his good will, which is an explanation of Genesis 1:2 about the Spirit of God stirring above the deep. Just prior to this quotation, Augustine indicates that he understands the action of stirring above the deep also to designate the subjection of creation to God. When speaking of the creation being subject to the "good will of the creator" because the creation is under God's Spirit, Augustine is indicating that God's will is the communication of divine love (i.e., the bestowal of goodness upon the creation). The Holy Spirit is that divine will and love that bestows divine goodness upon creatures.⁴⁵ Creaturely existence is entirely dependent upon God, and there is no good thing except that which is subject to the divine goodness of the Spirit.

The naming of the Trinity in Genesis 1 is not simply an exercise in theological speculation for Augustine, as if he were testing his theory of the Trinity on a difficult text. Because he is convinced of the theological necessity of belief in

⁴³ The connection is implicit in *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

⁴⁴ *The Literal Meaning* I.5.11.

⁴⁵ Referring to the Holy Spirit, Augustine writes in *The Trinity* XV.38, "But if any person in the Trinity is to be distinctively called the will of God, this name like charity fits the Holy Spirit more than the others. What else after all is charity but the will?" We have already discussed the appropriateness of identifying the Holy Spirit with love in the godhead in previous chapter. Here Augustine carries the equivalence of love and will to its logical conclusion, because he understands love as the essence of God. In accordance with his understanding of divine simplicity, whereby the divine essence is indivisible, God's will is not different from his love.

the Trinity, he believes that God's activity must always be triune in shape. He does not simply identify the Trinity and then move on to talk about God's creativity without further reference to the Trinity. Rather, he enumerates the three in Genesis in order to be able to show the significance of the trinitarian nature of God for creation. In the next two sections we will look at how Augustine's discussion of the establishment and conversion of creation are elaborated and justified at greater length throughout the opening books of the *The Literal Meaning*, paying special attention to the trinitarian implications that the conversion of creatures has for his doctrine of creation. First, we will consider the establishment of the creation from nothing in the eternal reasons, and then how the founding phase is completed in the conversion of the eternal reasons into their material forms.

How the Trinity Founds the Creation

Creation originates because the Father forms it through the Son, his Word, and the Holy Spirit, his goodness, love, and will. The resultant creation is mutable in its spiritual and physical reality, thus distinguishing the creation from the immutable and perfect being of the Trinity.⁴⁶ Moreover, creation's dependence upon God is contrasted with God's independence from anything outside of the divine being.⁴⁷ The dependence of creation upon God is understood by Augustine to be the result of the creation not having existed apart from God's creative activity. For example, he writes, "our Catholic faith declares, and right reason teaches, that there could not have existed any matter of anything whatsoever unless it came from God."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *The Literal Meaning* I.5.10. Cp. *The Confessions* XII.12.15 and *The Trinity* III.21.

⁴⁷ *The Literal Meaning* IV.15.26, "For whatever comes from God is so dependent upon Him that it owes its existence to Him, but He does not owe His happiness to any creature He has made." In this quotation, Augustine's reference to God's happiness is explained by the context of the quotation, which is concerned with God's rest in Genesis 2:3. If God was dependent upon creation for his rest (he takes rest to be God's happiness with his creative work) then God's happiness would have increased after creating, thus contradicting divine immutability and simplicity.

⁴⁸ *The Literal Meaning* I.14.28. This is not strictly a definition of creation from nothing, which is not the primary subject of discussion in *The Literal Meaning*. Nevertheless, it indicates that Augustine worked with the concept in mind. For a detailed study of Augustine's understanding of creation from nothing, and his early use of it against the Manicheans, see N. J. Torchia, *'Creatio Ex Nibilo' and the Theology of St. Augustine: The Anti-Manichaean Polemic and Beyond* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999). The theological tradition that Augustine inherited already had developed the notion. On this development in the early church one may consult G. May, *Creatio Ex Nibilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation out of Nothing' in Early Christian Thought*, trans. A. S. Worrall

Creaturely existence comes from God alone, not from some prior existing matter.

Returning again to the quotation from *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12, we can consider how each of the divine persons is engaged in the establishment of the creation from nothing. According to Augustine, “when Scripture says, *In the beginning God created heaven and earth*, by the name of “God” we understand the Father.”⁴⁹ Genesis 1:1 does not refer to the creation of the physical earth and sky, for Augustine, but to the creation of spiritual and physical reality. Thus, as he explains elsewhere in *The Literal Meaning*, “by the expression ‘heaven’ we must understand a spiritual created work already formed and perfected, which is, as it were, the heaven of this heaven which is the loftiest in the material world.”⁵⁰ This is a reference to the angelic realm, which is perfected to a degree greater than the physical world, just as the physical heaven (‘sky’, or ‘firmament’) is used by human beings to refer metaphorically to that which is above and greater than the earth. Therefore, the spiritual realm is the “heavens of this heaven.”⁵¹ What this amounts to, for Augustine, is the idea that the Father is the creator of everything, both spiritual and physical. He will unpack this idea more when he turns to the next clause in I.6.12, where he explains his understanding of everything being created in the Word of God.

That Augustine understands “Beginning” as a reference to the Son has already been noted. The Son is the “Beginning” in relation to the establishment of the spiritual and material creation, but not a beginning in relation to the Father (who is without beginning). He writes, “And by the name of ‘Beginning,’ [we understand] the Son, who is the Beginning ... first and foremost for the spiritual beings He has created and then also for all creatures.”⁵² The creation is divided into two parts. The spiritual beings are the angels, and “all creatures” refers to the physical creation.

By explaining the Son’s establishment of the creation according to spiritual and physical beings, Augustine is indicating that there is an order to the creation—the angels are the “first and foremost” beings that the Son creates. What he means is that he thinks that Genesis 1:1 states a specific order in which God created, first the heavenly or spiritual realm, and then the earthly or physical realm. Augustine specifies that the spiritual realm has a certain priority over the physical realm in the

(Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994).

⁴⁹ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

⁵⁰ *The Literal Meaning* I.9.15.

⁵¹ Cp. similar statements at I.17.32 and XII.30.58.

⁵² *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

Father's and Son's establishment of them.⁵³ However, the order of the creation into spiritual and physical realms at their establishment, whereby the spiritual realm occupies a place above the physical realm, is not meant to denigrate the physical creation. It seems more probable that Augustine understands the ordering to refer to the degree of perfections that a created substance has. The mutability of a spiritual substance, like an angel or the soul, is limited to temporal change only, while a physical substance is subject to both temporal and spatial change. When the two are compared, Augustine finds that there is more perfection in a spiritual substance than a bodily substance because the spiritual is subject to less change than the physical: "He established the spiritual creation above the corporeal, because the spiritual is changeable only in time, but the corporeal is changeable in time and place."⁵⁴ The immutable and eternal Son, who is the beginning of both the spiritual and the physical creation, is above both of them as the unchanging, absolute source of their being.

Augustine identifies the Holy Spirit in Genesis 1:2, where the Spirit is mentioned explicitly, "*And the Spirit of God was stirring above the water.*" With this identification, he concludes that "we recognise a complete enumeration of the Trinity" in the work of establishing the creation.⁵⁵ Augustine explains the Holy Spirit's establishing work in two ways. First, in I.5.11, he says that the reference to the Holy Spirit being *above* the creation is meant to convey the idea that the creation is "subject to the good will of the Creator." For the creation to be subject to the

⁵³ In Letter 140.II.3, Augustine implies this idea of an order of spiritual and physical creatures when he speaks of the human soul: "The soul is situated, of course, in a certain mid-rank, having beneath it the bodily creature but having above it the creator of itself and of its body."

⁵⁴ *The Literal Meaning* VIII.20.39. N. J. Torchia, "The Implications of the Doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* in St. Augustine's Theology," in *Studia Patristica* 33, ed. E. A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 269, lists the following differences between spiritual natures and material natures that appear across Augustine's larger body of writings on creation: the spiritual are mutable in "temporal, cognitive, and moral terms" and the corporeal "are mutable in regard to time and place." The purpose of Augustine's distinction between the spiritual and corporeal in a hierarchy of creation is not to establish the superiority of the spiritual over the physical, but to help him explain how the Father and the Son founded the creation in an orderly fashion, which in Genesis 1:1 is indicated by listing heaven before the earth. Moreover, as one comes to understand the order of creation, one is led to praise the creator. We will see in chapter 8 that the exercise of dominion by creatures that are higher in this hierarchy is good only when it leads to the worship of God.

⁵⁵ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

Holy Spirit means that creation is dependent on the Holy Spirit. The “good will of the creator” is the stirring presence of the Holy Spirit, who is the basis from which created matter is established “according to its capacity.”⁵⁶ Created matter attains a certain capacity, or measure of being from the Holy Spirit, who stirs above it. In other words, the Holy Spirit is the will of God, bringing the creation to its fulfillment.

The second point Augustine makes about the Spirit “stirring above the water” concerns the meaning of “stirring”.⁵⁷ He notes that whereas Greek and Latin translations of Genesis 1:2 refer to “stirring” (*superferebatur*), the Syriac version calls it “brooding” (*fovebat*). This is a more suggestive term, pointing to how a bird will brood over its eggs, warming them so that the chicks inside may develop “through an affection similar to that of love.”⁵⁸ Accordingly, he substitutes the idea of “brooding” for “stirring over,” though he continues to use the word “stirring.” For Augustine, the insight provided by the idea of brooding concerns the Spirit’s fostering love, which creates the conditions for creation to attain the capacity to reflect the divine goodness and love that God willed for it through its participation in the “unchangeable and fixed exemplars of His coeternal Word and ... His equally coeternal Holy Spirit.”⁵⁹ In support of this he alludes to Luke 13:34, where Christ spoke of gathering Jerusalem under his wings just as a hen gathers her young, so as to help them grow to maturity.⁶⁰ The Holy Spirit’s work in establishing the creation is to create in creatures the capacity in their being for love—by brooding over them like a hen.⁶¹ This divine love and support received from the Holy Spirit at the

⁵⁶ *The Literal Meaning* 1.5.11.

⁵⁷ *The Literal Meaning* 1.18.36.

⁵⁸ *The Literal Meaning* 1.18.36.

⁵⁹ *The Literal Meaning* 1.18.36.

⁶⁰ *The Literal Meaning* 1.18.36.

⁶¹ For Augustine, when creatures develop the capacity for love through the brooding work of the Holy Spirit, they are said to have found their rest in God (*The Confessions* XIII.4.5). In *The Confessions*, he develops this idea of the stirring/brooding love of the Holy Spirit in reference to Isaiah 11:2, where the Holy Spirit is said to rest on people. Rather than meaning that the Holy Spirit is dependent on people, resting in Isaiah’s context signifies making people rest on God (by causing them to have wisdom, knowledge, and fear of God). Augustine uses the same idea of how people are stirred to love God here in *The Literal Meaning* 1.18.36. Their capacity to love God is stirred up by the brooding activity of the Holy Spirit in whom they find their rest.

establishment of the creation is what creatures depend upon for their existence and development. Of course, creating in the creature a capacity for love, no more than creaturely existence and development themselves, is not solely the work of the Holy Spirit. God is at work in his Word, as well as his Holy Spirit.⁶² To speak of the Holy Spirit creating the capacity for love in creatures is to speak of the Father's work. And to speak of the Father's work is to speak of the Son's, since the Father "says everything" (meaning the Father's work) through his Word.⁶³ Moreover, remembering our discussion in chapter 5 of the unity of the Trinity in terms of a simple, indivisible substance, one would say that the Trinity works one divine action, not three discrete actions.

The establishment of everything, by the Father in his Word and through the Holy Spirit, is from nothing. We noted earlier that the general pattern of creation which Augustine develops begins with the creatures existing in the Word of God as eternal reasons, which are then formed into the creatures that now exist in created reality.⁶⁴ The establishment of substantial creatures, and their separation from the formless void in the conversion and perfection of creatures, is expressed in scripture as happening over a period of seven days. Augustine understood the seven human days to have been created all at once by God,⁶⁵ because "both the thing made and the matter from which it was made were created together."⁶⁶ What appears as two causal stages—the establishment of everything from nothing and the conversion and perfection of individual creatures from unformed matter—are temporally simultaneous (because time is a creature shaped from this unformed matter as well, as we have noted above), and also form one creative action by the Trinity.

As we now turn to a discussion of the conversion and perfection of creatures, we will see that Augustine understands the trinitarian activity of conversion to overlap with his understanding of the establishment of creation. This is so because the two stages are not two discrete activities carried out by the Trinity, with different aims and means of achieving those aims. Rather, the two stages are

⁶² *The Literal Meaning* I.18.36.

⁶³ *The Literal Meaning* I.4.9. This also means the Son does nothing without the Father whose eternal Word he is.

⁶⁴ Some creatures, though, have not yet appeared, because they remain as causal reasons until their appearance. So all creatures now exist either in their individual, substantial forms, or at least potentially as causal reasons which will appear at their appointed time. God no longer creates new creatures.

⁶⁵ *The Literal Meaning* V.1.1-3.6.

⁶⁶ *The Literal Meaning* I.15.29.

one divine activity that results in the making of a good creation. The work of conversion is not different from the work of establishment, but each is a mode of one creative work, so that the same trinitarian presence carries through both stages. On the one hand, in presenting God's activity as it is described in Genesis 1 as two stages, Augustine is able to work out the details of how the spiritual and physical creation comes into being in such manner that the order described in Genesis 1 is explained cogently. On the other hand, by keeping the trinitarian nature of God's creative work in his explanation of the stages, he is able to show that the stages form a unity that is both complex, that is, one can discern stages, and that is simple, that is, because the trinitarian persons carry out one activity that is indivisible, just as their nature is indivisible. What is begun by the Trinity in the establishment of creatures from nothing is carried through to its divinely appointed ends in the conversion of those creatures. After we describe the conversion of creatures, we will then be in a position to consider at greater length how the two stages form a unity.

How the Trinity Converts and Perfects Creatures

The trinitarian conversion and perfection of creatures, as Augustine described them in *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12, covers Genesis 1:3-2:3. What he means is the conversion of creatures from formless void mentioned in Genesis 1:3 to their particular, substantial forms over the six days of creation. He describes, it will be recalled, the trinitarian shape of the conversion and perfection of creatures in this way:

So in the conversion and in the perfecting of creatures by which their species are separated in due order, the Blessed Trinity is likewise represented: the Word and the Father of the Word, as indicated in the statement, *God said*; and then the Divine Goodness, by which God finds pleasure in all the limited perfections of his creatures, which please Him, as indicated by the words, *God saw that it was good*.⁶⁷

Specifically, the Trinity works “in the conversion and in the perfecting of creatures by which their species are separated in due order.” As creatures are converted from the unformed matter, so that each creature is separated from the others and made distinct from the others, it is the Trinity shaping them.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

⁶⁸ Augustine describes the creation of unformed matter—the void of Genesis 1:2—and the form given to creatures as simultaneous. In *The Confessions* XIII.33.48, he writes of creatures:

They are made of nothing by you, not from you, not from some matter not of your making or previously existing, but from matter created by you together with its form—that is simultaneously. For you gave form to its formlessness with no interval of time between. The matter of heaven and

Before we examine the Trinity's work of converting and perfecting creatures, we need to establish what Augustine means by conversion and perfection. Augustine calls the shaping of each creature out of the formless matter a "conversion," because the creature is given its substantial form from the formless matter, and is thereby said to be perfected in its existence. For a spiritual or physical substance not to exist in the spiritual or physical form that it is intended for is to exist in an unconverted or imperfect state, which the formless void represents.⁶⁹

As will be seen below in connection with the work of the Word of God, conversion and perfection not only refers to the initial work of forming the creature from the formless void, but also to how conversion from formlessness is an ongoing work, since the creature is continually being "called back" to God by the Word.⁷⁰

earth is one thing, the beauty of heaven and earth is another. You made the matter from absolutely nothing, but the beauty of the world from formless matter—and both simultaneously so that the form followed the matter without any pause or delay.

From the establishment of creation out of nothing, to the creation of the formless matter, to the conversion of the forms of various kinds of creatures from that matter, there is no temporal sequence, but just a causal sequence.

⁶⁹ *The Literal Meaning* I.4.9.

⁷⁰ *The Literal Meaning* I.4.9. Also see J. Oroz Reta, "The Role of Divine Attraction in Conversion According to Saint Augustine," in *From Augustine to Eriugena: Essays on Neoplatonism and Christianity in Honour of J. O'Meara*, ed. F. X. Martin and J. A. Richmond (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 155-67. Reta discusses Augustine's understanding of conversion as God's mysterious power to attract creatures to turn to him through the work of his incarnate Son. While his analysis focuses on the redemptive conversion of the human being from sin, much of his discussion fits well in the context of I.4.9, where the divine attraction of God's Word calls creatures into existence from the formless matter, and maintains them from their tendency toward non-existence. Augustine not only uses the term conversion to explain redemption and creation, but his description of the meaning of conversion in creation is similar to his description of conversion in redemption. The article by Hassell, mentioned earlier in fn.25, also draws out this parallel usage. Torchia points out the parallel functions of conversion in redemption from sin and conversion in divine creation, noting that Augustine's use of the term conversion to describe the formation of species into their various kinds from the formless matter "places his theory of creation squarely in a moral context" (*Creatio Ex Nibilo*, 107). By "moral context," Torchia means Augustine's conception of God as the supreme good (*summum bonum*) who attracts the creature toward his goodness. The creation reflects the divine goodness by existing as God's good work.

Conversion and perfection are a continuing work because a mutable creature “tends to nothingness,”⁷¹ by which Augustine means it has a tendency to turn away from God, who is the source of creaturely being and form in the establishment of creation. Creation of the material forms from the formless matter is a “calling back” because the tendency to fall back into formless imperfection and non-existence requires creatures constantly to depend on God’s Word, who calls to them.⁷²

A similar understanding of conversion and perfection as continuous work is related to the Holy Spirit by Augustine. Creatures are said to be perfected as God establishes and maintains them in their divinely intended individual forms, so that they rest in the “good will of the creator.”⁷³ This is the Spirit’s “loving endorsement of creation The Spirit’s recognition of the goodness of all things reflects the Divine goodness which both wills and sustains created reality.”⁷⁴ Above, we discussed how the Holy Spirit is part of the divine work of giving creatures their form according to their Beginning. Here, the perfecting work of the Holy Spirit is understood to maintain that form, just as being converted according to the Word also is a continual process.

Augustine names the Father and the Word together in the conversion of creatures, describing the Son as the speech by which the Father creates. He identifies the Father and the Word of the Father in Genesis 1:3, where he understands them to be “indicated in the statement, ‘God said’.”⁷⁵ As above, in our discussion of the establishment of the creation, God is the Father and the source from which creation is made, and the Son is the Word that God speaks.⁷⁶ In the conversion and

⁷¹ *The Literal Meaning* I.4.9.

⁷² In this section we are focussing on the role of the Trinity in the conversion of the creature from the formless void. In the next chapter we will take up the idea of the creature’s conversion again, in terms of the governance of God. God’s governance maintains creatures in their perfections.

⁷³ This has been alluded to in our discussion of *The Literal Meaning* I.18.36.

⁷⁴ Torchia, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, 107.

⁷⁵ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

⁷⁶ In *The Literal Meaning* II.6.12, the equality of the Father and Son is noted: But it ill becomes the Trinity that the Son should be, as it were, under orders in performing his work By what words would the Father order the Son to perform a work, since the Son is the original Word of the Father by which all things have been made?

Augustine is pointing out the equality of the Father and Son by noting that the Son is the Word of God, rather than under God’s command. We noted in chapter 5 that

perfection of creatures in the six days, the Father and Son are presented as calling creatures into their particular forms on the appropriate day. In putting forward this interpretation of how the Father and Son are involved in the conversion of creatures, Augustine suggests that when the text of Genesis repeats the phrase “And God said, ‘Let there be *x*’” for each day of creation, it does not mean that God spoke the words “Let there be *x*” time and again, but rather that “He begot one Word in whom He said all before the several works were made.”⁷⁷

What happens when the Father speaks “Let there be *x*” each day? God and his Word create each creature according to their proper form by converting unformed matter, so that it imitates the Word, who in his relationship to the creature is the creature’s exemplar.⁷⁸ Augustine defines the meaning of imitation in this way:

[I]t is when it [the creature] turns, everything in the way suited to its kind, to that which truly and always is, to the creator, that is to say of its own being, that it really imitates the form of the Word which always and unchangingly adheres to the Father, and receives its own form, and becomes a perfect, complete creature.⁷⁹

If a creature is not to tend toward nothingness, then it must turn, i.e., be converted to the creator of its being, so that it can receive its form. The creature is said to be turned toward, and receive form from, its creator, when it imitates the “form of the [Father’s] Word.” The Word’s form is its unchanging adherence to its Father. Therefore, when the creature turns toward the Word in imitation of the Word’s unity with the Father, it is said to receive its proper form, because by its turning toward the Word it is adhering to the Word. Just as the Word is eternally turned toward, and joined to its Father, so the creature must be turned toward and joined with its creator, who is the Word of the Father. In saying this, Augustine understands the creature to be converted to its proper form. The Word gives existence to creatures by calling them into being from nothing, and establishing them in proper forms, thus ensuring that the Father’s creation takes shape according to the Father’s will. The Word can do this because he is the command of the Father, spoken to the creation. The perfection of the creature is its conversion to its proper form by the Word,

Augustine also discussed the difference between conceiving of the Son as the command of God, rather than as being under the command of God, in *Answer to Maximus the Arian* II.XIV.9.

⁷⁷ *The Literal Meaning* II.6.13.

⁷⁸ *The Literal Meaning* I.4.9.

⁷⁹ *The Literal Meaning* I.4.9. This quotation is from Hill’s translation of *The Literal Meaning*, which on this point is clearer than Taylor’s.

whose form of unity with the Father the creature imitates by being shaped by the Father's command, which is the Son.⁸⁰ It is in this sense of the Son being the Father's Word that creatures are called back to their proper form from the formless void.

The Holy Spirit's role in the conversion of creatures is important to Augustine's explanation of Genesis 1, and he discusses the Spirit's work at length as the divine goodness by which the Father sees the creation is good. After Augustine has identified the Father and Son in the phrase "God said," he then discusses how, in Genesis 1:3-2:3, the Holy Spirit is the

... Divine Goodness, by which God finds pleasure in all the limited perfections of his creatures, which please Him, as indicated by the words, *God saw that it was good.*⁸¹

Augustine names the Holy Spirit as "divine goodness" in this quotation. That Augustine intends the reader to understand that the Holy Spirit is signified by the phrase "divine goodness" is the third point in his enumeration of the creative work of the Trinity in the conversion and perfection of creatures. Then, a few lines later, he makes the identification more explicit when he writes that "when there is mention of the Spirit of God ... the Divine Goodness and Love are to be understood."⁸² Augustine intends the references to love and goodness in *The Literal Meaning* to apply specifically to the Holy Spirit, as will now be shown.

The divine goodness is the means by which "God [the Father] finds pleasure in all the limited perfections of his creatures."⁸³ What is here translated as 'limited' is

⁸⁰ *The Literal Meaning* I.4.9. The creature's imitation of the Word, who unchangingly adheres to the Father, is similar to Augustine's description of the human being's redemption from sin, which he understands as the its spirit being "made one" (i.e. when the person's spirit is perfected according to its form) just as Christ clings to the Father in the unity (oneness) of substance. In *The Literal Meaning*, the language used by Augustine is that of the creature being perfected, while in redemption he refers to the Christian's spirit being made one. Both happen when the creature/Christian clings to the Son in imitation of the Son's clinging to the Father. See our discussion of how the Christian's spirit is made one by clinging to Christ in *The Trinity* VI.9, in chapter 5. One finds the form of life for the creature, whether in creation or in redemption, in the relationship of Father and Son who adhere (cling) to one another.

⁸¹ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

⁸² *The Literal Meaning* I.7.13.

⁸³ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

the Latin word *modulo*, which means a small or limited measure of something. The “limited perfections” is a reference to the fact that God creates finite beings, whose very condition for existence is dependent upon the measure, number, and weight that he gives them, each according to the kind of being they are.⁸⁴ If God is the supreme good by which all other goods are created,⁸⁵ then the creatures God creates will share in that goodness according to the limits established by God.⁸⁶ God finds pleasure in their limited perfections because they embody the goodness that is from God “according to the largeness of His bounty.”⁸⁷ In other words, God creates good creatures with a generous love, and enjoys the degrees of goodness exemplified in his creatures. We noted earlier how Augustine contrasts this divine love for creatures with creaturely love that “is generally needy and poor, so that its outpouring makes it subordinate to the objects that it loves.”⁸⁸ God does not create out of need for love (which is perfect in God), but loves out of delight for the goodness of things that he creates by his generosity, which overflows as the work of creation.

What does the Holy Spirit do to make the creation’s limited perfections a pleasure to the Father? According to Augustine an indication of the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and perfection of creatures is found in Genesis 1:4, “God saw that it was good.”⁸⁹ Augustine interprets the phrase “it was good” as a

⁸⁴ See *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.7. A thorough discussion of this is given in W. J. Roche, “Measure, Number, and Weight in Saint Augustine,” *New Scholasticism* 15 (1941): 350-76. It will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

⁸⁵ *Concerning the Nature of the Good* I-III. See A. A. Moon’s translation, *The De Natura Boni of Saint Augustine* (Catholic University of America Dissertation, Washington, 1955). A discussion of the divine nature, including Augustine’s understanding of the *summum bonum*, is in Scott MacDonald, “The Divine Nature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. E. Stump and N. Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 71-90. Also see Norman Kretzmann, “A General Problem of Creation: Why Would God Create Anything at All?,” in *Being and Goodness: The Concept of the Good in Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology*, ed. S. MacDonald (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 202-28.

⁸⁶ *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.7. Only the Son and the Holy Spirit are said to embody the fullness of God’s goodness completely in themselves, since they are of the same divine substance. See chapter 5 for our discussion of this idea in *The Trinity*.

⁸⁷ *The Literal Meaning* I.7.13.

⁸⁸ *The Literal Meaning* I.7.13.

⁸⁹ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

reference to the Holy Spirit, because it is through the Holy Spirit's work of converting and perfecting the creation's limited goodness that creation is seen by the Father to be good. This reflects the earlier discussion of the Holy Spirit's role in the establishment of the creation from nothing where it was suggested that the Spirit creates in creatures their capacity for love (i.e. their proper rest in God). In both the establishment and the conversion of creatures, the Holy Spirit is the means by which creation is perfected, in order to exemplify the goodness it was created for by God.⁹⁰

Later in book II, Augustine again takes up the idea of God's finding "pleasure" in the goodness of creation when he writes,

Moreover, by the words, *And God saw that it was good*, we should understand that the Divine Goodness was pleased in the work of creation; and thus the work which God was pleased to make would continue in its existence as a creature, as indicated by the words, *The Spirit of God was stirring above the water*.⁹¹

The divine goodness is the Holy Spirit, the one who is pleased with the work of creation that the Father creates through his Word. The Spirit's pleasure is also the way by which God the Father continues to bestow existence upon the creature. Elsewhere, Augustine specifies that the Father's pleasure in the creation is "in keeping with the benevolence by which He was pleased to create them."⁹² The Father creates by means of his benevolence (goodness), who is the Holy Spirit. The continued bestowal of existence upon the creation is a free and generous act of love by God the Father, carried out by the Spirit stirring over the waters so that they might bring forth a creation that is a pleasure for God.⁹³

One also finds a similar idea of the Holy Spirit described in terms of sight and goodness in *The Confessions* XIII.28.43-31.46, where Augustine discusses the phrase "and God saw that it was very good" in Genesis 1:31. Augustine begins by affirming that each thing God the Father has made is good and that all things taken together are very good (28.43). Augustine then goes on to draw a parallel between God's seeing and his own seeing, by describing how "I see those things which through my Spirit you see, just as I also say the things which through my Spirit you say" (29.44). Here, alluding back to how Genesis 1:31 describes God as seeing all things to be very good, Augustine now claims that what God sees is also through the

⁹⁰ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12 and I.8.14.

⁹¹ *The Literal Meaning* II.8.19.

⁹² *The Literal Meaning* I.8.14.

⁹³ E.g., *The Literal Meaning* I.7.13-8.14. The freedom of God's creative activity is taken up in R. Cousineau, "Creation and Freedom, An Augustinian Problem: 'Quia voluit?' and/or 'Quia bonus?'" *Recherches Augustiniennes* 2 (1962): 253-71.

Holy Spirit. We know that he means it is the Holy Spirit by which he sees, and not simply his own spirit, because it also is the Spirit by which God sees and speaks. For Augustine, God would not see or speak through a creature's mutable spirit, but through his coeternal Holy Spirit.

Augustine clarifies his understanding of how creatures are able to see the goodness of the creation because of the Spirit's perfecting work in *Confessions* XIII.30.45, where he contrasts the claim of Genesis 1:31 with the Manichean view, which is a different (and for Augustine, false) understanding of the creation. The Manicheans contend that not all things are created by God, and not all things are good in their original creation, because some things are created by an evil power that exists in opposition to God. The result is that the Manicheans "do not see your works with the help of your Spirit and do not recognise you in them" (30.45). Here, seeing the works of creation is the ability to recognise them for what they are, namely, good, because they are created by a good God. Seeing the goodness of the creation is possible because one's perception is conditioned by the work of the Holy Spirit, who enables such recognition. Seeing, then, is not simply a physical perception of the creation, but is an informed understanding of what the creation is, and is related to right knowledge. Seeing that the creation is good is possible because one has a right view as enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Augustine concludes his reflection on the Holy Spirit and creation's goodness in *Confessions* XIII.31.46, by focussing on those who do see the works of creation to be good because those works are wholly from God the creator.

When people see these things [your works of creation] with the help of your Spirit, it is you who are seeing in them. When, therefore, they see that things are good, you are seeing that they are good. Whatever pleases them for your sake is pleasing you in them. The things which by the help of your Spirit delight us are delighting you in us.⁹⁴

Here he is pointing to the Holy Spirit as God's seeing and as the source of the creature's seeing that its existence is from God. People seeing how the creation is good do so because "your Spirit" (that is, God the Father's Spirit—Augustine does not name the Son here) enables them to recognise the creation's goodness. When

⁹⁴ *The Confessions* XIII.31.46. James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1992), III: 410, notes that this is an allegorical interpretation of Genesis 1:31, and not to be taken literally except in an eschatological sense. The allegorical point is that the Holy Spirit is the sight of God, and God's sight is the basis for how creatures can truly see the creation to be from God. As God's Spirit provides a creature with that sight, within the work of redemption, they see it for what it is. However, Augustine's discussion of this passage in the *Confessions* also parallels his discussion in *The Literal Meaning* of how God sees that the creation is good through the divine goodness.

people are enabled to recognise the goodness of the creation through the Holy Spirit's work of conversion, then "you are seeing that they are good," by which he means that God is seeing the fulfillment of his works ("And God saw that it was very good") because they are taking shape according to God's good, creative intentions. When people delight in God's creation as good, it is because the Holy Spirit enables them to do so. Likewise, God delights in his creature's delight in God's goodness, because as they do so, they are manifesting what God created them for, namely, to be a good creation which recognises (knows) its creator.⁹⁵

In the conversion and perfection of creatures in the six days of Genesis 1, the Father and his Word convert the formless matter they have made from nothing into the creaturely forms that now exist by speaking the variety of species into being on each of the six days. Augustine establishes the presence of the Father and Son in the creative work by drawing out the implications of what it means for the creator God to speak his Word. The Holy Spirit converts creatures in their limited perfections so that they realise the goodness for which they have been made. Augustine establishes the Holy Spirit's presence in the work of conversion by explaining how the capacity for goodness that creatures have through the Holy Spirit is a delight to the Father, who sees the creaturely goodness through his Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

In Augustine's explanation of the triune nature of creation, the Son is the speech by which the Father creates, and the Holy Spirit is the divine goodness by which the Father sees that the creation is good. The Holy Spirit is God's seeing, just as the Son is God's speaking. As has been shown over the course of this chapter, in his trinitarian interpretation of the Genesis text, Augustine develops his understanding of the relationship of God to his Word in the act of speaking, following the biblical concept of the Son as God's Word. The Holy Spirit is more difficult to identify in Genesis 1, however, since the verses that follow Genesis 1:2, where the Spirit is said to stir over the deep, make no further, explicit mention of the stirring Spirit. However, in God's declaration of the creation's goodness, Augustine finds the key that clarifies the Holy Spirit's identity. The work of the Holy Spirit in nurturing (which is how Augustine explains the work of stirring above the creation) and bringing about the goodness of creatures is distinguished from God's speech by

⁹⁵ J. Burnaby relates the delight of creatures for their creator's good creation to what he calls "love at worship," whereby the dynamism of the creator-creation relationship that the Holy Spirit works between God and creatures issues in the loving worship of God. This worship is not because of God's requirement of worship, but because of the abundance of love that God produces in his creatures—a love originating from his overflowing bounty, which causes creatures to reciprocate that love to God in worship of his goodness by which they are. See *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, rev. ed. (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1991), 168.

linking that work to how God sees the creation's goodness. In Augustine's explanation of the creative work (the establishment and conversion of the creation) of the Trinity, the Father's creative activity is spoken in his Word and the divine goodness follows after the work of the Word. This pattern parallels his model of the inner Trinity where the Father is the fount of the Son and the Holy Spirit proceeds from both (but principally from the Father).⁹⁶ The order of the relations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit described in his trinitarian doctrine are also the order of the works of the Trinity as he interprets Genesis 1.

In bringing out the importance of the Trinity for Augustine's explanation of creation in Genesis 1, we have focussed primarily on how he describes each of the three in the work of founding the creation. Nonetheless, the three are one God, and their work is one work as well. It should be possible to understand how the creative activity of the Trinity is one work, since the order of the creative activities of the three parallels the relations of origin in the doctrine of the Trinity. In order to understand how the activity of creating is one work, it should be noted that the eternal simplicity of the divine substance (a key for how Augustine understands what it means to speak of God as one) provides a framework to understand the activity of the persons as one activity, not three activities. In *The Trinity*, Augustine had argued, based on the revelation of the divine economy in Scripture, that the divine substance is one and that each of the three is that one substance.⁹⁷ Part of his argument was that God's being (substance) is identical with any divine action, because God could not be different from his activity in the economy without the divine being changing.⁹⁸ As we have seen, Augustine connected the unity of divine being and action to the nature of the relations between the three persons, by putting forward examples of divine unity such as the Son eternally clinging to the Father, and the Holy Spirit being the glue or friendship of the Father and Son.⁹⁹

The conception of unity and distinction in the divine substance involves relative distinctions—relations of love between the persons where love is not different from any of the persons, but is the substance which each of the three persons are. Such an account of the Trinity brings out the dynamism of divine substance as charity.¹⁰⁰ In Augustine's understanding of the triune logic, these

⁹⁶ *The Trinity* IV.29.

⁹⁷ See chapters 4-5.

⁹⁸ If God's being changed, it would mean that his being was different from what it was, and therefore that God was not perfect. See *The Trinity* V.3.

⁹⁹ See our discussion of *The Trinity* VI.7-9, pp. 141-43, 163-65.

¹⁰⁰ *The Trinity* VI.7-9.

dynamic relations constitute the godhead. Similarly, the distinct creative works he attributes to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one activity. By keeping in mind the relations of the three persons in terms of cleaving to each other in the inner Trinity, one can see how his discussion in *The Literal Meaning* of the individual operations of the persons are congruous with the unity of the divine substance. The creative work of the Father is his speaking the creation into existence through his Word; and it also is through the perfecting goodness of his Holy Spirit, who unites the establishment and conversion of the creation in the Word to the Father by bringing creation's goodness to the Father's sight. While Augustine does not spell out in *The Literal Meaning* that in the creative activity God's speaking and seeing are not different from himself but are one with him, one can infer that this is the case, based on the logic of his doctrine of the Trinity, by which he conceives of the Son and the Holy Spirit as one substance with the Father.

The creative work of the three persons is one work because the eternal activity of the three persons is not divided into temporal operations, but is one simultaneous activity. The three modes of one action find cohesion in their source in the Father,¹⁰¹ who is the source of the creation, speaking its ordering through his Word and seeing its completion and fulfilment in the operation of his Holy Spirit who perfects its goodness.¹⁰² Because the Trinity is eternal and immutable, the founding of creation does not happen in temporal stages, but all at once, according to the nature of the creator. The operation of the Holy Spirit in the act of creation is not temporally after the Word or the Father, nor is the Father prior to his Word and the Holy Spirit. The founding of creation from nothing in the Father's Word and Spirit is simultaneous with the founding of creation by its conversion and perfection from the formless void.¹⁰³ There is an order to the creative activity of the persons, but it is an order that is one activity undertaken by the Trinity.

The Word spoken is the creative power that gives creation its form and conversion to being from non-being. The Word spoken is the Father's Son carrying the Father's will toward its fulfillment. The Word is the very command of the Father

¹⁰¹ E.g., *The Literal Meaning* I.5.11, "But what the Son speaks, the Father speaks, because in the speech of the Father, the Word, who is the Son, is uttered according to God's eternal way—if we can use the term 'way' in describing God's utterance of His eternal Word."

¹⁰² E.g., *The Literal Meaning* I.8.14, "Moreover, when the works thus begun had been formed and perfected, *God saw that it was good*. For he found His works pleasing, in keeping with the benevolence by which He was pleased to create them." The benevolence is the love of the Holy Spirit by which creatures exist and in which creatures abide, as we discussed above.

¹⁰³ *The Literal Meaning* I.18.36.

fulfilled in its being spoken. The Word ensures that the Father's creation takes shape according to the Father's will, which is the same will as that of the Son.

The Holy Spirit does not come after the fact to finish the creation nor to speak a new word that declares the creation's goodness. There is only one Word of creation, and that is from the Father. The Holy Spirit's work also is from the Father, drawing the Father into the delight of his good creation that has found its form in the eternal Word of the Father. The Holy Spirit loves the creation and perfects it in accordance with the forms that the Word gives it. Just as the Spirit's charity in the Trinity unites the Father and Son in the bond of love, so in creation the Spirit is the fulfillment of the Father and Son's work, and the unity of the creation as one work. The Holy Spirit perfects the creation so that the Father's creative will, spoken through the Son, is seen in its goodness and is therefore a source of delight.

In the next chapter we will consider how the Trinity governs the creation, the second phase of Augustine's discussion of how he thinks of God's activity in relation to the creation. We will see that for Augustine trinitarian governance is explained in terms of divine providential care, because creatures are dependent upon God for their continued existence through participation in the Trinity. Creaturely dependence upon and participation in the Trinity are related to Augustine's conception of the Trinity's goodness and the trinitarian love for creation. This divine love for creation shapes Augustine's understanding of the nature of the divine governance of creation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TRINITARIAN GOVERNANCE OF CREATION AND CREATURELY PARTICIPATION IN GOD

In the previous chapter we examined how Augustine's conception of the twofold nature of God's creative activity was rooted in his understanding of God as Trinity. It also was noted that he understood creation's existence as necessarily dependent on God; otherwise, the creation would cease to exist, because nothing can exist outside of God's sustaining Word who gives form to the creation, nor apart from the Holy Spirit who is God's good will, shaping and maintaining creatures.¹ This chapter will explore the implications of how creatures continue to exist because they are sustained by the triune God who enables them, by his providential government of them, to partake in him. We will begin with a general examination of how Augustine's understanding of the providential nature of divine government is based on his use of the concept of participation. Then, we will turn to an examination of two instances of how Augustine explained that creatures are governed through their ontological participation in God, namely, through motion, and through their having a certain measure, number, and weight. Then, at the end of the chapter, we will address the question whether the interpretation of the conversion of creation from the formless void must require Augustine to understand God's creative work as divine overpowering of created substance, or whether the ontological participation of creation in God allows for a different understanding of God's creative work. This chapter will set the stage for the next chapter, where we will turn to consider Augustine's understanding of human dominion as it is given to humanity on the basis of their being created in God's image according to Genesis 1:26.

Augustine's understanding of God's continued involvement with the creation after the founding work is an important component of his doctrine of creation, called divine governance, or providence. As has already been described, Augustine interpreted the two creation stories of Genesis 1:1-2:3 and 2:4-3:24 as a unified narrative, where the first part refers to God's establishment of everything from nothing and its conversion into the spiritual and material forms that now exist; and where the second part refers to how God continues to work in the creation through providential governance.² As Augustine moves from Genesis 1:1-2:3 to 2:4-3:24, he

¹ *The Literal Meaning* II.8.19; cp. I.5.10-11.

² The appearance of new creatures and species occurs as the causal reasons unfold at their appropriate times, like a seed germinating unseen in the ground and then sprouting at the appropriate time under God's governance. Thus, no new creating is done after God rests from the founding work (V.23.45).

explains that the rest attributed to God on the seventh day (2:2-3) does not conflict with the description of God's work as it is then depicted in Genesis 2:4ff.³ Rather, it points to how God rests from creating new things after the six days of Genesis 1. Divine rest, then, denotes how God continues to govern his creation after the completion of the founding of creation. Divine rest also refers to how God rests in himself apart from all his created works, while the creation only finds its rest when it is led to repose in God, according to its measure, number, and weight.⁴ The creation's rest is found only in God, which implies the creation's need for God is a need for God's providence, since no created good can exist apart from God, who is the source of all good. Thus, God's rest refers first to his rest in himself, and then to how creation must find its rest in God rather than in itself.

Governance indicates how God still works in the creation, so that creatures continue to exist. Through providential governance,

God moves His whole creation by a hidden power, and all creatures are subject to this movement: the angels carry out His commands, the stars move in their courses ... animals are born and live their lives according to their proper instincts, the evil are permitted to try the just.⁵

Providential governance is characterised by Augustine as a “double activity” of “the natural and the voluntary.”⁶ Natural providence refers to the way that God ensures all creatures live and move and find their proper rest. For example, God's providential government makes trees grow according to their created capacity. Voluntary providence refers to how God governs souls, so that they are instructed, are able to acquire knowledge, able to cultivate the land and to live in harmony with others.⁷ Also related to voluntary providence is God's power to accomplish his own good will despite the evil intentions of fallen wills.⁸ “Hence it is that God ... is over all creatures,

³ See *The Literal Meaning* IV.11.21-12.23, also V.23.46.

⁴ See *The Literal Meaning* IV.18.34: “For the perfection of each thing according to the limits of its nature is established in a state of rest ... in Him to whom it owes its being, in whom the universe itself exists.” Augustine's reference to a creature's being in God is based on Paul's understanding of being as existing in God (Acts 17:28). The limits of a creaturely nature are its measure, number, and weight, which will be discussed below.

⁵ *The Literal Meaning* V.20.40-41.

⁶ *The Literal Meaning* VIII.9.17.

⁷ *The Literal Meaning* VIII.9.17.

⁸ *The Literal Meaning* VIII.23.44. Augustine also points out that God, who has

that is, over natures that they may have existence, and over wills that they may do nothing without either His command or His permission.”⁹

To underscore that God’s providential government is a trinitarian work, Augustine refers to Paul’s sermon to the Athenians (Acts 17:28), in which Paul says “In him we live and move and have our being.” Augustine explains that this verse confirms how God “works ceaselessly in the creatures He has made.”¹⁰ Rather than meaning that creaturely existence is in God in the same manner as “He has life in himself,”¹¹ it means that God’s work of governance is the basis by which creaturely existence is maintained. This happens because God works through his wisdom (Son) and his good will (Holy Spirit), who keep creatures alive by holding all things together and by keeping them in motion.¹² If God’s wisdom and good will did not reach out and cause creatures to continue to move toward God, then all things would cease to participate in God, and thus cease to exist.¹³

The concern of this chapter is largely with natural providence, by which all creatures continue in their existence through dependence upon God. In particular, we will explore natural providence in terms of how God has made creatures to participate in God, especially as it is expressed in terms of the motion of all creatures, and through their measure, number, and weight. We pointed out in the previous chapter that Augustine’s explanation of governance overlaps with his discussion of the founding of the creation. As we discuss the motion of creatures, we will see that Augustine links God’s providential care to the ongoing perfection of creatures. In our discussion of measure, number, and weight, we will see how Augustine portrays the Father to be the Measure who limits creatures, just as he is the source of the creation from nothing; the Son is the Number who gives form to creatures, which corresponds to the Word’s founding work of forming creatures; and the Holy Spirit gives weight to creatures, just as in the founding of creation the Holy Spirit hovers over the deep, fostering the love in creatures that draws out their goodness.

created everything and has declared it good, when punishing an evil will according to his justice, never does so “to the extent of destroying the dignity of its nature.”

⁹ *The Literal Meaning* VIII.24.45.

¹⁰ *The Literal Meaning* IV.12.23.

¹¹ *The Literal Meaning* IV.12.23. This is a reference to John 5:26.

¹² *The Literal Meaning* IV.12.23 and VIII.20.39.

¹³ *The Literal Meaning* V.20.40-22.43. Also see C. J. O’Toole, *The Philosophy of Creation in the Writings of St. Augustine* (Washington: Catholic University Of America, 1944), 95-96.

In the next chapter, we will consider God's governance of creatures through voluntary providence, and its implications for understanding the command for humans to exercise dominion over other creatures. We turn now to Augustine's characterisation of creaturely dependence on God's governance in terms of its participation in God.

Participation in Augustine's Theology

Despite the importance of the concept of participation to Augustine's theology of creation, little scholarly attention seems to have been devoted to the topic in modern times. David V. Meconi has presented a survey of secondary literature, and a preliminary analysis of the earliest writings in which Augustine uses the concept. He identifies three areas in which Augustine relies upon the concept: ontology, epistemology, and deification.¹⁴ In this section, we will lay out a general picture of the concept of participation as Augustine employed it, using Meconi's three areas. We will look at each in turn, noting the way that the concept of participation enables Augustine to explain how the creation can be related to God, while also maintaining the distinction of God's transcendence over the creation and creation's dependence on God. This discussion of participation will serve as an introduction to the next two sections, where we will explore two instances of how Augustine describes the way that creatures participate in God according to God's providential government.

The first area where Augustine uses the concept of participation is to explain the ontological status of creation, by positing that all contingent created beings, and the qualities that they possess as existent beings, are dependent on God for their existence.¹⁵ The most basic insight of the ontological dimension of participation theory concerns how creatures, unlike the divine being, are not their own perfections, but rather have their perfections through participation in the immutable perfections of the divine being.¹⁶ For example, a creature, which is, by definition, mutable, is unable to be

¹⁴ "St. Augustine's Early Theory of Participation," *Augustinian Studies* 27 (1996): 81-98. He cites seven authors who have written on participation, from 1926 to the present. He overlooks M. Smallbrugge, "La notion de la participation chez Augustin: quelques observations sur le rapport christianisme-platonisme," in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Melanges T. J. Van Bavel*, 333-347. Smallbrugge's article is concerned chiefly with the manner in which Augustine used the Platonic understanding of participation in his theology. He focuses on how Augustine reversed the neo-platonic conception of an inferior creation ascending the hierarchy of being to participate in the superior One, by emphasising God's descent through the incarnation, in order to lift up humanity to God.

¹⁵ Meconi, "St. Augustine's Early Theory of Participation," 87.

¹⁶ See M. Annice, "Historical Sketch of the Theory of Participation," *The New Scholasticism* 26 (1952): 49-79.

a “good-in-itself.” Its goodness is through participation in a good that is immutable, or a “Good-in-itself.”¹⁷ That immutable good, namely, the supreme good, God, participates in nothing outside of itself. We have already seen that in Augustine’s interpretation of Genesis 1, all creatures are said to be good by God when they are formed according to his Word and given their capacity for limited perfection through the Holy Spirit. They are good because they are created by God, who is the greatest good. The maintenance of creaturely goodness is God’s trinitarian governance of the creature, by which they share in the Goodness by which they are good.

To take another example, concerning “The Divine Word and Son of God,” Augustine writes, “In His case not only is being the same thing as living, but living is the same thing as living wisely and happily.”¹⁸ This is contrasted with created beings, which are formless until the Word shapes them into creatures whose “being is the same thing as living, but living is not the same as possessing a life of wisdom and happiness.”¹⁹ After their formation by the Word, creaturely being is identical to its living—though only as far as God continues to maintain their being. Furthermore, the mutable perfections of their nature are only possessed by them through the work of God’s Holy Spirit, who nurtures their “limited perfections,”²⁰ so that they “may exist” and “abide” according to the purpose of God’s love.²¹ As we will see below, a key way that Augustine explains the providential care of the Trinity is by describing how creatures are made to participate ontologically through their measure, weight, and number.

The second area in which Augustine relies upon the concept of participation, according to Meconi, is his understanding of epistemology. Augustine’s epistemology is grounded in the concept of participation because he understands rational beings to receive their wisdom and illumination from God’s own wisdom.²² Augustine touches upon this epistemological usage in *The Literal Meaning*. He explains the nature of the light that was created three days before the creation of the sun and moon (Genesis 1:3-13) thus,

when eternal and unchangeable Wisdom ... enters into spiritual and rational creatures, as he is wont to come into holy souls ... then in the reason which

¹⁷ Annice, “Historical Sketch of the Theory of Participation,” 65.

¹⁸ *The Literal Meaning* I.5.10.

¹⁹ *The Literal Meaning* I.5.10.

²⁰ *The Literal Meaning*, I.6.12.

²¹ *The Literal Meaning*, I.8.14.

²² Meconi, “St. Augustine’s Early Theory of Participation,” 87.

has been illuminated there is a new state introduced ... [this state is] the light which was made when God said, *Let there be light*.²³

In this sentence, Augustine makes links between divine light of unchanging Wisdom (the Word of God) and spiritual (angels) and rational creatures (human beings). The links are forged because wisdom enters into these rational creatures “as he is wont” to do, so that creatures thereby are illuminated by the light of wisdom that shines through their reason. The Word of God is the source of intelligence because God’s wisdom illuminates these creatures.²⁴ This indicates that epistemological participation is not an act of the creature in an attempt to find wisdom in God, but rather, that such participation occurs because God enters into the creaturely being to make it able to shine with illuminated wisdom.

In the *Unfinished Literal Commentary On Genesis*, Augustine gives an explanation of epistemological participation, by which creatures become wise or chaste. He writes:

Now chastity is chaste without being so by participation in something, while it is by participation in her that any chaste things are chaste. And she is in God, where also is that wisdom which is wise without participation, but by participation in which any soul is wise that is wise.²⁵

Here, Augustine refers explicitly to how creatures need to participate in God for their perfections, such as chastity and wisdom. Augustine begins with an example of participation, explaining how someone who is chaste participates in chastity. Being chaste is not the same thing as being chastity, however. Understood according to Augustine’s concept of participation, chastity is by definition that which is chaste in itself. While someone is chaste through participation in chastity, it also is possible for that person to be unchaste by not participating in chastity; but chastity, being so in itself, is never not chaste.

Having put forward an example of chasteness and chastity, he then notes that chastity properly must be understood as a divine perfection: “And she is in God, where also is that wisdom which is wise without participation.” Chastity is in God in

²³ *The Literal Meaning* I.17.32.

²⁴ Also see Annice, “Historical Sketch of the Theory of Participation,” 61.

²⁵ *Unfinished Literal Commentary On Genesis* 16.57. Vernon Bourke, *Augustine’s View of Reality* (Villanova: Villanova Press, 1964), 119-20, notes a similar discussion by Augustine in question 23 in *Eighty-Three Different Questions*. There, Augustine writes that chastity is a perfection in two ways: “First, the chaste thing produces chastity so that it is chaste by that chastity which it produces and for which it is the generative principle and cause of existence; or second, when by participation in chastity everything is chaste which can at some time not be chaste” (trans. D. L. Mosher, *Fathers of the Church* 70 [Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1982], p. 49).

the same way that wisdom is in God. What Augustine means is that God's wisdom is the same thing as being God. God does not participate in a wisdom which he does not have, because in God's simple being "to be is not different from to be wise, there wisdom is the same as being."²⁶ Likewise, if chastity does not participate in anything outside of itself but has chastity completely in itself, then it is complete in itself, which is only true of divine being. Contrariwise, created things are not complete in themselves, but are mutable and dependent on the God who has created them from nothing. They do not have perfections in themselves, so that in order to have them they must participate in those perfections that are from God. The implication is that chastity is a divine perfection in the same way that wisdom is a divine perfection, since creatures can participate in it, but the divine being does not participate in anything outside of itself by which it has chastity. It has chastity in itself.

The wisdom of God is not different from God's being. Neither is chastity different from God's wisdom or from God's being. The link between chastity and wisdom is made by claiming that chastity is in God in the same way that wisdom is in God, because it does not participate in anything else, "but [it is] by participation in which any soul is wise that is wise."²⁷ A soul is chaste by participation in chastity, just as a soul is wise through participation in wisdom. All perfections that persons can participate in—but do not have in themselves—are from God, who is those perfections in the wholeness of his simple being. Again, relying on Augustine's trinitarian explanation of divine creation according to Genesis, we can understand how epistemological participation is according to the Trinity. The Word, who is the Wisdom of God, forms creatures according to the Father's will, so that they are able to become wise or chaste; and, as well, the Holy Spirit shapes creatures so that they have the capacity to be perfected in their wisdom and chastity. Epistemological participation is not an act of the creature in its attempt to find wisdom or chastity in God; rather, such participation occurs because God enters into the creaturely being to make them able to shine with illuminated reason.²⁸

The third area in which Augustine uses the concept of participation is his understanding of deification. According to Meconi, not only does the human necessarily participate in God for its being, but Augustine also speaks of Christ as the

²⁶ *The Trinity* VII.2.

²⁷ *Unfinished Literal Commentary On Genesis* 16.57.

²⁸ Annice, "Historical Sketch of the Theory of Participation," 61. See also *The Confessions* XIII.8.9, where Augustine describes the absence of God's Wisdom and Holy Spirit as the darkness that occurred when angels and human souls fell from their participation in God. Only as rational creatures have the divine presence as their illumination do they stand before the God. Otherwise they are in an abyss of darkness. Epistemological participation is God's illuminating presence in rational creatures' lives.

divine *particeps* in human nature. Creatures participate in God for their being because without God they would be nothing; and God participates in creation through Christ to enact creaturely redemption: “Only God is able to redeem because his ability to justify is his own and not by participation in another.”²⁹ God’s participation in creation “perfects us fully” without affecting God’s own perfection, because by “becoming a sharer (*particeps*) in human nature, God has elevated our nature to his.”³⁰ Participation describes the divine-human relationship, but not in any way that diminishes the complete dependence of creation on God, and God’s independence from the creation. Bourke also notes the dual understanding of participation, where humanity participates in God because God participates in humanity “in the unique instance of the Incarnate Christ.”³¹ The difference is that humanity’s participation is an ontological and spiritual necessity, while God’s participation in his creation is freely willed for the salvation of humankind. Creatures participate in God because they are dependent upon God, but God participates in creatures by causing their perfections of being and their redemption through the work of the incarnate Son.³² In other words, to speak of God’s participation in creatures through his Son is to speak of God’s grace and mercy, by which creatures participate in God according to the fullness of their being.

These applications of the conception of participation by Augustine will help us, as we now turn to his understanding of God’s providential governance of creation, by providing a context for seeing how creation can be related to God without losing sight of his transcendence or the creation’s dependence on God. In the rest of this chapter we shall examine two ways that Augustine explains the Trinity’s providential governance within the framework of participation theory. First, divine providence draws creatures toward God through their motion, or movement. Second, all creatures are created with a certain measure, number, and weight, by which they can participate in the Trinity. In the next chapter, we will reflect on how human dominion over other creatures is through their participation in God through the image of God.

²⁹ Meconi, “St. Augustine’s Early Theory of Participation,” 85. He is summarising G. Bonner, “Augustine’s Conception of Deification,” *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 37 (1986): 369-86.

³⁰ Meconi, “St. Augustine’s Early Theory of Participation,” 85.

³¹ *Augustine’s View of Reality*, 121. Meconi, “St. Augustine’s Early Theory of Participation,” highlights the roots of participation theory in Plato, and some possible Platonic sources for Augustine (e.g., 86, 91-92). Bourke notes another source for Augustine’s understanding of participation in Paul’s description of human redemption by participation in the body of Christ (*Augustine’s View of Reality*, 117-18).

³² Bourke, *Augustine’s View of Reality*, 120.

God's Providential Governance and Creaturely Motion

In this section we will explore Augustine's understanding of the creation's participation in God by considering how the creation's dependence through participation is manifested by its movement toward God's sustaining love—in fact, creaturely motion will be seen to originate from and be conferred by God's divine motion through his Wisdom and Holy Spirit.

As we noted in the previous chapter, the conversion of creatures from the formless void involves shaping them so that they manifest the limited perfections that God intends for them. The limited perfection of a creature is the goodness of its mutable form in which God delights and declares it to be good. This conversion is brought about by God's Word who forms creatures, and by the Holy Spirit, God's good will, which perfects them in their capacity for limited perfections.³³ Conversion is not only into the forms given by the Father through the Son and Holy Spirit at the founding of creation, but also is the continual attraction of the formed creature away from its natural tendency to “decay,” “disappearance,” and “loss of form,” which are features of mutable creation.³⁴ Because creation is an eternal act of God, founding and governing creation are not separated by time, but are part of God's one creative act. The conversion of the creature from formlessness to form in the divine Word and through the love of the Holy Spirit can be described both in terms of the start of creaturely existence in the founding of creatures, as well as throughout the duration of creation's existence under God's providential governance. In other words, Augustine's distinction between God's works of founding and governance is an exegetical

³³ See the discussion, in chapter 6, of Augustine's description of the Word's conversion of creatures from the formless matter in *The Literal Meaning* I.4.9, and the Holy Spirit's brooding over the creation in *The Literal Meaning* I.7.13-8.14 and I.18.36.

³⁴ See *The Literal Meaning* IV.1.1, where Augustine is speculating on the meaning of day and night in Genesis 1. He goes on in the next several chapters to discuss the perfection of the number six and how all creatures are perfected in their existence according to measure, number, and weight, which we will discuss in the next section. Also see IV.9.16 (cf. 16.28), where Augustine writes about God's Holy Spirit, who, by pouring out charity into human hearts (Romans 5:5), is thereby the source of human “desire and yearning” to find its rest in God. We shall take up the concept of rest as participation in God in the next chapter. Finally, in IV.18.31-34, Augustine describes creaturely existence as perfected in its orientation toward the creator, according to an “appetite of their weight,” by which God draws them to seek their rest in him, which echoes the idea of the Word who calls back creatures to himself (*The Literal Meaning* I.4.9), so that they might maintain their forms. “Conversion,” “perfecting,” and “calling back” describe the attraction of creatures toward God, who is the basis for their existence. In the providential government of creation, creatures are therefore rightly described as continually converted by God.

explanation of the meaning of Genesis 1-2, but does not mean that he uses a strict terminological division. His language for the Word's forming, and the Holy Spirit's brooding affection and perfecting, also are used for explaining God's governance.³⁵ The perfecting of creatures is part of God's ongoing providential care.

In *The Literal Meaning*, as we noted earlier, Augustine describes God's providential government to be the ongoing source of the creation's existence by referring to Acts 17:28, in which Paul says "In him we live and move and have our being." For Augustine, Paul can be properly understood when one remembers that God "works ceaselessly in the creatures He has made."³⁶ To say that creatures live in God is not to be taken as indicating that creatures exist in God in the same manner as "He has life in himself,"³⁷ but, instead, that God's work of providential governance is the basis by which creaturely existence is maintained. This happens because God works through his wisdom (Son) and his good will (Holy Spirit), who keep creatures in existence by holding all things together and by keeping them in motion.³⁸ If God's wisdom and good will did not reach out and cause creatures to continue to move toward God, then all things would cease to participate in God, and thus cease to exist.³⁹ God's Wisdom and good will rule creatures by keeping them in motion, "lest they forthwith lose the natural motions by which their actions and natural processes go on."⁴⁰ It is because the nature of existence is a "process" and "action" (or, perhaps better, an activity) that providential government is, in part, the conferral of motion.

³⁵ D. J. Hassel, "Conversion-Theory and *Scientia* in the *De Trinitate*," 383-401, as has already been noted in chapter 6, describes how two of the three "principal moments of conversion" in Augustine's doctrine of creation are discussed in terms of the governing of the creation. Those two moments are when "the creature is impelled to turn back" to the Word, and when the creature has "growth in perfection" (384-38). They extend through time as part of God's governance. The first is also part of the founding of creation, when the creature is formed by the Word.

³⁶ *The Literal Meaning* IV.12.23.

³⁷ *The Literal Meaning* IV.12.23. This is a reference to John 5:26.

³⁸ *The Literal Meaning* IV.12.23 and VIII.20.39.

³⁹ *The Literal Meaning* V.20.40-22.43. Also see C. J. O'Toole, *The Philosophy of Creation in the Writings of St. Augustine* (Washington: Catholic University Of America, 1944), 95-96.

⁴⁰ *The Literal Meaning* IV.12.23. For further discussion on creaturely movement as dependent on God's governance, see S. J. Grabowski, *The All-Present God: A Study in St. Augustine* (St. Louis: Herder, 1954), 148-55; and O'Toole, 96-98.

The limit of creaturely existence, which is mutability, since existence can change from coming-to-be into ceasing-to-be, signals that a creature moves from being given form to losing its form (i.e., returning to formlessness). God's providence is the maintenance of that form within the limits he has set for a creature.⁴¹

Though God moves the creation through his Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity, nonetheless, is itself outside of the limits that frame creaturely motion. Augustine describes how God's Holy Spirit—who moves both spiritual and physical creatures through space and/or time—has no movement in time or space (having created them both) but “moves himself independently of time and space.”⁴² Likewise, God's Wisdom, the Son, is also said to move the creation. In fact,

When Scripture says of Divine Wisdom that *It reaches from end to end mightily and governs all graciously* [Wisdom 8:1], and that Its motion is swifter and more active than all motions, it is quite clear, if we think well on the matter, that Wisdom, when It governs created things graciously, gives them motion beyond our powers to comprehend or describe, a motion we might call stable, if we can conceive of such a thing. And if this motion is withdrawn and Wisdom ceases from this work, creatures will immediately perish.⁴³

The motion that Wisdom is said to confer upon creation, much like that of the Holy Spirit, is from its own motionless movement. In other words, the conferral of motion is “beyond our powers to comprehend” because it is conferred by Wisdom whose own motion transcends creaturely notions and experience of motion. That is why it is a motion that might be called “stable,” since, for Augustine, God is immutable, which indicates that God is free from all change as creatures know change (according to time and space).⁴⁴ In describing Wisdom as moving with a motion that is stable, Augustine also is letting the reader know that he is unsure exactly how to describe God as an unmoved mover of creatures.

One way that Augustine attempts to explain God's unmoving, or “stable,” movement, can be found in his discussion of the immanent Trinity. The relationship between the Trinity (the mover) and the creation (that which is moved) reveals a parallelism in Augustine's understanding of divine being and created being: both are dynamically conceived. With respect to the divine being, Augustine's description of the Trinity in terms of the relationship of the Father and Son clinging to one another, and

⁴¹ We shall see below that this is the “measure” of a creature that is set out by God the Father, in Augustine's description of measure, number, and weight.

⁴² *The Literal Meaning* VIII.20.39.

⁴³ *The Literal Meaning*, IV.12.23.

⁴⁴ *The Literal Meaning*, VIII.23.44.

the Holy Spirit as the love between the Father and Son, suggests that divine being itself is a movement of one to another in charity.⁴⁵ And, as we have seen above, the divine persons move themselves (as opposed to needing something to move them) in this eternal clinging to one another. With respect to creatures, God moves toward them by creating them and delighting in their limited perfections, which conveys the idea of God's love being given to them at their establishment and conversion, in the work of the Son and Holy Spirit. In moving toward creatures by creating them and delighting in them, God also makes movement intrinsic to all aspects of created being—both the spiritual and the physical aspects. Creaturely life is moved by God, toward God, through the overflowing bounty of divine love that is the life of the Trinity.⁴⁶ This unmoved (i.e., simple, unchanging and perfect) movement of triune love is both transcendent of the creation and conferred upon the creation through God's Word and Holy Spirit.

Augustine summarises his conception of the movement of creatures according to divine, providential government in this way:

Without any distance or measure of space, by His immutable and transcendent power He is interior to all things because they are all in Him, and exterior to all things because He is above them all. Moreover, without any distance or unit of time, by His immutable eternity He is more ancient than all things because He is before them all, and newer than all things because He is also after them all.⁴⁷

Because the eternal God is outside of time, the creaturely experience of God's governance is such that he is at once before, that is, "more ancient than," and after, that is, "newer than," the creation.⁴⁸ God also is not confined by space—he is "exterior to all things" because of his transcendence of the creation. But God also is "interior to all things" because he has no distance from creatures, which is consistent with Augustine's conception of God always moving them in his Wisdom (Son) and good will (Holy Spirit).⁴⁹ The work of God to move creatures originates in the divine

⁴⁵ *The Trinity* VI.7, 9-10. See the discussion of this in chapters 4-5.

⁴⁶ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12-7.13, describes the overflowing love of God given to creatures in the founding work of creation.

⁴⁷ *The Literal Meaning* VIII.26.48.

⁴⁸ Cf. *The Confessions* XI.13.16, where God's eternity is described as the time-bridging present of a creature's experience of past and future.

⁴⁹ God is said to be interior to all things, because all things are in God. Augustine takes care not to be misunderstood as claiming that God is actually 'in' creatures. Taylor points to how Augustine qualifies this in *The Confessions* I.2.2: "Accordingly, my God, I would have no being, I would not have any existence, unless you were in me. Or rather,

transcendence of the creation, but that work also is immanent in the creation.

Divine conferral of motion on creatures is not conceived by Augustine in a generic sense of one movement for all. He recognises that the variety of creatures made by God requires that God move each according to the limited perfections of their kind. In the quotation from *The Literal Meaning*, IV.12.23, what Taylor translates as Wisdom’s conferral of motion according to “gracious” government is more literally a conferral of motion by disposing creatures sweetly (*suaviter disponendis*), which highlights how each creature receives its particular type of motion according to the loving attention of Wisdom. Creaturely motion differs according to how a creature has been made, so that,

a soul moves in time, remembering what it had forgotten, or learning what it did not know, or wishing what it did not wish; but a body moves in space, from earth to heaven, or from heaven to earth, . . . or in similar ways.⁵⁰

The notion of creaturely movement applies to all creatures, then. An angel, being a spiritual substance without a physical body, only moves through time. A human being, though, has a soul and a body, and therefore moves through space as well as time. Finally, there are those creatures that only have physical bodies and therefore move only in space. In terms of simplicity, that which moves through time alone is “more excellent” than that which moves through both time and space (e.g., a human being).⁵¹

While human beings are said to move in space and time, like other creatures that have bodies and souls, Augustine also notes that there is uniqueness in human movement, because humans are created to the image of God, according to Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man to our image and likeness.”⁵² In *The Trinity*, Augustine gives particular consideration to how a human being moves toward God, which clarifies our discussion of movement. Being created “to the image” of God is not the same thing as being a perfect image, like the perfect image who is the Son. Rather, “to the image” refers to how the human being “approaches him [that is, the Trinity] in a certain similarity.”⁵³ He then explains that ‘approaching’ is not a motion across “intervals of

I would have no being if I were not in you ‘of whom are all things, through whom are all things, in whom are all things’” (*The Literal Meaning*, 263-64, fn.116).

⁵⁰ *The Literal Meaning* VIII.20.39.

⁵¹ *The Literal Meaning* VIII.20.39.

⁵² *The Trinity* VII.12.

⁵³ *The Trinity* VII.12. For more detail on Augustine’s understanding of image and likeness, see R. A. Markus, “‘Imago’ and ‘Similitudo’ in Augustine,” *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 10 (1964): 125-43.

place, but by likeness or similarity, and one moves away from him by dissimilarity or unlikeness.”⁵⁴ What is the difference between the human image as movement and a movement across space? What Augustine means is that the rational nature of human beings is the factor that distinguishes them from other animals, in that they can know God through wisdom, which illumines and animates their minds.⁵⁵ To explain this difference, which Augustine finds in Genesis 1:26, he explains, “Thus all things [are] through the likeness, but not all to the likeness.”⁵⁶ It is by everything being created through the Word of God that all things receive their form of existence from the formless matter, but only human beings are created to the likeness of God, which is their rational nature.⁵⁷ All creatures, human or otherwise, are made in the likeness of God, and it is only possible for creatures to live, move, and have being as God rules over the creation by “the motion of Divine Wisdom”⁵⁸ and the motion of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁹

Augustine’s explanation of how a human being is made to the image (as opposed to being made through the likeness) is based on the idea that one “*approaches* him [that is, the Trinity] in a certain similarity.”⁶⁰ On the basis of the description of God as an eternal movement of charity among the three persons,⁶¹ Augustine describes human beings as creatures who approach the Trinity through a movement of likeness, by imitating the Son who clings to the Father in the bond of love, that is, through the grace of the Holy Spirit.⁶² The imitation of Christ (God’s wisdom) is

⁵⁴ *The Trinity* VII.12.

⁵⁵ *Unfinished Literal Commentary On Genesis*, 16.60. We will discuss the image of God more in the next chapter.

⁵⁶ *Unfinished Literal Commentary On Genesis*, 16.59.

⁵⁷ *Unfinished Literal Commentary On Genesis*, 16.60.

⁵⁸ *The Literal Meaning* IV.12.23.

⁵⁹ *The Literal Meaning* VIII.20.39.

⁶⁰ *The Trinity* VII.12. For more detail on Augustine’s understanding of image and likeness, see R. A. Markus, “‘*Imago*’ and ‘*Similitudo*’ in Augustine,” *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 10 (1964): 125-43.

⁶¹ *The Trinity* VI.7, 9-10.

⁶² *The Trinity* VII.12. Imitating the Son is the subject of this passage, while the Holy Spirit’s work of transforming a person to the image of God is the subject of *The Trinity* XIV.23 and XV.14.

motion that is enabled by God's Spirit (who confers God's grace). This movement to the image of the Trinity through the imitation of Christ by grace is the participation of human beings in the Trinity, which keeps the creation in motion. Humans, then, move like all bodies, through space and time. In their rational natures, though, they approach, that is, move toward, God the Trinity in a certain similarity through the imitation of the Son's love through the Spirit's grace.

The parallel between the dynamism of the eternal Trinity that is a substance of love, and humanity created to move to the image of God, is most clearly seen in the biblical commandments to love God and one's neighbour.⁶³ In such love, one moves toward God, in fulfillment of God's creative intentions. When one is moved by rightly ordered love, then one imitates Christ according to God's grace. This dynamic of rightly ordered love will be taken up in the next chapter, when we consider the nature of human action as "use" and "enjoyment," and relate human action to the command to have dominion in Genesis 1:26.

Creaturely participation in God is through God's providential governance over the creation. Creatures are dependent upon God's governance, because if God does not keep the creation in motion it ceases to be—motion is necessary to creaturely being. The Trinity governs creatures by enabling the motion of creatures to imitate the Father's divine Word who has given creatures their form—and who himself eternally clings to the Father in their common love. Participation in God is to move toward God, according to his Word and Spirit. Augustine's view of both the founding of creation, discussed in the last chapter, and of its divine governance by the providential movement of creatures, is marked by a dynamic relationship between the creation and God, where creatures exist as they are turned toward God. This Augustinian characterisation of the divine-creature relationship finds its basis in the inner life of the Trinity, the persons of which are eternally turned toward one another. The nature of the movement that is granted to creatures by the Trinity will be expanded in our discussion of measure, number, and weight in the next section, and in our discussion of resting in God in the next chapter.

Participation in the Trinity Through Measure, Number and Weight

Another way to understand God's providential governance over creation through creaturely participation in the Trinity is to look at how creatures have been

⁶³ *The Trinity* VIII.9-12. As Augustine puts it in *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green, *The World's Classics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), I.36.40:

So anyone who thinks that he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up this double love of God and neighbour, has not yet succeeded in understanding them.

The centrality of loving God and one's neighbour to Augustine's theology is taken up in Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine*.

made so that this participation is possible. We have seen how a creature is made to live and move in God, that participation involves a dynamic relationship with the Trinity, who is the source of all movement while being transcendent of the creation. Yet movement by itself does not fully explain the structure of creation so that it participates in God. What is it in creaturely existence that all creatures have from God by which they participate by movement in the divine being, whether movement in time, or space, or both? It is that all creatures have a certain measure, number, and weight by which they are able to participate in the Trinity. The Father is the Measure who limits creatures, just as he is the source of the creation from nothing; the Son is the Number who gives form to creatures, which corresponds to the Word's founding work of forming creatures; and the Holy Spirit gives weight to creatures, just as in the founding of creation the Holy Spirit hovers over the deep, fostering the love in creatures that draws out their goodness. Together, measure, number and weight shape creaturely existence, so that it moves by God's providential care, and thereby participates in the divine being which made it.

Augustine's understanding of divine governance as creaturely participation in the divine being through measure, number, and weight, is based on Wisdom 11:20, where God is said to have "ordered all things in measure and number and weight."⁶⁴ In *The Literal Meaning*, he understands this verse to indicate two things about creation. First, it explains why Genesis 1 describes God as creating everything in six days. Second, it describes the pattern of being that all creatures exhibit and by which God rules them. For Augustine, measure points to how the creation has limits; number indicates how each creature fits harmoniously within the whole; and weight shows how creatures are drawn to live in a certain order or place.⁶⁵ We will consider why Augustine relates measure, number, and weight to his discussion of why God created everything in six days. In doing so, we will see again that the perfection of creation is maintained by God in the providential government. Then we shall turn to his definition of measure, number and weight, how all creatures are patterned after them, and how measure, number, and weight provide insight into God's trinitarian rule of creation.

⁶⁴ *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.7. The importance of Wisdom 11:20 for Augustine's discussion of creation is noted by O. du Roy, *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1966), 421-24. This triad, *mensura et numero et pondere*, appears throughout Augustine's writings; see W. J. Roche, "Measure, Number, Weight," *The New Scholasticism* 15 (1941): 351-53. Besides the scriptural citation, Roche notes that there are also philosophical sources that may have informed his understanding and application of the triad in Stoic and Platonic writings (Roche, 355, 372-76).

⁶⁵ *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.7-4.10. Also cf. V.22.43, where Augustine uses the human body as an example to justify his contention that God governs the creation through a "rule of measures, every harmony of numbers, every order of weights."

Augustine's first extensive use of Wisdom 11:20 in *The Literal Commentary* forms part of his explanation of why creation happened in six days, namely, because six is a perfect number. He suggests the perfection of the number six "parallels the order of the works of creation," because six "rises in three steps from its parts" just as the works of creation also can be divided into three ascending phases.⁶⁶ In mathematics, a perfect number equals the sum of all of its factors. Accordingly, 6 is a perfect number since its factors are 1, 2, 3, and $1 + 2 + 3 = 6$. Augustine applies this pattern to the description of Genesis 1. The first ascending phase is the first day of creation, which brings light. The second phase comprises the second and third days of creation in which the universe is completed—the second day, the firmament; the third, the earth and sea. The third phase comprises the fourth, fifth, and sixth days of creation, in which those things which are contained within the universe are made—the fourth day, the planets and stars; the fifth, the water creatures; and the sixth the land creatures.⁶⁷ The creation of everything culminates on the symbolic perfection of the sixth day according to the pattern of the perfect number six.

Furthermore, the perfect number six reminds Augustine of the threefold ordering of creation, namely, according to measure, number, and weight, by which Scripture declares that everything is perfected by God. Since Augustine does not suggest that the number six is identical to measure, number, and weight, the perfect number seems to remind him of measure, number, and weight because both are indicative of the perfections of the creation. The creation is perfected according to the perfect number six (six days of creation), and six is a perfect number because all perfections (including measure, number, and weight) are from God, who gives creatures form according to his perfect wisdom.⁶⁸ If everything is ordered to measure, number, and weight, and since "before creation nothing existed except the Creator," one has to "in some way identify measure, number, and weight with Him, and say that the works of creation are, as it were, in Him by whom they are ruled and governed."⁶⁹ Augustine is making the connection between the creation of everything in six days and the creation's ordering according to measure, number, and weight, because both indicate the perfections of creatures that originate from God, and by which the creation participates in God as the Trinity governs them.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *The Literal Meaning* IV.2.2-3.7. See Agaesse and Solignac, *La Genèse au sens littéral en douze livres (I-VII)*, 633-35.

⁶⁷ *The Literal Meaning* IV.2.2-3.7.

⁶⁸ In *The Literal Meaning* IV.5.11, Augustine points out that the perfection of all created forms is by God's wisdom, "through whom all things have been made."

⁶⁹ *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.7.

⁷⁰ *The Literal Meaning* IV.2.2-3.7, "... God perfected His works in six days

The perfection of creation (both in the founding of creatures and in the governance of creation) by the number six, and by measure, number, and weight, does not mean that God is identical with them as they are understood within the creation, but rather that God is the source of these perfections in himself, and that he is above them as they are manifest in his creation.⁷¹ One can understand this distinction between the perfections of six and measure, number, and weight as they are manifest in the creation and their origin in God, by noting that Augustine argues in *Concerning the Nature of the Good* that God is the supreme good, while creatures are goods from God (mutable things made from nothing by the immutable God).⁷² More specifically, all creatures are good within a hierarchy of goods, and equally dependent on God for existence.⁷³ Augustine then argues that all goods can be described according to limit, form, and order,⁷⁴ by which creatures possess their degree of goodness from God. However, “God is above every limit, above every form, above every order of the created universe” as the source of all three.⁷⁵ The limit, form, and order of all created things is the source of their goodness; and a creature’s goodness comes from the supreme good who created it.⁷⁶

We shall now turn to Augustine’s explanation of the structure of all creatures according to the pattern of measure, number, and weight. We will examine how he

because six is a perfect number ... even if these works did not exist, this number would be perfect” W. G. Most, “The Scriptural Basis of St Augustine’s Arithmology,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 13, 3 (1951): 284-95, discusses the relationship between divine Wisdom’s perfecting work and the power of numbers.

⁷¹ *The Literal Meaning* IV.2.2-3.7.

⁷² *Concerning the Nature of the Good* I.

⁷³ *Concerning the Nature of the Good* I-II. In *The City of God* XI.24, Augustine relates the declaration of creation’s goodness by God to the fact that creation is made from God’s goodness.

⁷⁴ *Concerning the Nature of the Good* III. According to Roche, “Measure, Number, Weight,” 352, *modus, species, ordo*, are synonymous in meaning with *mensura, numero, pondere*; limit is equivalent to measure; form is equivalent to number; and weight is equivalent to order.

⁷⁵ *Concerning the Nature of the Good* III.

⁷⁶ See the discussion of the divine nature as good in S. MacDonald, “The Divine Nature,” 71-90, and N. Kretzmann, “A General Problem of Creation: Why Would God Create Anything at All?,” 202-28.

defined each term, and how the terms reveal the Trinity's providential rule of the creation by perfecting creatures so that they participate in the Trinity through them.⁷⁷ Augustine writes, "In so far as this matter can be grasped ... we must understand that the words, *Thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight*, mean nothing else than "Thou hast ordered all things in Thyself."⁷⁸ He reaches this conclusion by claiming that according to Romans 11:26 every created thing is "in Him by whom they are ruled and governed."⁷⁹ All creatures are in God insofar as they are ruled by God's ongoing providence. Measure, number, and weight are identified with God's providence as the means by which creatures are able to be in God. The three are perfections by which creatures are structured by God, and those perfections have their source in God who is "Measure without measure ... Number without number ... Weight without weight."⁸⁰ God makes his creatures to have their limits (their measure, number, and weight) according to his creative purpose. God limits and upholds his creation according to them. As creatures participate in measure, number, and weight, they participate in God's providential governance.⁸¹

For Augustine, the Father is measure who sets the limits outside of which no created things stray: "Measure places a limit on everything."⁸² As Carol Harrison notes, just as the Father is the source who creates everything from nothing, so also in the governing of the creation the Father is the Measure of creaturely beginnings and ends.⁸³ For Augustine, the Father creates everything to have limits by which they are measured, through "a beginning and end to mutable time and existence."⁸⁴ The Father has created all things within the measure or limits of mutable existence, which unlike God, not only change according to their measure, but cannot go beyond that measure, for beyond mutability and existence is eternity. Measure does not simply refer to the material creation, which can be measured according to its occupation of space and time, but also to the measure "of an activity, which keeps it from going on without

⁷⁷ In *The Literal Meaning* I. I.6.12

⁷⁸ *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.7.

⁷⁹ *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.7.

⁸⁰ *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.8.

⁸¹ *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.7.

⁸² *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.7.

⁸³ "Measure, Number, and Weight," *Augustinianum* 28 (1988): 594.

⁸⁴ Harrison, "Measure, Number, and Weight," 595.

control or beyond bounds.”⁸⁵ Augustine is thinking of human activity, which is governed by limits that prevent one from doing things beyond the boundaries set for human action, so that humanity cannot do something which they could not then undo, or which would exceed all natural bounds within which they are created. Augustine points out that this measure or limit (measure and limit are synonymous terms for him) of creatures is itself “limited by another Measure ... There is a Measure without measure, and what comes from It must be squared with It, but It does not come from something else.”⁸⁶ This way of describing the Measure that limits creaturely measure corresponds to the work of the Father, who is the source of the creation that he gives by means of his Word and Holy Spirit.⁸⁷

The Son is number in that he “gives everything form.”⁸⁸ Augustine already has shown that in the founding of creation the Word of God gives unformed matter its shape (form) by which it can be recognised according to its own kind.⁸⁹ This shaping or numbering also is true of all creatures in the Word’s governing work. Material creatures have number in terms of mass and quantity. Spiritual creatures are governed by “the number of the affections of the soul and of the virtues, by which a soul is held away from the unformed state of folly and turned towards the form and beauty of wisdom.”⁹⁰ The soul that is turned towards form and wisdom, as was shown above, is said to participate in wisdom (specified here through the number of the affections and of the virtues). The wisdom that a creature participates in is that which is wise in itself—namely God’s Word. So then, all creatures have number, and “this number is formed by another Number ... there is a Number without number, by which all things are formed, but It receives no form.”⁹¹ This is a direct reference to God’s Word, the “Divine Exemplar, who is eternally and unchangeably united with the Father.”⁹² The Word is the form and number in which the creation participates so that it continues in

⁸⁵ *The Literal Meaning* IV.4.8.

⁸⁶ *The Literal Meaning* IV.4.8.

⁸⁷ See chapter 6, where we discuss how the Father is conceived as without beginning.

⁸⁸ *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.7.

⁸⁹ *The Literal Meaning* I.4.9.

⁹⁰ *The Literal Meaning* IV.4.8.

⁹¹ *The Literal Meaning* IV.4.8.

⁹² *The Literal Meaning* I.4.9.

wisdom rather than falling back to an unformed state of folly. If the Trinity were to cease from moving the creation, as we discussed in the preceding section, then it would fall back into its unformed state. When creatures are “held away” from such a fall, it is because their original formation and shaping according to number is maintained by the Number without number.⁹³ In Augustine’s thought, form and number are equal to each other, and they are created by the Word/wisdom of God who is their source. Form is given to creatures at the founding of creation, and is maintained as the Word governs the creation by making it possible to participate in wisdom.

Finally, the Holy Spirit is the weight of creatures, by which they are drawn “to a state of repose and stability,” so that they rest in the place for which they have been made.⁹⁴ Augustine understands the word weight to convey two meanings. First, with regard to physical objects, weight draws them to find rest in an appropriate space. For example, oil is “so constituted as to tend towards its proper place ... and settle on the surface [of water].”⁹⁵ If oil’s weight were heavier than water, then it would find rest under the water.

Second, a spiritual being has “the weight of the will and of love, wherein appears the worth of everything to be sought, or to be avoided”⁹⁶ Just as a physical object’s weight draws it to rest in certain spaces, so a spiritual substance’s weight also draws it to rest in certain spiritual conditions. As Augustine famously put it in *The Confessions*, “My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me. By your gift we are set on fire and carried upwards: we grow red hot and ascend.”⁹⁷ Just as oil rests upon water, so the soul’s love rests upon that to which it is attracted. The soul, by its will and love, is attracted to and seeks the form of beauty and wisdom, and wishes to avoid the folly of tending toward unformed and degenerate desires. The soul’s ability to will and to love is at once its weight by which it finds rest in its proper place, and also is its weight because by the activities of willing and loving it is able to value (i.e., “weigh”) things.⁹⁸ In both senses of the term “weight”—the weight

⁹³ *The Literal Meaning* IV.4.8.

⁹⁴ *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.7.

⁹⁵ *The Literal Meaning* II.1.2.

⁹⁶ *The Literal Meaning* IV.4.8.

⁹⁷ *The Confessions* XIII.9.10.

⁹⁸ James J. O’Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, 3: 46-52, 356f; Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, 94; and R. Williams, “Good for Nothing? Augustine on Creation,” *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994): 12-14.

something has, and the activity by which someone weighs the value of something else—the end is a “state of repose and stability.”⁹⁹ In the first, the weight of a thing draws it to its proper place in the order of creation. In the second, the weighing of what is to be sought or avoided leads one to seek rest in one state rather than another. Weight and order are often used interchangeably in Augustine’s writings. For example, at the end of *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.7, in his explanation of Wisdom 11:20, Augustine paraphrases the verse this way: “He limits everything, forms everything, and orders everything.” The equation of weight and order signals that when everything is properly ordered, then it has found the rest for which it has been intended.¹⁰⁰

As with measure and number, Augustine points out that creaturely weight is from “a Weight without weight”¹⁰¹ to which creatures are drawn. To be drawn toward this Weight is to find rest in that which gives everything weight and order.¹⁰² The Holy Spirit is particularly associated with weight and order. It was noted in chapter 6 how the Holy Spirit’s work in founding the creation is to establish creatures with a capacity for love by making them find their rest in God’s love.¹⁰³ Augustine’s understanding of creaturely love is that it is properly drawn towards God’s love, which is manifest in the work of the Holy Spirit. We have already noted how, in *The Confessions* XIII.10.10, that he writes, “Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me. By your gift we are set on fire and carried upwards There we will be brought to our place by a good will, so that we want nothing but to stay there for ever.” In this quotation, he speaks of his love carrying him upward because his heart has been set on fire by God’s gift, and then lifted to its place by God’s good will. Both terms, “gift” and “good will,” already have been linked to the work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁴ Here God’s gift is the source of the soul’s love, carrying it to the place where it lacks nothing; through God’s good will, the spiritual fire warms the soul so that it might rise upwards to its proper place, an image of it finding its place in the order of creation for which it has been created. It rises to

⁹⁹ *The Literal Meaning* IV.3.7.

¹⁰⁰ Roche, “Measure, Number, Weight,” 362-68. In the next chapter, we shall discuss more fully the rest that creatures find when they are drawn by the weight of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰¹ *The Literal Meaning* IV.4.8.

¹⁰² *The Literal Meaning* IV.4.8.

¹⁰³ We discussed this in Chapter 6. We did so by comparing his discussion of the Holy Spirit in *The Literal Meaning* I.18.36 and *The Confessions* XIII.4.5.

¹⁰⁴ See our discussion of “gift” in chapter 5, as Augustine uses the term in *The Trinity*, and of “good will” in chapter 6, as he uses the term in *The Literal Meaning* I.6.11.

that place by the Spirit's fire. The weight of the soul is such that it rests in the place for which it has been designed; and it finds that place through the Spirit who gives creatures their weight and also is the rest toward which they are drawn by their weight.

Measure, number, and weight are not three independent ways in which creatures may exist according to God's providence. Rather, God makes creatures according to measure, number, and weight, which is the basis for all creaturely unity. In *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* Augustine writes, "There is not a single living creature, after all, in whose body I will not find, when I reflect upon it, that its measures and numbers and order are geared toward a harmonious unity."¹⁰⁵ By this, Augustine is referring to how "all these things are beautiful to their maker and craftsman, who has a use for them all in his management of the whole universe"¹⁰⁶ Everything God creates exhibits a particular measure, number, and weight according to his wisdom and will. And though Augustine cannot explain why there is such an abundance of creatures, or what is the purpose of each one,¹⁰⁷ he does think that the answer to a creature's unity lies in its originating from God, who is "the supreme measure and number and order which are identical with the unchanging and eternal sublimity of God himself."¹⁰⁸ The Father's will and wisdom are not different from the Father—each is God and God is each.¹⁰⁹

Just as the triune God is one and three, so he is the source of creaturely unity through his threeness that is one. Every creature is made by the three who are one; and when each creature properly exhibits measure, number, and weight, it is a unified and harmonious whole in the unity of the Trinity's perfect work. While Augustine describes the correspondence of measure/limit with the Father, number/form with the Son, and weight/order with the Holy Spirit, one should not assume that Augustine restricts the work of measuring, numbering, and weighting creatures to each respective divine person. What the Father has, so has the Son and the Holy Spirit in themselves, and all three have them together in perfect unity.¹¹⁰ The Trinity governs the creation by

¹⁰⁵ *On Genesis* I.16.26.

¹⁰⁶ *On Genesis* I.16.25. On the place of beauty in Augustine's conception of creation, see Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1992), especially ch.3.

¹⁰⁷ He does suggest that one reason there are animals that seem to be "against our interests" (i.e. that would cause us harm) is "because of our sins" (*On Genesis* I.16.26).

¹⁰⁸ *On Genesis* I.16.26.

¹⁰⁹ See chapters 4-5.

¹¹⁰ See *The Trinity* VI.8-9, and VII.1-4. See the discussion of the unity and distinction of the divine persons in his doctrine of the Trinity in chapters 4-5 above.

ordering everything to measure, number and weight. When Augustine identifies the individual terms with the persons of the Trinity, he is not contradicting the oneness of the divine work, but is showing how the Trinity, which is three in one and one in three,¹¹¹ is identified as three persons at work in the divine governing. Moreover, we already have pointed out that Augustine's explanation of governance overlaps with his discussion of founding the creation, which suggests that the founding and governing of creation, while distinguished by Augustine, nevertheless also form a certain unity. The Father is the Measure who limits creatures, just as he is the source of the creation from nothing; the Son is the Number who gives form to creatures, which corresponds to the Word's founding work of forming creatures; and the Holy Spirit gives weight to creatures, just as in the founding of creation the Holy Spirit hovers over the deep, fostering the love in creatures that draws out their goodness. Just as the three persons' work in the founding of the creation is one work, so it is in the governing of creation; and, the two together—the founding and governance of creation—are one work by the Trinity.

Formless Matter and the Question of Passivity

We have tried to show, thus far, that Augustine's interpretation of God's creative works in Genesis 1 is thoroughly trinitarian in regards to its founding and its governance. Moreover, the governance of God over the creation is described in such a manner that creation is moved toward God according to each creature's measure, number, and weight. However, questions have been raised as to whether Augustine's understanding of God's relationship to his creation really is as dynamic as it appears, or if it is not instead best described as authoritarian and dominating. Does not the conversion of creatures from a formless void (Genesis 1:2) in Augustine's interpretation indicate that God's actions are in fact the imposition of form upon an inert or passive substance? If so, does this not confirm the suspicion that the creation from its very beginning is simply under the domination of its divine maker?¹¹²

To answer this claim that God's relationship to creation is authoritarian and oppressive, we need to think about how Augustine characterises the formless matter in the founding work from which everything is shaped, which he does in *Concerning the Nature of the Good*. We also need to attend to how Augustine's description of God's governance and creaturely participation are presupposed in that description of the formless matter.

With regard to the formless void from which creatures are shaped, Hanby has

¹¹¹ *The Trinity* I.7.

¹¹² The claim is in Primavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis*, 203; Augustine is linked, by Primavesi, to the idea of God imposing a form by dominating passive matter on pp. 210-21, where he also is considered a key figure in the history of patriarchalism and authoritarianism.

addressed the question of its nature and supposedly passive quality in his *Augustine and Modernity*. In *Concerning the Nature of the Good* XVIII, Augustine identifies the formless void of Genesis 1:2 with the platonic term *hyle*. Hanby admits that Augustine's definition of *hyle*, by itself, could be taken to indicate God's domination of a passive substance: "I mean by *hyle*, as did the ancients, a sort of matter utterly formless and without qualities, and out of which are formed the qualities which we perceive."¹¹³ However, Augustine adds to this definition a clarification concerning the goodness of the *hyle* because it was created by God with the capacity for receiving form (which is a good):

We must not term evil that *hyle* which not only cannot be perceived through a visible form, but can scarcely be conceived of on account of its all-embracing privation of visible form. Even this has the capacity for forms If form is a good ... doubtless the capacity for form is likewise a good.¹¹⁴

For Augustine, according to Hanby, the *hyle's* capacity for good, among other things, denotes its capacity to receive form by its "participation in the good."¹¹⁵ It has this capacity for participation in goodness because God created it (from nothing) to be open to goodness even in its formlessness. Participation in goodness (namely, the Trinity) is not simply introduced into Augustine's understanding of governance, but is presupposed in the conversion of creatures from the formless void as well.

The capacity to receive form through participation is the means by which the conversion of the formless matter into the variety of creaturely forms happens. In Hanby's explanation, the *hyle* is

interposed in the interval between the Father's intention of and delight in the Son and the Son's response to and vision of the Father, and it is by virtue of this location that the *hyle*, along with formed matter ... can be understood to participate in the conversion to form.¹¹⁶

According to Hanby, creaturely participation is grounded in a twofold understanding of the Father-Son relationship: on the one hand creaturely participation is grounded in God's intention of love for his Son, who is the Word by which he creates; and on the other hand the Son's response to that intention of love from the Father is to speak forth the creation as the Father's Word. Creation is understood as arising out of this mutual relationship of the Father and Son because "In the beginning, God created."

¹¹³ *Concerning the Nature of the Good* XVIII. See Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, 85.

¹¹⁴ *Concerning the Nature of the Good* XVIII.

¹¹⁵ *Augustine and Modernity*, 85.

¹¹⁶ *Augustine and Modernity*, 86.

When the creatures (the individual goods that are made) are formed from the formless void, according to Hanby's account, that conversion is best characterised as the response of the formless void to the love between the Father and Son (Word), by which the formless void becomes actually (being formed by the Word) what it only was potentially when it was formless.¹¹⁷

In support of the contention that Augustine understands the creation to be active from its very beginning because of its place between the Father and Son, Hanby cites a portion of *The City of God* XI.24.¹¹⁸ There Augustine writes,

For it is the Father of the Word Who said, 'Let it be'. And that which He spoke was beyond doubt made by means of the Word. Again, when it is said, 'God saw that it was good', it is thereby sufficiently signified that God made what He made not from any necessity ... but simply from His goodness: that is, so that it might be good. And this was said after the created thing had been made, so that there might be no doubt that its existence was in harmony with the goodness for the sake of which it was made.

Hanby is arguing, again, that in this passage the activity of creating reflects the relationship of the Father and his Word. On the one hand, the Father is the origin of his Word and its result (the creation that was spoken by the Father in his Word). On the other hand, the Word's response to the Father is to make that which the Father intends (i.e. the creation) when he creates in his Word by saying "let it be." So, the relationship of the Father and the Son in eternity is the basis for the creatures that are formed (from the formless void, though Augustine does not mention that explicitly in this passage). They are a product of the mutual goodness of the Father and the Son,¹¹⁹ which, according to Hanby, is a movement of love, that is, the Father's loving "intention" and the Son's loving "response." In other words, because Augustine calls the *hyle* good in *Concerning the Nature of the Good*,¹²⁰ and because he understands creation's goodness to originate in the Father-Word relationship (which is goodness itself), then the *hyle* itself reflects the active intention and response of the Father and the Son. The good *hyle* could only reflect this active intention if it participated in the good of the supreme good—which is the Trinity. Hanby's argument makes sense when one understands that, for Augustine, participation in the supreme good is one of active response (movement) toward that goodness.

Hanby's argument could have been strengthened if he had continued his

¹¹⁷ *Augustine and Modernity*, 85-86.

¹¹⁸ *Augustine and Modernity*, 218, fn.73.

¹¹⁹ *Concerning the Nature of the Good* I-III.

¹²⁰ *Concerning the Nature of the Good* XVIII.

quotation from *The City of God* XI.24 just one sentence further, so as to include “And if this goodness is rightly understood to be the Holy Spirit, then the whole Trinity is revealed to us in the works of God.”¹²¹ By doing so, Hanby could have noted that the goodness of the *hyle* is also shaped by the Holy Spirit, who is the movement over the formless void, nurturing its perfections and potential.¹²² The Holy Spirit, the charity between the Father and the Son,¹²³ who hovers over the creation so that it is loved to perfection, is integral to Augustine’s trinitarian understanding of creation’s founding. The founding of the creation (including the *hyle*) in the interval between the intention and response of the Father and Son is where God’s goodness and love is located: “God made what he made . . . from His goodness [namely, the Holy Spirit].”¹²⁴

Williams points out that Augustine’s conception of God’s Word forming the formless void is important for grasping his understanding of creation.¹²⁵ The Word forms created matter. That should not be taken to imply that formless matter is dominated by that Word of the Father, by forcing matter into the form it has. Rather, as Williams puts it, “The action of form on matter is not the imposition of one thing on another, let alone one system on another: it is simply the process of actualisation itself, the process by which organization appears.”¹²⁶ Williams is pointing out that Augustine’s idea of formless matter is not simply an idea that two “things” are engaged in an activity where one overcomes the other, but rather that formless matter is matter that is open to the potential for which God has created it.¹²⁷ As God’s Word forms the formless matter, that matter is able to achieve its potential for having form. The *hyle* is not evil matter, nor is it matter that is neither good nor bad, but rather it is matter created by God to become what God has intended it to become, by being converted from formlessness to form, and from potentiality to actuality. Whatever God creates is good,¹²⁸ so that formless matter is already good, though it can achieve a greater goodness as it realises its potential through God’s forming Word.

¹²¹ *The City of God* XI.24.

¹²² We saw this in *The Literal Meaning* I.18.36.

¹²³ *The Trinity* VI.7.

¹²⁴ *The City of God* XI.24.

¹²⁵ “‘Good for Nothing?’ Augustine On Creation,” *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994): 17ff.

¹²⁶ “‘Good for Nothing?’,” 16.

¹²⁷ “‘Good for Nothing?’,” 16.

¹²⁸ *Concerning the Nature of the Good* I-III.

Conclusion

We noted, at the beginning of this chapter, that Augustine described divine providence as God moving “His whole creation by a hidden power, and all creatures are subject to this movement.”¹²⁹ We then explored some aspects of the movement by which God providentially governs creatures. Noting first of all that for Augustine the conception of participation is basic to his understanding of the God-world relationship, we explored how participation helps him to express the dependence of the creation’s motion upon God. As creatures partake in God for their perfections, they manifest their being as God intends it for them. The perfection of creatures is described by Augustine in this way: “when creatures remain in the state in which they have been created, possessing the perfection they have received ... they are good individually, and all in general are very good.”¹³⁰ Any perfection that belongs to a creature (and different creatures have different groups of perfections by which they are called perfect¹³¹) is given by God, so that the creature may be in a state of perfection with regard to its being and that its perfections may contribute to the overall goodness of the creation. God providentially governs the creation by moving creatures to participate in God’s perfections, so that their perfections may be good. God’s providence, then, is life-giving, by moving the creation toward the goodness of existing as a creature in the supreme good.¹³²

The participation of creatures in measure, number, and weight is the ontological structure that Augustine uses to describe how creatures participate in God (in whom they live and move and have their being), that is, how they are subject to divine providence. When created beings participate in measure, number, and weight according to the divine intention, they reveal the goodness of God’s work. Augustine’s description of measure, number, and weight corresponds to his understanding of how

¹²⁹ *The Literal Meaning* V.20.40-41.

¹³⁰ *The Literal Meaning* III.24.37. The reference to the whole of the creation being “very good” is in reference to Genesis 1:31, the verse Augustine is considering. Augustine uses the word ‘order’ not only to refer to weight as it is meant in measure, number, and weight, but also more generally to the order of the whole creation. So it is here, that the creation as a whole is very good, because of God’s ordering. The word ‘order’ is not used equivocally though, since the order of the whole and the particular order that each creature manifests are intrinsically related. All order, whether the ordering of the whole or the particular order/weight of the individual, is from God and does not contradict the other, but rather confirms that the order of the creation and the individual creatures is part of the same divine ordering.

¹³¹ Cf. *The Literal Meaning* V.20.40-41.

¹³² *Concerning the Nature of the Good* I-III.

each of the divine persons is at work in the creation. Measure, by which creatures receive their limit, is related to the Father, who is the beginning of the creation. Number, by which creatures receive their individual forms, is related to the Son. Weight, by which creatures are moved to their proper place in creation, is related to the Holy Spirit. Williams describes measure, number, and weight in this way (using the word “proportion” instead of “number”): “Measure and proportion govern the reality of things that are made to change, and ‘weight’ is what pulls them to their proper place.”¹³³ The structure of reality has been designed by the Trinity so that all creatures move toward their proper place. This is not surprising, since Augustine’s understanding of the immanent Trinity is itself dynamic: the Father eternally begetting the Son who clings to the Father in the charity of their Holy Spirit. Divine governance reflects that dynamic life of the godhead. The participation of creatures through measure, limit, and weight is a participation in the Trinity, which is an eternal relationship of divine persons.

At the same time, creatures are not God, and participation in God is not the same as being God. The Creation is made in the finite, mutable likeness of God.¹³⁴ The relationship between creator and creature, though founded on God’s goodness and love, never is fused ontologically. The creature is always from nothing and without God’s governance would return to nothing. God’s governance, then, maintains the creation in its goodness, so that it might move toward the perfect ordering of everything according to measure, number, and weight. God’s governance brings about the perfection of goods that are finite and mutable.¹³⁵

Over the course of the last two chapters we have seen how God, as triune creator, is described by Augustine. On the one hand Augustine is careful not to

¹³³ R. Williams, “‘Good for Nothing?’ Augustine on Creation,” 14. Williams describes how measure, number, and weight relate to God’s governance by grouping together measure and number as one activity, and then naming weight as a second. However, despite Williams’ distinct formulation, it leads to the same point as we are making, which is that the Trinity governs creatures through their measure, number, and weight, and that the measure, number, and weight of a creature is how it participates in the triune God. Whether measure, number, and weight can be grouped together into one, two, or three activities does not affect the fact that the three are identified with the Trinity, and that, all together, they give a creature its unity.

¹³⁴ *Unfinished Literal Commentary On Genesis*, 16.59.

¹³⁵ The opposite of this, moving away or turning from God, would be to revert to the state of unformed matter from which creatures are shaped. This is also a movement away from the goodness of being to the evilness of non-being. On the goodness of creation and the Augustinian conception of evil as privation, see Rowan Williams, “Insubstantial Evil,” in *Augustine and His Critics*, 105-23.

compromise his understanding of the eternity, simplicity, and immutability of the Trinity; he does this by distinguishing the creation from God's being and by making the creation of everything from nothing central to his explanation of the founding of creation. The conversion of creatures from the formless void, too, is described in trinitarian terms, whereby the Trinity's eternal life of love (with the Son clinging to the Father in the Holy Spirit) is manifest in the economic activity of shaping creatures through God's forming Word and brooding Spirit of goodness and love. Augustine also makes clear that God's governance of creation, through his ongoing providential work, enables the goodness of created being to be maintained and fulfilled by moving toward its rest in the Trinity through the creature's participation through its measure, number, and weight.

In the next chapter, we will examine how Augustine understood the relationship of creatures among themselves, in light of the triune God's governance of creation. It is here that the moral consequences of God's governance will be discerned, which is a major concern to ecological theologians. Of particular note will be how Augustine conceives human beings, created in the image of God, are to exercise their dominion in the universe.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RESTING IN GOD AND THE IMAGE OF GOD IN HUMAN DOMINION

In chapter 6, we explored Augustine's understanding of the founding of creation, and showed it to be trinitarian in shape, with the Father creating everything that exists through his Word and Holy Spirit. This trinitarian delineation of the divine work, as we have seen, corresponded in form to Augustine's doctrine of the immanent relations of the Trinity, set out in chapters 4-5. In chapter 7, Augustine's conception of God's governance was described in terms of God's providential work of sustaining the creation's existence and order, which lives and moves in God through participation in him. In particular, the creation's participation in God through its measure, number, and weight helped Augustine explain how creatures realise the goodness for which God had created them—that they might live and move in God. All creatures depend on the work of God the Trinity for the goodness of their being and fulfillment.

We now turn to consider Augustine's understanding of human dominion as it is given to humanity on the basis of their being created in God's image, according to Genesis 1:26. Human dominion within the order of creation is understood by Augustine to be one of the human works that lead to rest in God—which means, simply, that human beings fulfill the good ends for which God has created them according to God's goodness and love when they exercise dominion well. This, as we have seen in chapter 1, is a reading of Augustine that goes against some modern commentators, who see in Augustine, and more generally in the classical theological traditions of the East and West, the promotion of a dominating role for humanity over the creation, a domination based on a deficient conception of God that is not trinitarian. In order to find the link between Augustine's conception of the Trinity's creative work and governance of creation as we have described them in the previous chapters, and his understanding of the work of human dominion as it is commanded in Genesis 1:26, we shall first look at another way in which Augustine conceived of the participation of creatures in God, namely, the resting of the creation in God. The conception of resting in God follows naturally from the discussion in the previous chapter, of participation as movement and as the measure, number, and weight of a creature. The movement of creaturely being, by God's providential government, which is according to its measure, number, and weight, is toward the end of resting in God. We will turn, after discussing Augustine's understanding of creaturely rest, to the question of how one can know one's activities lead to rest in God, by looking at Augustine's distinction between use and enjoyment as a way of properly conceiving of good human action. From there we will turn to his understanding of the image of God. The image of God is the proper movement of human beings toward rest in God's love. Augustine conceives of human dominion as the rule of creatures according to the image of God, which is a seeking of God's love in the right use of the creation.

Resting in God

We considered in chapters 6 and 7 Augustine's explanation of God's resting from creation (Genesis 2:2) as a reference to how God creates no new creatures after the founding of creation in Genesis 1.¹ God's rest also is thought, by Augustine, to describe the state of divine independence from the creation, on the grounds that God has no need of creation.² The creation is a work of God's goodness, and is a delight to God precisely because it is a good created by God, who is the supreme good.³ God's rest from creation is not indicative of divine mutability or even of his need to create.⁴ As we look at Augustine's understanding of creaturely rest in this section, we will see that rest is closely related to his understanding of happiness. Human beings' likeness to God manifests itself through proper rest, which follows after the good works for which they have been created. To find rest in God is to find one's happiness in God in all things, including the works for which one has been created. One of those works is dominion, which we will consider in light of the idea of resting in God.

Divine rest implies the creation's need for God, since no created (mutable) good can exist apart from God's providential work. As we saw, Augustine's reference to a creature's being in God is based on Paul's description of humanity existing in God (Acts 17:28). Augustine develops this idea of creaturely being in God when he writes, "For the perfection of each thing according to the limits of its nature is established in a state of rest ... in Him to whom it owes its being, in whom the universe itself exists."⁵ The finite limits of a creaturely nature are its measure, number, and weight. Just as God rests in himself, apart from all created works, so the creation only truly rests when it is led to repose in God, according to its measure, number, and weight. Thus, God's rest refers first to his rest in himself, and second to how creation must find its rest in God rather than in itself.

Augustine expands on this understanding of rest, as it applies to creatures, by observing that creaturely rest is like and unlike God's rest. "The repose of God, by which He rests in Himself and is happy in the Good which is identified with Himself, has no beginning and no end for Him."⁶ In God is eternal rest, having no beginning or end, unlike creaturely rest that has its beginning and ending in the

¹ *The Literal Meaning*, IV.11.21-12.23 and V.23.46.

² *The Literal Meaning* IV.16.27.

³ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12.

⁴ *The Literal Meaning* IV.16.27.

⁵ See *The Literal Meaning* IV.18.34.

⁶ *The Literal Meaning* IV.18.34.

creative work of the Trinity. God's rest also is identified with the indivisibility of the divine being. God is not made of parts, such that happiness is somehow different from God's rest. Rather, God's rest "is happy in the Good which is identified with Himself."⁷ Augustine creates a synonymy between rest, happiness and goodness, on the basis that God has all three indivisibly in himself. The argument for the synonymy follows this reasoning: God's happiness is found in himself, rather than outside of the divine being;⁸ God's happiness is in his unchanging goodness, which is the source of all true happiness;⁹ and, since God is happy in his own goodness, God's rest, which also is his happiness,¹⁰ therefore, is his repose in his own goodness.

Creatures, on the other hand, find the perfection of their limited, mutable being not by resting in themselves, but by resting in the immutable God:

For the perfection of each thing according to the limits of its nature is established in a state of rest, that is, it has a fixed orientation by reason of its natural tendencies, not just in the universe of which it is a part, but more especially in Him to whom it owes its being, in whom the universe itself exists.¹¹

In this quotation, Augustine makes a passing reference to the physical rest towards which creatures are oriented "in the universe." For example, oil rests on water because God has created oil to have such a physical nature that its weight is less than water.¹²

⁷ *The Literal Meaning* IV.18.34.

⁸ Augustine describes the divine Word's happiness in *The Literal Meaning* I.5.10: "In His case, not only is being the same thing as living, but living is the same thing as living wisely and happily." Thus, divine happiness is not different from divine being, but is found in the Word's being itself, which also is one being with the Father. This parallels the idea of IV.16.27, where God's goodness, namely, the Holy Spirit, is said to be independent of everything outside of himself, because God is eternally self-sufficient.

⁹ One finds the goodness of God related to divine happiness in *The Literal Meaning* IV.16.27, where God's rest is at once described as his happiness, and as his independence of any extrinsic goodness. God's happiness is his own goodness. Similarly, in the *City of God* XII.1.2, Augustine speaks of God's goodness as his immutable blessedness.

¹⁰ *The Literal Meaning* IV.16.27.

¹¹ *The Literal Meaning* IV.18.34.

¹² *The Literal Meaning* II.1.2. See the discussion in chapter 7.

The main point that Augustine wishes to make, however, is that not only does oil rest on top of water, but it also rests in God because it only exists as a creature of God. The mutable nature of created being cannot find rest in itself because all creatures are created from nothing, and would fall back into nothingness, except that God upholds the creature's being. A creature's perfections are understood in relationship to God, not only in relation to the creature itself. Augustine has already linked the perfection of happiness in God to God's self-rest. He also thinks that the happiness of creaturely natures resides in their rest in God's goodness.¹³ Human beings find their rest in God by imitating Christ, who eternally clings to the Father.¹⁴ Just as with non-souled creatures, the tendency of a human soul toward its proper place of rest in God indicates the means "by which it maintains its nature and identity."¹⁵ Because it is created out of nothing, like all other creatures, its nature is only maintained in its rest in God, not in itself.

Human rest, like that of other creatures, is an "inclination that might be called an appetite of their weight, and when they find it they are at rest."¹⁶ The "place" that all creatures find their rest in is God. However, Augustine admits, "I have not used this term 'place' in the literal sense."¹⁷ A literal sense of creaturely rest in its intended place implies the physical space it occupies. Yet, as Augustine observes, even in physical space bodies do not always "remain in place."¹⁸ They may move about. If literal "rest" is not God's intention for creatures, then "rest" has more to do with the creature's need to fulfill its appetite, what was described in the previous chapter as its ontological participation in God, who is the source of creaturely existence. In this sense, the motion of the universe is not toward stasis, which would be the literal understanding

¹³ Similarly, in *The City of God* XII.1.2, he writes,

Although, therefore, they are not the supreme good—for God is a greater good than they are—those mutable things which can cleave to the immutable good, and so be blessed, are nonetheless great goods. And so completely is He their good that, without Him, they are necessarily miserable.

¹⁴ This theme was noted in Chapter 7. The rest that human beings find in resting in God is through their clinging to Christ. This was discussed in chapters 4-5, as part of Augustine's establishment of the doctrine of the Trinity from the scriptural presentation of human redemption by God.

¹⁵ *The Literal Meaning* IV.18.34.

¹⁶ *The Literal Meaning* IV.18.34.

¹⁷ *The Literal Meaning* IV.18.34.

¹⁸ *The Literal Meaning* IV.18.34.

of rest at a particular, fixed place. Rather, the motion of the universe is toward the completion of its perfections according to God's will, that is, having its appetite fulfilled through ontological participation. One infers from this that a creature's lack of resting is a sign that they can only find rest outside of themselves, rather than in themselves. Their temporal composition means that they cannot achieve literal rest. Their final rest can only be in God, who is their true end—the source of their goodness and happiness.

Augustine also relates this orientation to rest in God in human beings to the moral quality of holiness, which is part of the human likeness to God:¹⁹

Our likeness to God cannot be holy if we wish to be like Him in such a way as to rest in ourselves from our works as He rested in Himself from His works. For we must rest in an immutable Good, that is, in him who made us.... and this is what we must desire after our good works, which, though taking place in us, we recognise as His. Thus, He also rests after His good works, when He bestows rest in Himself upon us after the good works we have done when justified by Him.²⁰

Human beings' likeness to God manifests itself through proper rest, which follows after the good works for which they have been created. We shall deal specifically with the right use of God's creation and the work of human dominion later in this chapter. Likewise, the unique form of human likeness to God—being created to the image of God—will be taken up in the discussion of dominion. At this point it is sufficient to recognise that the likeness to God is manifest in the desire for rest in God's immutable goodness, which is both the source of all good works and the rest that is bestowed after all good works, as we shall see below. Augustine's argument is that God rests in himself because he is the immutable good and therefore, by implication, is the only stable source of rest. Because God is immutable goodness, human beings can only rightly find rest after their works in God's unchanging rest, which he bestows through justification.

The first sentence of the above quotation, from *The Literal Meaning* IV.17.29, provides a picture of the relationship between works and rest. God has made human beings to do works (such as exercising dominion) which are holy, that is, in accordance with God's will. Human works done properly are not performed with the desire to delight in them as if one were self-sufficient in one's abilities, apart from God. Rather, human works are done properly in dependence on God who is the source of all good

¹⁹ Moral nature is situated in the human will. It will be recalled that creatures without souls do not find rest in God by a free decision of their will. See Hassel, "Conversion-Theory and *Scientia* in the *De Trinitate*," 383-401.

²⁰ *The Literal Meaning* IV.17.29.

works, and the rest to which they lead in God.²¹ That one would want to find rest within oneself rather than in God is part of humanity's sinfulness, expressed in human nature as pride.²² Human pride leads to the idea that happiness may be found outside of God and in one's ability to do good and delight in that good apart from God. However, as Augustine continues in the next sentence, "we must rest in an immutable Good"²³ The only good works that a human being can delight in are the works and subsequent rest that come from God's goodness, who is the source of good works. All good human works, in fact, are part of God's creation and therefore ultimately are God's works.²⁴ Human works follow from God's creative activity in the beginning, and must find their culmination in God's gift of rest²⁵ (who is perpetually at rest in himself, apart from the creation²⁶). Therefore, though God rests apart from his creation, human works manifest God's continual working, which is his providential governance.

By beginning with a discussion of how God has created the world so that all creatures may find their rest in him, we have set up a context in which to understand Augustine's discussion of human dominion. Human dominion is one of the works that

²¹ Since movement is basic to creaturely being, a person would be wrong to think they can rest apart from their works, which are part of the natural movement of the person toward rest in God.

²² *The Literal Meaning* IV.17.29. Cf. *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Pride."

²³ *The Literal Meaning* IV.17.29.

²⁴ *The Literal Meaning* IV.17.29. Also see *The Confessions* XIII.36.51:

After your 'very good' works, which you made while remaining yourself in repose, you 'rested the seventh day' (Genesis 2:2-3). This utterance in your book foretells for us that after our good works which, because they are your gift to us, are very good, we also may rest in you for the Sabbath of eternal life.

²⁵ The end of the quotation from *The Literal Meaning* IV.17.29, "... He bestows rest in Himself upon us after the good works we have done when justified by Him," points not only to how the proper end of human works is in God, but that that end is only properly reached when God justifies "us." While Augustine discusses the rest that God created humanity to find through its works in God, he also understands that that end is dependent on God's redemptive work of justification, because of human sinfulness.

²⁶ For example, see *The Confessions* XIII.37.52: "Your seeing is not in time, your movement is not in time, and your rest is not in time. Yet, your acting causes us to see things in time, time itself, and the repose which is outside time."

God intends for humanity, and is a good and holy work when performed in dependence upon God. Human works should be part of the movement by which God providentially leads humanity to its rest in God. As part of the movement of creation toward God, they are a means by which humanity participates in the Trinity, in whom everything lives and moves and has its being. In other words, the triune nature of Augustine's concept of participation and movement, as discussed in the previous chapter, extends as well to human works, which are explained by Augustine within the framework of divine providential government.

Human works can be carried out and true rest found when, as understood by Augustine, one has a proper understanding of how to use and enjoy things. In the next section we will consider how Augustine describes the proper objects of human use and enjoyment. In doing so, we will see that the fulfillment of human goodness is the enjoyment of God, in whom humanity finds true rest, and the use of creatures.

Use and Enjoyment

Human works are good when they lead to rest in God, because God is the source and end of all things.²⁷ How can one know whether one's works lead to rest in God? Augustine provides an answer to such a question in his discussion of use and enjoyment. One's works, in Augustine's estimation, reveal the object of one's love and where one desires to find rest. By looking at use and enjoyment as a measure of one's love, one is able to see how human works point forward to that place where one seeks rest (i.e. "in God"). In taking account of how Augustine conceives of use and enjoyment, we can then turn to a related idea, namely, how the image of God in humanity, which Augustine relates directly to human dominion in Genesis 1:26, is to be worked out in relation to God as the proper object of enjoyment.

Augustine understands the scriptural commandments to love God completely, and one's neighbour as oneself, as central to the formation of a good soul.²⁸ One way that he attempts to explain the relationship between these two loves is by employing the terms 'use' and 'enjoyment'. This distinction is given an extended treatment in *On Christian Teaching*,²⁹ but also is present more generally in his subsequent works as a way of understanding how Christians are to love both God and neighbour.³⁰ He defines his

²⁷ *The Literal Meaning* IV.17.29.

²⁸ Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22: 37-39, Mark 12:29-31. For more detailed background, see Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine*, esp. pp. 79-115.

²⁹ Especially in I.3.3-7.7, 22.20.

³⁰ The terms, though, are not used strictly according to the definitions found in *On Christian Teaching*. See O. O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in Augustine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 25-29.

terms thus: “To enjoy something is to hold fast to it in love for its own sake. To use something is to apply whatever it may be to the purpose of obtaining what you love—if indeed it is something that ought to be loved.”³¹ The enjoyment of something is directed at the thing itself as the source of love, but by using something, one recognises that it is not a source of love in itself, but points beyond itself to another love. Augustine later identifies God alone as the proper source of enjoyment, because only God is perfect and unchangeable.³² One should not use God, since God is the source of all that is good, and all created things only have their goodness from God.³³ However, Augustine recognises that one can love one’s neighbours without making them the object of that enjoyment which only belongs to God.³⁴ In other words, the biblical commandment that one ought to love one’s neighbour need not lead to a potential idolatrous enjoyment whereby one confuses the proper limits of one’s love of neighbour with one’s love for God.³⁵

Augustine’s conception of the use that can be made of the things of the world (including people) is not intended to be understood in terms of using something as merely a means to an end, which is the negative way that one might conceive of the term.³⁶ Rather, as Rist puts it, Augustine’s employment of use “is merely a standard Latin locution—found also in earlier English, e.g. ‘He used him well’—indicating how people are to be treated; the notion of ‘exploitation’ is not to be read into it.”³⁷ The

³¹ *On Christian Teaching* I.4.4.

³² *On Christian Teaching* I.22.20-21.

³³ Thus, in *City of God* XI.25, Augustine judges as perverse those who use God for the sake of some temporal good: “... those perverse men who wish to enjoy money and use God, not spending money for God’s sake, but worshipping God for money’s sake.” This perversity is the result of a will turned evil and motivated by a disordered love that no longer desires God. See N. J. Torchia, “The Significance of *Ordo* in St. Augustine’s Moral Theory,” in *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, 268-70.

³⁴ In this regard, see *City of God* XI.25.

³⁵ Rist notes that Augustine left room for the application of “use” and “enjoyment” toward one’s neighbour, as well as toward God, after writing book 1 of *On Christian Teaching*. See *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptised*, 165-66.

³⁶ *On Christian Teaching* I.4.4. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptised*, 163, as an example of such a misinterpretation of “use,” cites A. Nygren, *Agape and Eros: A Study of the Christian Idea of Love*, trans. P. S. Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953).

³⁷ Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptised*, 163-64.

proper use of something is so that God may be enjoyed (loved) fully.³⁸ In sum, then, God gives creatures being—that is, gives them goodness, since to be is to be good—for the ultimate end of enjoying God. As we shall see, the work of human dominion is a command to use something not in order to exploit it, but in order to love God more fully, and thus to find one’s rest in him.

In order to make sure that the use of people is not misconstrued, Augustine also refers to the commandment to love one’s neighbour as the enjoyment of another “in God.”³⁹ He then defines such “enjoyment” as to “use with delight.”⁴⁰ One’s ultimate enjoyment, which is fellowship with the Trinity,⁴¹ provides a limit on how one might enjoy one’s neighbour, because the proper enjoyment of one’s neighbour leads to one’s ultimate end in God. One’s enjoyment of others is not that ultimate end, but an enjoyment along the way toward one’s final end of enjoying God, just as one can enjoy a trip without forsaking the end of that trip.⁴²

In addition to explaining how one’s love of their neighbour is both a form of “enjoyment” and “use,” it should be clarified that loving others in God is not only in reference to enjoying their souls, but to enjoying their whole being—body and soul.⁴³ Thus, Augustine does not separate the physical dimension from the spiritual dimension in his understanding of good behaviour, but actually emphasises the unity

³⁸ So, in the course of his explanation of how one uses the world to enjoy God, Augustine appeals to the example of how the Christian loves God through following the way of his incarnate Son, Jesus Christ (*On Christian Teaching* I.34.38). The incarnation provides the path to the invisible and transcendent God. It is likely that part of the reason Augustine uses this example is because he recognises that God’s bestowal of goodness (being) upon the world makes it capable of moving toward God—the way to God is through God (i.e. the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit) and through the good things he has created (the incarnation affirms this). See our discussion of how God draws the creation to himself in chapter 7.

³⁹ *On Christian Teaching* I.33.37. “In God” was used by Augustine prior to *On Christian Teaching* as well as afterwards (e.g. *The Trinity* IX.13), see Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptised*, 165-66. Also see O’Donovan, “*Usus and Fructio in Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana* I,” *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 33 (1982): 361-97.

⁴⁰ *On Christian Teaching* I.33.37.

⁴¹ *On Christian Teaching* I.33.37.

⁴² *On Christian Teaching* I.4.4.

⁴³ *On Christian Teaching* I.24.25-27.28.

of the spiritual and the physical.⁴⁴ This unity of the physical and the spiritual dimensions of the human being provides a clear enough clue that the physical is not to be neglected or merely used as a means to another end. Augustine's affirmation that the corporeal can be used well echoes his understanding that the whole creation finds its rest in God, and that the whole, rather than just the spiritual aspects of the creation, is "very good."⁴⁵ The physical universe is not denigrated or given short shrift by Augustine, but is a part of God's good work of creation.

The distinction between use and enjoyment provides Augustine with a way in which he can distinguish between the proper goals of human actions in relation to God (enjoyment) and to other creatures (use), with human beings occupying a middle ground because of their constitution as physical and spiritual beings (thus they are to be enjoyed, but only in God—in other words, enjoyment is a form of use when directed toward human beings). Augustine's distinction between use and enjoyment serves to clarify how human actions can be good and lead to their intended eternal ends of human beings loving God. As such, the distinction gives a more concrete way of delineating what it is that leads to the rest that humanity has been designed to seek—that human use is conditioned by the enjoyment (love) of God. Inasmuch as one's participation in the Trinity involves a conversion of the soul toward God so that one finds one's rest in God, as discussed in the previous chapter, Augustine's understanding of use and enjoyment is assumed to be trinitarian in shape. It is through the soul's measure, number, and weight that one is drawn to love things properly in the Holy Spirit, according to the form given through the Word, and according to the limits of creaturely existence that are set by God the Father. That is, to use some things and to love others is possible when one participates in the Trinity that draws the soul toward those things that should be used and enjoyed. In the next section we will employ Augustine's conception of how human beings should act, according to proper use and enjoyment, to explore his understanding of dominion as the practical expression of how human beings are the image of God.

The Work of Human Dominion and the Image of God

The work of human dominion over nature, which will be our focus in the remaining sections of this chapter, is one of the ways that Augustine understands humanity to be distinct among created beings. He argues that the idea of dominion, as

⁴⁴ *On Christian Teaching* I.24.25-27.28. A study of Augustine's understanding of human embodiment and its goodness is G. Lawless, "Augustine and Human Embodiment," in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Melanges T. J. Van Bavel*, 167-86.

⁴⁵ In *The Literal Meaning* III.24.37 he writes, "For when creatures remain in the state in which they have been created, possessing the perfection they have received ... they are good individually, and all in general are very good." The reference to the whole of the creation being "very good" is Genesis 1:31.

understood in Genesis 1:26, is able to clarify the description of humanity as being created to the image of God.⁴⁶ Augustine understands human works to be holy when they lead to rest in the supreme good, who is God.⁴⁷ He specifies the reason for this relationship between human works and rest when he describes human rest in God as reflecting the special human likeness to God. Rather than resting in oneself instead of the creator, the human being shows its likeness to God by depending on God with complete devotion, that is, by desiring rest in God as the proper end of human works.⁴⁸ It is because humanity has been created in God's image that its works are to be holy. Moreover, human works are not for the enjoyment of the works in themselves, but for the end of enjoying (loving) God. Dominion is one of those human works that reflects the right use of the creation so that God may be enjoyed. The relationship between dominion and human likeness to God is rooted in a conception of human works as revealing the proper object for one's love, namely, God's immutable goodness—the greatest good, which orders the creation, giving it rest and final fulfillment.

As we saw in chapter 6, Augustine believed that God created everything to a certain order. As well, as we have just seen, part of that ordering involves how one uses or enjoys something, so that God is the proper object of enjoyment, and other people (with the qualifications that we also noted) and the world are to be used. So, in the *City of God*, for example, Augustine describes how the order of the heavenly city is best because it leads to peace: “The peace of the Heavenly City is a perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God, and of one another in God.”⁴⁹ God created humanity to have its end in the enjoyment of God, where people also can enjoy each other in God according to God's conferral of peace upon its citizens. However, Augustine does not limit his conception of harmony to the enjoyment of other human beings in God. He continues, “The peace of all things lies in the tranquillity of order.”⁵⁰ Just as use and enjoyment, when rightly practiced toward other humans in God, produce harmony, so the right order of all creatures within the creation produces peace for the whole creation. For humanity, this requires that creation is used rightly.

⁴⁶ We noted earlier that Augustine considered all creatures to be made to the likeness of the creator, but that human beings are made to the image. See John E. Sullivan, *The Image of God: The Doctrine of St. Augustine and Its Influence* (Dubuque: Priory Press, 1963), 11-14; Markus, “‘Imago’ and ‘Similitudo’ in Augustine,” 125-43.

⁴⁷ *The Literal Meaning* IV.17.29.

⁴⁸ *The Literal Meaning* IV.17.29.

⁴⁹ *City of God* XIX.13.1.

⁵⁰ *City of God* XIX.13.1.

This context of the moral use of others is crucial for understanding Augustine's interpretation of God's command in Genesis 1:26 that humanity is to exercise dominion over the world. He understands dominion as the rule by human beings of non-human creatures through the exercise of their rational capacity. However, this should not be misunderstood as a rule for merely human ends and enjoyment. His framework for speaking of the use and enjoyment of others "in God" helps to explain his understanding of human dominion over nature. All human works are to be done in reference to God, and not merely as ends in themselves. The use of something is in order to love God. The orientation of human works, when set within the larger picture of the goodness of all creation and its participation in God, suggests that the commandment to exercise dominion is supposed to mandate the rule of nature not for human enjoyment, but for upholding the divine ordering of reality in its goodness.

Augustine does not devote much space to explaining what dominion means in Genesis 1:26. Primarily he understands it as part of the statement that human beings are made to the image of God, and accordingly that the verse bears a trinitarian stamp.

'Let us make mankind to Our image and likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, all the cattle, and all the earth, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.' And God made man, to the image of God.⁵¹

Augustine explains that this verse, on the one hand, begins with a plural pronoun, "Let us make," thus indicating the plurality of persons in the godhead, so that making "mankind to our image" is not the work of one divine person (e.g., the Father) making human beings to the image of another divine person (e.g., the Son).⁵² On the other hand, it ends with a singular subject, "God made," indicating the unity of the godhead, whose work is one work, not three works.⁵³

He then suggests that because humanity's dominion over the animals is

⁵¹ This is Augustine's text of Genesis 1:26-7, in *The Literal Meaning* III.19.29.

⁵² *The Literal Meaning* III.19.29. Cf. his *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis* 16.61, where he explained, in an emendation, that the likeness of the image in humanity is to the Trinity itself, thus revising his earlier interpretation (16.60) that the image of humanity is to the Word alone. See our discussion in chapter 6.

⁵³ *The Literal Meaning* III.19.29. Augustine makes this same point in Sermon 52.18, where he begins the explanation of the idea of humankind being made to the image of God as a reference to the Father and the Son, "and also of course in consequence of the Holy Spirit too So the Father isn't making without the Son, nor the Son without the Father" (*Sermons 51-94*, trans. E. Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, part III, vol. 3 [Brooklyn: New City Press, 1990]).

mentioned directly after the first clause, “Let Us make mankind to Our image and likeness,” but before the affirmation that God did so (“And God made man, to the image of God”), one should understand that the part of human nature which is the basis for dominion, namely, “his reason,” is what is meant by “to the image of God”:

From this we are to understand that man was made to the image of God in that part of his nature wherein he surpasses the brute beasts. This is, of course, his reason or mind or intelligence, or whatever we wish to call it.⁵⁴

A person’s mind is at once the aspect of human nature which allows it to exercise authority over other earthly creatures, and also that which is specifically made to the image of God the Trinity. In Sermon 43.3, he also answers the question of what the basis for human dominion is in Genesis 1:26: “What gives him this authority? The image of God.”⁵⁵ He then continues to explain, in this sermon, what the image is by showing how human beings are different from other creatures: “We have existence in common with sticks and stones, life in common with trees, sense in common with beasts, understanding in common with angels.”⁵⁶ Human beings are different from other creatures because of their rationality. The image of God in human beings lies in their exercise of reason. And it is the exercise of reason that gives them authority, or dominion, over animals. Given this close relationship between the image of God and human dominion, we shall briefly unpack Augustine’s understanding of the image of God as a movement of the human being toward knowing God. In the previous chapter, while considering the governance of divine providence, we noted that Augustine’s understanding of participation sometimes was expressed in terms of how creatures move in God. Our focus on the image of God here will dwell on how Augustine speaks of the image in terms of the moral participation of humanity in God as they move toward him. In grasping this aspect of Augustine’s conception of the image of God we will be in a position to clarify how the exercise of dominion according to that image is envisaged by him.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ *The Literal Meaning* III.20.30. Cf. *The Trinity* VII.12 and XIV.25.

⁵⁵ *Sermons 20-50*, trans. E. Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, part III, vol. 2 (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1990).

⁵⁶ Sermon 43.4.

⁵⁷ Our discussion about the image of God will be developed using Augustine’s comments about the image as they are related to dominion, since our purpose is to develop a fuller understanding of human dominion. It is impossible to do full justice to Augustine’s important discussion of the image in the second half of *The Trinity* in this section, and we will only make limited use of it. We will rely on Rowan Williams’ essay on how Augustine develops his argument about the image in *The Trinity*, “*Sapientia* and the Trinity: Reflections On the *De Trinitate*.”

Immediately after linking the exercise of dominion to the image of God in *The Literal Meaning* III.20.30, Augustine cites Paul's argument about how a person's mind is renewed by the putting on of the "new man, who is being renewed unto the knowledge of God, according to the image of his Creator" (Ephesians 4:23-24, Colossians 3:10), as a justification for his interpretation of the image of God as human reason. His point is that Paul points to the mind, as opposed to the body, as that part of the person where the renewal from sin happens according to the image of God.⁵⁸ By citing Paul, Augustine brings out a parallel between God's work of creation and redemption. In both cases God is the subject and creatures are the objects of the divine work. The person created by God is also redeemed by God. In redeeming creatures, God's activity arises from his love of creation; in creating, God's works arise from his love, which is the nature of his being.⁵⁹ The external activities of God—the works directed toward his creation—come from the trinity of eternal persons whose indivisible substance is love.⁶⁰

When Augustine cites Paul in order to indicate that the image of God is one's mind, he is likely thinking of this relationship of love between God and the creation. In *The Trinity*, Augustine also cites Ephesians 4:23 and Colossians 3:10 as part of his explanation concerning the renewal of the image from the deformity brought about in it by sin.⁶¹ There, he describes the process of renewing the image

in the recognition of God (Colossians 3:10), that is *in justice and holiness of truth* (Ephesians 4:24) ... So then, the man who is being renewed in the recognition of God and in justice and holiness of truth ... is transferring his love from temporal things to eternal, from visible to intelligible, from carnal to spiritual things ... But his success depends on divine assistance

One is renewed in one's image, which is the mind, in the recognition of God, when one's love is directed toward God. The recognition of God, in terms of his justice and holiness, is revealed in how one directs one's love toward God. Augustine is portraying one's knowledge of God "as operational and vital," because the mind must

⁵⁸ Cf. *The Trinity* XII.12. It should be pointed out that even though it is the mind that is renewed from the effects of sin, Augustine also believed that bodies would be renewed. They would not be renewed according to the image of the Trinity, but to the image of the Son who became incarnate. Augustine did not denigrate the body.

⁵⁹ E.g., *The Trinity* XV.31 and *The Literal Meaning* I.8.14.

⁶⁰ The importance of love for understanding the image of God is confirmed in the place that it occupies as the starting point (VIII) and the conclusion (XIV-XV) of Augustine's search in *The Trinity*. See Williams, "*Sapientia* and the Trinity," 322f.

⁶¹ *The Trinity* XIV.23.

return to, or better, move toward, God in love.⁶² As one's mind is renewed, the person recognises God as the immutable source of holiness and justice, who has called that person back to that person's proper love. This moral renewal of the image is rooted in the redemption of a person from sin, since in sin human beings do not participate in such moral perfections as they ought to (because they have transferred their love from God to "temporal things," "visible" things, and "carnal" things). But when the image is renewed, then a person can know and participate in justice and holiness inasmuch as they are in God, who is perfect in justice and holiness.

The identification of the image of God with "the reason, mind, or intelligence,"⁶³ by which humanity has dominion over other creatures, implies the superiority of humanity over other creatures.⁶⁴ Of course, even that part of human nature that is the basis for the image of God, and that differentiates humanity from other creatures, must participate in God just as all creatures do. One of the key aspects of Augustine's conception of participation, discussed in the last chapter, is its dynamic quality. Williams brings out the importance of Augustine's description of the image as movement. He describes Augustine's understanding of the image of God as a person's maturing understanding that they are loved and known by God:

We come to 'image' God by grasping that our reality exists solely within his activity of imparting wisdom and justice, and thus letting that prior gift form our conscious reflection and decision-making—which of course is not done by our effort but by the receiving of the grace of Christ which reconnects us with our vocation to be God's created image. The image of God in us might be said to entail a movement into our createdness, because that is a movement into God's own life as turned 'outwards.'⁶⁵

Williams' description of Augustine's understanding of the image of God as a movement toward knowing God, especially God's wisdom and justice as they are known through one's redemption by the grace of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and his emphasis on letting that knowledge form one's consciousness, clarify how the image of God is a dynamic intelligence. It is about knowing who God is through a "movement into God's own life" as God turns "outwards" toward his creatures.⁶⁶ Augustine

⁶² Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 50-51, 54, 62-63.

⁶³ *The Literal Meaning* III.20.30.

⁶⁴ Sermon 43.4.

⁶⁵ "Sapientia and the Trinity," 321. The trinitarian work of redeeming the image of God in human beings is also described in detail by Sullivan, *The Image of God*, ch. 2.

⁶⁶ Cf. Sullivan, *The Image of God*, 17-21. Augustine describes this movement toward God in *The Trinity* XII.10: "Now the more it [the mind] reaches out toward what

describes this movement of creatures into God as the movement of creatures toward their proper end or rest.⁶⁷ Likewise, Williams' reference to God's life turned outward is in keeping with Augustine's explanation of trinitarian creativity in Genesis 1-2, namely, that the Father's Word and Holy Spirit shape and uphold the creation in God's love.⁶⁸ Williams rightly calls Augustine's conception of the image of God a "vocation," by which he means one's ongoing movement toward a deeper knowledge of God and God's creation. Such a movement happens according to the "corporate charity" that is given to the human being by the Trinity, originally at the creation and then later through the redemptive work of the Trinity in the economy of salvation.⁶⁹ Another way to put this idea, in the context of our discussion of God's governance of creation, is that one is the image of God the Trinity as one is dependent upon God's work according to the proper use of creation and enjoyment of God.

The image of God, according to Augustine, concerns persons moving toward God particularly through the exercise of their intellects which enable them to pursue a knowledge of God's love. As we also have seen, the exercise of human dominion is through the intellect, by which human beings are above other creatures (which do not have intellects).⁷⁰ The image of God, then, functions as a limiting concept for how dominion may be understood. For example, dominion (following Augustine's understanding of it as the exercise of the image of God in creation) does not refer to the imitation of God's rule over the creation, but rather to the realisation of the image through the vocation of seeking and knowing the triune creator's love.⁷¹ A proper

is eternal, the more it is formed thereby to the image of God." The mind can do this only because it has help from God: "But his success depends on divine assistance; it is after all God who declares, *Without me you can do nothing* (John 15:5)." In this quotation, the divine assistance is specifically the mediator Christ, though in the larger argument of *The Trinity* it is the work of all three persons who reach out.

⁶⁷ See Chapter 7, above.

⁶⁸ See chapter 6, above.

⁶⁹ "*Sapientia* and the Trinity," 321.

⁷⁰ *The Literal Meaning* III.20.30 and Sermon 43.3.

⁷¹ It will be recalled (see pp. 13-14) that Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 236-40, depicts Augustine's understanding of dominion and the image of God to be about the rule of power, calling it "a pure analogy of domination ... a patriarchal analogy to God the Father" (240). We also noted how Moltmann's argument is repeated by Boff (see pp. 13, 49-52), though he does not place the blame for such a dominating and patriarchal view of God solely on Augustine, but rather construes the problem of dominating

understanding of the work of dominion should take into account how it leads to rest in God. Put another way, dominion over other creatures is not an ultimate source of enjoyment for humanity; it is supposed to lead the person toward rest in and enjoyment of God. The enjoyment of God is the experience of God's love as it is known by a person through the image of God.⁷² It is this idea of dominion that we must work out in the rest of the chapter.

power to be at the root of ancient and classical societies, distorting even the message of Scripture; see *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 79.

Moltmann reaches the conclusion that Augustine's conception of the image of God is patriarchal and dominating, in part, because of his understanding of Augustine's argument in *The Trinity* XII.10, where Augustine is attempting to explain how man and woman might symbolize the functioning of the image of God according to 1 Corinthians 11:7, which states that, "[man] is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man." This is to misunderstand what Augustine is trying to accomplish. He does not reject the woman as a bearer of the image of God in her human nature (XII.10), but rather argues that in 1 Corinthians 11:7 (XII.9-10) the woman symbolizes a function that is not called the image, while the male symbolizes a function that is called the image. When he turns from his symbolic reading of 1 Corinthians to speak about the image of God as it applies to human nature, he explicitly clarifies that a woman is the image of God just as much as man, since both equally share the human nature that bears the image. "It [Genesis 1:27] says that what was made to the image of God is the human nature that is realized in each sex, and it does not exclude the female from the image of God that is meant" (*The Trinity* XII.10).

This is not to deny that limitations exist in Augustine's understanding of subordination with regard to gender. The subordination of women to men is cited in *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum* I.CLIII: "there is even a natural order among humankind, such that women should be subject to men ..." (*est etiam ordo naturalis in hominibus, ut seruiant feminae uiris* ...), as a result of their "weaker reason" (*inferior ratio*). In this respect, Augustine reflects a hierarchy prevalent in his day. However, at the very least, Augustine can be said to understand woman to participate fully in the image of God with man, which means that woman and man together can be renewed in that image. It is not surprising, then, that the debate as to how to understand Augustine's anthropology with regard to the place of women continues. An overview of recent scholarship on this is E. A. Matter, "Christ, God, and Woman in the Thought of St. Augustine," in *Augustine and His Critics*, 164-75. Also see M. Miles, "The Body and Human Values in Augustine of Hippo," in *Grace, Politics & Desire: Essays on Augustine*, ed. H. A. Meynell (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990), 55-67.

⁷² This experience of divine love is not something that a person accomplishes by themselves either, but rather they use their intellects to know God through God's work of providence in the creation. See chapter 7, above.

Dominion and Power

Though the verb *dominor* means to rule, primarily in the legal sense of a ruler in government, Augustine did not simply read a patriarchal, dominating political authority into his interpretation of the commandment for humanity to have dominion in Genesis 1:26. Instead, he understood dominion to be the rule of reason, which, as we have just seen, is understood properly when reason is conceived as an orientation to the knowledge of the love of God. Because of the close connection between the image of God and dominion, the latter needs to be understood within the larger context that Augustine has described concerning the image, which is directly related to how human beings participate in God and enjoy (love) God. In this section, we will take up the question of how the power exercised in human dominion can be understood according to this enjoyment of God and the right use of others. We will do this by first considering some of the ways in which God's power is described by Augustine in his portrayal of God's governance of providential care and redemption. Then, we shall link Augustine's conception of how the human being is to respond to God's power, which we will describe in terms of a loving worship of God, back to how human dominion is described within the context of use and enjoyment.

Augustine's description of God's power to rule over creatures (God's governance) is not described as a dominating power. Rather, he sets God's rule within the context of wisdom, "For He is all-powerful not by arbitrary power but by the strength of wisdom."⁷³ God's wisdom is his Word,⁷⁴ who, with the Holy Spirit, founded and converted the creation and holds it together so that its goodness might be a delight to the Father.⁷⁵ Augustine recognises God's will as omnipotent, but clarifies that omnipotence is not to be defined as an unrestrained, arbitrary power, that is thoughtless in its application, but rather as the power of God's wisdom and goodness. As we have seen, the Word and the divine goodness create out of God's love, and govern the creation so that the creation will find rest in that love.

An excellent example of how God's power is manifest is in the work of

⁷³ *The Literal Meaning* IX.17.32.

⁷⁴ See our discussion of *The Literal Meaning* I.4.9 and II.6.12, in chapter 6; and *The Trinity* VII.1-4 in chapter 5.

⁷⁵ *The Literal Meaning* I.6.12. In chapter 1 we cited the critique of God conceived as king over the creation by S. McFague, "A Square in the Quilt," 42-58. It is now clear that McFague's critique of traditional images of divine lordship as a kingly rule does not apply to Augustine's portrayal of God's rule over creation. She described the image of kingly rule as anthropocentric and, ultimately, as a disinterested and distant benevolence that is directed toward the affairs of the creation. Augustine's conception of God's governance is of the Trinity holding together the creation through its providential love of all creatures, which depend on, and in, God's presence in order to exist.

redemption, which is the foundation from which Augustine developed his doctrine of the Trinity. The redemptive work of Christ saves humanity from bondage to sin, and is revealed as God's powerful mercy and justice on the cross.⁷⁶ This merciful and just redemption, "[which we needed] just as we needed a creator," is an expression of God's governance.⁷⁷ For it is from the God who created and governs the world that the redemption of fallen humanity also comes. To distinguish God's wise, omnipotent power from the idea of power that leads creatures boastfully to use (and even abuse) their authority over others, Augustine goes on to note how God's power is revealed through humble means, such as the apostle Peter, who witnesses to God's saving revelation in Jesus Christ:

"Give me," he says, "that fisherman, give me a common man, give me an uneducated man, give me one whom the senator doesn't deign to talk to, not even when he's buying fish.... The fisherman isn't in a position to boast about anything except Christ. Let him come first, to give a salutary lesson in humility. Let the fisherman come first; the emperor is best brought along through him."⁷⁸

God's omnipotent power is revealed through the example of humility, not only the humble witness of Peter, but supremely through God's own incarnate Son.⁷⁹ Through this humility even those who have great authority will be brought back to God. God's lordship is an omnipotent power, but also is simultaneously merciful, just, and humble.

The rule of God is not sheer dominating power, but instead is a rule of wisdom, such as is revealed through the humility of Christ's redemption, and also through God's delight in creating all things to be good through participation in the Father's Word and goodness. The basis for human dominion rests in the human being's uniqueness of being created to the image of God, so that through its mind it

⁷⁶ In *The Trinity* XII.18, Augustine explains Paul's conception of Christians as "justified in his [Christ's] blood" (Romans 5:9) in terms of the blood's "potency" (XII.15) of justice, which he understands to be closely related to mercy (XII.19). Justice and mercy do not appear powerful, as power is understood in the world, nevertheless, as he again quotes Paul (1 Corinthians 1:25), "What is weak of God is stronger than men" (XII.18).

⁷⁷ Sermon 43.1.

⁷⁸ Sermon 43.6. H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 70, notes that it is in fallen humanity that the urge to dominate others is evident. This tendency, often most visible in the powerful and in political leaders, is challenged in this sermon by Augustine's affirmation of an unlikely, humble source for God's revelation of his salvation.

⁷⁹ *The Trinity* VIII.7.

seeks understanding and rest in God, according to the movement of love in which all creatures partake according to divine providence. While Augustine does claim that having dominion over animals means they are “subjected to us,”⁸⁰ because Genesis 1:26-27 implies “that reason ought to rule the irrational life,”⁸¹ nevertheless, it is a rule that should reflect the vocation of the image of God. One can infer that for Augustine the vocation of humanity to know and love God, who created the world out of his goodness and love, does not warrant the wanton destruction of God’s creatures. In fact, such license is an act against the goodness of God and oneself, since “the peace of all things lies in the tranquillity of order.”⁸²

For Augustine, the natural use of creatures, such as for food, is not a violation of the command to have dominion. It is a fulfillment of God’s design that those non-rational forms of life might supply the necessities of physical life, not only for human beings, but for each other. Thus, concerning why animals consume one another, Augustine explains that

one animal is the nourishment for another. To wish otherwise would not be reasonable. For all creatures, as long as they exist, have their own measure, number, and order. ... even when one passes into another, [they] are governed by a hidden plan that rules the beauty of the world and regulates each according to its kind.⁸³

The predatory nature of animals, including human beings, is justified as the natural state of affairs by which God has ordered the world. Augustine goes on to indicate that the answer to why God created in this way—that some animals eat other animals for nourishment—is only dimly grasped by most people.⁸⁴ Part of the problem is that sin has obscured human ability to understand the purpose of God’s creation, so that good things which God has created now appear to be evil, when in fact they are still good,

⁸⁰ Sermon 43.3.

⁸¹ “*Ubi insinuat rationem debere dominari irrationalis vitae*” (in *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum* I.CLIII). R. H. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 201-202, comments on this passage. He points out that the context is Augustine’s explanation of Genesis 46:32, where Joseph is speaking to his brothers, who are shepherds. Augustine argues that being a shepherd is worthy of merit, because it is a vocation that is directed toward the proper employment of dominion, namely, over cattle, according to Genesis 1:26.

⁸² *City of God* XIX.13.1.

⁸³ *The Literal Meaning* III.16.25.

⁸⁴ *The Literal Meaning* III.16.25.

but also function as a punishment for human sin: “Since ... all things are ordered in the best possible way, which seem to us now adverse, [the evil which is the penalty of sin] has deservedly happened to fallen man”⁸⁵ In fact, though God has made everything to be good, sin not only makes it difficult to see how everything is good, but it also leads to good things being a punishment for humanity.

Since ... it behooves us to be good not of necessity but voluntarily, it behooved God to give the soul free will. But to this soul obeying His laws, He subjected all things without adversity, so that the rest of the things that God made should serve it, if also the soul itself had willed to serve God. But if it should refuse to serve God, those things that served it should be converted into its punishment.⁸⁶

As we noted above, Augustine understands that the predatory nature of animals is normal. However, he also suggests that sin, which has disordered God’s good creation, has made humanity’s dominion less effective than it is supposed to be. The world seems to be against people’s interests as a result of sin.

The fact that predation is a natural state for animals—that they eat one another—does not mean that Augustine thought God had relegated non-human animals merely to be food or some other utility at the hands of humanity. As Augustine puts it in *The City of God*, one of the problems of calling non-human creatures displeasing or evil is that “... [M]en consider them not in themselves, but only with reference to their utility”⁸⁷ This surely suggests that for Augustine dominion, whatever utility may properly be included in its exercise, is not first or foremost to please human beings “in themselves.” He goes on to write a few lines later, “It is not with respect to our comfort or discomfort, then, but with respect to their own nature, that created things give glory to their maker.”⁸⁸ He affirms animals as having their own intrinsic goodness that can be appreciated by people in relation to God’s creative work. Similarly, in *The Literal Meaning* VIII.23.44, Augustine argues that

⁸⁵ *Acts or Disputation Against Fortunatus* XV, in *Augustin: The Writings Against the Manichaens, and Against the Donatists*, trans. J. H. Newman, ed. P. Schaff, NPNF¹ vol. 4 (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1887; reprint, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 116.

⁸⁶ *Against Fortunatus* XV. Van Bavel, “The Creator and the Integrity of Creation,” 17, cites this passage from *Against Fortunatus*, as well as one from *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum* III.LXVII, which forms part of Augustine’s discussion of Leviticus 18:25, where God warns that when humans sin, the earth will vomit its inhabitants out. Augustine notes that humans suffer when they violate God’s ordering of creation through their sins.

⁸⁷ *The City of God* XII.4.

⁸⁸ *The City of God* XII.4.

all creatures that are without free wills are not simply subordinate to those beings with wills without any qualification. Rather, the ranking of creatures is set within limits according to a specific “order established by the justice of the Creator.”⁸⁹ The rule of some creatures over others is to be guided by the providential government of God, who delights in all the things he has made.

Observing an animal’s desire for life, which they cling to instinctively, Augustine also sees their beauty and praiseworthiness.⁹⁰ The harmony of measure, number, and order produces in an animal a beauty that amazes Augustine, especially the beauty of animals “doing their utmost ... to protect the material and temporal life which has been given them by their position in the lower ranks of creatures.”⁹¹ The protection of life and the fight for survival is an example of the right use of life and its goodness, in which creatures properly delight when they use and protect life according to the measure that God gives them.⁹² Preaching on Psalm 144, Augustine says that the beauty, goodness, power, and utility of the creation should always lead people to the praise and celebration of God: “I want the creator to be glorified in all he has made.”⁹³ The perfections of the universe are to lead people to love God and praise him, just as the rest of creation confesses and praises God in their being which is ordered according to God’s goodness.⁹⁴ It follows that the exercise of dominion is not merely to delight in the use that a creature provides for human needs, but that the creator might be praised. Animals, then, have their part in the beauty of God’s plan, one which is to delight in life according to their measure, number, and order. This part, or role, in

⁸⁹ *The Literal Meaning* VIII.23.44.

⁹⁰ *The Literal Meaning* III.16.25. W. Cizewski has shown how Augustine’s discussion of animals in the *The Literal Meaning* reveals his compassion for an animal’s suffering as it instinctively struggles to survive in the face of death. See “The Meaning and Purpose of Animals According to Augustine’s Genesis Commentaries,” in *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, 363-73.

⁹¹ *The Literal Meaning* III.16.25.

⁹² Also see *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* I.16.25: “all these things are beautiful to their maker and craftsman, who has a use for them all in his management of the whole universe ...” Even though the beauty of creatures may elude some people, as Augustine observes above, nevertheless God knows everything’s beauty.

⁹³ *Expositions of the Psalms 121-150*, trans. M. Boulding, The Works of Saint Augustine, part III, vol. 20 (Brooklyn: New City Press, 2004), 144.7. He laments, though, that often it is not the case that the beauty of creation leads to the praise of God.

⁹⁴ *Expositions of the Psalms 121-150*, 144.13-14.

God's plan is more than merely serving as a product for human consumption, but is the worship of the creator.⁹⁵

In Sermon 68, Augustine says,

Observe the beauty of the world, and praise the plan of the creator. Observe what he made, love the one who made it ... because he also made you, his lover, in his own image.⁹⁶

Here, Augustine makes clear that if one recognises in forms of life that are not made in God's image the signs of God's good plan for creation, then they who are made to God's image should love God because of his good works. Since all forms of life are good and therefore reveal God's greatness, their use by humanity should be to lead humanity's worship and enjoyment of God,

Others, in order to find God, will read a book. Well, as a matter of fact there is a certain great big book, the book of created nature. Look carefully at it top and bottom, observe it, read it. God did not make letters of ink for you to recognise him in; he set before your eyes all these things he has made. Why look for a louder voice? Heaven and earth cries out to you, "God made me" ... Observe heaven and earth in a religious spirit ... [but those who have done so] ... *while recognising God, they did not glorify him as God* (Romans 1:21).⁹⁷

According to Augustine, it was on account of the Athenians having read the book of creation, which speaks to any who would read it concerning God's creative work, that Paul affirmed that they had an understanding of the creator, which enabled them to write concerning God, "For in him we live and move and are" (Acts 17:28).⁹⁸ Just like one who reads Scripture with understanding, Augustine goes on to state, so one who observes the book of nature ought to be led to glorify God (though the Athenians did not). It would seem reasonable to infer, because his theology of creation leads to the affirmation that God is to be glorified for his goodness and love, that the proper use of creatures in the exercise of human dominion leads to an increase of one's love of God. It was noted above how Augustine connected the enjoyment of God to the

⁹⁵ That the whole creation is created according to God's delight for its goodness, both in each individual creature and in the whole, is described a few paragraphs later: "When creatures remain in the state in which they have been created, possessing the perfection they have received ... they are good individually, and all in general are very good" (*The Literal Meaning* III.24.37).

⁹⁶ Sermon 68.5.

⁹⁷ Sermon 68.6.

⁹⁸ Sermon 68.6.

maintenance of the harmony of God's ordering of creation.⁹⁹ Understanding the divine ordering of creation—according to a creature's measure, weight, and number—and promoting that harmony by which each creature fits into God's beautiful plan, is an apt description of how humankind properly is to exercise dominion and to use creatures.¹⁰⁰

In fact, knowledge of how God has ordered the creation according to a hierarchy of creatures, and subjected some to others, can lead to two possible ends: to the wisdom of knowing God and loving him, i.e. using others to know and love God better, or to the folly of thinking oneself to be higher than others in the hierarchy, i.e. enjoying or loving oneself because one can exercise one's intellect over others. For example, in *On Christian Teaching* II.38.56, Augustine notes that there are some who study arithmetic; indeed, they do so with “shrewd and sagacious minds.” Nevertheless, it would be wrong if they claimed that the immutable rules of arithmetic were instituted by human beings. He then writes:

However, take someone who loves knowing all these things [including learning why some things are mutable and other things are immutable] just so that he can give himself airs among the uneducated ... and who does not turn all this to the praise and love of the one God from whom he knows it all proceeds; such a person can seem to be very learned, but in no way at all can he be wise.¹⁰¹

In this passage, Augustine argues that the knowledge of truths in creation (through secular education) in terms of their degrees of mutability and immutability only can be called wisdom when it leads to the praise and worship of God. However, it is vanity when such knowledge does not result in worship, but instead leads one to a sense of superiority over others who do not recognise such structures of reality. Put in the terms Augustine used to describe divine providence, such a sense of superiority happens when one tries to rest in oneself, rather than in God. Dominion is exercised

⁹⁹ *City of God* XIX.13.1.

¹⁰⁰ In *On Christian Teaching* I.24.25-27.28, Augustine notes how the subjection of one's body to one's spirit is for the flourishing of the body, which will exist in perfect harmony with the spirit after the resurrection. Such a subjection of the body to the spirit, “car[ring] for them in an orderly and prudent manner” (I.25.26), is the fulfillment of the “unalterable law of nature” that “we should love ourselves and our bodies” (I.26.27). The subjection of other bodies to human dominion, one would expect, also requires the application of proper care. The work of maintaining the world's natural harmony is a proper care for the bodies that the Trinity has created in its goodness. The translation used here, for its clarity, is *Teaching Christianity (De Doctrina Christiana)*, trans. E. Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, part I, vol. 11 (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1996).

¹⁰¹ *On Christian Teaching* II.38.57. Again, we are using Hill's translation.

in the hierarchy of beings, following Augustine’s understanding of creation in Genesis 1-2, not because human beings are able to institute their rule over others through sheer strength of arbitrary power or will. Rather, dominion is given to human beings because they are created to the image of God. And, as a result of being created to the image of God, and in light of God’s trinitarian governance of the creation through providential care, Augustine’s conception of dominion should be one that leads to a deeper worship of God by those who exercise that dominion in order to enjoy God.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have gotten to our main topic of how Augustine’s trinitarian doctrine of creation describes God’s providential care of the creation, and how this relates to the commandment of Genesis 1:26 that human beings are to exercise dominion over other creatures. It will be recalled how Gunton claimed,

In Augustine’s theology of creation ... the Christological element plays little substantive role, and the pneumatological even less. The result is that the way is laid open for a conception of creation as the outcome of arbitrary will [of the Father].¹⁰²

Chapters 6-7 showed how thoroughly trinitarian Augustine’s conception of creation and governance is in his understanding of Genesis 1-2. In those chapters we discovered how the founding and governance of creation are portrayed as arising out of the goodness of the Trinity and resulting in the Trinity’s delight in the creation’s goodness. The Trinity’s creative works and governance of creation are not susceptible to the criticism that they are simply the result of the Father’s arbitrary will, as Gunton suggests.¹⁰³ As we have seen, Augustine explains that God’s providential care, while omnipotent, is not arbitrary: “For He is all-powerful not by arbitrary power but by the strength of wisdom.”¹⁰⁴ More specifically, the order of creation under God’s governance is according to God’s wisdom and divine goodness, in order that the creation might participate in God.

We have seen how all creatures are created to have their rest in God. Outside God there is nothing to rest in, for the Trinity is the source of all created being. Rest in God was not conceived by Augustine as a static or motionless existence, like a picture

¹⁰² Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 54.

¹⁰³ *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 75-76. In this same section, Gunton suggests that Augustine’s affirmation of divine omnipotence is “a sign of weak theological argument because it is abstract and *a priori*” (75).

¹⁰⁴ *The Literal Meaning* IX.17.32.

of a rock at rest, since everything is in motion.¹⁰⁵ The rest creatures have in God is their movement toward God, who is ever working in the creation that it might continue to exist. While God is always working in creation, so that it might not fall back into non-being, God also is said ever to be at rest in himself apart from the creation, because creation's dependence on God is not true of God's relationship to creation. God rests in himself, apart from his works, in the eternal relationship of love that is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This conception of God's self-rest as the divine love of the Trinity is seen in Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity as the Son clinging to the Father, and in the Holy Spirit who is the glue of love between them.¹⁰⁶

In the proper ordering of creation, according to Augustine, all creatures are turned toward their creator, according to their measure, number and weight.¹⁰⁷ Humanity has been given a special place in this ordering of creation toward God, because it has been created to the image of God—which is manifest in the vocation of knowing God's love. To understand Augustine's explanation of how a person grows in the image of God, we have noted how he distinguishes between use and enjoyment. Human beings should find their enjoyment in God alone, while the proper use of something is so that God may be enjoyed (loved) fully. Every human action is understood in relation to God, whose worship is the end of all things for Augustine.

Dominion, which is the exercise of authority or rule over creatures, is given to humanity through its possession of the image of God. However, dominion is not an authority that is meant to be exercised apart from God's love of the whole creation. Just as the creation has been created and providentially ordered by God according to his goodness and love, humankind's exercise of dominion also should reflect God's rule of goodness and love. Dominion, in this respect, is a form of use (not enjoyment), since it uses creation to know better God's goodness and love, which is the goal of the proper exercise of the image of God. When dominion is exercised well, it contributes to the "peace of all things ... in such a way as to give to each its proper place."¹⁰⁸ In order to give each thing its proper place, one must know its place (and one's own) in the divine order, and thus must know the God who has ordered all things according to the divine goodness of the Holy Spirit and the formative Word who is the eternal Son of God. That is to say, one's view of the world must be shaped according to the divine love for the creation, which is also the divine love for humanity, made according to God's image.

¹⁰⁵ *The Literal Meaning* IV.18.34.

¹⁰⁶ *The Trinity* VI.7-9.

¹⁰⁷ See chapter 7.

¹⁰⁸ *City of God* XIX.13.1.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

The framing question within which we have taken up our analysis of Augustine's trinitarian doctrine of creation is the contemporary theological employment of ecological concepts. We noted, in chapter 1, some of the themes that have been used by modern theologians, who emphasise the idea of interrelationality in their consideration of God and creation. We also noted the contemporary critique of hierarchies that place humanity above other creatures, and are often linked to the traditional doctrines of the Trinity and of creation. Boff's conception of an ecological theology is an example of how the use of ecological concepts, along with a strong critique of anthropocentric and patriarchal ideas in biblical texts and classical doctrines, have been combined to present a revised doctrine of the Trinity and creation. Boff sees this as an effective way for promoting the liberation of the whole creation from the Western imperialism that attempts to subdue and dominate nature. He also sees it as a means to reintegrate the doctrine of the Trinity into theological discourse.

In order to accomplish the task of reviving the doctrine of the Trinity within the context of an ecologically devastated world, Boff begins his constructive enterprise by critiquing two aspects of the classical theological view of God and the world. First, he perceives a hierarchical and patriarchal tone in classical doctrine. For him, the classical theological tradition, in its so-called Western and Eastern expressions, was founded on an imbalanced view of relationships, where some were accorded special authority to control or dominate others. This view of relationships was justified theologically by appealing to the oneness of God, whose nature is like an overpowering authority over creation, similar to a king over his kingdom, or to the pope over the church. God's transcendence of, and superiority over, the creation is taken as a model for human superiority over other creatures, and over weaker people. Boff argues instead for a theology of egalitarian relationships, with a stress upon the immanence of God in the creation, rather than God's transcendence of the creation.

Second, Boff also rejects the view of God the Trinity that is founded on the doctrinal idea of the Father's monarchy in the Trinity, where the Son and the Holy Spirit are under the Father, who is the eternal beginning of them just as he is the ultimate beginning of the creation. Boff fears that relations of origin also could potentially be carried to logical extremes by conceiving the ultimate source of divinity, the Father, to be ontologically prior to the other two persons. His alternative is a social doctrine of the Trinity, whereby the three persons are described perichoretically, so that they are completely equal, and each one is the beginning for the others in a mutual relationship of eternal revealing and recognition:

The three divine Persons are simultaneous in origin and co-exist eternally in communion and interpenetration. Each is distinct from the others in personal characteristics and in the communion established by that Person in everlasting

relationship with the others, each revealing that Person's self to itself and the self of the others to them.¹

This process of each divine person revealing himself to himself, and to the other divine persons, so that they may recognise themselves and the others, is founded on the idea that the three are engaged in recognition and revelation eternally and simultaneously in an eternal circle of community. In Boff's social Trinity there is no beginning where the Father is conceived as the source of the Son and the Holy Spirit. All three persons are equal in their relationships with each other and in their eternity. They are a beginning for each other.

Augustine's theology of the Trinity and creation falls within the parameters of Boff's critical appraisal of classical Western theology. We also noted several other scholars who have criticised Augustine's conceptions of the Trinity, and of creation, for failing to do justice to the relational aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity and modern ecological ideas of interrelationality. In fact, those criticisms at first glance seem to carry weight, since Augustine did stress God's transcendence of the creation, and also maintained the importance of stressing God's oneness, or better, simplicity, and immutability in contrast to creaturely mutability. Furthermore, he founded his doctrine of the Trinity on relations of origin, according to his understanding of the scriptural account of God's economic work of redemption. It also is true that Augustine conceived the relationship between the Trinity and the creation along lines that highlight God's transcendence of the world, with creation structured according to a hierarchy, where those creatures with souls, namely, angels and humanity, are above non-souled creatures, because the soul is closer to the invisible Trinity that created everything.

Yet, Augustine's discussion of the Trinity and creation does emphasise God's presence to the world as well. The presence of God in creation begins at the founding, with the establishment of everything from nothing and the conversion of creatures into their material and spiritual forms by God's Word and Holy Spirit. Moreover, the divine presence continues in the ongoing work of divine governance through providential care. Augustine understands the Father's Word and Holy Spirit to be in the world, maintaining the being of creation which is given form and goodness so that it might move toward the Father, whereby it finds its rest. This involvement in the creation is a dynamic work, drawing creatures from their mutability, and their tendency toward non-being, toward God who is the source of all being, and in whom all goodness resides.

Furthermore, Augustine's conception of the presence of the Trinity in the creation is based upon his understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity in terms of relations of origin. The Son is begotten by the Father and the Holy Spirit proceeds from both, though principally from the Father, who himself is from no one. In the eternal relations of origin, the three divine persons are engaged in an eternal

¹ *Trinity and Society*, 142.

relationship—the Son cleaving to the Father in the Holy Spirit’s bond of love; none is subordinate to another, and all three equally possess in themselves the divine being in its fullness and without division. In their economic activity, the Trinity moves the creation, the Son forming it as the Father’s creative Word, and the Holy Spirit perfecting it as the Father’s good will by which he delights in seeing its goodness. The monarchy of the Father, for Augustine, does not lessen the divinity, equality, or eternity of any of the divine persons. In fact, the Trinity’s economic work is like their eternal relations, unified in a movement of love between the Father and Son in the Holy Spirit.

What this discussion of Augustine’s doctrine of the Trinity and of creation shows, then, is that the modern, negative portrayal of his doctrines have elements of truth, with regard to how he stressed divine transcendence of the creation, relations of origin for describing the trinitarian relations, and the oneness of the divine being. However, a closer reading of Augustine’s explanation of those doctrines also reveals that he did not necessarily succumb to the general characterisations and critiques as they are given by modern critics. He did not argue for relations of origin because of a predisposition for favouring the Father’s ontological status in the Trinity, nor did he describe the Trinity’s relation to creation in terms of transcendence and immutability as a way to justify social or other hierarchies. In fact, he was attempting to explain the doctrines in light of scriptural and creedal beliefs as they had been handed on to him.

Boff does not merely critique classical theologies, though. He puts forward an argument for how the conception of the Trinity’s perichoretic unity fits well with his understanding of the creation’s ecological unity. The creation is constantly evolving just as the divine persons are an eternal process of revelation and recognition of each other. The Trinity created a universe that reflects itself in its equality of relationships:

By the joining of the three Persons in creating (perichoresis), everything comes interwoven with relationships, interdependencies, and webs of intercommunion. The cosmos is shown to be an interplay of relationships, because it is created in the likeness and image of the God-Trinity.²

The proper understanding of the image of God is that human beings are able to work together as one with their creator. In order for all creatures to work together, and for the creation to recognise and work with God, Boff stresses the need for recognition of the equality of all creatures. This equality is based upon Boff’s understanding that all creatures are a creation of the Trinity of equal persons, and that the Trinity has made the creation to reflect its own equality. In Boff’s view, the reference in Genesis 1:26-28 to the image of God must be widened from its anthropocentric implications to include all creatures.³ Based on the ecological knowledge of the world now available, the

² *Cry of the Earth*, 167.

³ See above, pp.94-97.

interrelatedness of all creatures refers to how the creation forms one whole, and that the image of God ought to be attributable to the whole creation. Humanity cannot exist apart from the rest of the cosmos. The creation as a whole, for Boff, is a community of equals who reflect the eternal equality of divine persons in the creation according to his perichoretic, panentheistic understanding of the God-world relationship. Such a conception of the God-world relationship is the better alternative to the traditional model of the classical Western approach, which understood God to control the creation by a dominating will, and where the image of God was only found in the individual human being, who was to dominate others according to that image.⁴

For Augustine, who worked without the benefit of knowledge of ecological science, creatures also possess equality of being, because they all originate as good works of God. Nevertheless, he also sees distinctions between creatures that reveal how God has created everything to a certain order—each individual creature has a certain measure, number, and weight. Indeed, the ordering of the whole creation is a delight to God because it is very good. All created being, in its many varieties and individuals, is good because it is made by the supreme good. The goodness of created being remains good only as it continues to participate in God through its measure, number, and weight. God's governance of the creation through providential care is the basis for this continued goodness.

Holding to this conception of all creaturely being as providentially governed by God, Augustine explains how human beings are created in God's image so that they might know and love him. To be created to the image of God also is the basis for human dominion. Augustine's understanding of human dominion is not toward a dominating control of others. Rather, he understands dominion as the exercise of the image of God. It is a vocation by which humanity may enjoy God, who delights in and loves his creatures. The rule of dominion is not an arbitrary power that mimics a divine and absolutely powerful will. It is the exercise of the human mind to know and love God through all relationships, including those in which human beings have dominion over other creatures. Even in Augustine's discussion of the variety of creatures, and his inquiry into why some creatures are predatory and why their presence seems only to bring harm to human beings, his response is to see in them the expression of God's goodness. Though he may not understand how each creature fits into the whole of creation, nevertheless, Augustine does believe that everything is created by God to form a beautiful whole. All of the creation, for Augustine, should lead one to worship the God who loves his creation.

As Boff discusses divine creation, he attempts to bring out the relational character of the doctrine of the Trinity by replacing the conception of relations of origin with the conception of eternal perichoresis. In doing so, he also rejects many classical ideas about God and creation that he fears are counterproductive to taking seriously the ecological knowledge of the world. Augustine's formulation of the

⁴ *Trinity and Society*, 11. Cf. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 236-40.

doctrine of the Trinity, however, based on the concept of relations of origin, did not place an overwhelming stress on God's oneness, or reduce the godhead to the Father who acts by an arbitrary and absolute will. Rather, he balances the unity and threeness of the Trinity using a dynamic conception of divine being, in which that being is love. In *The Literal Meaning* he explains God's creative works, including God's involvement through divine governance of providential care, with an emphasis on the trinitarian shape of the divine work. At the same time, he also keeps hold of divine transcendence, by describing creation's relationship to God as being through its participation in the divine source of all things. This common source for all creatures, namely, the goodness of God, ensures creation's goodness and also enables Augustine to understand how human dominion is not about dominating power, but rather about rightly using the creation in God.

WORKS CITED

Primary Sources

Augustine

Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna, 1887-).

- 25,1 *Contra Fortunatum*
25, 2 *De Natura Boni*
28, 1 *De Genesi ad Litteram, Imperfectus Liber*
 De Genesi ad Litteram, Libri Duodecim
34, 2 *Epistulae*
44 *Epistulae*
57 *Epistulae*
91 *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*
92 *Contra sermonem Arianorum*

Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina. (Turnholt, 1950-).

- 27 *Confessiones*
32 *De Doctrina Christiana*
33 *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*
36 *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*
40 *Enarrationes in Psalmos*
41 *Sermones*
44A *De Diversis Quaestionibus Octoginta Tribus*
46 *De Haeresibus*
47-48 *De Civitate Dei*
50-50A *De Trinitate*
57 *Retractiones*

Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina. (Paris, 1844-1864).

- 38 *Sermones*
42 *Conlatio cum Maximino Arrianorum Episcopo*
44 *Contra Maximinum Arrianum*

Translations

Acts or Disputation Against Fortunatus. In *Augustin: The Writings Against the Manichaens, and Against the Donatists.* Translated by J. H. Newman. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 1st series, vol. 4,* ed. P. Schaff. Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1887; reprint, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995.

Answer to the Arian Sermon, Answer to Maximus the Arian, Debate with Maximus the Arian, and Heresies. In *Arianism and Other Heresies*. Translated by R. J. Teske. The Works of Saint Augustine, part I, vol. 18. Brooklyn: New City Press, 1995.

The City of God Against the Pagans. Translated by R. W. Dyson. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

The Confessions. Translated by H. Chadwick. The World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

The De Natura Boni of Saint Augustine. Translated by A. A. Moon. Washington: Catholic University of America Dissertation, 1955.

Eighty-Three Different Questions. Translated by D. L. Mosher. Fathers of the Church, vol. 70. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1982.

Expositions of the Psalms 121-150. Translated by M. Boulding. The Works of Saint Augustine, part III, vol. 20. Brooklyn: New City Press, 2004.

La Genèse au sens littéral en douze livres (I-VII). Translated by P. Agaësse and A. Solignac. In *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, vol. 48. Bibliothèque Augustinienne. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1972.

Lectures or Tractates On the Gospel According to St. John. In *Augustin: Homilies On the Gospel of John, Homilies On the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies.* Translated by J. Gibb and J. Innes. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st series, vol. 7, ed. P. Schaff. Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1888; reprint, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995.

Letters (vol. 2, 83-130). Translated by W. Parsons. Fathers of the Church, vol. 18. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1953.

Letters (vol. 4, 165-203). Translated by W. Parsons. Fathers of the Church, vol. 30. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1955.

Letters (vol. 5, 204-270). Translated by W. Parsons. Fathers of the Church, vol. 32. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1956.

Letters 100-155. Translated by R. Teske. The Works of Saint Augustine, part II, vol. 2. Brooklyn: New City Press, 2003.

The Literal Meaning of Genesis. 2 vols. Translated by J. H. Taylor. Ancient Christian Writers, no. 41-42. New York: Newman Press, 1982.

The Literal Meaning of Genesis, On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees, and Unfinished Literal Commentary On Genesis. In *On Genesis*. Translated by E. Hill. The Works of Saint Augustine, part I, vol. 13. Brooklyn: New City Press, 2002.

On Christian Teaching. Translated by R. P. H. Green. The World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

The Retractions. Translated by M. I. Bogan. Fathers of the Church, vol. 60. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1968.

Sermons 20-50. Translated by E. Hill. The Works of Saint Augustine, part III, vol. 2. Brooklyn: New City Press, 1990.

Sermons 51-94. Translated by E. Hill. The Works of Saint Augustine, part III, vol. 3. Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991.

Teaching Christianity (De Doctrina Christiana). Translated by E. Hill. The Works of Saint Augustine, part I, vol. 11. Brooklyn: New City Press, 1996.

The Trinity. Translated by E. Hill. The Works of Saint Augustine, part I, vol. 5. Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991.

Gregory Nazianzen

Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca. (Paris, 1857-1886).

36 *Orationes*

Translation

Theological Orationes. In *Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen.* Translated by C. G. Browne and J. E. Swallow. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd series*, vol. 7, ed. P. Schaff and Henry Wace. Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1894; reprint, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995.

Secondary Sources

Annice, M. "Historical Sketch of the Theory of Participation." *The New Scholasticism* 26 (1952): 49-79.

Ayres, Lewis. "The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine's Trinitarian Theology." In *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honor of Gerald Bonner*, ed. R. Dodaro and G. Lawless, 51-76. New York: Routledge, 2000.

- _____. “‘Remember That You Are Catholic’ (serm. 52.2): Augustine On the Unity of the Triune God.” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000): 39-82.
- Barbour, Ian. *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997.
- Barnes, Michel R. “The Arians of Book V, and the Genre of *De Trinitate*.” *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 44 (1993): 185-95.
- _____. “Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology.” *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 237-50.
- _____. “The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon.” In *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric, and Community*, ed. L. Ayres and G. Jones, 47-67. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- _____. “Exegesis and Polemic in Augustine’s *De Trinitate* I.” *Augustinian Studies* 30 (1999): 43-59.
- _____. “Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity.” In *The Trinity: An International Symposium On the Trinity*, ed. S. T. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O'Collins, 145-76. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Edited and translated by G. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. 2nd ed. London: T & T Clark, 1975.
- Boff, Clodovis. *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations*. Translated by R. Barr. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987.
- Boff, Leonardo. *Jesus Christ Liberator*. Translated by P. Hughes. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978.
- _____. *Church, Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*. Translated by J. W. Dierchsmeier. London: SCM Press, 1985.
- _____. *The Maternal Face of God: The Feminine and its Religious Manifestation*. Translated by R. Barr and J. W. Dierchsmeier. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.
- _____. *Trinity and Society*. Translated by P. Burn. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988.
- _____. “The Contribution of Liberation Theology to a New Paradigm.”

- Translated by M. Kohl. In *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future*, ed. H. Küng and D. Tracy, 408-23. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989.
- _____. “The Trinity.” Translated by R. Barr. In *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. I. Ellacuria and J. Sobrino, 389-404. Maryknoll: Orbis and CollinsDove, 1993.
- _____. *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*. Translated by J. Cumming. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995.
- _____. *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. Translated by P. Berryman. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997.
- _____. *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*. Translated by P. Berryman. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000.
- Boff, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff. *Liberation Theology: From Dialogue to Confrontation*. Translated by R. Barr. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.
- _____. *Introducing Liberation Theology*. Translated by P. Burn. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987.
- Boff, Leonardo and Victor Elizondo, ed. *Ecology and Poverty: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. Concillium 5. London: SCM and Orbis, 1995.
- Bohm, David. “Postmodern Science and a Postmodern World.” In *Ecology*, ed. C. Merchant, 342-50. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994.
- Bonner, Gerald. “Augustine’s Conception of Deification.” *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 37 (1986): 369-86.
- Bouma-Prediger, Steven. *The Greening of Theology: The Ecological Models of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Joseph Sittler, and Jürgen Moltmann*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.
- Bourke, Vernon J. *Augustine’s View of Reality*. Villanova: Villanova Press, 1964.
- Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo*. Berkeley: University of California, 1967.
- Brown, William P. *The Ethos of the Cosmos: The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

- Brunk, Conrad and Scott A. Dunham. "Ecosystem Justice in the Canadian Fisheries." In *Just Fish: Ethics and Canadian Marine Fisheries*, ed. H. Coward, R. Ommer, and T. Pitcher, 9-30. St. Johns: ISER, 2000.
- Brunn, Emile Zum. "L'exégèse augustinienne de 'Ego sum qui sum' et la métaphysique de l'exode." In *Dieu et l'être : Exégèses d'Exode 3, 14 et de Coran 20, 11-24*, 141-64. Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1978.
- Burnaby, John. *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*. Rev. ed. Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1991.
- Burt, Donald X. *Augustine's World: An Introduction to His Speculative Philosophy*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1996.
- Canning, Raymond. *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine*. Heverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993.
- Capra, Fritjof. "Systems Theory and the New Paradigm." In *Ecology*, ed. C. Merchant, 334-41. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994.
- Carter, Brandon. "Large Number Coincidences and the Anthropic Principle in Cosmology." In *Confrontation of Cosmological Theories with Observational Data*, ed. M. S. Longair, 291-98. Dordrecht: Reidel, 1974.
- Cavadini, John. "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De Trinitate*." *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 103-23.
- Christian, William A. "The Creation of the World." In *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. R. W. Battenhouse, 315-42. New York: Oxford, 1955.
- Cizewski, Wanda. "The Meaning and Purpose of Animals According to Augustine's Genesis Commentaries." In *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, ed. J. T. Lienhard, E. C. Muller, and R. J. Teske, 363-73. New York: Peter Lang, 1993.
- Cochrane, Charles Norris. *Christianity and Classical Culture a Study of Thought and Action From Augustus to Augustine*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1957.
- Cohen, Jeremy. *Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It: The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- Congar, Yves. *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. Translated by D. Smith. New York: Crossroad, 1997.

- Cousineau, R. "Creation and Freedom, An Augustinian Problem: 'Quia voluit?' and/or 'Quia bonus?'" *Recherches Augustiniennes* 2 (1962): 253-71.
- Cranfield, C. E. B. *Romans*. 2 vols. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975.
- Crouse, Robert D. "St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*: Philosophical Method." In *Studia Patristica* 16, ed. E. A. Livingstone, 501-10. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985.
- Daly, Mary. *Beyond God the Father*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.
- Devall, Bill. "The Deep Ecology Movement." *Natural Resources Journal* 2 (1980): 299-313.
- Drengson, Alan and Yuichi Inoue, ed. *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995.
- Ecological Society of America. "The Scientific Basis for Ecosystem Management." 09/15/1997, <http://www.epa.gov/ecocommunity/tools/ecosysmn.pdf>. Accessed July 2004.
- Fitzgerald, Allan. and John Cavadini, ed. *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999. S.v. "Epistulae," "Pride."
- Fox, Matthew. *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988.
- Grabowski, Stanislaus J. *The All-Present God: A Study in St. Augustine*. St. Louis: Herder, 1954.
- Green-McCreight, K. E. *Ad Litteram: How Augustine, Calvin, and Barth Read the "Plain Sense" of Genesis 1-3*. Issues in Systematic Theology, vol. 5. Peter Lang: New York, 1995.
- Gunton, Colin. *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.
- _____. *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- _____. *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation*. Translated by C. Indra and J. Eagleson. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988.

Hall, Douglas John. *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.

_____. *The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

Hanby, Michael. *Augustine and Modernity*. Radical Orthodoxy Series. London: Routledge, 2003.

Hanson, R. P. C. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988.

Harrison, Carol. "Measure, Number, and Weight." *Augustinianum* 28 (1988): 591-602.

_____. *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1992.

Harrison, Verna. "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 3 (1991): 53-65.

Hassel, D. J. "Conversion-Theory and *Scientia* in the *De Trinitate*." *Recherches Augustiniennes* 2 (1962): 383-401.

Heron, Alasdair I. C. *The Holy Spirit*. London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1983.

Jenson, Robert W. *The Triune Identity*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982.

Jerrett, M. R. T. and others. "A GIS-Environmental Justice Analysis of Particulate Air Pollution in Hamilton, Canada." *Environment and Planning A* 33 (2001): 955-73.

Kasper, Walter. *The God of Jesus Christ*. Translated by M. J. O'Connell. New York: Crossroad, 1994.

Kelly, J. N. D. *Early Christian Creeds*. 3rd ed. New York: Longman, 1972.

_____. *Early Christian Doctrines*. Rev. ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1976.

- Kretzmann, Norman. "A General Problem of Creation: Why Would God Create Anything at All?" In *Being and Goodness: The Concept of the Good in Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology*, ed. S. MacDonald, 202-28. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Kung, Hans. *On Being a Christian*. Translated by E. Quinn. New York: Doubleday, 1976.
- LaCugna, Catherine Mowry. *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991.
- Lawless, George. "Augustine and Human Embodiment." In *Collectanea Augustiniana: Melanges T. J. Van Bavel*, ed. B. Bruning et al., 167-86. Leuven: Peets, 1990.
- Lienhard, Joseph T. "Friendship in Paulinus of Nola and Augustine." In *Collectanea Augustiniana: Melanges T. J. Van Bavel*, ed. B. Bruning et al., 279-96. Leuven: Peets, 1990.
- _____. "The Glue Itself Is Charity': Ps. 62:9 in Augustine's Thought." In *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, ed. E. C. Muller, R. J. Teske and J. T. Lienhard, 375-84. New York: Peter Lang, 1993.
- Likens, G. E. *The Ecosystem Approach: Its Use and Abuse*. Excellence in Ecology 3, ed. O. Kinne. Oldendorf/Luhe, Germany: Ecology Institute, 1992.
- Lovelock, James E. *Gaia: A New Look at Life On Earth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- MacDonald, Scott. "The Divine Nature." In *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. E. Stump and N. Kretzmann, 71-90. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- de Margerie, Bertrand. *The Christian Trinity in History*. Translated by E. J. Fortman. *Studies in Historical Theology*, vol. 10. Petrsham: St. Bede's, 1982.
- _____. *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis*. Vol. III, *Saint Augustine*. Translated by P. de Fontnouvelle. Petersham: Saint Bede's Publications, 1991.
- Markus, Robert A. "'Imago' and 'Similitudo' in Augustine." *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 10 (1964): 125-43.

- _____. *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Marsh, Thomas. *The Triune God*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1994.
- Martland, T. R. "A Study of Cappadocian and Augustinian Trinitarian Methodology." *Anglican Theological Review* 47 (1965): 252-63.
- Matter, E. Ann. "Christ, God, and Woman in the Thought of St. Augustine." In *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honor of Gerald Bonner*, ed. R. Dodaro and G. Lawless, 164-75. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- May, Gerhard. *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation Out of Nothing' in Early Christian Thought*. Translated by A. S. Worrall. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994.
- McFague, Sallie. "A Square in the Quilt." In *Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment Is a Religious Issue, an Interfaith Dialogue*, ed. S. C. Rockefeller and J. C. Elder, 42-58. Boston: Beacon, 1992.
- McKeough, M. J. *The Meaning of the Rationes Seminales in St. Augustine*. Washington: Catholic University of America Dissertation, 1926.
- Meconi, David V. "St. Augustine's Early Theory of Participation." *Augustinian Studies* 27 (1996): 81-98.
- Milbank, John. "Sacred Triads: Augustine and the Indo-European Soul." *Modern Theology* 13 (1997): 451-74.
- Miles, Margaret. "The Body and Human Values in Augustine of Hippo." In *Grace, Politics & Desire: Essays On Augustine*, ed. H. A. Meynell, 55-67. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Trinity and the Kingdom*. Translated by M. Kohl. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981.
- _____. "The Inviting Unity of the Triune God." Translated by R. Nowell. *Concillium* 17 (1985): 50-58.
- _____. *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*. Translated by M. Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.
- _____. *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. Translated

- by M. Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.
- Most, William G. "The Scriptural Basis of St Augustine's Arithmology." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 13 (1951): 284-95.
- Muller, Earl. "The Dynamic of Augustine's *De Trinitate*: A Response to a Recent Characterization." *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995): 65-91.
- Nash, James. *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*. Publications of the Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy. Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.
- Nash, Roderick. *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.
- Nygren, Anders. *Agape and Eros: A Study of the Christian Idea of Love*. Translated by P. S. Watson. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953.
- O'Donnell, John. "The Trinity as Divine Community: A Critical Reflection Upon Recent Theological Developments." *Gregorianum* 69 (1988): 5-34.
- O'Donnell, James J. *Augustine: Confessions*. 3 vols. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1992.
- _____. "The Trinity." *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995): 159-62.
- O'Donovan, Oliver. *The Problem of Self-Love in Augustine*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.
- _____. "Usus and Fructio in Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* I." *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 33 (1982): 361-97.
- Oroz Reta, Jose. "The Role of Divine Attraction in Conversion According to Saint Augustine." In *From Augustine to Eriugena: Essays On Neoplatonism and Christianity in Honour of J. O'Meara*, ed. F. X. Martin and J. A. Richmond, 155-67. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1991.
- O'Toole, Christopher J. *The Philosophy of Creation in the Writings of St. Augustine*. Washington: Catholic University of America, 1944.
- Otto, Randall E. "The Use and Abuse of Perichoresis in Recent Theology." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54 (2001): 366-84.

- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. Translated by G. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991-1998.
- Pannikar, Raymond. *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man*. New York: Orbis, 1973.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971.
- _____. “*Canonica Regula*: The Trinitarian Hermeneutics of Augustine.” In vol. 12/13, *Proceedings of the PMR Conference at Villanova University*, 17-29. Villanova University: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1987-1988.
- Petersen, Erik. *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem*. Leipzig: Jakob Hegner, 1935.
- Plumwood, Val. “Ecosocial Feminism as a General Theory of Oppression.” In *Ecology*, ed. C. Merchant, 207-21. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994.
- Poque, Suzanne. *Le langage symbolique dans la prédication d’Augustin d’Hippone*. 2 vols. Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1984.
- Prestige, G. L. *God in Patristic Thought*. London: S.P.C.K., 1936.
- Primavesi, Anne. *From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.
- _____. “Ecology and Christian Hierarchy.” In *Sacred Custodians of the Earth: Women, Spirituality, and the Environment?*, ed. A. Low and S. Tremayne, 121-39. New York: Berghahn Books, 2001.
- Rahner, Karl. *The Trinity*. Translated by J. Donceel. Wellwood: Burns and Oates, 1970.
- Rist, John M. *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Roach, Catherine M. “Stewards of the Sea: A Model for Justice?” In *Just Fish: Ethics and Canadian Marine Fisheries*, ed. H. Coward, R. Ommer, and T. Pitcher, 67-82. St. Johns: ISER, 2000.
- Roche, W. J. “Measure, Number, and Weight in Saint Augustine.” *New Scholasticism*

15 (1941): 350-76.

Roland, Kany. “*Fidei Contemnentis Initium*: On Certain Positions Opposed by Augustine in *De Trinitate*.” In *Studia Patristica* 27, ed. E. A. Livingstone, 322-28. Louvain: Peeters, 1993.

du Roy, Olivier. *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin*. Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1966.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford, ed. *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974.

_____, ed. *New Woman/New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975.

_____. *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology*. Boston: Beacon, 1983.

_____. *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992.

Santmire, H. Paul. *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.

Sessions, George. “Ecocentrism and the Anthropocentric Detour.” *ReVision* 13 (1991): 109-15.

Simkins, Ronald A. *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994.

Smallbrugge, M. “La Notion de la participation chez Augustin: quelques observations sur le rapport christianisme-platonisme.” In *Collectanea Augustiniana: Melanges T. J. Van Bavel*, ed. B. Bruning et al, 333-47. Leuven: Peets, 1990.

Studer, Basil. “*Deus, Pater et Dominus* Bei Augustinus Von Hippo.” In *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity: Essays in Tribute to George Christopher Stead*, ed. L. Wickham and C. P. Bammel, 190-212. Leiden: Brill, 1993.

_____. *Trinity and Incarnation*. Translated by M. Westerhoff. Ed. A. Louth. Collegeville: Michael Glazier, 1993.

_____. *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo: Christocentrism or Theocentrism?* Translated by M. J. O’Connell. Collegeville: Liturgical Press,

1997.

_____. “History and Faith in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*.” *Augustinian Studies* 28 (1997): 7-50.

Sullivan, John E. *The Image of God: The Doctrine of St. Augustine and Its Influence*. Dubuque: Priory Press, 1963.

Tansley, Arthur. “The Use and Abuse of Vegetational Concepts and Terms.” *Ecology* 1 (1935): 284-307.

Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre. *The Divine Milieu: An Essay On the Interior Life*. Translated by B. Wall. New York: Harper & Row, 1960.

_____. *The Phenomenon of Man*. Rev. ed. Translated by B. Wall. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.

Tipler, Frank J. “The Anthropic Principle: A Primer for Philosophers.” In *Proceedings of the 1988 Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, ed. A. Fine and J. Lepli, 27-48. East Lansing: Philosophy of Science Association, 1989.

Torchia, N. Joseph. “The Implications of the Doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo* in St. Augustine’s Theology.” In *Studia Patristica* 33, ed. E. A. Livingstone, 266-73. Leuven: Peeters, 1997.

_____. “The Significance of *Ordo* in St. Augustine’s Moral Theory.” In *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, ed. J. T. Lienhard, E. C. Muller, and R. J. Teske, 263-78. New York: Peter Lang, 1993.

_____. *‘Creatio Ex Nihilo’ and the Theology of St. Augustine: The Anti-Manichaean Polemic and Beyond*. New York: Peter Lang, 1999.

Torrance, T. F. *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996.

Troeltsch, Ernst. *The Christian Faith: Based On Lectures Delivered at the University of Heidelberg in 1912 and 1913*. Translated by G. LeFort. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Vannier, Marie-Anne. “*Creatio*,” “*Conversio*,” “*Formatio*,” *chez S. Augustin*. *Paradosis* 31. Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, 1991.

- Van Bavel, Tarsicius. "The Creator and the Integrity of Creation in the Fathers of the Church, Especially in Saint Augustine." *Augustinian Studies* 21 (1990), 1-32.
- Van Fleteren, Frederick. "Principles of Augustine's Hermeneutic: An Overview." In *Augustine: Biblical Exegete*, ed. F. Van Fleteren and J. C. Schnaubelt, 1-32. Peter Lang: New York, 2001.
- Weinandy, Thomas G. *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995.
- Welker, Michael. *Creation and Reality*. Translated by J. F. Hoffmeyer. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999.
- Wenham, Gordon J. *Word Biblical Commentary*. Vol. 1, *Genesis 1-15*. Edited by D. A. Hubbard et al. Dallas: Word Books, 1987.
- White, Lynn. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-07.
- Widdicombe, Peter. *The Fatherhood of God From Origin to Athanasius*. Rev. ed. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2000.
- Williams, Rowan. "'Good for Nothing'? Augustine on Creation." *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994): 9-24.
- _____. "Sapientia and the Trinity: Reflections On the *De Trinitate*." In *Collectanea Augustiniana: Melanges T. J. Van Bavel*, ed. B. Bruning et al, 317-32. Leuven: Peets, 1990.
- _____. "Insubstantial Evil." In *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honor of Gerald Bonner*, ed. R. Dodaro and G. Lawless, 105-23. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Williams, Thomas. "Biblical Interpretation." In *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. E. Stump and N. Kretzmann, 59-70. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Wolfson, Harry. *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956.