

# Re-Evaluating Augustinian Fatalism through the Eastern and Western Distinction between God's Essence and Energies

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RE-EVALUATING AUGUSTINIAN FATALISM THROUGH THE  
EASTERN AND WESTERN DISTINCTION BETWEEN  
GOD'S ESSENCE AND ENERGIES

by

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ABSTRACT  
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Stephen J. Plečnik

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In this dissertation, I will examine the problem of theological fatalism in St. Augustine and, specifically, whether or not Augustine was philosophically justified in his belief that his views on divine grace and human freedom could be harmonized. As is well-known, beginning with his second response *To Simplician* (ca. 396) and continuing through his works against the semi-Pelagians (ca. 426-429), Augustine espoused the Pauline doctrine of all-inclusive grace: that the fallen will's ability to accomplish the good is totally a function of God's elective grace. What, then, does the fallen will do to work out its own salvation? There is the further issue of how to reconcile Augustine's rather extreme emphasis on grace in his later works with the more balanced picture we receive in his *sermones ad populum*, written throughout his forty-year preaching career. In many of these sermons, even those written during the Pelagian controversy, Augustine is careful to leave space for both divine and human initiative in the process of our justification within the *totus Christus*, or 'whole Christ.' How we can understand Augustine in his role as *doctor gratiae* and as preacher of human freedom will be a major inquiry of this dissertation.

The most serious obstacle to moving forward on these problems has been and remains the essentialist interpretation of Augustine's Trinitarian theology by most commentators. On their interpretation, Augustine thought that there were no real distinctions within the Trinity, with each of the three divine persons and their actions sharing in the absolute unity of the divine essence. Holding this interpretation not only does away with the distinctness of each of the persons, but also requires all of God's different powers and attributes, including willing and foreknowing, to be coalesced into one another without distinction in the divine essence. God's foreknowledge is thereby identified with God's will, which necessarily leads to theological fatalism: God would have to will everything that He foreknows, and God would have to foreknow everything that He wills. Since God is omniscient, He wills everything that will happen, including the future willings of the fallen human will.

It cannot be denied that there are texts in the Augustinian corpus that seem to point to a reading of the Trinity as absolutely simple. But this study will endeavor to show that there are also other largely overlooked texts in *On the Trinity*, the *Confessions*, and his *Commentaries on the Literal Interpretation of Genesis* (among others) that argue for various distinctions within the Trinity to make sense of the relation between Creator and creature, and the differences between the divine processions of generation/spiration,

and the act of creation. These texts will be shown to parallel very closely the position of the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition, which consistently uses the real distinction between God's essential being and energetic activities (also known as the essence-energy distinction) to avoid the problem of theological fatalism. This rich theological and philosophical tradition, from the time of the fourth-century Greek Fathers to the Byzantine tradition that followed, differs less with Augustine concerning the essentials of Trinitarian theology and its practical implications for solving the problem of making human freedom and divine grace compatible than has been hitherto thought.

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## Chapter 1

### *Statement of the Problem*

In religion it must be the case that corresponding to every level of devoutness there is a form of expression that has no sense at a lower level. For those still at the lower level this doctrine, which means something at the higher level, is null and void; it can only be understood wrongly, and so these words are not valid for such a person.

Paul's doctrine of election by grace, for instance, is at my level irreligious and ugly nonsense. So it is not meant for me since I can only apply the wrong picture offered me. If it is a holy and good picture then it is so for a quite different level, where it must be applied in life quite differently than I could apply it.<sup>1</sup>

This quotation from Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value* sums up rather well the common reaction to both Saint Paul's doctrine of election by grace and the mature theology of sin and grace defended by Saint Augustine (354-430), who explicitly and frequently invited the comparison of Paul's doctrine to his own. As is well-known, beginning with his second response *To Simplician* (ca. 396) and continuing through his last four works sent to the semi-Pelagians (ca. 426-429),<sup>2</sup> Augustine often espoused the Pauline doctrine of all-inclusive grace from Romans 9: that fallen humanity's ability to do the good, whether in thinking, in willing, or in acting, is totally a function of God's grace, and that, on its own, the fallen will only has the power to accomplish evil, because of the damaging effects of original sin. The worry, of course, is that under the thrall of sin, by which we all find ourselves trapped, we can only be freed by God choosing to bestow His graces upon us according to His unchanging redemptive purposes. We can do nothing to merit or earn these graces, for they are by definition gratuitous (free) gifts of

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<sup>1</sup> Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* (1937), 37e.

<sup>2</sup> These works are *On Grace and Free Choice*, *On Rebuke and Grace*, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, and *On the Gift of Perseverance*.

God. Such a position, however, appears to present God's salvific decisions as being made regardless of the lives we may lead. And yet, somewhat paradoxically, He also winds up being totally responsible for the lives we end up leading, either by His granting or withholding His graces.

Augustine maintains this somewhat strange-sounding position because of his view of God's grace, which he tells us God grants or withholds *solely* as the effects of His predestination, for which Augustine gives the now famous definition: "This is the predestination of the saints, nothing else: plainly the foreknowledge and preparation of God's benefits [or graces], by means of which whoever is to be liberated is most certainly liberated."<sup>3</sup> The definition of predestination given here by Augustine has typically been interpreted in one of two distinct ways, both of which appear problematic. First, it could be taken to mean that Augustine defended a doctrine of predestination whereby God is causally responsible for saving those who are righteous, while permitting (i.e., not willing to prevent) all others to be damned. Second, it could be taken to mean that he defended a doctrine of double-predestination whereby God is causally responsible for both saving those who are righteous and damning those who are not. Whichever of these two meanings one applies to Augustine's definition of predestination, there does not seem to be a way to integrate his predestinationism into a coherent theology of redemption. Indeed, whether God merely permits people to be damned because of their own sinful behavior, or whether He contributes to the condemnation of some by directly hardening their hearts, He appears lacking in moral goodness. After all, how could an all-good God

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<sup>3</sup> *De dono perseverantiae*. 14.35.

allow part of his rational creation to be lost forever, or what is even worse, actively help to bring this loss about? How could this not be “irreligious and ugly nonsense?”

The problem that Augustine’s doctrine of predestination poses, in the seemingly dominating power God exercises over and against the powerless fallen human will remains an infuriating conundrum for theologians and philosophers and, unfortunately, a perennial sticking point in efforts at East-West rapprochement. Gerald Bonner, one of the most respected twentieth century Augustine scholars, writes: “Predestination is, however, too fundamental to Augustine’s mature theology, and too much a part of the heritage of Western Christian theology, to be ignored in serious ecumenical debate.” He thinks if we are to move beyond publishing statements of mere doctrinal agreement, and if East and West are to achieve a “common theological mind” with each other, then the doctrine of predestination in Augustine must be dealt with, and not in the typical dismissive fashion as being “the rationalization of the mystery of human freedom and divine grace.”<sup>4</sup> Bonner made this statement in 1986. However, some twenty years later he gives up on this admirable idea, claiming instead that Augustine’s doctrine of divine predestination was just such a rationalization: one that prioritizes God’s contribution to the accomplishing of good works at the expense of the human, with nothing more than the unconvincing, inconsistent, and unhelpful explanation that how all of this works will be revealed on the Last Day.<sup>5</sup> Bonner is not alone in his opinion, with many other scholars offering similar

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<sup>4</sup> Bonner, Gerald. “Augustine’s Conception of Deification.” *Journal of Theological Studies* (1986), Vol. 37, Issue 2: 369-386. P. 385.

<sup>5</sup> See Bonner, Gerald. *Freedom and Necessity: St. Augustine’s Teaching on Divine Power and Human Freedom*. The Catholic University of America Press: Washington D.C, 2007. P. 109.

negative appraisals of Augustine's mature theology of sin and grace and/or its foundation in God's predestination.<sup>6</sup>

It must be admitted that *prima facie* Augustine does not do himself any favors in answering these kinds of objections. Two of the more pronounced examples of this can be found in his *The City of God* and *Retractions*, both of which were works of his maturity. First, there is his famous discussion of fatalism and foreknowledge against Cicero in *The City of God*, Book V.IX, where Augustine affirms God's prescience of the future as a necessary "aspect" of His Godhood. Indeed, Augustine will argue that God is not God if He does not know the future, "for one who is not prescient of all future things is not God."<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, at the same time, he also affirms man's freedom of will as necessarily part and parcel of his created and rational nature. It is important to note that Augustine is dealing here primarily with the issue of divine fatalism, election, predestination, or whatever one wishes to call it, but he never viewed this to be theologically or philosophically separate from the issue of divine foreknowledge, because he believed the former to necessarily hinge on the latter. This is an idea we have already seen in Augustine's definition of predestination given above: God's granting or withholding of His predestinating graces is dependent on His foreknowledge. Speaking

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<sup>6</sup> See for example, Arendt, Hannah. *The Life of the Mind*. Volume II. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich: New York, 1978. Burnaby, John. *Amor Dei: A study of the Religion of St. Augustine*. Hodder and Stoughton: London, 1938. Wetzel, James. *Augustine and The Limits of Virtue*. Cambridge University Press: New York, 1992. Karfikova, Lenka. *Grace and the Will according to Augustine*. Trans. by Marketa Janebova. Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden, The Netherlands, 2012. Pelikan J. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Volumes 1 and 2. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1971. Cary, Phillip. "Augustinian Compatibilism and the Doctrine of Election," *Augustine and Philosophy*. Ed. by Phillip Cary, John Doody, and Kim Paffenroth. Lexington Books: Lanham, Maryland, 2010. Louth, Andrew. "Heart in Pilgrimage": St. Augustine as Interpreter of the Psalms," taken from *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*. Ed. by George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: Crestwood, NY, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

anachronistically, Augustine reports that Cicero has a much different position from his when it comes to the issue of fatalism and the precise knowledge of the future it inevitably entails.

According to Augustine, in order to refute the Stoical idea of fate, Cicero thought that he needed to destroy the idea of there being divination, and he attempts to do this by denying that there is *fore-knowledge*, i.e., knowledge in the sense of having an exact vision of what future actions and events are going to happen and their causal order for coming to be. Augustine summarizes Cicero's objection to there being divination, and so foreknowledge, as follows:

What is it, then, that Cicero feared in the prescience of future things? Doubtless it was this—that if all future things have been foreknown, they will happen in the order in which they have been foreknown; and if they come to pass in this order, there is a certain order of things foreknown by God; and if a certain order of things, then a certain order of causes, for nothing can happen which is not preceded by some efficient cause. But if there is a certain order of causes according to which everything happens which does happen, then by fate, says he, all things happen which do happen. But if this be so, then there is nothing in our own power, and there is no such thing as freedom of will; and if we grant that, says he, the whole economy of human life is subverted. In vain are laws enacted. In vain are reproaches, praises, chidings, exhortations had recourse to; and there is no justice whatever in the appointment of rewards for the good, and punishments for the wicked.<sup>8</sup>

To avoid these unacceptable consequences, Cicero rejects the idea of knowledge of future contingents *simpliciter*. Knowledge of future contingents, whether this knowledge is had by God or by man, and free will are mutually exclusive: If one of them is affirmed, the other is immediately denied. In this way, I think, Cicero can be seen as the originator of the opinion so commonly held among philosophers and scholars as illustrious as Wittgenstein and Bonner in more recent times that divine election (which is the causal

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<sup>8</sup> City of God 5.9.

consequence of divine foreknowledge<sup>9</sup>) is, quite frankly, nothing more than religious mumbo jumbo. Augustine, however, believes that the “religious mind chooses both, confesses both, and maintains both by the faith of piety.”<sup>10</sup>

We find the second example of Augustine wholeheartedly embracing the kind of doctrine of divine election gainsaid by the scholarly majority in his final statement on how God’s grace interacts with the freedom of the human will in Book II of his *Retractions* (ca. 428 AD). It reads as follows: “I labored indeed on behalf of the free choice of the human will, but God’s grace overcame, and I could only reach that point where the apostle is perceived to have said with the most evident truth, *For who makes you to differ? And what have you that you have not received? Now, if you have received it, why do you glory as if you received it not?* (1 Cor 4:7).<sup>11</sup> Here we have Augustine apparently conceding that God’s grace overcame the free choice of the human will in his theological teaching; that he could do no better than Paul in explaining their interaction with each other than to affirm the priority and unmerited nature of God’s grace; and that the latter was the only relevant factor in making the elect to differ from the non-elect. Augustine does not hesitate to affirm that Paul spoke in all of these respects “with the most evident truth.” We might well ask: In what was his final chance to set the record straight, did he offer a statement of mere Christian belief as a substitute for a rational explanation of how grace co-operates with the human will? While many say that not just this final instance but his whole theology of sin and grace is representative of this sort of *ad hoc* solution, I for one think that would be uncharacteristic, to say the least, of a man

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<sup>9</sup> The relationship between divine election and divine foreknowledge will be discussed in greater detail *passim* Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Retractions*, 2.1.2.

who took as the motto of his entire theological perspective, “*crede, ut intelligas*” (believe, so that you may understand),<sup>12</sup> which points to the fact that Augustine was never interested in belief as an end in itself, even if that belief pertained to the faith of the Church. For if “faith is not charged with thought, it is nothing.”<sup>13</sup> Being satisfied with one’s own philosophically untested beliefs might be the stance of someone like Tertullian,<sup>14</sup> but not Augustine.

The real question then becomes: How did Augustine understand his belief in the Pauline doctrine of election by grace, and did he understand it in such a way that passes philosophical as well as theological muster? This is the question of interest to my dissertation and, while it is too complex to be answered in a few introductory remarks, I will provide some indication of how I will go about answering it in subsequent chapters at this point. The good news is that Augustine is actually very forthcoming about how he understands God’s elective grace most fundamentally in the person of Christ. He claims that there is nowhere else that God’s grace appears to better effect than in Christ, and that it is “through Jesus Christ our Lord that we should understand God’s grace. It alone sets human beings free from evil. Without it they do nothing good at all, whether in thinking,

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<sup>12</sup> See for example, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 29.6. His motto was itself based on his favorite scriptural quotation from Isaiah 7:9: *Unless you believe, you will not understand*. In a letter to Consentius, Augustine will even say that those who understand their faith are better off than those who merely believe it: “Heaven forbid, I say, that we should believe in such a way that we do not accept or seek a rational account.” (120.3) And a little later on, he says: “One who now understands by true reason what he before only believed should certainly be preferred to one who still desires to understand what he believes.” (120.8)

<sup>13</sup> *On the Predestination of the Saints*, 5.

<sup>14</sup> As is well-known, it was Tertullian who famously warned against the “wretched Aristotle” and asked the question of all questions when it comes to the relationship (or lack thereof) between faith and reason: “what then hath Athens in common with Jerusalem?” (Tertullian, “On the ‘Prescription’ of Heretics,” Chapter 7, taken from *Tertullian: On the Testimony of the Soul and On the ‘Prescription’ of Heretics*, trans. by T. Herbert Bindley (London: SPCK, 1914), P. 45. Shortly after asking this question, Tertullian answers his own question by emphatically denying the need for philosophical understanding, for “we have no need of speculative inquiry after we have known Christ Jesus; nor of search for the Truth after we have received the Gospel. When we become believers, we have no desire to believe anything besides; for the first article of our belief is that there is nothing besides which we ought to believe” (Ibid, P. 46).

or in willing and loving, or in acting.”<sup>15</sup> Speaking of predestination in particular, Augustine writes of Christ: “But there is no more illustrious instance of predestination than Jesus Himself ... [and] in the end of this [work] I have chosen to insist upon it. There is no more eminent instance, I say, of predestination than the Mediator Himself. If any believer wishes thoroughly to understand this doctrine, let him consider Him, and in Him he will find himself also.”<sup>16</sup>

Because of the perfect union of Christ’s human and divine natures, accomplished by God’s grace (also referred to as the ‘grace of union’), the singular person of Christ lived a life in complete obedience to the will of the Father.<sup>17</sup> That is, Christ’s life was one of perfect freedom, unable to sin, unable to die, and unable to abandon the good. Christ’s human will willed what it willed, but by its own graced liberty it could only will the will of the Father, to which it was obedient even unto death on a cross (Phil 2: 8). Since Augustine says that Christ’s inability to sin (*non posse peccare*) is the model of our perfect freedom, it is imperative that we get some initial clarity on this concept before we explain it further in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. The inability to sin of Christ, according to Augustine, should not be understood as being devoid of the consent of his human will. If it could, then many questions and objections about the authenticity of Christ’s ministry on earth would have to be raised. We might say that Christ’s maintaining of his sinless moral character (Heb 4:15), resistance to the temptations of the devil, and all of his morally praiseworthy actions were hollow achievements, or that they lacked true virtue. If he was a mere conduit of the Father’s will, lacking any initiative of

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<sup>15</sup> *Rebuke and Grace* 2.3.

<sup>16</sup> *On the Gift of Perseverance*, Chapter 67.

<sup>17</sup> *doctr. chr.* I.10.10.22-3.

his own, then in what legitimate sense could we say that Christ was responsible for his triumphs of will that ultimately led to the redemption of human nature? As it is, however, Augustine thinks that Christ in his humanity was unable to sin in the sense of being unwilling to sin by willingly following not his own will, but that of his Father in heaven. This is precisely the same kind of freedom enjoyed by the saints in heaven, whereby they cannot fall away from God. Unlike Adam, who had the power not to sin (*posse non peccare*) but sinned, Christ, because of the unique grace given to him, was unable, or perfectly unwilling, to sin.

For Augustine, those who cannot understand Christ's necessary freedom, which was predestined according to the will of the Father, and which is to be a model for our true liberty, do not yet have a proper understanding of the Christian faith itself. This is so because the Christian faith cannot be understood by those who lack humility, precisely because that faith comes from faith in Christ, who is himself only present to us when we humble ourselves down to the level at which he chose to live, that of scarred and broken humanity.<sup>18</sup> He writes in this connection:

[Christ] whose power was so great hungered, thirsted, grew weary, fell asleep, was taken prisoner, was beaten, crucified, slain. This is the way: walk through humility that you may come to eternity. Christ-God is the homeland to which we are going; Christ-man is the way by which we are going (*Deus Christus patria est quo imus; homo Christus via est qua imus*).<sup>19</sup>

Augustine further maintains that Christ's perfected human nature, like our own fallen human nature, could not merit the graces it received, or cause itself to differ from the rest of sinful humanity in and of itself: "Look at Christ the Lord, Word, soul, and flesh, as I said; God is there, there also are you; and it's one Christ. So what puts you there? For

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<sup>18</sup> *conf.* 7.18.24.

<sup>19</sup> *Sermo* 124.3.3; PL 38.685.

what merit, for what free choice, did the Lord take on human nature, was the Word clothed with human nature? What merit of that particular human nature came first?”<sup>20</sup>

The answer is none whatsoever. There was no merit attributable to even Christ’s human nature before the Word took on that particular flesh.

Augustine’s conception of true human liberty as Christological therefore requires us to recognize two important points. First, the grace of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is required for all human beings, including Christ in his humanity, to freely carry out anything good and avoid anything evil.<sup>21</sup> Second, God’s grace is completely unmerited. Since Christ provides us with the brightest example of both points,<sup>22</sup> it makes sense for Augustine to say that we should understand our graced human liberty through him. This is what I intend to do in my dissertation.

However tempting it may be, we must avoid any desire to import more modern notions of freedom and autonomy into Augustine’s philosophical-theological anthropology to “save it” from what many view as its theological fatalism. Augustine does not argue for a radical form of freedom, or a conception of the human self that is proto-Cartesian/proto-Kantian, which is to say a self that is a complete and unconditioned law unto himself. For Augustine, not even humanity in its paradisaic state enjoyed such a freedom. Writing of Adam, Augustine tells us, he was only able not to sin, able not to die, and able not to abandon the good; but he possessed all three of these capacities *because of God’s grace*. Once he refused such grace, by insisting to follow his own will, God

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<sup>20</sup> Sermon 265D.7, 417. See also *trin.*13.17.22.

<sup>21</sup> Augustine believes, for example, that in the case of Christ in his humanity it is not only the Father and the Holy Spirit who provide such graces, but also Christ in his divinity, i.e., the Son. All three persons of the Trinity act inseparably in this regard. See *trin.*1.3.14-21 for Augustine’s position on this and how closely it resembles St. Paul’s in his Letter to the Philippians.

<sup>22</sup> See *City of God* 10.29.

justly withdrew from him.<sup>23</sup> Whether we are considering humanity's previous unblemished ahistorical state, or its current fallen condition, God always remains humanity's law and life. We are never emancipated from God our creator or God our redeemer—the Word made flesh. Any discussion of Augustine's notion of true human liberty must therefore take place in what he believes to be its proper supernatural context.

As I will show throughout the course of this dissertation, Augustine anchors man's true liberty specifically in his doctrines of *creatio ex nihilo* and *imago Dei*. Because we were created out of nothing, which is itself a grace according to Augustine,<sup>24</sup> we are totally dependent on God for our being; and because we were created in God's image, we are totally dependent on God for our well-being. In other words, God is the source of both our ontological and moral good, respectively. The autonomous (*autonomos*) human self, in itself, and by itself, at least for Augustine, is a metaphysical and moral fiction. As human beings, we have no autonomous good independent from God. Augustine takes this as a super-*natural* dimension of human life, which he thinks has its specific point of origin and return in the God-man, Christ, who is himself the mediator between God and man. We might say, then, to borrow the expression of Wittgenstein, that Christ is the "higher level" through which we may correctly picture man's supreme good and freedom.

Nevertheless, merely asserting that Christ is the "higher level" through which we must understand the supreme good of humanity (including its liberty) under the auspices of divine grace will not by itself be enough to legitimately quell the complaints we have seen raised against Augustine. To discuss the Christological focus of Augustine's

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<sup>23</sup> See for example, *Rebuke and Grace* 12.33.

<sup>24</sup> See *Sermo* 258.2. See also *On Nature and Grace*, Chapter 62.

conception of human freedom, and to give it the proper philosophical support, I think there is a need to examine how he more broadly conceived of God's roles in the divine economy as creator and redeemer. That is, how Augustine actually saw the two-natured Christ as harmoniously interacting with human beings.

However, this quickly becomes a problem because of the dominant scholarly interpretation of Augustine's approach to God as being fundamentally concerned with the unity of the divine essence, and how that essence is radically unlike anything created. It is well-known that such an interpretation first gained its foothold in the Western scholarly milieu from the work done by Theodore de Régnon, a nineteenth century French Jesuit theologian. He argued that, at least since the time of Saint Augustine, the Western theological tradition began with the oneness of God (*de Deo uno*), whereas the Greek Fathers began with God as Trinity (*de Deo Trino*) in the economy of creation and redemption.<sup>25</sup> Most scholars in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have continued to operate under this interpretive paradigm to perpetuate the claim that Augustine's theological conception of God prioritizes the absolute unity of the divine essence over and above how that essence is expressed in the distinct persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, both in the essential life of the "inner" Trinity (*ad intra*) and in the economic life of the "outer" Trinity (*ad extra*).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Theodore de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*. Victor Retaux: Paris, 1892. Michel René Barnes has an article entitled, "De Régnon Reconsidered," *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995): 51-79, that has proven authoritative on the subject of De Régnon's immense influence on Augustine scholarship in this regard.

<sup>26</sup> For some good examples of the De Régnon interpretive paradigm hard at work in the secondary literature, see G. L. Prestige's *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1952); Duncan Reid's *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology*. Scholars Press: Atlanta, 1997; Boris Bobrinskoy's *Mystery of the Trinity: Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*. Trans. by Anthony P. Gythiel. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: New York, 1999; and John Zizioulas' *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006).

These scholars often refer to Augustine's approach to God as 'Latin essentialism,' both because of its origin in the Latin-speaking West and because of its supposedly all-encompassing concern with preserving the picture of God as absolutely simple and undifferentiated essence. With this said, Latin essentialists do allow for a distinction of the divine essence from the three persons and from their various attributes, but they diminish the latter two realities in God to preserve His simplicity. They do this, first, by labeling the divine persons as purely 'relational' entities, not as subsistent individuals possessing a real existence of their own. It is their opinion that real, 'personal' differences in God would amount to differences in the being of God. Latin essentialists, in other words, do not understand the existence of Father, Son, or Holy Spirit as one which is distinct but not divided from each other and the divine essence which they commonly and equally share. Rather, they think that everything in God pertains to and is explained by the divine essence, as this is the only way to guarantee that God's simplicity remains unthreatened.

They do this, second, by claiming that the various attributes of the persons are not 'really' distinct from the three persons, the divine essence, and even from each other, but only 'logically' distinct. This amounts to them rejecting the less extreme theological position wherein the divine attributes are said to be distinct but not divided from the various realities that pertain to God as God.<sup>27</sup> The unwillingness of Latin essentialists to make real distinctions in the Godhead when it comes to the persons and their attributes subsequently make it impossible for them to keep distinct God's temporal missions in the economy of salvation from the eternal divine processions. On their view, the economic

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<sup>27</sup> As we shall see shortly, such is the theological position of the Greek East.

missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit must be ontologically identified with the intra-trinitarian relationships to which they correspond.

Two theologically unsettling conclusions are left in the wake of the doctrine of divine simplicity as defended by Latin essentialism. First, the economic sendings of the Son and the Holy Spirit would give us a window through which to view the essential life of God, thereby destroying His transcendence. Second, we could no longer make a real distinction between God freely creating and redeeming according to the divine will, and the intra-trinitarian processions, i.e., the begetting of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit, all of which take place according to the necessary divine essence. Rather, creation, redemption, and procession would be one and the same essential and, therefore, necessary activity.<sup>28</sup> This in turn would make any kind of real divine and human interaction impossible, because the wholly simple, necessary, and eternal being of God has no way of interacting with the inherently complex, contingent, and temporal reality of human beings.

Contrary to Latin essentialism, the Greek-East is said to have an appreciation for both the essential and economic realities of God, because of the ‘real distinction’ (*pragmatike diakrisis*) but not ‘real division’ (*pragmatike diairesis*) it maintains between God’s essential self, which always remains beyond the horizon of created being, and

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<sup>28</sup> To avoid this unsettling conclusion, authors in the Greek East will make clear that there must be a real distinction made between the divine will and the divine essence, which allows for the corresponding distinction between the Trinity’s economic activities of creation and redemption and internal activities of begetting, begotten, procession, respectively. In the chapter, “Creature and Creaturehood,” Georges Florovsky will cite two key figures in the Eastern Orthodox tradition in this connection: “St. Gregory Palamas emphasizes that any refusal to make a real distinction between the ‘essence’ and ‘energy’ [or will] erases and blurs the boundary between generation and creation—both the former and the latter then appear to be acts of essence. And as St. Mark of Ephesus explained, ‘Being and energy, completely and wholly coincide in equivalent necessity. Distinction between essence and will is abolished; then God only begets and does not create, and does not exercise his will’” (Florovsky, 68). *Creation and Redemption*, Vol. III. Nordland Publishing Company, Belmont MA (1976).

God's energetic self, which is expressed in creation, missions, and Incarnation. Often referred to as the essence-energy (*ousia-energeia*) distinction, this has been the hallmark feature of Eastern Orthodox theology from the time of the fourth century Greek Fathers to the later Byzantine theological tradition, found especially in the works of John of Damascus and Gregory Palamas. The philosophical groundwork of this distinction is found in their unilaterally shared claim that the divine essence cannot lack its corresponding energies, or natural activities by which it becomes manifest, through the Trinity of the divine *hypostaseis* that share that essence, to realities other than itself. It follows that, if one were to collapse the three persons and their energies into the divine essence, then it would lack any kind of real presence or existence beyond itself. That is, it would lack subsistence and could not be considered to hypostatically and energetically exist *ad extra*. All of the above Greek-speaking theologians were therefore careful to maintain the distinction between *ousia*, *hypostasis*, and *energeia* in God, so that He could simultaneously subsist and exist for Himself (essentially) as Father, Son, and Spirit and for creation (energetically).

The essence-energy distinction, unlike Latin essentialism, made it possible for the Greeks to ontologically differentiate God's creating and redeeming, which are free activities according to the energy, from the Father's generation of the Son and procession of the Holy Spirit, which are necessary actions according to the essence. It also made it possible for them to keep all of God's energies distinct but not divided from each other, and so safeguard against paradoxes that would result from their coalescence. Take, for instance, the situation in which God's will and foreknowledge are identified. If God were

to will everything he foreknows, and God foreknows everything that happens whether good or evil, He would be responsible for willing evil; which is absurd.<sup>29</sup>

It should come as no surprise, then, that the essentialist interpretation of Augustine’s approach to God is commonly criticized in Eastern Orthodox circles specifically for its lack of an essence-energy distinction. Georges Florovsky, for instance, thinks that it is not just Augustine but Western theology in general that fails to make this distinction: “The Eastern patristic distinction between the essence and energies of God has always remained foreign to Western theology.... St. Augustine decisively rejects it.”<sup>30</sup> Duncan Reid writes of Augustine’s entire corpus that “there is no hint here of the distinction between essence and energy that will later (some 1000 years later with Palamas) be developed in Eastern Orthodox theology.”<sup>31</sup> Rather, he thinks that in its place Augustine left us with a view of God in which the outer side of the Trinity—the temporal missions—is the same as the inner side of the Trinity—the eternal processions.<sup>32</sup> Reid calls this the ‘identity principle’ or the ‘simplicity model’ for understanding God, which has remained commonplace in western theology from the time of Augustine all the way up to the post-Reformation present.

Even today no one has been more directly critical of Augustine’s theology than John Romanides. In his *An Outline of Orthodox Patristic Dogmatics*,<sup>33</sup> Romanides notes that the key theological error of Augustine was his failure to make an essence-energy

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<sup>29</sup> For an excellent rendition of this paradox, see *Capita* 100 of St. Gregory Palamas’ *150 Capita*.

<sup>30</sup> Florovsky, Georges. “Creation and Creaturehood,” 274, fn. 68.

<sup>31</sup> Reid, Duncan. *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology*. Scholars Press: Atlanta, 1997. P. 11.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 13-14.

<sup>33</sup> John S. Romanides, *An Outline of Orthodox Patristic Dogmatics*. Trans. by George D. Dragas. Orthodox Research Institute: Rollinsford, NH (2004). This book is a translation of Romanides’ “Notes in Dogmatics” (1972).

distinction such as that found in the Eastern Orthodox tradition since the fourth century onwards. This failure in turn made it impossible for him to have an accurate understanding of the developmental process in which humanity achieves its finite perfection, made possible by the Word's incarnation and brought about through God's grace or energy in harmonious co-operation (*sunergia*)<sup>34</sup> with the human will, which the East refers to as the doctrine of deification (*theosis*). For Romanides, "St. Augustine himself does not appear to have accepted this [sc. essence-energy] distinction.... This identification of essence and energy in the West led Western theologians to articulate the thought that God is 'pure energy.'"<sup>35</sup> As a result of such an identification, we see that "in the theological tradition of the Franks, beginning with Augustine, there is no doctrine of deification."<sup>36</sup> Rather, all we see in the West since Augustine is a doctrine of an absolutely simple, purely actual, and completely necessary God that exists in and for Himself.

Clearer than most, then, Romanides explains the real practical issue at stake in discussions pertaining to divine simplicity in Augustine, i.e., the freedom of humanity and its deification. His informal argument above can be broken down into three distinct conditional statements:

- 1) If Augustine does not have an essence-energy distinction, then he cannot make sense of the concept of deification.

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<sup>34</sup> Vladimir Lossky gives a concise definition of synergy at p. 196 of his *Mystical Theology*, where he notes that, when Western theology claims that God's grace or energy is the cause of the meritorious acts of our free wills, that is to miss the point about divine and human interaction: "For it is not a question of merits but of a co-operation, of a synergy of the two wills, divine and human, a harmony in which grace bears ever more and more fruit, and is appropriated—'acquired'—by the human person."

<sup>35</sup> Romanides, 35.

<sup>36</sup> Romanides, 39.

2) If he cannot make sense of the concept of deification, then there is no harmonious co-operation possible between God and human beings.

3) Therefore, if Augustine does not have an essence-energy distinction, then there is no harmonious co-operation possible between God and human beings.

Romanides' argument is meant to sharpen what he takes to be the opposition between the Latin (and supposedly Augustinian) idea of absolute simplicity and the Greek concept of deification. On the one hand, the doctrine of deification holds there to be a harmonious co-operation between the divine will and the human will within the context of salvation history. On the other hand, the doctrine of essentialism holds that the divine will, including its economic functions of creation and redemption, must be absolutely and unqualifiedly identified with the divine essence.

The problem, of course, is that that the reality of the divine essence is completely necessary, whereas the divine will is that reality in God which is supposed to be completely free. Not merely 'free' in the negative sense of being free from constraints to will this or that, but 'free' in the positive sense to choose amongst different alternatives to do this or that, e.g., to create this or redeem that. If one were to identify the divine will with the divine essence, then God would cease to be free in the positive sense but able to be free in the negative sense. He would cease to have a free will for the activities of creation and redemption, all the while remaining free from constraints.<sup>37</sup> It also would follow that there could not be a synergy between the divine and human wills, because

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<sup>37</sup> The negative and positive senses of free will I call attention to here are recognizable to anyone, including Augustine, familiar with the Neoplatonic philosophical tradition, and especially Plotinus. More recently, these different senses of free will have been discussed as two concepts of liberty by Isaiah Berlin in his seminal 1958 lecture at the University of Oxford aptly titled, "Two Concepts of Liberty," which was then published in his *Four Essays on Liberty*. Oxford University Press: London, 1969. See for example, pp. 121-122.

there would no longer be a divine will with which the human will could co-operate. This entails that there is no freedom possible for human beings, because our freedom, in the Augustinian/Pauline sense of the term, completely depends on God's energies or graces co-working with our individual wills in a way that is in consonance with their created, rational, and free nature.<sup>38</sup> These are meant to conform us to the image of the Son in such a way that, God willing, we become like Christ, unable to sin, unable to die, and unable to abandon the good.

As we can see, the validity of Romanides' argument ultimately comes from the perceived truth of the claim that Augustine does not have an essence-energy distinction. While the validity of this assumption has been granted by the majority of both Eastern and Western theologians alike over the past three centuries, I believe to further illuminate the mystery of divine and human freedom we must re-evaluate the assumption that the essence-energy distinction was somehow exclusively Eastern in origin and design. To that end, one of my primary aims in this dissertation will be to show that there are ontological grounds in Augustine's writings, which are akin to those found in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, for maintaining a distinction between the necessity of God's essence and His free activities of choosing to create and redeem.

Through a close analysis of certain passages from Augustine's earlier and later writings, I will prove that he himself uses this distinction in at least three important respects that directly resonate with the Eastern Orthodox tradition. First, he uses this

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<sup>38</sup> This point will be discussed in various places throughout the dissertation, but I do make explicit mention of it many times in Chapter 2, where I discuss Augustine's view of the human will's dependence relationship to God's will within the context of his doctrinal teaching on the subject; and in Chapter 3, where I discuss this relationship within the context of his pastoral teaching on the subject. I argue in those Chapters that neither Augustine's doctrinal nor pastoral views necessarily lead him to abandon, or in principle would bar him from accepting, the related conceptions of deification and synergy that are held in such high esteem in the Greek-speaking-East.

distinction to argue that there is a difference between the eternity of the divine essence and the eternity of the divine ideas; the former kind of eternity being unknowable and impalpable by creation, the latter being knowable and capable of being participated in by creation. Second, he uses this distinction to prevent the confusion of God's essential activities of generation and procession (*ad intra*) with His economic activity as the productive source of creation (*ad extra*).<sup>39</sup> Augustine believes this in turn safeguards the Creator-creature distinction, which is itself meant to prevent a pantheistic conception of created reality whereby it would achieve an equal ontological status to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Third, he uses this distinction to maintain that there is a distinction without division between God's essence and God's will,<sup>40</sup> the latter being especially crucial to Augustine's claim in Books II-IV of *On the Trinity* that the inner trinity, as expressed in the eternal processions, cannot be identified with the outer trinity, as expressed in the temporal missions.

While qualitative differences may remain among Eastern and Western theologians with respect to the making of this distinction and how it is used in their respective theological traditions, I will show that the fundamental metaphysics of each of their positions remain consistent with and complimentary of the other. With Augustine's version of the essence-energy distinction and its uses in hand, I will then attempt to explain his Christocentric solution to the predestination problem seemingly entailed by Paul's words at 1 Cor 4:7 and by much of what Augustine himself had to say about how to reconcile man's liberty with God's causality beginning with his second response *To Simplician* onwards. Augustine himself may have never explicitly purposed this

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<sup>39</sup> See for example, *conf.* 12.2.7.

<sup>40</sup> See for example, *Gn. litt. imp.* 1.2.

distinction to solve the issue of divine and human interaction, but I believe it can be used as the logical and metaphysical foundation to construct such a solution, and even a valid argument to prove the existence of human liberty, in co-operation with God's grace. As I have suggested earlier, previous attempts at solving this problem have been frustrated, or perhaps not even attempted, because of the essentialist interpretation of Augustine's Trinitarian theology that has predominated in the past and still holds great appeal among scholars working today. On such an interpretation, there is simply no ontological room for human freedom to live and move and have its own being in the presence of God's will and knowledge, both of which are identified with each other, and both of which are collapsed into the necessity of the divine essence. It is my claim, however, that Augustine's approach to God is not of necessity beholden to Latin essentialism, and that there are clear non-essentialist tendencies in his extensive corpus that should make us re-evaluate Augustine's so-called 'Western' Trinitarian theology and his own final solution to the predestination problem found in Book II of the *Retractions*.

## Chapter 2

*Augustine's Teachings on Sin and Grace*

In order to come up with a convincing solution to the predestination problem in Augustine, we must first gain a clearer understanding of the problem itself. This requires us to explore two interrelated themes in Augustine's thought: sin and grace. Augustine's position on these two themes was not monolithic. In *On the Gift of Perseverance*, Augustine tells his readers that over time he made progress in his understanding of God's grace, and that it would be unfair for them not to allow him to change his theological position as is necessary to accord with what is true by reason and what is right by Christian doctrine.<sup>41</sup> He claims that the biggest change made to his position occurred in his second response *To Simplician*, where for the first time he "realized and stated that the beginning of faith (*initium fidei*) is also the gift of God."<sup>42</sup> Augustine specifically cites his greater understanding of Paul's Letter to the Romans (9: 10-29) as granting him this realization. Considering the importance that Augustine places on his second response *To Simplician* for his own better understanding of God's grace, this work serves as a natural entry point for its discussion.

Augustine begins his second response *To Simplician* with what he takes to be St. Paul's main insight from Romans 9, namely: no one should boast of the merits of his works, for any merit they do possess is wholly because of God's merciful grace.

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<sup>41</sup> Chapter 30.

<sup>42</sup> Chapter 20. Beforehand in the *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula ad Romanos* (393/394), Augustine claimed that human beings were responsible for their initial faith in God—a claim he defends in the first response *To Simplician* as well (See for example, *To Simplician* 1.14). In these two early works, Augustine held that grace was needed to make the good will effectual, to make it result in the performance of good deeds, but faith was willed by us (*exp.prop.Rm.61.69*).

Following St. Paul, Augustine claims that grace is not grace if it is not given gratuitously. Grace thus comes before any kind of merit, before good works and faith; and a person cannot “do good works unless he has obtained grace through faith,”<sup>43</sup> a faith that is given to him by an internal or external urging of the Holy Spirit. Grace is not the result of merit, but merit is the result of grace. For if “grace comes from merit, it means you have bought it, not received it free, *gratis*, for nothing.”<sup>44</sup> To illustrate the utter gratuity of grace, Augustine uses an example given by Paul: the twins Jacob and Esau (Rom 9:13). Since they did not yet exist, they were deserving of nothing; neither one of them was more *praevisa merita* than *praevisa demerita*; yet God chose to love Jacob and hate Esau.<sup>45</sup> According to Augustine, it was God’s redemptive purpose that was the deciding factor in choosing to give grace to Jacob but not to Esau. The twins’ future merits or demerits played no part in God’s choice, which was made *ante praevisa merita*.<sup>46</sup> The same goes for all of us: whether our fate is that of Jacob or Esau is a matter ultimately determined by God.

In her recent book, *A New Apophaticism: Augustine and the Redemption of Signs*, Susanna Ticciati argues that it is precisely this claim, “that only some are predestined to salvation, while others are left to perdition,”<sup>47</sup> that cannot serve any beneficial, transformative, or salvific purpose for the individual. It is a problematic aspect within Augustine’s “doctrine of predestination which cannot be integrated into its broader trajectory.”<sup>48</sup> Essential to her argument is the assertion that Augustine makes God

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<sup>43</sup> *Simpl.* 2.2.

<sup>44</sup> *Sermo* 169.3, 416.

<sup>45</sup> *Simpl.* 2.3.

<sup>46</sup> *Simpl.* 2.6.

<sup>47</sup> Ticciati, 54.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

responsible for both our good and evil wills: “not only is the good will to be attributed to God, but so is the evil will... a will which is nevertheless genuinely the human’s own ... in such a way that it is to be attributed wholly to God and wholly to the human being.”<sup>49</sup> For Ticcianti, Augustine makes divine agency out to be one part liberating grace for human agency and one part divine judgment. This divided “divine agency draws focus back again to the question of choice between alternative options: will the human choose good or evil? And this question is replicated on the divine plane: will God give or withhold grace?”<sup>50</sup> While Ticcianti admits that God is not the direct cause of the evil will, she still makes His withholding of grace from the Esau’s of the world a kind of sin of omission. The problem is Augustine believes that God always offers everyone equal access to sufficient graces for their salvation.<sup>51</sup> Ticcianti confuses the point that, while God does not give grace to all,<sup>52</sup> which is certainly true, this does not mean he does not offer it to all, which he does. The distinction made between “giving” and “offering” grace is not mere wordplay, but rather a real distinction that Augustine makes use of on multiple occasions to avoid just such a confusion. Augustine believed that God offered sufficient salvific graces to everyone. Or as he will say, God “makes his sun rise on the good and the bad, and sends rain on the just and the unjust, inviting them of course to repentance by his patience, so that those who are indifferent to his goodness may experience at the last his severity.”<sup>53</sup> And elsewhere we are told by him that, “God grants well-being or salvation in the present to both human beings and animals, to both good and bad alike.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ticcianti, 68.

<sup>50</sup> Ticcianti, 69.

<sup>51</sup> See for example, *Sermon* 250.1, 416: “at the present day there is equal access to the grace of God for nobles and commoners, for the educated and the illiterate, for the poor and the rich.”

<sup>52</sup> See Ticcianti, 74.

<sup>53</sup> *Sermon* 149.18, 412.

<sup>54</sup> *Sermon* 319A, date unknown.

Augustine makes this point so that not even those who have an evil will can complain of God's justice and goodness. I think it safe to conclude from these texts that Augustine believed in the doctrine of universal grace, or that God offers sufficient graces to all for their salvation, but not the stronger doctrine of universal salvation, both of which can be interpreted as being consistent with the claim found at 1 Tim 2: 4 that God wills all to be saved. Certainly God wills all to be saved, but that does not mean everyone will accept his grace and actually be saved.

We might say that God's "standing offer" to give sufficient graces for everyone's salvation must be co-operatively accepted by our wills to do any real work, to be effectual in our lives. After all, for it to be properly said that God makes good on this offer of salvation in actually giving us these graces, we must be said to accept them. I believe it is therefore helpful to think of God's giving His graces and our accepting of them as two inseparable parts of one redemptive process. Take one or the other part away, and there really cannot be said to be a giving or receiving, for if there is no giving on the part of God, there cannot be a receiving on the part of man; and if there is no receiving on the part of man, there cannot be a giving on the part of God. However, God's offering of grace, as opposed to Him giving it or our accepting it, is perfectly intelligible without a faithful response or otherwise from us: God can offer grace, and we can either choose to accept it or not; but the offering of His grace does not depend on anything we do. As Augustine has said before, God offers sufficient salvific graces to all, to all persons who are good and bad alike.

Augustine is aware that the preceding—even with the distinctions he makes regarding offering, giving, and accepting grace—may still sound disturbing to the

believer. God appears to be unjustly arbitrary, giving grace to the Jacob's of the world but not the Esau's even though there are no relevant differences between them. To defend his position, Augustine first appeals to St. Paul: *For Moses says, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will show compassion to whom I will be compassionate* (Rom 9: 15). Later, he will cite Mt 20: 1-12's parable of the vineyard to make the same point. The master in this parable hired some workers for the whole day and some for only one hour, yet he paid both groups of workers the same daily wage. When the first group of workers complain, the master answers that the fact that he "willed" to be generous to those who worked for one hour did not mean that they were paid an unjust wage. Augustine concludes from this parable that God, as our Master, must also be given the freedom to have mercy on whom He will have mercy, though it cannot be stressed enough that such mercy is not owed to anyone as a result of the whole human race living under the tyranny of sin, both original sin and those that are personal. Augustine will insist that, because of original sin in particular, we all begin life with a hamstrung moral agency and debilitated ontological being: we are dominated by ignorance of the truth and lust of the flesh; we sin in every action we perform, unless aided by divine grace; we have become mortal; and we all constitute a kind of mass of sin (*una quaedam massa peccati*), and as such deserve damnation.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> See for example, *Simpl.* 2.16. Augustine's doctrine of original sin is based on an inaccurate Latin translation of Romans 5:12: "*per unum hominem in hunc mundum peccatum intravit et per peccatum mors et ita in omnes homines mors pertransiit in quo omnes peccaverunt.*" For Augustine, no one, not even infants, *whose life on earth has lasted but a day, is pure of sin* (Job 14:5). The entire human race was borne from Adam, from the same common root; and in Adam all must die, *in whom all sinned* (Rom 5:12). (The Literal Meaning of Genesis Book VI, 9, 14). Augustine thinks the *in quo* refers to Adam (cf. Deserts and Forgiveness of Sins 1.10-11) when, in fact, the original Greek text reads *eph ho*, which is meant to introduce an explanatory clause and does not support Augustine's translation.

Accepting the offer of God's mercy in this life is thus necessary, for it is only by God's help that we attain to what is true, good, life-giving, and redeeming. Once again, however, this idea that God's grace is the only reality which can aid us in pulling ourselves out of the swamp of sin we trudge through on a daily basis must be balanced with the fact that God can only save us from sin if we are willing to accept His help. Augustine will explicitly claim that God's mercy is not by itself sufficient for our salvation. God's mercy must be joined to the will's "consent"<sup>56</sup> and considered within the context of the will's effort to which Paul refers in Phil 12:12: *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling*. He makes this quite clear in his discussion of how God calls us to salvation. For Augustine, there are many who are called and not chosen, not because God does not call them in the appropriate way, as the kind of person they are, but because they are not suited to the call since they have hardened their hearts to the Holy Spirit's internal and external urgings.<sup>57</sup> It is on account of *their demerits* that they will be condemned, not because God intends some calls not to be accepted.<sup>58</sup> God is thus sensitive to what they will, and it is they who are the problematic variable in the equation of divine and human interaction. It is they who refuse to accept the gift of salvation that God is offering. We might well ask: Why does not God call everyone so that they would answer? If God were to call them in such a way as to override their freedom of choosing

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> *Simpl.* 2.13. There are those who may now be tempted to object that persons only harden their hearts because God hardens them through the withholding of His graces. However, as I have pointed out already, Augustine believes that God always offers sufficient salvific graces to all of humankind, and not to mention that such an objection would go against Scripture, which at various places puts the blame for the hardening of one's heart on the human individual, not on God. Perhaps the most famous example of this can be found at Exodus 8:32, where it is made clear that "Pharaoh hardened his heart" and would not let the Israelites go. Pharaoh willed something else for the Israelites than God, namely their captivity. We cannot say therefore that Pharaoh's hardness of heart was a result of God's choice.

<sup>58</sup> See for example, Wetzel 1992, p. 157, who thinks God actually wills some persons to not be saved by deliberately giving them an unsuitable call.

what is lower, then He would be forcing them to answer His call. Then, however, His call would cease to be a call, becoming rather a compulsion, and their answer would cease to be a free response. Augustine's position here remains consistent with 1 Tim 2: 4ff:

*Almighty God wills that all men without exception be saved, although all are not saved. Now, that certain ones be saved, this is the gift of Him who saves; and that certain ones perish, this is the fault (meritum) of those who perish.*

Augustine's view of sin and grace elaborated in his second response *To Simplician* would take center stage during his polemical bouts with the Pelagians and the semi-Pelagians, whose contrary positions, as well as Augustine's responses to them, will now be briefly considered. We shall begin chronologically with the Pelagian controversy, which began around 412. The main opponents of Augustine here were Pelagius and his followers, Celestius and Julian of Eclanum. Pelagius himself is thought to have been a British monk, perhaps of Irish descent, who lived in Rome from 384 until its fall in 410 at the hands of the Visigoths. Fleeing to Africa, he soon came into conflict with Augustine, then Bishop of Hippo, who wasted no time in publishing two works against Pelagius' teachings around 411 or 412, the *De peccatorum meritis* and the *De spiritu et littera*. In these works, Augustine accuses Pelagius of heretically teaching that:

- 1) Adam would have died whether he sinned or not.
- 2) Adam's sin was purely personal, affecting him and him alone.
- 3) Infants are born into the same sinless state Adam enjoyed before his fall, hence infant baptism is superfluous (Pelagius believed that adult baptism did confer certain benefits on the believer, however, such as the remission of personal sins).

4) Adams's sin did not cause the death of all, and so Christ's resurrection is not needed for the redemption of all.

5) Following the Law and Gospel are sufficient for salvation.

6) Before Christ's redemptive work there were men wholly without sin.

Since Pelagius' writings are not extant, it is difficult to get a clear and unbiased picture of his position. What cannot be historically questioned, however, is the fact that the above teachings of Pelagius were condemned at two African councils at Carthage and Mileve in 416, and later by Pope Innocent I in 417, who excommunicated Pelagius and his follower Celestius. Julian of Eclanum then inherited the mantle of Pelagianism, but it was a mantle that proved to be too heavy for his shoulders as well. He was eventually banished by Pope Zozimus, and is said to have died in Sicily around 455.

While there are many points over which Augustine and Pelagius battled, the entire controversy can really be seen as one concerned with the power of the human will in its fallen condition, and how to characterize the help afforded to it by God's grace.

Augustine, from his own personal experience of the vicissitudes of fallen human nature and the oppressive hold his bad habits had over his own will,<sup>59</sup> and from his zeal to defend what he took to be right Christian doctrine in accord with the teaching of St. Paul, emphasizes the fragility of the fallen will's power. Our desperate need for grace is found in scripture, which Augustine thought to be authoritative: *Without me you can do nothing (Sine me nihil potestis facere)* (Jn 15:5). Pelagius, on the other hand, was more confident in the power of unaided human nature and its corresponding faculties, emphasizing instead the sufficiency of these natural gifts given to us by God for right action, provided

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<sup>59</sup> As, for instance, we get a vivid description of in his *Confessions*, 8.9.21.

they are used properly. He argued that God would never command us to do anything unless we had the power to do it (a version of the “ought implies can” principle), and even cited Augustine’s early work *On Free Choice of the Will* to make his case.<sup>60</sup> His faith in the strength of human nature and its powers led Pelagius to view God’s grace as something beneficial to the believer, but not as something necessary to bring about one’s salvation. While most would agree that Pelagius’ Christian Stoicism does not adequately acknowledge the positive benefits of God’s grace for the believer, Augustine appears to go in the opposite extreme direction, portraying human nature and the will as so weak and so lost without God’s helping hand that there is no possibility for human freedom.

Much more could be said about the Pelagian controversy itself and the many works that Augustine wrote during this period in response to it. However, my interest at this point rests primarily in getting clear on what has commonly been seen as problematic in Augustine’s conception of sin and grace, so that we can more readily come up with an appropriate solution, and, in particular, a solution that would be acceptable to both East and West. To that end, the semi-Pelagian controversy proves even more relevant to the project of this dissertation, in that Eastern Christianity has long viewed the semi-Pelagians as witnesses to their tradition. Vladimir Lossky, for instance, will call St. John Cassian of Marseilles—who was perhaps the most prominent of all the semi-Pelagians in his time—a “representative” of the Eastern tradition in what he wrote concerning the relationship between God’s grace and the human will.<sup>61</sup> Lossky believes he is justified in making this claim because Cassian, like the entire Eastern tradition, “has always asserted

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<sup>60</sup> The passage Pelagius cited can be found at *de. lib. arb.* 3.18.50.171.

<sup>61</sup> *Mystical Theology*, 199.

simultaneity in the synergy of divine grace and human freedom.”<sup>62</sup> However, because Augustine and the Pelagians lacked such a divine and human synergy in their writings, they can never be considered as in accord with Eastern Christianity in this regard. My brief examination of the Pelagian controversy shows that this is a fair estimation of Pelagius’ position, but can we really transfer the same criticism over to Augustine? To find out, I will examine in some detail certain relevant parts of the last four major doctrinal works Augustine wrote and that were sent to the semi-Pelagians at Hadrumetum and Provence, the latter being mainly from southern Gaul, in the monastic communities at Marseilles and Lérins.

The first two of these works are *On Grace and Free Choice* and *On Rebuke and Grace*, both of which were sent to the monks at Hadrumetum around 426-427. Like many modern commentators today, these monks thought that Augustine’s doctrine of grace left no room for free will, thereby destroying any notion of moral responsibility. Augustine’s response in these two works, however, seems to tell a different story.

*On Grace and Free Choice* begins with Augustine affirming the necessity of both grace and free will, and their undeniable complementarity found in the Old and New testaments. We see this first and foremost, he thinks, in the commandments present throughout scripture, which reveal that the will of man is free:

The divine precepts would themselves be pointless for human beings unless we had free choice of the will, by which we might reach the promised rewards through carrying them out. For the precepts were given to human beings in order that they not have an excuse on the grounds of ignorance, as the Lord says of the Jews in the Gospel: *Had I not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin* (Jn 15: 22).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> *Grace and Free Choice*, 2.2.

Augustine then goes on to cite many specific passages from scripture which point to there being free will in man, for instance, Sir 15: 12-18: *It was He who made human beings from the beginning, and left them in the hand of their own counsel. If you are willing, you shall keep the commandments and keep good faith with his pleasure. He sets fire and water before you: stretch forth your hand to whichever you will.* God could not bid us to follow such commandments if we did not have free will. Further, there are many commandments that explicitly reference the will, including: *Be unwilling to be overcome by evil* (Rom 12:21); *Be unwilling to become as the horse or the mule, which have no understanding* (Ps 31:9); *Be unwilling to fall away from the teaching of the Lord* (Prv 3:7); and many more.<sup>64</sup> It is important to note that all of Augustine's examples are rendered using the Latin *nolle*, which means "to be unwilling [to]." Though commonly these negative imperatives are translated into English as "Thou shalt not..." or "Do not..." I think it is more accurate to recognize the role of the will in these commandments by translating it more literally, to mirror the original Latin text of Augustine. Taking scripture as authoritative, Augustine thinks that all of these examples are "sufficient proof of free choice."<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, one should not understand these examples as leaving no room for the necessary help of grace in the carrying out of these commandments. Pelagius made such a mistake, placing his faith in the natural power of the will to do the good. Augustine on many occasions would respond to this with the words of the prophet Jeremiah: *Cursed is the man who has his hope in man, and makes strong the flesh of his arm, and whose heart abandons the Lord* (Jer 17:5). Augustine takes "arm" to mean

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 2.4ff.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

power of acting and “flesh” to mean human weakness. It follows that anyone who goes along with Pelagius in thinking that humanity’s weak and inadequate power is “sufficient by itself for acting well makes strong the flesh of his arm.”<sup>66</sup> What any holy person should do, however, is put their faith in God’s power. Augustine writes in this connection: “No holy person rejoices in his own power, but in the power of Him from whom is derived all potency for fitting action. He knows that it is a mightier thing to be united in willing worship to the omnipotent, than to display in his own power and will a potency which is fearful to those who have it not.”<sup>67</sup> The freedom of the will is actually freer in proportion to its inability to display this kind of prideful potency:

One should not think that free choice has been taken away because the apostle said: *God is the one who works in you both willing and doing works in conformity with good will* [Phil 2:13]. *Blessed*, after all, *is the one whose helper is the God of Jacob, his hope in the Lord his God* (Ps 146:5). In addition, if freedom were taken away, he would not have said immediately before that: *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling* [Phil 2:12].<sup>68</sup>

But now we appear to wind up in a paradoxical situation, in which God commands us to do the good but also grants us this very same good. Or as Augustine famously says in the *Confessions*, “Command what you will, and give what you command,”<sup>69</sup> a statement that particularly annoyed Pelagius when he heard it during a public reading of the *Confessions* in Rome, as it seemingly asked the impossible of human beings.<sup>70</sup>

In *On Grace and Free Choice*, Augustine does not back down from this claim, writing: “It is certain that we will, when we will. But God brings it about that we will something good.... It is certain that we act, when we act. But God brings it about that we

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 4.6.

<sup>67</sup> *trin.* 8.11.

<sup>68</sup> *trin.* 9.21.

<sup>69</sup> *Conf.* 10.29.40.

<sup>70</sup> Augustine will actually describe this event in *On the Gift of Perseverance*, Chapter 53.

act by furnishing our will with efficacious strength.”<sup>71</sup> Essentially what Augustine is saying is that we work with God and God works with us to accomplish good things; and it is by “working along [with us that] He perfects what He began by working [in us]” (*cooperando perficit quod operando incipit*).<sup>72</sup> If taken literally, the Latin here reads “by co-working He completes what by working [alone] He started.” This famous phrase is commonly seen as the origin of the doctrine of co-operative grace in the West, though one might argue its beginnings are found just as clearly in St. Paul, who actually uses the Greek term *sunergia*.<sup>73</sup> Regardless, Augustine believes we must acknowledge God as the

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<sup>71</sup> *Grace and Free Choice*, 16.32.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 17.33. There is a great variability with respect to how the Greek *sunergia* is translated into Latin. As a result, no general claim can be made as to how it ought to be translated. Conducting a lexical study of selected works from Augustine’s Cappadocian contemporaries (i.e., Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory of Nyssa) in J-P Migne’s *Patrologia Graeca* (*PG*) bears this out quite clearly. The following are some representative examples of this I have found in the *PG*, for which I have provided the official Volume and Column reference numbers: *sunergia* = *cooperante* (Vol. 29b, Col. 29A); *sunergou* = *operis* (Vol. 29b, Col. 56A); *sunergou* = *simul operabatur* (Vol. 29b, Col. 208A); *sunergon* = *cooperatorem* (Vol. 29b, Col. 760B); *sunergon* = *cooperatorum* (Vol. 31, Col. 756D); *sunergein* = *adjutricem* (Vol. 36, Col. 25D); *sunergon* = *cooperarium* (Vol. 36, Col. 137D); *sunergaths* = *cooperator* (Vol. 37, Col. 872A); *sunergia* = *ope* (Vol. 44, Col. 140A); *sunergias* = *occupasset* (Vol. 44, Col. 141B); *sunergian* = *remedium* (Vol. 44, Col. 144A); *sunergon* = *efficacem* (Vol. 44, Col. 168B); *sunergian* = *convenienter actiones* (Vol. 44, Col. 237B); *sunergei* = *cooperatur* (Vol. 44, Col. 1344A). Cross-referencing these examples with their English translations shows that most often—though not always—the various forms of *sunergia* and their Latin equivalents are translated by individual words, such as “co-operation,” “co-working,” or “help” (in the sense of a helper “helping” someone or something else), or simple phrases, such as “simultaneous acting” or “suitable co-operation.” This can be seen, for example, *passim* the translations of Volumes 5, 7, and 8 of the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, and are in themselves perfectly acceptable translations of the original Greek and Latin. I would argue therefore that Augustine’s use of *cooperando* and the concept of *sunergia* in the works of the 4<sup>th</sup> C. Greek Fathers are meant to denote the same fundamental idea, namely, a kind of “working with,” “acting with,” or “helping” someone or something else. In *On Grace and Free Choice* 17.33, we see this idea is given concrete expression in God’s grace “working with” (*cooperando*) the fallen human will so that it may accomplish the good. It is also worth noting that this linguistic trend of viewing the Latin *cooperatio* (and/or other Latin words that connote the same meaning of “co-operation”) as equivalent to the Greek *sunergia* continued beyond the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. For example, the Latin translations of the 6<sup>th</sup> C. theologian Dionysius the Areopagite by Eriugena, Sarracen, and Grossetestes prove this continuing linguistic trend. Some examples from the *PG* Vol. 3, using Sarracen’s Latin translations of the Greek, are as follows: *sunergon* = *cooperatorem* (Vol. 3, Col. 165B); *sunergian* = *cooperationem* (Vol. 3, Col. 168A); *sunergias* = *cooperatione* (Vol. 3, Col. 212A); *sunergshswmen* = *operabimur* (Vol. 3, Col. 953A); *sunergia* = *cooperationem* (Vol. 3, Col. 393C). Many thanks to my dissertation director, Fr. John D. Jones, for finding these instances of *sunergia* mentioned in Dionysius with their corresponding Latin translations.

<sup>73</sup> There are many of his Letters in which St. Paul will literally use the Greek words *sunergein* and *sunergos* to refer to himself and his brothers in Christ as active co-workers with God. A few examples: “we

primary cause who first works without us so that we might have the power to will what is good within us. God offers these beginning graces to all. But once we will, and will in such a way so that we may act well, God works within us to make the will efficacious. A similar idea is found in Chapter 35 of *On Nature and Grace*, where Augustine writes: “We ourselves bring it to pass; that is to say, we ourselves justify our own selves. In this matter, no doubt, we do ourselves, too, work; but we are fellow-workers with Him who does the work, because His mercy anticipates us. He anticipates us, however, that we may be healed; but then He will also follow us, that being healed we may grow healthy and strong.” However, in no uncertain terms does God’s grace take away our free will either before, during, or after we act. God’s grace turns the will from seeking lower things to higher things, and gives further help once the will is good so that it may persevere in the good. He “works in human hearts to incline *their wills* to whatever he wills, either to good due to his mercy or to evil due to their deserts.”<sup>74</sup> Yet such providentially graced causation does nothing to vitiate the nature of *their wills* as free.

Phillip Cary represents the attitude shared in the vast majority of the scholarly literature well when he says that the just mentioned passage from *On Grace and Free Choice* (and the many others that express the same basic point) prove that “in the last decade of his life Augustine develops a view of free will” that does not allow a person to control the development of their own character.<sup>75</sup> Cary states that, while this is good news for those who are saved, whose wills are irresistibly bended to God’s will, it is equally bad news for those who are not. According to Cary, the real problem can be found in

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are laborers together (*sunergountes*) with God” (1 Cor 3:9); “we then, as workers together (*sunergountes*) with him” (2 Cor 6:1); “Timothy, our brother and co-worker of God” (*sunergon tou theou*) (1 Thess. 3:2).

<sup>74</sup> *On Grace and Free Choice*, 21.43, emphasis mine.

<sup>75</sup> Cary, 79.

Augustine's doctrine of prevenient grace, which holds that for any of us to will anything that would contribute to our salvation, God must literally "come before" and offer sufficient graces to strengthen our wills.<sup>76</sup> Augustine does adhere to this doctrine: "The fact is, his mercy gets in ahead of us every single time; to call us when we were lacking the will, and then to ensure we obtain the ability to do what we will."<sup>77</sup> But even more problematic is that Augustine "pushes the logic of prevenience back to the very beginning of every human life."<sup>78</sup> Augustine's logic of prevenience thus places all of the power in God's hands, rendering our wills completely inefficacious and unnecessary in the process of salvation, and leads to the kind of double-predestination we encounter later in the Reformation with Luther and Calvin.<sup>79</sup> For Cary, this is the only interpretation of Augustine's mature theology of sin and grace will allow.

To some extent we can understand Cary's point, but amassing quotes like the one from *On Grace and Free Choice* without giving it, or Augustine's doctrine of grace as a whole, proper context does not prove that Augustine was a Calvinist before Calvin. A fundamental Augustinian idea that Cary's study completely ignores is that grace has a mutual affinity for nature, working in harmony with it. Commenting on his work *On Nature and Grace*, for instance, Augustine writes: "I defend grace, not indeed as in opposition to nature, but as that which liberates and controls nature."<sup>80</sup> He will even say in the work itself that the gift of grace can never take away the nature of the will as free, for this gift only becomes effectual in the life of the man who "humbly uses ... his own

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<sup>76</sup> Cary, 85.

<sup>77</sup> *Sermo* 193.2, around 410. See also, *Sermon*, 176.5, 412.

<sup>78</sup> Cary, 87.

<sup>79</sup> Cary, 86.

<sup>80</sup> *Retractions*, Book II, Chapter 42.

will, and makes no boast of the power and energy thereof, as if it alone were sufficient for perfecting him in righteousness.”<sup>81</sup> The latter provides more proof of the idea that the distinction Augustine makes between God’s offering and giving grace, and our accepting that grace, are real distinctions: Grace becomes active in the life of man when and only when he humbly and willingly accepts it as necessary for his perfection.

In *Sermo* 398 (ca. 425), Augustine further explains why grace cannot override the will’s freedom. His explanation is founded on the fact that there are many things that God cannot do, because if He could do them, He would no longer be God:

He is unable to die, unable to be deceived, unable to lie, and as the apostle says, *he cannot deny himself* (2 Tm 2:13). How many things he is unable to do, and he is almighty! And that’s why he is almighty, because he cannot do these things. I mean, if he could die, he wouldn’t be almighty; if he could lie, could be deceived, could deceive, could act unjustly, he wouldn’t be almighty, because if it were in him to do that sort of thing, he wouldn’t be fit to be almighty.<sup>82</sup>

Focusing on the words of the apostle from 2 Tm, Augustine then gives a short argument as to why God’s will cannot be contrary to itself: “God, you see, is willingly whatever he is; so he is willingly eternal and unchangeable and truthful and blessed and undefeatable. So if he can be what he does not wish, he is not almighty; but he is almighty, which is why he is capable of whatever he wishes.”<sup>83</sup> Coupling this with the fact that the human will was created by God to be by nature free, it follows that His grace (in any of its many forms) can never be so overpowering as to make the human will unfree, otherwise God’s own will would be contrary to itself, thereby contradicting his own almightiness; which is absurd. By granting the gift of free will to humankind, God has metaphysically and

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<sup>81</sup> *On Nature and Grace*, Ch. 36.

<sup>82</sup> *Sermon* 398.2. He says the same things in Sermons *Sermo* 214.4 (around 391) and 140.2 (around 428).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

morally bound himself not to interfere with its use, even if it is used by them to perpetrate moral evil. Though, of course, God is powerful enough to also bring moral good out of their evil, which we can see perhaps most clearly in the death of Christ, unjustly put to death by the Jews, but which thereby freed all of mankind from the servitude of sin and the road it paves towards eternal death.

Augustine's above argument concerning the things God cannot do has been infrequently touched upon in the scholarship, but one notable exception is Jacques Maritain, who claims that both Aquinas and Augustine held that every rational creature is naturally peccable, i.e., capable of sin; and that "God can no more make a creature, angel or man, naturally impeccable than he can make a square circle."<sup>84</sup> Maritain believes this is a result of their belief that God "plays fair" with His creatures, dealing with them as He does according to their natures. When it comes to angels and men, free beings, this means God must respect their fallible liberty.

In the next work written for the monks of Hadrumetum, *On Rebuke and Grace*, Augustine's main concern is to call attention to what he takes to be the key to understanding divine and human co-operation in the realm of moral action. While I have quoted this statement once before, it is worth repeating: "It is through Jesus Christ our Lord that we should understand God's grace. It alone sets human beings free from evil. Without it they do nothing good at all, whether in thinking, or in willing and loving, or in acting."<sup>85</sup> Upon reading this statement and many others like it from Augustine, the monks complained that, if God's grace works in them the thinking and the willing and the working in accord with what is good, then they do nothing. Another objection Augustine

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<sup>84</sup> *God and the Permission of Evil*, 37.

<sup>85</sup> *Rebuke and Grace*, 2.3.

heard from these monks pertained to the possible rebuke a monastic superior may give to his inferiors: if God does not work in them the thinking and the willing and the working in accord with what is good, then they cannot be blamed by their monastic superiors for what they have done wrong. After all, if they do not do it, then they should not be reprimanded; all they should do is pray to God, so that he may give the requisite grace that he has not yet bestowed.<sup>86</sup> Augustine responds to their first complaint by saying that, while indeed they are “led by the Spirit of God (*spiritu Dei se agi*) to do that which should be done,” they are not led in such a way that they do nothing, “for they are acted upon that they may act.”<sup>87</sup> And he responds to their second complaint by saying that even in rebuke, the synergy between God and man can be revealed, since a rebuke may be just the catalyst needed for someone to change the focus of their will from loving evil things to loving God, a change that is brought to completion by God’s grace, but one that also requires the free consent of the will. Whether in the salutary effect of a rebuke, or in the performance of good actions, God gives support “to the weakness of the human will, so that by divine grace it [leads] unchangeably and insurmountably (*Subventum est igitur infirmitati voluntatis humanae, ut divina gratia indeclinabiliter et insuperabiliter ageretur*).<sup>88</sup>

Augustine chooses his words very carefully here, deftly emphasizing both the primacy of divine agency and the importance of human agency: divine grace is what

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<sup>86</sup> *Rebuke and Grace*, 4.6.

<sup>87</sup> *Rebuke and Grace*, 2.4.

<sup>88</sup> *Rebuke and Grace*, 12.38. I have chosen to change the original English translation of the verb *ageretur* by “moves” to “leads,” which is a commonly accepted translation of the Latin. As will be apparent shortly, this change is important not only for what I think is a more accurate understanding of Augustine’s overall position on how God’s grace *works with* the freedom of the human will, but also in rebuffing certain objections to his position that are based on an inattention to this and other possible meanings of the Latin words actually used by Augustine in the original Latin manuscript of *On Rebuke and Grace*.

unchangeably and insurmountably leads the infirm human will in accordance with what is good, but the human will must follow in harmony with God's grace. This passage in particular has frequently been interpreted by scholars as necessarily implying a kind of moral determinism, when, depending on one's translation of the original Latin, it need not. John Rist, for instance, writes that he takes this passage to mean "that God's grace moulds the human will to its own purposes, without any vestige of self-determination remaining for man.... The crux of the problem lies in the meaning of the two adverbs [*indeclinabiliter et insuperabiliter*]." <sup>89</sup> For Rist, these two adverbs do not just imply that grace is irresistible to and transforming of the human agent, so that we will freely from our own power, but rather that it is "unswerving and all-conquering," <sup>90</sup> so that we are slaves of God's will. Rist concludes that, for Augustine, fallen human beings are like puppets on the controlling fingers of God, "free in the sense only of being arranged to act in a way not subject to external pressures." <sup>91</sup> Augustine, however, is not of necessity bound to understand these two adverbs in this way, either by themselves, <sup>92</sup> or in his

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<sup>89</sup> Rist, 435.

<sup>90</sup> Rist, 436.

<sup>91</sup> Rist 440. He takes the same position in his *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*. See for example, p. 133.

<sup>92</sup> After conducting a word search in Volumes 44 and 45 of J-P Migne's *Patrologia Latina (PL)*, which contain most of the major works at issue in the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian controversies, I have found that the adverb *indeclinabiliter* is used only one time by Augustine at Column 0940 in the controversial text that I have currently been discussing from *On Rebuke and Grace* 12.38. Here, the meaning of *indeclinabiliter* is "unchangeably," which by itself cannot be used by Rist to argue that Augustine is a theological determinist. Perhaps more interesting is what my word search turned up (or, rather, did not turn up) when it came to the adverb *insuperabiliter*, which does have the meaning of "insurmountably," "invincibly," or as Rist likes to say, "unswerving." I have found that Augustine will actually never use the word *insuperabiliter* in the entirety of Volumes 44 and 45 of the *PL*. The original Latin word he does use at Column 0940 and elsewhere (i.e., Columns 0247, 0275, 0277, 0420, 1132, 1250, 1541, 1804, 1828, and 1893) is the adverb *inseparabiliter*, which he consistently takes to mean "inseparably" throughout these texts. In the first footnote for Column 0940, the editor explains that many manuscripts brought in *insuperabiliter*, including the 1577 ed. Lov. They did this because the context of the larger work seemed to emphasize the grace of God's powerful influence on the infirm human will. However, he notes that in the interest of not committing any possible error with respect to Augustine's original Latin manuscript, he is opting to keep the word Augustine himself used, which is *inseparabiliter*.

pairing of them with the imperfect passive subjunctive of the Latin *agō*, namely *ageretur*, all of which can be collectively translated as that divine grace “unchangeably and insurmountably leads” the human will. Translating *ageretur* in terms of “leads” (not “drives” or “moves”) is not only in my opinion an equally accurate conversion of this word into English, but also helps to shed the negative connotations of “compels” or “determines,” which are meanings usually attendant on these alternate translations, and ones which inevitably imply that Augustine is describing a kind of moral determinism with God playing the puppeteer. I would argue that Rist focuses too much on the two adverbs Augustine uses and not enough on the verb which they are meant to modify and, specifically, the different meaning of “leads” this verb can possess. In doing this, Rist misunderstands the larger thought that Augustine is attempting to convey about how God’s grace *works with* the fallen human will by unchangeably and insurmountably providing it with its proper direction and resting place.

Nor would Augustine accept the dichotomy Rist sets up between God’s grace and the human will. As we have briefly seen in works such as *On Nature and Grace*, Augustine does not view these as mutually exclusive realities that have to somehow be reconciled, and that have to be given their own cordoned off areas of existence apart from each other; they are, rather, two distinct realities that have a mutual exigency for each other: the sole function of grace is to complete all finite natures according to the will of God, including human nature and its conative and cognitive powers; and the sole function of all finite natures and their corresponding powers is to be completed as such. In short, the purpose of God’s grace is to “lead” us to our perfection, and the purpose of our wills

is to “follow” that grace to our perfection.<sup>93</sup> One can see the entire work, *On Rebuke and Grace*, as a brief attempt to make this point to the monks of Hadrumetum.

The monks of Provence, on the other hand, were mainly worried that Augustine’s belief in predestination by grace led to defeatism in the moral life. After all, if God has already decided who He will elect before the foundation of the world, then nothing any of us do can change that, thus rendering our wills inefficacious. To avoid the total disempowerment of the will seemingly implied by God’s predestinating grace, these monks wanted to reserve certain spaces for human freedom that were liberated from the encroachment of divine causality, namely the beginning of faith and perseverance. Augustine sent them *On the Predestination of the Saints* and *On the Gift of Perseverance* in response, which were originally written as one work between the years of 427 and 429.

From the very beginning of *On the Predestination of the Saints* and all the way to its end there is one point that Augustine stresses above all else: It is God’s grace that makes us first believe.<sup>94</sup> The way he goes about actually proving this is through the citing of Church authorities and by giving certain arguments based on what these authorities have said. It should come as no surprise that the first of these authorities Augustine mentions is Paul, whom he quotes as saying, *Not that we are sufficient to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God* (2 Cor 3:5). Augustine then reasons that, since thought precedes belief, and since God graces us with thought, God is responsible for our belief, which is merely thought with assent. It follows that anyone who believes

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<sup>93</sup> I take the difference in God leading man by His grace and man following God by his will as another example of the previously discussed distinction that Augustine makes between God giving grace and man’s acceptance of that grace, respectively.

<sup>94</sup> See for example, Chapter 3.

also thinks, meaning “no one is sufficient for himself, either to begin or to perfect faith.”<sup>95</sup>

As mentioned before, God offers sufficient beginning and perfecting graces to all, and Augustine never abandoned this idea: “in a certain sense the Father teaches all men to come to His Son. For it was not in vain that it was written in the prophets, *And they shall all be teachable of God* (John 6:45).”<sup>96</sup> All are teachable of God (i.e., all have the capacity for God), but not all actualize it in faith working through the love of God and neighbor. Augustine thinks this is why the Gospel writer prefaces this statement with the claim, *Every man, therefore, who has heard of the Father, and has learned, comes to me*. Even though His lessons often fall on deaf ears and go unnoticed by blind eyes, “God teaches all men to come to Christ, not because all come, but because none comes in any other way.”<sup>97</sup> For Augustine, this is borne out by the fact that some choose to accept the offer of grace and thereby receive it as a gift from God, whether in its beginning or in its completion, and some do not, as Scripture clearly bears witness. It follows that both those who successfully come to Christ and those who fail in this task do so willingly; the former do so willingly and in co-operation with God, whereas the latter do so willingly but in separation from God.

It might be helpful to think of what Augustine is saying in the following way: Those who come to Christ are offered the gift of grace by God; they accept such grace in co-operation with Him; they then receive that grace, which is both theirs from their acceptance of it, and God’s from His having given it. Those who fail to come to Christ

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<sup>95</sup> Chapter 5.

<sup>96</sup> Chapter 7.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

are similarly offered the gift of grace by God; but they reject such grace in independence from Him; they then fail (and justly, Augustine might add) to receive that grace, which could have been theirs if they had accepted it, but remains only God's, who never stops offering it.<sup>98</sup> Augustine thinks the believer should not worry about to which group they belong, however, since all deserve condemnation because of Adam's sin, "so that even if none were delivered therefrom, there would be no just cause for finding fault with God."<sup>99</sup> Augustine's answer here is consistent with the one already given in *To Simplician*: It is because of our demerits that we will be condemned, not because God does not will all to be saved.

Chapter 19 of *On the Predestination of the Saints* is where talk of the relation between God's grace and Augustine's understanding of predestination<sup>100</sup> reaches its height. To begin the Chapter, Augustine makes a very important distinction between the two: "predestination is the preparation for grace, while grace is the donation itself." The preparation for grace is already accomplished in the mind of God, i.e., in God's rational

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<sup>98</sup> The Latin words Augustine will generally use for "offer," "receive," and "give" are forms of the verbs *offere/proferre*, *accipere*, and *dare*, respectively. See footnote 113 for an example of how Augustine will actually use some of these Latin words in clarifying the above distinction.

<sup>99</sup> Chapter 16.

<sup>100</sup> Recall that Augustine's technical, theological definition of predestination is given at *On the Gift of Perseverance* 14.35: "This is the predestination of the saints, nothing else: plainly the foreknowledge and preparation of God's benefits, by means of which whoever is to be liberated is most certainly liberated." (*Praedestinationem quippe sanctorum nihil aliud esse quam praescientiam et praeparationem beneficiorum Dei, quibus certissime liberantur, quicumque liberantur*). Augustine's definition of predestination will be unpacked and qualified in certain respects that will be made clear in my exegesis of the relevant chapters of his *On the Predestination of the Saints* and *On the Gift of Perseverance* in what follows. However, it can be briefly noted that his definition shares certain similarities with, but is also different from, other major Patristic authors writing before and after him. Matthew Levering (2011) attempts a definitional comparison between the major Patristic authors regarding predestination. We learn from Levering, for example, that Origin's definition of predestination is the same as Augustine's in terms of basing it on God's foreknowledge (i.e., God only grants His benefits or graces according to His knowledge of the future), but different from Augustine's in terms of claiming that it is based on God's knowledge of the future merits or demerits of individual persons (Levering, 39-40). For more helpful comparisons between how Augustine understands predestination and that of other theologians from the Patristic period, see Levering's book, *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2011).

plan for creation, whereas the donation itself is dependent on the latter, with God only granting grace according to it. As Augustine says, “grace is the effect of predestination,” not the other way around. Another distinction Augustine insists upon in this Chapter is that between God’s predestination and foreknowledge, where the former cannot exist without the latter (because it would be nonsensical to say that God’s predestination was accomplished without knowledge), but foreknowledge is capable of existing without predestination. This allows Augustine *inter alia* to say of God that, “He is able to foreknow even those things he does not Himself do—as all sins whatever,” which effectively safeguards the predestinating will of God from any taint of the moral evil rational creatures are prone to commit by their own wills.

Augustine then uses the example of Abraham’s faith in God’s promise to further illustrate his doctrine of predestination by grace:

Therefore when God promised to Abraham in his seed the faith of the nations, saying, *I have established you a father of many nations* (Genesis 17:5), whence the apostle says, *Therefore it is of faith, that the promise, according to grace, might be established to all the seed* (Romans 4:16). He promised not from the power of our will but from His own predestination. For He promised what He Himself would do, not what men would do.<sup>101</sup>

What men would do is uncertain, but what God Himself would do is certain and, in fact, already accomplished, for *He made those things that shall be* (Is 45: 11). God’s predestinating will does not change: from eternity, God has made up his mind, so to speak, to strengthen those who will the thinking of good thoughts, and to let those harden their hearts who by their free choice think evil thoughts.

Again somewhat reminiscent of the *Confessions*, Augustine notes that, “although men do those good things which pertain to God’s worship, He himself makes them to do

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<sup>101</sup> Chapter 19.

what he has commanded.” Coming back to Abraham, it was not Abraham that made God to do what He had promised. It was God. To say otherwise would make the fulfillment of God’s promise placed in the power of Abraham. Abraham did not think this way, but rather *he believed, giving glory to God, that what he promised he was able also to do* (Rom 4:21). In the same way, our initial faith in God is a gift from Him: “when it is said, ‘If you believe, you shall be saved,’ faith is required of us, and salvation is proposed to us as a reward. For these things are both commanded of us, and are shown to be God’s gifts, in order that we may understand both that we do them, and that God makes us to do them, as He most plainly says by the prophet Ezekiel. For what is plainer than when He says, *I will cause you to do?* (Ezekiel 36: 27).”<sup>102</sup>

*On the Gift of Perseverance* is quite similar to *On the Predestination of the Saints*, which makes sense since they were originally written as one cohesive work on God’s grace. However, as the title of the work indicates, it is concerned primarily with the perseverance by which someone perseveres in the good to the end, and to prove that this is a gift of God. Here, as in *On the Predestination of the Saints*, Augustine will rely on Church authorities and philosophical argument to make his case. The first authority he relies upon in this work, however, is not St. Paul but St. Cyprian, whose *On the Lord’s Prayer* is cited by him as directly contradicting the heresy of Pelagianism in its defense of two important points. First, the grace of God is not given according to our merits; and second, no man is without sin. Another principle that Augustine adds as in accord with right Christian teaching is that we all inherit the condemnation brought about by Adam’s sin. He writes that, “Of these three points, that which I have placed last is the only one

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<sup>102</sup> Chapter 22.

that is not treated of in the above-named book of the glorious martyr; but of the two others the discourse there is of such perspicuity, that the above-named heretics [sc. the Pelagians], modern enemies of the grace of Christ, are found to have been convicted long before they were born.”<sup>103</sup> Augustine’s opening argument to the monks therefore is that his position on grace is actually not as radical as they may think, mirroring St. Cyprian’s work in at least the two previously mentioned ways.

Augustine also rightly notes that it was Cyprian who said, “We must boast in nothing, seeing that nothing is our own.”<sup>104</sup> Augustine takes this to mean that we only have a proper conception of free will “if we give up the whole to God, and do not entrust ourselves partly to Him and partly to ourselves, as that venerable martyr saw.”<sup>105</sup> To be clear, this does not mean that we must relinquish our idea of human freedom *simpliciter*, but rather that we must relinquish the idea that we can be free in independence from God. In his famous biography of the African Bishop entitled *Augustine of Hippo*,<sup>106</sup> Peter Brown claims that this point can be used to illustrate the major difference between Augustine and Pelagius:

The basic difference between the two men ... is to be found in two radically different views on the relation between man and God. It is summed up succinctly in their choice of language. Augustine had been fascinated by babies: the extent of their helplessness had grown upon him ever since he wrote the *Confessions*; and in the *Confessions*, he had no hesitation in likening his relation to God to that of a

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<sup>103</sup> Chapter 4.

<sup>104</sup> Augustine thinks that we find the same position in St. Paul: *We are not sufficient to think anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.* (2 Corinthians 3:5); and in Ambrose of Milan: “our heart is not in our own power, nor are our thoughts.” See also Chapter 49, where Augustine will mention not only Cyprian, Paul, and Ambrose, but also Gregory Nazianzen as subscribing to this position. He writes: “let us add also a third, the holy Gregory, who testifies that it is the gift of God both to believe in God and to confess what we believe.”

<sup>105</sup> Chapter 12.

<sup>106</sup> Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo*. University of California Press: Los Angeles (2000).

baby to its mother's breast,<sup>107</sup> utterly dependent, intimately involved in all the good and evil that might come from this, the only source of life.

The Pelagian, by contrast, was contemptuous of babies. 'There is no more pressing admonition than this, that we should be called *sons* of God.' To be a 'son' was to become an entirely separate person, no longer dependent upon one's father, but capable of following out by one's own power, the good deeds that he had commanded. The Pelagian was *emancipatus a deo*; it is a brilliant image taken from the language of Roman family law: freed from the all-embracing and claustrophobic rights of the father of a great family over his children, these sons had 'come of age.' They had been 'released,' as in Roman Law, from dependence upon the *pater familias* and could at last go out into the world as mature, free individuals, able to uphold in heroic deeds the good name of their illustrious ancestry: 'Be ye perfect, even as Your Father in Heaven is perfect.'<sup>108</sup>

Unlike Pelagius, Augustine thought we could not cordon off a space for human autonomy that exists in and for itself, whether that be how we initially come to have faith in God, or how we persevere in that faith to the end, or indeed anything good that we will or think or do. In all of these respects, Augustine states we are radically dependent on God, but it is nonetheless a willing dependency, because it is a relation we enter into if and only if we accept it by the humble consent of our wills. In short, it is a co-operative relationship. God does not force us to accept this dependence relationship with Him, even if it would be for our own good. For He has left us in the hands of our own counsel (Sir 15: 12-18), and the grace that would bring us into such a relationship with Him could not properly be called a gift unless it could be accepted or rejected. One thing we can always count on, however, is that God is there in the background, constantly working even up until now, offering graces that would establish this relation, but not compelling us to accept them. Augustine thus encourages the monks that this co-operative relationship he is describing leaves room for both humans and God to act freely, inasmuch as when we will what is

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<sup>107</sup> Augustine also frequently likened his relationship to God to that of the prodigal son and his relationship to his father found in Luke 15: 11-32.

<sup>108</sup> Brown, pp. 352-3.

good, “God works in us to will also. We therefore work, but God works in us to work also for His good pleasure.”<sup>109</sup> If, on the other hand, we prefer to will what is evil and thereby reject God’s help to work with us to accomplish good things, He will nonetheless maintain his “standing offer” to provide help to our fallen wills; but He will respect our free choice to stand in separation from Him by not actually giving support to our fallen wills by gifting us with His grace. Whether the monks work with God or against God, then, Augustine believes their free will is on display for all to see.

Starting with Chapter 34, Augustine shifts his focus to the doctrine of predestination, and makes the somewhat unexpected claim that predestination, at least how he teaches it, and moral exhortation are not opposed to each other. After all, he tells us, “Did not that teacher of the heathen [sc. St. Paul] so often, in faith and truth, both commend predestination, and not cease to preach the word of God? Because he said, *It is God that works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure* (Phil 2:13), did he not also exhort that we should both will and do what is pleasing to God?” In Chapter 36, he also cites Cyprian, saying that he actually “pronounced predestination to be most assured. For if we must boast in nothing, seeing that nothing is our own, certainly we must not boast of the most persevering obedience.” But the objection rears its head again: If God works in us both to will and to do, and if we cannot boast in anything, because nothing is our own, then does this not make human beings passive agents in the working out of their own salvation? Augustine recounts a story he once heard coming from a monastery in which one of the brothers was rebuked for doing things he should not have done, and for not doing things that should have been done. When he was rebuked, the

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<sup>109</sup> Chapter 33.

monk replied, “Whatever I may now be, I shall be such as God has foreknown that I shall be,” implying that he has no control over the development of his character, and so no control over what he does or does not do. According to Augustine, what this monk said about God’s foreknowledge was true, “but he was not profited by this truth for good, but so far made way in evil as to desert the society of the monastery, and become a dog returned to his vomit; and, nevertheless, it is uncertain what he is yet to become.”<sup>110</sup> Such is just one example of how predestination and foreknowledge are often misunderstood, resulting in a moral complacency that opens a person up to the alluring danger of sin.

How, then, should predestination be taught? For Augustine, there is really only one suitable way:

For either predestination must be preached, in the way and degree in which the Holy Scripture plainly declares it, so that in the predestined the gifts and calling of God may be without repentance [i.e., without dependence on the merits/demerits of those who are predestined]; or it must be avowed that God’s grace is given according to our merits—which is the opinion of the Pelagians. To whomsoever, therefore, God gives His gifts, beyond a doubt He has foreknown that He will bestow them on them, and in His foreknowledge He has prepared them for them. Therefore, those whom He predestined, them He also called with that calling which I am not reluctant often to make mention of, of which it is said, *The gifts and calling of God are without repentance* (Rom 11:29).<sup>111</sup>

Augustine is making the point that the gratuity of God’s grace does not admit of degrees. It is either gratuitous or not. It is either as Holy Scripture teaches it to be or not. There is no way to escape between the horns of this dilemma by finding a third alternative, even though that is precisely what the monks to whom Augustine is writing were trying to do, in their holding that the beginning of faith and perseverance in that faith to the end were two parts of human agency that were independent of God’s causality. But Augustine will

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<sup>110</sup> Chapter 38.

<sup>111</sup> Chapter 41.

hold his ground along with St. Paul and St. Cyprian in saying that all of the good we think and will and do are gifts of God.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, they are gifts in the sense of being freely ‘given’ to us by God, not depending on our merits, but requiring the consent of our wills to be received. The fact that they are gifts, Augustine tells us, does not make them any less ours when we willingly receive them, for “ours is anything had by us, ours too is anything given to us; I mean, if it isn’t ours, it hasn’t been given. How after all can you give anything, if it isn’t to be his or hers, to whom you give it?”<sup>113</sup> It follows that all of the goods and perfections that come down to us from the Father of Lights (James 1:17) can properly be said to be God’s, in that He is the one giving these gifts, and ours, in that we are ones accepting and thereby receiving them.

For the remainder of the work, Augustine then gives advice as to how the above-mentioned teaching of predestination ought to be preached to the members of the Church, so that it does not lead to moral defeatism or theological contradiction. In Chapter 58, we receive the most important of these pieces of advice. While rather lengthy, it is worth quoting in full:

Now, therefore, the definite determination of God’s will concerning predestination is of such a kind that some from unbelief receive the will to obey, and are converted to the faith or persevere in the faith, while others who abide in the delight of damnable sins, even if they have been predestined, have not yet arisen, because the aid of compassionate grace has not yet lifted them up. For if any are not yet called whom by His grace He has predestined to be elected, they will receive that grace<sup>114</sup> whereby they may will to be elected, and may be so; and

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<sup>112</sup> See for example, Chapter 48.

<sup>113</sup> *Sermon* 333.1, 415-420.

<sup>114</sup> The original Latin may help to understand what Augustine is driving at in this sentence when he speaks of God’s grace and how it interacts with those persons who are elected but not yet called: *si qui enim nondum sunt vocati, quos gratia sua praedestinavit eligendos, accipient eandem gratiam, qua electi esse velint et sint*. Augustine means that these persons will receive (*accipient*) God’s predestinating grace, which is offered to everyone yet not forced on anyone, only if they will (*velint*) to receive that grace whereby they become elected (*electi*). Augustine is here once again calling attention to his distinction between God’s grace *qua* offered and God’s grace *qua* given/received: As offered, everyone has equal access to sufficient graces for their salvation, but this offered grace has no ontological relation or causal

if any obey, but have not been predestined to His kingdom and glory, they are for a season, and will not abide in the same obedience to the end.

Although, then, these things are true, yet they must not be so said to the multitude of hearers as that the address may be applied to themselves also, and those words of those people may be said to them which you have set down in your letter, and which I have above introduced: The definite determination of God's will concerning predestination is of such a kind that some of you from unbelief shall receive the will to obey, and come to the faith. What need is there for saying, 'Some of you?' For if we speak to God's Church, if we speak to believers, why do we say that some of them had come to the faith, and seem to do a wrong to the rest, when we may more fittingly say the definite determination of the will of God concerning predestination is of such a kind that from unbelief you shall receive the will to obey, and come to the faith, and shall receive perseverance, and abide to the end?

When we preach predestination, in other words, Augustine thinks it is better to preach it in the third person rather than the second person. For to preach it in the second person "is not to be said to be desirable, but abominable, and it is excessively harsh and hateful to fly as it were into the face of an audience with abuse, when he who speaks to them says, 'And if there are any of you who obey, and are predestined to be rejected, the power of obedience shall be withdrawn from you, that you may cease to obey.'"<sup>115</sup> Augustine admits that there may be no fundamental difference in the third person and second person expressions of this doctrine, but there is a difference in the psychological effect that these expressions have on the audience: the one made in second person is unhelpful to their salvation, sounding more like a personal attack, or a supererogatory request that they cannot work towards achieving; whereas the one made in the third person is helpful to

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effect on the human will. As given/received, God has only given his predestinating grace to those persons who were willing to accept it and thereby received it. In other words, God's offered gift of grace becomes God's given gift of grace the moment it has been willingly accepted and thereby received by the individual. God's grace then becomes ontologically one with yet distinct from that individual's will, strengthening its power for action so that it can do the good it wills to do, and not the evil that it hates, but often does anyway because of its infirmity (Rom 7:15). Put simply, God's grace *qua* given/received is the "primary cause" of any person's good actions. The idea that God's grace is the primary cause of the human will is discussed in the next chapter of this dissertation.

<sup>115</sup> Chapter 61.

their salvation, in that it provides a kind of salutary exhortation to fight the good fight, to keep the faith, and finish the race.<sup>116</sup> According to Augustine, the way predestination is preached to the community of the faithful matters because human effort matters. For anyone to say that he would switch his preaching of predestination from the second person to the third person in order to achieve some end other than aiding in the salvation of the faithful, such as to maintain order and peace in his flock, makes Augustine out to be no more than a charlatan. Given how seriously Augustine took his pastoral duty of preaching, I dare say he would view such an accusation contemptible.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ticciati actually believes that Augustine is being disingenuous in Chapter 58, and claims that it is easy for him to say, “The gift of grace is given to some and not to others, but I hope that it will be given to all” (99) in order to elicit moral effort from his audience. This, in my mind, not only diminishes Augustine’s teaching concerning predestination, but also casts unwarranted doubt on the sincerity of Augustine’s pastoral practices, which I maintain are beyond reproach. Possidius, a good friend of Augustine and his biographer, proves to be a helpful character witness for the Bishop of Hippo in this regard: “Right down to his final illness he preached the word of God in the church uninterruptedly, zealously, and courageously, and with soundness of mind and judgment.” “He taught and preached the word of salvation (Acts 13:22) with complete freedom (Acts 4:29) in private and in public, in the house and in the church.” (Possidius, 31, 4). Augustine saw his preaching as a debt he owed to his congregation: “I know that I am a debtor to you as Christians; I regard you as creditors.” (Sermon 153.1). Does this sound like a man who was insincere about anything he preached concerning the word of salvation? Augustine was always aware of the fact that it was not his word that he was preaching, but God’s. He starts a sermon by saying, “What I am about to say is not my idea but God’s” (Sermon 51.1).

## Chapter 3

*Augustine as Preacher of Grace*

The stress that Augustine puts on the primacy of God's grace in his anti-Pelagian and semi-Pelagian writings has led to him being called the "doctor of grace" (*doctor gratiae*). But even in these sometimes highly polemical works, we have seen reason to doubt the claim of his theological opponents and scholarly critics that his teaching with respect to sin and grace somehow destroy the free choice of the will. We see this to an even greater extent in his pastoral writings and scriptural commentaries, which I will show allow for the same kind of synergy between God and man that the Eastern Orthodox tradition's conception of deification requires.

While the concept of deification by grace is not as emphasized in Augustine as in the Greek-speaking-East, it still finds a place of great importance in his writings.<sup>118</sup> As an object of scholarly research, however, it is still true to say that it has received less than adequate attention, considering just how much Augustine will rely on it to explain key aspects of Christian life, from the reason why God created man to how we are able to interact with God (whether in this life or the next) and everything in between.<sup>119</sup> As a

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<sup>118</sup> The contributors to the *Augustinus Lexikon* did a computer search and found only fifteen references to the words *deificatus* and *deificare* and their grammatical variants in the totality of Augustine's writings, with seven of these references being unrelated to the theology of deification. The latter seven being: *Contra Faustum* 32.7 and 32.19; *Contra Felicem* 1.13; *De Baptismo* 6.15.24; *Contra Cresconium* 3.49.80 (two references); *De Patientia* 17.14. The eight references related to the theology of deification being: *Ep.* 10.2; *De Civitate Dei* 19.23; *Enarratio in Ps.* 49.2 (three references) and 117.11; *Sermon* 126.10.14 and 166.4.4. Yet as Gerald Bonner points out in his article, "Augustine's Conception of Deification," the computer they used was not programmed to identify the instances where Augustine mentioned deification in his exegesis of Ps. 81 [82]: 6: *Dixi, dii estis*; nor was it programmed to identify the times when he made the claim, following in the footsteps of Athanasius and Irenaeus, that God became man so that we might become gods, which is clearly of the utmost importance to the theology of deification, but does not actually use the word deification in its elaboration (See Bonner, 369).

<sup>119</sup> The following represents some of the best work written on Augustine's conception of deification in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is a short list. Since I have already referenced Gerald Bonner's excellent article on

theological concept, deification finds its origin in the famous words of St. Peter: *grace makes us partakers of the divine nature* (“*consortes divinae naturae/theias xoinonoi phuseos*”) (2 Peter 1:4). Because of God’s deifying grace, real human-divine communion can take place, as we become in a sense connatural with God through His activity towards us that makes us “like Him.” Similarly to the Greek Fathers, Augustine views deification to be the New Testament doctrine of *uiothesia*, or sonship by adoption, made possible by the Son’s Incarnation. The Word’s union with human nature in the person of Christ as the way to our salvation is a major theme in Augustine’s theological and pastoral writings from about the mid-390s throughout the rest of his teaching and preaching career. An earlier example of this can be found in *Sermo* 261.2-3 (ca. 396 or 397):

Just as he ascended, you see, and still didn’t depart from us, so we too are now there with him ... if he has attached us to himself as his members in such a way that even with us joined on he is his very same self (*ut etiam nobis coniunctis idem ipse sit*), ... we too are going to ascend, not by our own virtue, but by our and his oneness (*sed nostra et illius unitate*).

A later example of this can be found at *en. Ps.* 121.5:

Onto what should you grasp? Grasp that which Christ became for you, because that is Christ himself, and Christ himself is rightly understood by this name *I am who I am* [Ex. 3.14], inasmuch as he is in the form of God. In that nature wherein he deemed it no robbery to be equal to God, there he is the selfsame [*idipsum*]. But that you might participate in the selfsame, he first of all became a participant in what you are [*ut autem efficiaris tu particeps in idipsum, factus est ipse prior particeps tui*].<sup>120</sup>

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Augustine’s conception of deification, I do not include it in the following list: V. Capánaga, ‘La Deificación en la soteriología agustiniana,’ in *Augustinus Magister: Congrès International Augustinien*, Paris 21-24 septembre 1954 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1954), ii. 754-54; P. Wilson-Kastner, ‘Grace and Participation in the Divine Life in the Theology of Augustine of Hippo,’ *Augustinian Studies*, 7 (1976), 135-57; J. Oroz Reta, ‘De l’illumination à la deification de l’âme selon Saint Augustin,’ *SP* 27 (1993), 364-82.

<sup>120</sup> CSEL 95/3.91.

Our participation in God is thus only made possible by Christ becoming man, and it is through him that we become deified. The Christological focus of Augustine's doctrine of deification is perhaps best seen in his *Commentaries on the Psalms* 49.2, where he writes:

In the same psalm observe to whom it is said, "I have said, 'you are gods and sons of the Most High, all of you, but you will die as men, and you will fall like one of the princes.'" It is therefore clear that he calls gods those men who are deified by his grace (*ex gratia sua deificatos*) even though they are not born of his substance. For he justifies who is just through himself and not from another; and he deifies who is God through himself and not by participation in another. Now he who justifies is he who deifies because by justifying he makes them sons of God. *For he gave them power to become sons of God* (Jn 1:12). If we have become sons of God, then we have also become gods; but this is by reason of the grace of the one who adopts us not by reason of his nature begetting us.<sup>121</sup>

This adoptive grace makes us brothers of Christ: "For he who says 'Our Father' to God says 'Brother' to Christ."<sup>122</sup> And Christ himself tells us, *Whoever does the will of my Father is my brother and sister and mother* (Mk 3:35). The adopted Christian in fact becomes part of Christ and forms with him 'the whole man,' "for if he is the head, we are the members: he and we are a whole man."<sup>123</sup> In this regard, Augustine will often refer to the Church by the expression "*Christus totus*"—the whole Christ.<sup>124</sup> For Augustine, individual Christians are only who they are in relation to Christ and their fellow Christian brothers and sisters, in the service of charity. It is a relation in which the fulfillment of any member helps bring to fulfillment the whole body. When one Christian, for instance, shows hospitality to another who is a stranger, or feeds another who is hungry, or clothes

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<sup>121</sup> *Enarr. in Psalmos*.49.2; CCL 38.575-576. Similar texts to this one can be found at: *Miscellany of 83 Questions*, LXVII; *Sermo* 166.4 (PL 38.909); Epistle.140.4.10 (PL 33.542); Sermon 119.4-5 (probably after 409); Sermon 126.9.

<sup>122</sup> *Enarr. in Psalmos*.48.1.8.

<sup>123</sup> *In Joan. Tract.*21.8.

<sup>124</sup> See for example, *On the Trinity*, 4.2.12; *Sermon* 217.4; *Sermon* 137.1, 400-405; and *Sermon* 341.11.

another who is naked, “members are serving members; and the head rejoices, and reckons as given to himself whatever has been lavished on a member of his.”<sup>125</sup>

As the Archbishop of Ottawa, Monsignor Joseph Plourde, once said:

[T]he human being, in St. Augustine’s formulation, is ‘an extension of the Trinitarian family’; that, when God thinks of man as His image, man is, in the first place, Jesus Christ. Consequently, that man is governed by the same dynamics as the Trinity itself, that is, by freedom, unity, and love.... [T]his image of God which is actualized in a divine surrounding, requires of us a mastery of nature; and thus a technical and economic effort. We should move beyond the struggle for life and beyond self-centeredness, to a vision of sharing, and the essential fulfillment of all humanity.<sup>126</sup>

The fact that some members of the body have things to give to other members, or that some have things others do not, does not imply any kind of disunity in the body.<sup>127</sup> The body is a place where the members ought to supply what certain other members are lacking, a place where the material and spiritual needs of others are met.<sup>128</sup> This is one of Augustine’s fundamental theological/philosophical ideas: “that the good of all persons is both unified and interdependent (I cannot specify what is good for me without including what is good for you in the same calculation).”<sup>129</sup>

Augustine gives an example: Suppose in your body your left hand has a ring on it, but your right hand does not. Does that mean your right hand is lacking something your left hand possesses? It would seem so, if you are only considering your two hands; but if you consider your entire body, of which your two hands are parts, you will see that “the one which doesn’t have a ring, does in fact have it in the one which does.”<sup>130</sup> Similarly,

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<sup>125</sup> Sermon 236.3, 410-412.

<sup>126</sup> Declaration at the Synod of Rome on October 19, 1971.

<sup>127</sup> Augustine’s discussion of the unity of the ecclesial body of Christ is the strongest polemical line he takes up against the Donatists. See for example, *en.Ps.99.9-11*; *De baptismo* III-V; and *Ep.185.X.43*.

<sup>128</sup> *en.Ps.125.13*.

<sup>129</sup> Rowan Williams, *On Augustine* (2016), 89. See also Augustine’s discussion of the need to love the good in others at *trin.8 passim*.

<sup>130</sup> Sermon, 162A.5, 404.

different parts of your body serve different and distinct functions from each other: your eyes allow you to see where you are headed, whereas your feet move you to where your eyes look ahead; and while it is true that your feet are unable to see, and your eyes are unable to walk, it is not true that they lack each other's functions, when they are considered within the context of the unity of the body as a whole. Augustine writes: "your foot answers you, 'I too have the light; not in myself, though, but in the eye; the eye, after all, doesn't see only for itself, and not for me.' Your eyes too say, 'We too can walk, not in ourselves but in the feet; the feet, after all, don't only carry themselves, and not carry us.'"<sup>131</sup> Every function of every part of the body, in other words, is shared in the unity of the whole body for the benefit of the whole body. This is how we must understand the unity of the body of Christ, i.e., the unity of its members and Head in the visible Church. For we, too, are freedom, unity, and love, not in ourselves but in the whole Christ, and particularly in our Head, who has sacramentally brought us into this unity through his life, death, and resurrection. The unity of the whole Christ, then, cannot be understood in individualistic terms, because it is by its very nature a *societas* grounded in the love of the members both for each other and for their Head, and preeminently in the love that the Head has for its body. Freedom, unity, and love are not private possessions of an individual, but rather are the common goods of all Christians, as they relate to each other and to God through Christ.

A fitting and not to mention helpful image of this unity is also provided by the prophet Isaiah's discussion of the bride and the bridegroom. In the book of Isaiah, the bride speaks to the bridegroom as if they were one person. Augustine comments that it is

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<sup>131</sup> Sermon 162A.5.

certain that “it’s one and the same person speaking,”<sup>132</sup> and that we can see this in what is said: *As for a bridegroom he has bound a turban on my head, and as for a bride he has decked me out with ornaments* (Is 61:10). Isaiah calls “one and the same person bridegroom with reference to the head, bride with reference to the body.”<sup>133</sup> Another biblical example Augustine often relies on to explain the close-knit unity between the members of the body of Christ is Paul’s conversion experience recounted in Acts 9. Here, the then named Saul is asked the simple question, *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?* (Acts 9: 1-4). Paul could neither see nor touch Christ, but he still said to him, *why are you persecuting me?* Augustine thinks it is of great significance that Christ did not say, “Why are you persecuting my family, my servants, my saints—add another title of honor—my brothers and sisters.”<sup>134</sup> He said you are persecuting *me*, my members, who were being insulted, stoned, and killed on earth, causing the head to cry out from heaven.

The unity among Christ and Christians is indeed so strong that Augustine claims that psalms of praise may be made in honor not only to the Head of the Church but also to its body, to us as its adopted sons and daughters.<sup>135</sup> Even more emphatic is the image of this unity Augustine gives us in his *Commentary on the Epistle of John* 10.3, where he talks of Christ and Christians as being *unus Christus amans seipsum*, or “one Christ loving himself.”<sup>136</sup> For Augustine, one becomes a member of Christ’s body only by the way of love (*via amoris*), and through that love “there will be one Christ loving himself. For when the members love one another, the body loves itself.”<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Sermon 341.11.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Sermon 345.4, 411.

<sup>135</sup> See for example, Enarr. in Ps.90; Sermo 2.1.

<sup>136</sup> PL 35.2055.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

We must also understand this unity to apply to all members of the body of Christ, no matter where they are, no matter past, present, or future:

The apostle says with the utmost clarity: *You are the body of Christ and his members* (1 Cor 12:27). All of us together are the members and the body of Christ—not only we who are present in this place, but all throughout the world; not only we who are alive at the present time, but—as I might put it—all who have lived or will live from Abel the just man to the end of the world, as long as human beings beget and are begotten. Every just man who passes through this life is included<sup>138</sup>; all who exist now, that is, not just in this place, but in this life everywhere; all who will be born in the future. All these form the one body of Christ.... This Church, which is now on pilgrimage, is united to the heavenly Church where we have the angels as fellow citizens.... And there is but a single Church, the city of the great king.<sup>139</sup>

Apart from the body of Christ (*corpus Christi*), or what means the same thing, the unity of the Church (*unitas Ecclesiae*), Christians cannot be one with any person, even themselves; nor can they find any true and lasting fulfillment as the spiritual beings they are meant to become. As a result, Christ “wants his disciples to be one in him, because they cannot be one in themselves, split as they are from each other by clashing wills and desires, and the uncleanness of their sins; so they are cleansed by the mediator that they

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<sup>138</sup> When Augustine speaks of “all of us together” and “every just man” being included in the body of Christ, he is specifically referring to all those who have received the love of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and are thereby incorporated into the universal Church. According to Augustine, not all of humanity is a part of the body of Christ, because of their own prideful decision to set themselves apart from the unity of the Church; and not all those who have been baptized are truly Christians, or persons who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit (See Sermon 269.2 and 269.3). A prime example of this in Augustine’s own time would be the Donatists—schismatics who from ca. 393-412 battled over the topic of ecclesial unity with Augustine. The Donatists, in their effort to remain ‘pure’ of sin, did not want to intermingle with sinners present in the Church; they even re-baptized themselves. But in doing this Augustine thought that they not only fractured the unity of the Church (Sermon 4.32), which is meant to call sinners to repentance and forgiveness, but they also ignored the fundamental truth that no man is without sin (Ps.116:11). Anthony Dupont writes in this connection that, for Augustine, “sinners should not be excluded from ecclesial communion ... [and that] the Donatists, by insisting on separation, actually commit a grave sin themselves” (Dupont 166), i.e., the sin of pride. Hence all those who are part of the universal Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, sinners though they may be, are said by Augustine to be included in the body of Christ. For more on Augustine’s understanding of the unity of the body of Christ, especially as it relates to his anti-Donatist Sermons, see Chapter 4 of Dupont’s *Preacher of Grace: A Critical Reappraisal of Augustine’s Doctrine of Grace in his Sermones ad Populum on Liturgical Feasts and During the Donatist Controversy* (Koninklijke Brill NV, The Netherlands, 2014).

<sup>139</sup> Sermon 341.11.

may be one in him, not only by virtue of the same nature whereby all of them from the ranks of mortal men are made equal to the angels, but even more by virtue of one and the same wholly harmonious will reaching out in concert to the same ultimate happiness, fused somehow into one spirit in the furnace of charity.”<sup>140</sup> Augustine tells us that Christ’s desire for our unity in him should be seen as an invitation to live the life of the angels, to participate in the Holy Spirit’s love, and to partake in the never ending dinner. It is an invitation which is given to us so that we may become Christ’s brothers and sisters, so that we may inherit the eternal felicity meant for us from the moment we were created in the divine Wisdom. And it is an invitation to live Christ’s life of perfect freedom, lived in perfect obedience to his Father in heaven.<sup>141</sup> Accepting this invitation means that we actually become Christ, “because we too are himself, insofar as he is the son of man because of us, and we are sons of God because of him.”<sup>142</sup>

But here we must be careful about in what sense we become Christ, for surely we do not attain the divine nature of Christ, nor do we become Christ in the sense of taking over his unique role as mediator between God and man, i.e., as the Head of the Church. In Sermon 341 (419), Augustine clarifies how we should understand our identification with, yet distinction from, the two-natured Christ. He begins this sermon with an analysis of choice scriptural passages to show that Christ is to be understood in three ways: the first way is “as God and according to the divine nature which is coequal and coeternal with the Father before he assumed flesh.” The second way is as he is after the taking on of our human nature, i.e., as the God-man—the mediator between God and man,

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<sup>140</sup> On the Trinity, 4.2.12.

<sup>141</sup> Sermon 231.5.

<sup>142</sup> Sermon 263A.2, 396-397.

“according to that pre-eminence which is peculiar to him and in which he is not to be equated with other human beings.” The third and final way is “in some manner or other as the whole Christ in the fullness of the Church, that is as head and body, according to the completeness of a certain perfect man (Eph 4:13), the man in whom we are each of us members.”<sup>143</sup> Only in this third and final way can we properly say we are Christ.

We will not receive the same divine inheritance as Christ the mediator, however, if we shun the unity enjoyed by the whole Christ, preferring our own individual good. Indeed, if we do not join together in this *societas* but set ourselves apart, we will be natural human beings and remain as such, for this is what we have of ourselves, by ourselves; we will remain *psychikoi* (natural men), who are slaves to the carnal lusts that are natural to our bodily existence, not becoming the *pneumatikoi* (spiritual men)<sup>144</sup> we were meant to become, because we will not possess the Spirit, or perhaps better, because we will not be possessed by the Spirit. Augustine believes that it is this unity, effected by the Incarnation, cemented by the love of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts (Rom 5:5), that is enjoyed by the true Church. And it is this unity that Saint John was speaking of when he said, *that they may be one as we are one* (Jn 17:22). The Father and Son are one not only by virtue of the same substance they share, but also from their will being one and the same. So too, all true Christians are one not only by possessing the same human nature, but also “by being bound in the fellowship of the same love.”<sup>145</sup> Being bound by others’ love in this way is not a form of internal compulsion, an obstruction to one’s freedom, but rather is how we are reconciled to each other and to God.<sup>146</sup> The

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<sup>143</sup> Sermon 341.1.

<sup>144</sup> See 1 Cor 3:1 for Paul’s mention of the *psychikoi/pneumatikoi* distinction.

<sup>145</sup> On the Trinity, 4.3.13.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

Church thus cannot be conceived of as a mere natural unity between members of the human species. After all, not even the Trinity can be described as *just* a community of three persons which are of the same divine kind. The Church, like the Trinitarian communion, is a *dilectionis societas*. That is, a society of individuals of the same kind that is effected by love. According to Augustine, any other kind of *societas*, whether formed for the utilitarian benefit of its members or some other reason, is not a true society.

Augustine was so certain of the reality of man's deification by grace, occurring in and through the unified body of Christ, that he even used it to argue for the true divinity of the Son:

If the word (*sermo*) of God was so made to men that they should be called gods, how can the Word (*verbum*) of God himself, who is with God, not be God? If men are made gods by the Word of God (*per sermonem Dei*), if by participating (*participando*) they are made gods, is not He in whom they participate not God? If lights which are kindled are gods, is the light which enlightens not God? If they are made gods being warmed in a certain fashion by the saving fire, is He by whom they are warmed not God? You come to the light and are illuminated and numbered among the sons of God. If you draw back from the light you are darkened and reckoned to be in darkness. But that light does not come to itself, because it does not draw back from itself. If therefore the word (*sermo*) of God makes you, how is the Word (*verbum*) of God not God?<sup>147</sup>

Augustine makes clear, however, that our adoption as sons will only be fully realized in the next life, when the spiritualization of our bodies is complete:

Our full adoption as sons will take place *in the redemption of our body*. We now have the *firstfruits of the spirit*, by which we are indeed made sons of God; but in other respects we are Sons of God as saved and made new by hope. In the event, however, since we are not yet finally saved, we are therefore not yet fully made new nor yet sons of God, but children of this world.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> *In Io. Ev. Tr.*48.9; CCSL 36.417-418.

<sup>148</sup> *De Pecc. Mer. et Rem.*II.8.10;CSEL Ix.81.

This is not to say that we cannot have any knowledge of our future spiritualized state at the present time. Christ's resurrected form, for those who have the eyes to see and the ears to hear, provides us quite exactly with what we will be, God willing, at the resurrection of our bodies. The spiritualized form in which "we are to rise again, he has shown us himself in his own resurrection. It's because that specific form, however, will have no tendency to decay that the apostle says, *But this I must say, brothers, that flesh and blood shall not gain possession by inheritance of the kingdom of God; nor shall what is perishable gain possession by inheritance of imperishability* (1 Cor 15:50).<sup>149</sup>

Augustine does not view it to be an abdication of our freedom to conform ourselves as far as we can to Christ's spiritualized form here and now, this side of heaven; he in fact recommends us to imitate the example set by Christ in the form of his humanity, and the example set by the Son—the divine Image—whose being and will are inseparably one with the Father's:

For we too are the image of God, though not the equal one like him; we are made by the Father through the Son, not born of the Father like that image; we are image because we are illuminated with light; that one is so because it is the light that illuminates, and therefore it provides a model for us without having a model itself. For it does not imitate another going before it to the Father, since it is never by the least hair's breadth separated from him, since it is the same thing as he is from whom it gets its being. But we by pressing on imitate him who abides motionless; we follow him who stands still, and by walking in him we move toward him, because for us he became a road or way in time by his humility, while being for us an eternal abode by his divinity."<sup>150</sup>

Even though we are not an equal image of God the Father, like the Son, and even though we are radically separated in our being from him, unlike the Son, by imitating the humility of Christ, who only came to do his Father's will, we can achieve a deeper

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<sup>149</sup> Sermon 362.19, 411.

<sup>150</sup> *trin.* 7.2.5.

communion in that reality of God which is for us: God's eternal will and knowledge. Our deification as Christians is effected by our imitation of Christ's obedience to that reality on which our salvation and freedom completely turns, by aligning our wills with Christ's. That Christ as humble man is our way to Christ as God is an idea that frequently recurs in the *Sermons*. For instance, Augustine says, "The place for you to stay in, that's God; the way for you to get there, that's man. It's one and the same Christ, both the way to go and the place to go."<sup>151</sup> Augustine will also frequently refer to the humanity of Christ as being a "broad road" or "highway" which leads us back home to our Creator,<sup>152</sup> but a road or highway which demands from us the same kind of willing obedience displayed by Christ.

The model of human free will for which I am arguing in Augustine is not one characterized by the dominance of the divine will over the subordinate human will, but one characterized by their inseparable, co-operative, and free relation to each other. The Greek East picks up on this, too, with Basil offering the same example of the Son's obedience to the Father to show why this is the case: "When then he says, 'I have not spoken of myself,' and again, 'As the Father said unto me, so I speak,' and 'The word which you hear is not mine, but [the Father's] which sent me,' and in another place, 'As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do,' it is not because he lacks deliberate purpose or power of initiation, nor yet because he has to wait for the preconcerted keynote, that he employs language of this kind. His object is to make it plain that His own will is connected in indissoluble union with the Father ... so that 'all things that the Father hath' belong to the Son, not gradually accruing to Him little by little, but with Him all

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<sup>151</sup> Sermon 261.7, 418. See also Sermon 123.3 (date uncertain) and Sermon 362.4, 411.

<sup>152</sup> See Sermon 9.21 and Sermon 345.6, 411.

together and at once.”<sup>153</sup> And the same goes for the Spirit: “you might learn that in every operation the Spirit is closely conjoined with, and inseparable from, the Father and the Son. God works the differences of operations, and the Lord the diversities of administrations, but all the while the Holy Spirit is present too of His own will, dispensing distribution of the gifts according to each recipients worth.”<sup>154</sup> Basil’s younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa, will even be more extreme in his language, claiming that subjection to God is our only chance for real freedom. He writes: “the subjection of men to God is salvation for those who are so made subject, according to the voice of the prophet, who says that his soul is subject to God, since of Him cometh salvation by subjection (Ps lxi.1), so that subjection is the means of averting perdition.”<sup>155</sup>

Augustine assures us that such obedience or subjection to God does nothing to vitiate the nature of our wills as free:

When we obey God and are said to do his will by that obedience, we do not do it unwillingly, but willingly. Hence, if we do it willingly, in what sense do we not do our own will, unless in the language of Scripture that will is called ours, which is understood to be our own as opposed to the will of God. Adam had such a will, and as a result, we died in him. Christ did not have such a will so that we might have life in him.... In terms of the Son’s divinity, the Father and the Son have one and the same will, nor can it be different in any way where the nature of the Trinity as a whole is immutable. But so that the mediator of God and man, the man Jesus Christ, would not do his own will, which is opposed to God, he was not only man, but God and man. And through this marvelous and singular grace human nature could exist in him without any sin.”<sup>156</sup>

Similar themes are brought out in his *Commentary on Psalm 93* (ca. 414), where

Augustine discusses the two wills that Christ revealed in the garden of Gethsemane and

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<sup>153</sup> CE 8.20.

<sup>154</sup> CE 16.37.

<sup>155</sup> CE 2.14.

<sup>156</sup> Contra serm.6.7; CSEL 92.56-7; The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, I/18, trans. Roland J. Teske [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1995].

on the cross within the larger context of salvation history, and what this should mean for the salvation of our own individual wills. He rhetorically asks:

How did our Lord marry two wills so that they became one in the humanity he bore? In his body, the Church, there would be some people who, after wanting to do their own will, would later follow the will of God. The Lord prefigured these people in himself. He wanted to show that though they are weak, they still belong to him, and so he represented them in advance in his own person. He sweated blood from his whole body, as a sign that the blood of martyrs would gush from his body, the Church.... He revealed the human will that was in him, but if he had continued to insist on that will, he would have seemed to display perversity of heart. If you recognize that he has had compassion on you, and is setting you free in himself, imitate the next prayer he made: *Yet not what I will, but what you will be done, Father* (Mt 26:39).<sup>157</sup>

We are able to do the Father's will here and now by following the commandments present in scripture, with the help of God's grace, of course. In one of his most important anti-Pelagian sermons, Sermon 348A (415), Augustine comments on the apostle's words,

*We pray to God that you may do nothing evil* (2 Cor 13:7):

He could have said, "We warn you not to do anything evil, we teach you not to do anything evil, we order you, we command you." And to be sure, if he had said that, he would have said something perfectly in order, because our wills also do contribute something; it's not the case, after all, that our wills do nothing. But they are not sufficient by themselves. However, he preferred to say, *We pray*, in order to emphasize the role of grace, so that those correspondents of his might understand that when they did not do anything evil, they were not shunning evil solely by their own will, but were fulfilling with help from God what had been commanded."<sup>158</sup>

Augustine concludes that when a command is given by God, it points to the will's freedom of choice; and when a prayer is made about accomplishing what has been commanded, it points to the will's need for grace to be effectual. The need for both free will and prayer can also be found in scripture:

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<sup>157</sup> (En.in Ps.93.19; CCSL 39.1319; The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, III/18, trans. Maria Boulding [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002]).

<sup>158</sup> Sermon 348A.3.

Is there any need, my brothers and sisters, to run through many instances? Whatever we are commanded to do, we have to pray that we may be able to fulfill it; but not in such a way that we let ourselves go, and like sick people lie flat on our backs and say, “May God rain down food on our faces,” and we ourselves wish to do absolutely nothing about it; and when food has been rained into our mouths we say, “may God also swallow it for us.” We too have got to do something. We’ve got to be keen, we’ve got to try hard, and to give thanks insofar as we have been successful, to pray insofar as we have not.”<sup>159</sup>

In emphasizing God’s grace as the primary cause of our free will oriented towards the good, Augustine does not cancel human freedom and responsibility. While any good that we do is wholly from God as primary cause, it is also wholly from us as secondary cause, as actuated or moved by God’s grace, in accord with the praiseworthy specification of our will. It is not as if part of a good action belongs to us and part of it belongs to God. According to Augustine, from the deepest recesses of our hearts to the hairs on our head, no minutiae of our spiritual and corporeal being escapes God’s providential causality.<sup>160</sup> So too with the good actions we perform: from their possibility, to their source and specification in the will, and even during and up to their completion, no part of them is separated from God’s causality. Augustine gives an example of this in *On the Trinity*, where he uses the language of first or primary causality to explain God’s role in effecting someone’s charitable action. He begins by saying that, “Without any doubt the first or ultimate cause [of someone’s work of mercy] must be looked for in that changeless wisdom which the soul of the wise man serves in charity.... So it is in the will of God that the primary and ultimate cause”<sup>161</sup> of the man’s work of mercy can be found. Augustine continues his example by asking us to suppose that in going about his charitable action the wise man hires servants to help complete his good work, even though the servants

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<sup>159</sup> Sermon 348A.4.

<sup>160</sup> See *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book V, 21, 42; Book VIII, 23, 44.

<sup>161</sup> *On the Trinity*, Book III, 1.8.

might be motivated to do so not because they have the same spirit of generosity as the man, but because they want to get paid to feed their worldly lusts or to avoid bothersome inconveniences as a result of a lack of money. Suppose further that the wise man enlists the help of draft animals to complete his good work. Since they are non-rational, clearly they do not give a moment's thought to what they are doing; they only help the man because of their natural desire to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Finally, suppose the wise man uses many different kinds of inanimate objects required for his charitable endeavor, such as money, clothes, food, drink, oil, books, etc. etc. According to Augustine, the application of all of these animate and inanimate bodies to the man's work leads to their being "moved about, damaged, repaired, destroyed, reconstructed, subjected to all sorts of changes in time and space"; and all such changes have as their first cause "the invisible and unchanging will of God."<sup>162</sup>

If Augustine were asked to specify exactly the role of the secondary causality provided by the various animate/inanimate objects in the above example and the secondary causality provided by the man performing the work of mercy, he would reply that such a question cannot be answered univocally, because the being of created reality is not univocal, capable of being divided most generally into the visible and the invisible, heaven and earth. This is why Augustine in Book III gives various examples of how secondary causation operates with the primary causality of God. He believes that there is a difference between stones and living stones (1 Pt 2:5), or non-rational and rational creation, respectively.<sup>163</sup> It follows that there must also be a difference between how the

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid. Generally speaking, Augustine takes a strong view of God's providential causality in Book III of *On the Trinity*, attributing the existence of all secondary causes and events in the world to God's will.

<sup>163</sup> See *trin.3.2.8*.

divine will operates *with* causes that come from the soul and operates *on* causes that come from purely material or bodily realities.<sup>164</sup> Coming back to the example given above, Augustine will attempt to make this point clearer by asking us to suppose that the man who performs a work of mercy “wearies his body by toil, and thereby contracts an illness.”<sup>165</sup> Suppose further that this man goes and asks one physician what caused his illness, and the physician replies that it was a dryness of the body; the man then goes and sees another physician, who tells him that his illness is due to excessive moisture in the body. One of these physicians, from a bodily perspective, gives the true cause of the man’s physical ailment, but both are talking about the “proximate cause” of the man’s illness. There is yet a higher cause of his illness, however, which is the “freely-assumed toil” the man chose to undertake in the carrying out of his work of mercy; and this pertains to the soul.<sup>166</sup> But even with this psychological explanation, Augustine maintains that we have not given an adequate causal explanation of why the man performed his work of mercy. For that we must turn to the unchangeable Wisdom itself. According to Augustine, by serving the divine Wisdom and obeying its command, “the soul of the wise man took upon himself this voluntary toil (*voluntarium laborem*). Thus, the first cause (*causa prima*) of that illness, in the truest sense of the term, would be found to be nothing else than the will of God (*Dei voluntas*).”<sup>167</sup>

But when it comes to our evil actions, God cannot be said to be causally responsible for them, directly or indirectly, for it is we who are the first cause of them, taking the first initiative towards doing them in rejecting the divine will. In Sermon 229E

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<sup>164</sup> See *trin.*3.1.6 and 3.3.

<sup>165</sup> *trin.*3.3.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

(after 411), Augustine urges those listening to him to not let sins remain their friends; but if certain sins do manage to tempt their hearts, they should only let those sins tempt them “against [their] wills,” for then it will be the sins in them that want to do what is evil and not them.<sup>168</sup> He gives an example: Suppose you are sick with a bodily disease, and the doctor comes to see you in order to help make you better. Would not this mean that the doctor is a friend to you, but an enemy of your disease? Yes. After all, if the doctor did not want you to get better, he would be an enemy to you and a friend to your disease. So the doctor hates the disease in you, and “it’s against it that he entered your house, against it that he went upstairs to your bedroom, against it that he approached your bed, against it that he felt your pulse, against it that he gave you instructions, against it that he mixed and applied medicines; all this against the fever, all this for you.”<sup>169</sup> If, however, you love the disease your body carries, you will be alone in hating yourself, being against yourself. Does anyone love being sick? No. Even so, Augustine notes that while no one is fond of, for instance, having a fever, people are often fond of what the “fever is asking for,” such as cool drinks. Yet the doctor—the enemy of your fever—prescribes that you should not consume cool drinks, as it will make you sicker and your time of recovery longer. So when the doctor leaves your house, the fever may ask for a cool drink, but you must recognize this fondness of yours for a cool beverage “is the fever.”<sup>170</sup> It is not you but the fever in you that dries up your mouth, making a cool drink appear desirable. If, however, you remember the doctor’s advice, and if you ally yourself with him against your fever, then there will be two of you fighting against the same enemy, and you will almost

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<sup>168</sup> 229E.3.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

certainly achieve victory over your foe. On the other hand, if you ally yourself with the fever, succumbing to what it asks for, “the doctor loses—but the loss is the sick person’s, not the doctor’s.”<sup>171</sup>

Augustine clearly wants to conceive of sinful and righteous action along the same lines, holding that we alone “lose” in any sinful actions we perform, whereas both we and God “win” in any righteous actions we perform. According to Augustine, Christ, our *medicus*, can never really lose irrespective of what we choose to do, since Christ works all things, including moral evil, for the good; and like an experienced doctor, he knows more thoroughly what is going on in a morally sick man than that man himself, and just how to cure him. As doctors are experts at producing health in the body, so, too, Christ is an expert at producing health in the soul.<sup>172</sup> The *Christus-medicus* theme in Augustine has a clear basis in Scripture, which constantly speaks of human sinfulness and weakness and their need to be healed by Christ.<sup>173</sup> It also proves, I think, that Augustine did not defend a predominately legalistic interpretation of our salvation, an interpretation which has been almost universally supported by Western theologians since the eleventh century.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Sermon 229O, 422.1.

<sup>173</sup> See for example, Ps 91: 6; Ps 102: 3; Isa 3:4; Mt 4: 23; Mt 8: 17; Mt 10: 1. See also Th. Martin, “Paul the Patient. Christus Medicus and the “*Stimulus Carnis*” (2 Cor 12: 7): a Consideration of Augustine’s Medicinal Christology,” *AugStud* 32 (2001), pp. 219-256.

<sup>174</sup> Panayiotis Nellas discusses this common soteriological emphasis of Western Christianity very well in his article, “Redemption or Deification? Nicholas Kavasilas and Anselm’s Question ‘Why Did God Become Man?’” *Sourozh* (1996), pp. 10-30. Nellas argues that, since the eleventh century with St. Anselm, Western Christianity has almost exclusively operated under a juridical model of redemption, according to which God became man in the Incarnation for the sole purpose of redeeming man from sin. The Orthodox Christian tradition, by contrast, has always defended a deification model, according to which God became man so that we might achieve communion in Christ and realize our full potential as *capax Dei*. For Nellas, if one restricts the economy of the Word’s Incarnation to redemption from sin alone, then that results in the terrible theological error of reducing Christianity “to a legalistic ethical system” (23) and all of mankind to the limited scope of their current fallen condition, not as the gods they were meant to become before the foundation of the world. All Christians, he thinks, ought to rid themselves “of the idea that Christ is simply

Even in his doctrinal works, Augustine never ceases to primarily emphasize the suitability of the incarnation for the *healing* of fallen humanity. The following is a representative text:

Our enlightenment is to participate in the Word, that is, in that life which is the light of men (Jn 1:4). Yet we were absolutely incapable of such participation and quite unfit for it, so unclean were we through sin, so we had to be cleansed. Furthermore, the only thing to cleanse the wicked and the proud is the blood of the just man and the humility of God; to contemplate God, which by nature we are not, we would have to be cleansed by him who became what by nature we are and what by sin we are not. By nature we are not God; by nature we are men; by sin we are not just. So God became a just man to intercede with God for sinful man. The sinner did not match the just, but man did match man. So he applied to us the similarity of his humanity to take away the dissimilarity of our iniquity, and becoming a partaker of our mortality he made us partakers of his divinity. It was surely right that the death of the sinner issuing from the stern necessity of condemnation should be undone by the death of the just man issuing from the voluntary freedom of mercy, his single matching our double.<sup>175</sup>

Immediately following this text Augustine will then use the harmonious pitch ratio of 1 to 2 of the musical octave to further explain the fitting application of Christ's single to our double: the incarnate Word bestows on our humanity, in consonance (*conuenientia*) with its fallen nature, "what the Greeks call *harmonia*"<sup>176</sup>—a gift which in its oneness heals the double-death of our souls to ungodliness and our bodies to perishability which our humanity suffered in the fall of Adam and Eve. Accordingly, we can say that Christ's one death saved us from our double-death, and that his one resurrection granted us two resurrections, restoring the harmony of our spiritual and material nature. This sacrificial

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the Redeemer from sin, and see him once again as Alpha and Omega, as the true savior, which is to say at once Redeemer and Recapitulator of the entire world; and give back to the divine economy all its breadth and significance" (28). As Christians, our theology of redemption should be Christocentric, not legalistic.

<sup>175</sup> *trin.*4.2.4; CCSL 50 164-5.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.* Augustine will here coin the word *coaptatio* to translate the Greek *harmonia*. *Coaptatio* is used by Augustine to mean a kind of suitable joining together. I find this to be significant insofar as Augustine's use of *co-aptatio* ties in rather nicely with his overall position on divine and human interaction, namely that God always co-works with human nature, not exerting himself over and against it as a dominating power.

gift on the part of Christ is given by God to unredeemed humanity because he is merciful, so merciful that he deigned to take on the likeness of sinful flesh, in which our “mortal body and damnable soul are united with the single purpose of divine love so that they are made capable of seeing God and being resurrected.”<sup>177</sup>

The kind of harmonious healing Augustine speaks of here, and that is more fully explained in his doctor-patient analogies, is a very useful way of conceiving of divine and human synergy—or what Augustine has deemed to be the harmonious working of primary and secondary causality—in moral life.<sup>178</sup> The doctor acts and the patient is acted on, but the patient, too, acts in his choice to either freely consent to or dissent from the prescriptions of his doctor. If he follows them, by *conforming* himself to the doctor’s regimen for him, he gets better; if he does not, he becomes worse; the choice is up to the sick patient, who is helped along by the doctor in the former, but not in the latter. Augustine considers a possible objection to the synergistic relationship he is envisioning between the doctor and his patient, or as he puts it below, that between God as our helper (*audiutor*) and we as helped:

Someone will say to me, ‘So we are led, acted on, we don’t act.’ I answer: Rather, you both act and are acted on; and it is precisely then that you act well, when you are acted on by one who is good.<sup>179</sup> The Spirit of God, you see, who is leading

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<sup>177</sup> Williams, 144.

<sup>178</sup> I am not alone in my opinion. In talking about Christ as a doctor, Paul Van Geest thinks Augustine avoids any kind of legalistic interpretation of Christ’s salvific work on earth. He notes that Augustine “interpreted redemption in terms of healing (*ordo sanandi*) rather than justification” (170). In her article, “Divine Relations of the Trinity: Augustine’s Answer to Arianism,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 34 (1999): 327-346, Sarah Heaner Lancaster comments on the passage of Book 4 of *On the Trinity* I cite: “Christ’s death and resurrection match in ‘curative symmetry’ our death and resurrection” (331).

<sup>179</sup> This claim by Augustine is based on the fact that we all are a mass of sin by ourselves, only possessing the ability to accomplish evil on our own. In order to act well, we must look to God to provide us with the proper conative and cognitive resources for our right action from His abundant goodness. In saying this, however, Augustine is not espousing the idea of the depraved nature of man after the Fall of Adam and Eve, or that somehow the nature of man after their disobedient act has become fundamentally evil. Whenever the text of Gen 1:26 is to be interpreted (*Let us make man to our image and likeness*) Augustine will consistently maintain that it ought to be understood “according to what is within man and is his principal part, that is, according to the mind” (*DGnI.16.60*). The mind is a power of human nature, not

you or acting on you, is your helper in your own action. He gave you this very word “helper,” because you too have to do something. You must realize what you are asking for, realize what you are admitting, when you say, *Be my helper, do not forsake me* (Ps 27: 9). You are, of course, calling on God as your helper. None are helped if they do not do anything themselves.... If you were not working, he would not be working together with you.<sup>180</sup>

Augustine’s response to this hypothetical objection points to the fact that God’s grace cooperates with a man’s own good action, and thus cannot determine it in any fatalistic sense. In other words, for a man to will or think or do the good, he cannot be a passive pawn in God’s helping hands but must be an active participant in the working out of his own salvation. It follows that God will not grant his predestinating grace to persons for their salvation who do not help themselves by rendering the secondary causality they possess in humble obedience to the primary causality of the unchanging Wisdom.

Augustine warns us, however, that we must not now fall into the Pelagian heresy by overemphasizing the secondary causality we provide, by saying that God’s help is not necessary for us to act well, but rather is something that makes acting well considerably easier. He likens this to someone on a boat saying, “We can of course get there by rowing, though with considerable trouble; oh, if only we had some wind, we would get

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human nature itself, the latter being created plumb and sound by God, and remaining as such even after the Fall. In his *Retractions*, Augustine will say with the utmost clarity that “no nature or substance, insofar as it is a nature and substance, is an evil.” (I.9). Moreover, he will insist that when he said, “By sin Adam lost the image of God according to which he was made” (*DGnL*.6.27.28), this should not be interpreted “as though no image remained in him,” but “that there was need for [its] re-formation” (II.50). For Augustine and the Greek-speaking-East, it is not our human nature but the image of God in us that was damaged after the Fall—our mental and volitional powers are now often confused and misdirected towards things other than God. However, the nature of man remains fundamentally intact. In Augustine’s theology, this is witnessed most forcefully in his views on the Incarnation, where we have seen Augustine say things such as “Christ became what by nature we are,” and the humanity of Christ “did match” our humanity (*trin*.4.2.4). There is therefore nothing inherently evil about the nature of post-Fall humanity. After all, Christ did not become evil after he took on our human nature, nor was Christ without moral evil because of his human nature. As Christ himself would often point out, evil is something that comes from inside the heart of man (e.g., see Mt 15:19 and Mk 7:21). It is certainly not a function of our God-given human nature, which we all share and which was (pre-Fall) and is (post-Fall) fundamentally plumb and sound.

<sup>180</sup> *Sermon* 156.11, 419.

there so much more easily!”<sup>181</sup> God’s help in the form of His grace is not given to us so that we may “fulfill more easily by grace what [we] are commanded to do by free will,”<sup>182</sup> which implies the will is sufficient by itself to uphold the commandments, if it is used properly, as the Pelagians hold.

Contrary to the Pelagians, Augustine claims that God’s grace is a necessary condition for our acting well, and in fact the “primary” condition, without which we can do nothing good. Though it is primary, it does not follow that it determinatively takes over human agency in the sense of fatalistically forcing us to act out our “free” choices according to a pre-approved divine plan from which we cannot deviate: “After all, God is not building his temple out of you as out of stones which can’t move themselves; they are picked up, placed in position by the mason. That’s not what living stones are like: *And you like living stones are being built together into the temple of God* (1Pt 2:5). You are being led, but you too must run; you are being led, but you must follow.”<sup>183</sup> So how do you run, how do you follow? How do you build up the temple of God within yourself? Augustine answers: you must be like “beams that cannot rot [and] make of yourselves a house for God. Let yourselves be squared off together, be chipped and chiseled, by toil, by need, in going without sleep, in being kept constantly busy; be prepared for every good work; so that you may deserve to find rest in eternal life, as in the well-constructed company of the angels.”<sup>184</sup>

Augustine will say elsewhere that everything good about our actions comes from God, but not “however as though we were asleep, as though we did not have to make an

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<sup>181</sup> Sermon 156.12.

<sup>182</sup> Sermon 156.13.

<sup>183</sup> Sermon 156.13.

<sup>184</sup> Sermon 337.4, 391-395.

effort, as though we did not have to be willing.”<sup>185</sup> If we are not awake, if we do not make an effort, if we are not willing, then there simply will not be the justice of God in us. And while it may be true that the will is prepared by the Lord, strengthened by the Lord, and made effectual by the Lord, it does not follow that the will ceases to be our own. For Augustine, God does not justify us without our consent; we must let God justify us. He writes: “The will, indeed, is only yours, the justice is only God’s.”<sup>186</sup> However, since God’s justice can exist without your will, but your will can only be just with the help of God’s justice, God maintains his primacy.

It follows that a person can do nothing good or can only do “nothingness,” i.e., introduce into what exists the privation of a due good, which Augustine views as “evil,” without the help of God’s guiding hand (Jn 15:5); indeed any created initiative that is not caused by God can only be an initiative for what is harmful or a deprivation in being, or what Maritain will appropriately call a “nihilation,”<sup>187</sup> for it is a “defective movement, and every defect is from nothing.”<sup>188</sup> Augustine will actually compare our feebleness of mind and body, which is our natural lot in life because of original sin, to the feebleness of a newborn baby. A new born baby cannot talk by itself, walk by itself, or do anything by itself; of itself it just lies there. It is so weak that it needs “someone else’s help for everything.”<sup>189</sup> The position of Pelagius and his followers, that the will can have an initiative for the good on its own, and that the grace of God can be merited, must therefore be rejected; and *a fortiori* for the idea of the semi-Pelagians that we are

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<sup>185</sup> Sermon 169.13, 416.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> *God and the Permission of Evil*, 33.

<sup>188</sup> *On Free Choice of the Will* 2.20.54.204. See also *de.civ.Dei* 12.7, where he speaks of the human will separated from God as a “deficient cause.”

<sup>189</sup> Sermon 127.1, between 410 and 420.

responsible for the beginning of our faith and its perseverance to the end: “Anybody, you see, who wishes to say that he has paid something back to God, is a liar. Absolutely everything has to be hoped for from him. From ourselves, apart from him, nothing—except perhaps sin and lies, because whoever utters a lie, speaks from what is his own.... But when it comes to the truth, if he wants to be truthful, it won’t be from what is his own.”<sup>190</sup> Important to note is that the latter is a point on which Augustine and all major Greek theologians agree.<sup>191</sup>

To more fully explore the idea of our complete indebtedness to God with respect to the conative and cognitive goods we possess, the concept of the interior word (*verbum interior*) that Augustine explains at *De Trinitate* 9.6.9-12.18 proves useful. Here Augustine considers the idea that we know in two ways: 1) we know things in ourselves that we can then communicate to others through various signs, such as language; or 2) we know things in the Truth itself, which is present to us in such a way that it is not the private possession of an individual, but a possible object of knowledge for all

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<sup>190</sup> Sermon 254.7, 414.

<sup>191</sup> It would be beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide an in depth examination of the Greek tradition on this point. However, it is possible to cite some primary texts from this tradition which show its agreement with Augustine on the positive benefits of God’s grace for the believer. In *On the Holy Spirit*, for example, St. Basil states that the divine *energeiai* are responsible for any of the good actions we perform, and even for the habitual states of the soul that are the well-spring of those very same good actions: “As is the power of seeing in the healthy eye, so is the *energeia* of the Spirit in the purified soul.... And as the skill in him who has acquired it, so is the grace of the Spirit ever present in the recipient, though not continuously active (*energousa*). For as the skill is potentially in the artisan, but only in operation (*energeia*) when he is working in accordance with it, so also the Spirit is present with those who are worthy, but works (*energei*) as need requires, in prophecies, or in healings, or in some other carrying into effect of His powers (*tisi dunameon energemasin*)” (*On the Holy Spirit* 61, PG 32 180C-D; NPNF 8, 38). In his *De Fide Orthodoxa*, John of Damascus will state that, while it is within our power to choose what actions we perform, the actual carrying out of those actions depends on God: “in the one case when our actions are good, on the co-operation of God, who in his justice brings help according to his foreknowledge to such as choose the good with a right conscience, and, in the other case when our actions are evil, on the desertion by God, who again in his justice stands aloof in accordance with his foreknowledge.” (Book II, Ch. 29) He even makes a point of saying that all the good that we do is from God, and without “His co-operation and help we cannot will or do any good thing.” (Book II, Ch. 30). Like Augustine, John of Damascus, believes that all goods come from God, which in turn means that every good action we perform must be assigned to him as well (See Book IV, Ch. 12).

simultaneously. While we know these things, they can be spoken about and thought of in the same way by others who know them in the Truth as we do,<sup>192</sup> the Truth mentioned here being the divine Word. In either form of knowing, we formulate what Augustine will refer to as “words of the heart.”<sup>193</sup> According to Augustine, these words of the heart require not only love to be conceived, but also the knowledge of higher or lower objects that direct that love to those objects.<sup>194</sup> Because “love ... joins together our word and the mind it is begotten from,”<sup>195</sup> what we choose to know and how we choose to know it matter a great deal: we become what we know insofar as our minds are formed by the objects on which we direct our attentive effort.

These words precede any and every human working, good or bad, occurrent or habitual—indeed “there are none that are not first spoken in the heart, and hence it is written that *the beginning of every work is a word* (Eccl 37:16).”<sup>196</sup> Augustine will divide up these words into two basic categories: words that occur as a result of love for God, and words that occur as a result of an inappropriate love for creatures.<sup>197</sup> The second category

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<sup>192</sup> *trin.* 9.6.9.

<sup>193</sup> *trin.* 9.12.7. Augustine will often use “thoughts” as a substitute for “words of the heart” (See for example, *trin.* 15.18), supported by his interpretation of Mt 15: 10ff (“But the things which come forth from the mouth proceed from the heart, and they defile the man. For from the heart proceed evil thoughts...”), but he never loses sight of their volitional aspect in his use of this more cognitively loaded term.

<sup>194</sup> *trin.* 9.13.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> *trin.* 15.20.11.

<sup>197</sup> He writes: *Quod uerbum amore concipitur siue creaturae siue creatoris, id est aut naturae mutabilis aut incommutabilis ueritatis. Ergo aut cupiditate aut caritate* (*trin.* 9.7-8.13; CCSL 50A.304). An example of how not to love, or how to love improperly, is provided by Augustine himself, who anecdotally recalls in the *Conf.* an incident in his early life involving the death of a close friend, whom he had known since he was a teenager. At *Conf.* 4.4-9 he tells us how badly he dealt with this loss: “What mindlessness it is not to know how to love human beings humanly [*humaniter*]! And what a foolish human I was then, so impatient in coping with the human condition!” (*Conf.* 4.7). It was an inhuman love because Augustine was entrusting his personhood, or identity, in the temporal relationship he had with his friend. However, he recognizes that he should have loved his friend (*pace* for all other temporal goods) *in God*, i.e., to love his friend in relation to God. As Augustine will say in his *De doctrina Christiana*, we should love all human beings “for the sake of God,” *propter Deum* (*doctr. chr.* I.22.20); they are signs of the Creator, not signs for themselves.

of words is then distinguished into the *verbum* as *conceptum* and the *verbum* as *natum*. As conceived, we desire the word's completion; as born, our desire for the word's completion is actually completed. The only way we can conceive true words, Augustine tells us, comes from our knowing and judging in the Truth, in the Word of God; by doing so we generate or utter this true word in our mind.<sup>198</sup> Unlike words that occur as a result of an inappropriate love for creatures, these true words are simultaneously conceived and born, and this because the true love (*vera dilectio*, not *cupiditas*) by which they are conceived instantly possesses what it loves and loves what it possesses. He gives an example: a person who loves justice has a will that remains in the knowledge that is conceived, so that what he wills is simultaneously present to his knowledge and vice versa.<sup>199</sup> In our fallen state, however, our love is tinged by concupiscence and our minds misled by intellectual error, thus making it impossible to rely on our own conative and cognitive powers to be the primary cause of the good we desire and by which we are directed in our search for happiness. For any and every word we speak internally, if we do so by ourselves, content with our own damaged faculties and powers, is insufficient to attain to its proper objects that would lead to our being formed into the image of God.

As we have seen, Augustine thinks we have a perfect model of how this formal causality should work in the conformity of will that is shared between the Father and the Son, which St. John speaks of: *the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father doing* (Jn 5:19); and *Everything that's mine is yours, and that's yours is mine* (Jn 17:10). According to Augustine, what the Gospel writer means is that the Son perfectly *conforms* himself to the Father, doing only the same things as the Father does. The Son

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<sup>198</sup> *trin.*9.7.12;CCSL 50A.304.

<sup>199</sup> *trin.*9.9.14.

perfectly patterns himself after the Father out of the perfect love he has for his generator. Augustine is aware that some may object to this statement on the grounds that it attributes an “inability” to the Son, as it seems the Son cannot do anything according to His own will, but he thinks that such inability is actually “true ability,” nor is it weakness but “the strength whereby the truth is unable to be false.”<sup>200</sup> Again this is a point on which the Greek East could not agree on more, with Basil, for instance, writing: “Accordingly, a man becomes ‘one’ with another, when in will, as our Lord says, they are ‘perfected into one’ (Jn 17:23), this union of wills being added to the connexion of nature. So also the Father and Son are one, the community of nature and the community of will running, in them, into one.”<sup>201</sup>

It is Augustine’s belief that because Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share one and the same nature, they share one and the same will.<sup>202</sup> But that does not mean that either the Son or the Holy Spirit is unfree to do their own will. Certainly there are many instances in scripture which point to the Son claiming that he has been sent to do the will of the Father. Augustine thinks these show that “the Father willed, the Son put it into effect.”<sup>203</sup> But there are also examples from scripture that show that this does not prevent the Son from willing, with the Father putting it into effect. We have Christ saying, for instance, *Father, I will. That where I am, these too may be with me* (Jn 17: 24); and the Son’s power of will is clearly proclaimed at Jn 5: 21: *Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so too the Son gives life to whom he will*. The Son does not give life to those whom the Father orders him to give life, but to those whom he will. In the same

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<sup>200</sup> *trin.* 15.23.14.

<sup>201</sup> *CE* 1.34.

<sup>202</sup> See for example, Sermon 135.5, 417 or 418.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

way, we are truly free when we act according to true words that cannot be false on account of their being formally and finally caused by God's will and knowledge for us, all of which are "spoken" by Him to restore the image of God in us. The works we perform from those true words are both God's and ours. Yet we should not glory in our contribution to the works we perform; we should follow the example of Christ, in the form of his humanity, who would always give the glory to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In addition, we should all strive to understand that just as the Son can only speak through the Father, and has everything that he speaks from the Father, so, too, for those who are righteous: all the goods they possess, all the good that they *will* and *think* and *do* is from God. Indeed, the very good they seek as their ultimate end is God, according to which they organize their pursuit of all other goods.

Following the example of Christ in this regard demands a literal self-sacrifice on our part.<sup>204</sup> Augustine often pleaded with his flock to believe and understand as far as they could the idea that they are most fully themselves when they, as the apostle says, *clothe [themselves] with the Lord Jesus Christ, and [when they] do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh* (Rom 13: 14).<sup>205</sup> This is a lesson he personally learned all too well, and which he forcefully recounts in Book VIII.12 of his *Confessions*, where he tells the reader how his self-conversion (and the conversion of his good friend Alypius) came about through the Lord Jesus Christ, helped along by his reading of the following quotation from Paul's Letter to the Romans:

*Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision*

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<sup>204</sup> Christ himself will speak of the need for such self-sacrifice in the Gospels. See for example, Jn 12:25: *Whoever loves his soul let him lose it*; and Mt 10:39: *And whoever has lost his soul on my account will find it*.

<sup>205</sup> See for example, Sermon 260D.2.

*for the flesh in its concupiscences* (Rom 13:13). I had no wish to read further, and no need. For in that instant, with the very ending of the sentence, it was as though a light of utter confidence shown in my heart, and all the darkness of uncertainty vanished away. Then, leaving my finger in the place or marking it by some other sign, I closed the book and in complete calm told the whole thing to Alypius, and he similarly told me what had been going on in himself, of which I knew nothing. He asked to see what I had read. I showed him, and he looked further than I had read. I had not known what followed. And this is what followed: *Now him that is weak in faith, take unto you*. He applied this to himself and told me so. And he was confirmed by this message, and with no troubled wavering gave himself to God's good will and purpose—a purpose indeed most suited to his character, for in these matters he had been immeasurably better than I. Then we went in to my mother and told her, to her great joy.

Augustine urges us to give our wills, our minds, and indeed everything that we are metaphysically and morally back to God, who made us for Himself. For apart from God, we are nothing: “Of one thing only I am sure—that, apart from you, nothing I have or am can be good, and ‘anything I gain is a mere deprivation’ if it be not my God.”<sup>206</sup>

Somewhat paradoxically Augustine holds that the only way we can truly and freely will is not to do our own will. If we prefer to follow our own will and resist the will of God, then we are “harmful”<sup>207</sup> to ourselves; and this because as persons we are depriving ourselves of a good which is due to the human will and to human nature itself. It is thus necessary, Augustine tells us, to put God's will before our own, and to put love of God before love of ourselves.

Our love of God must reach the point that, “for love of him we even forget, as far as this is possible, ourselves.”<sup>208</sup> There are many other *Sermons* in particular where Augustine recommends a letting go of ourselves, or a kind of self-sacrifice, so that we

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<sup>206</sup> *Conf.* 13.2.9. See also Sermon 229A.3, 410-412.

<sup>207</sup> *Miscellany of 83 Questions*, LXVI.

<sup>208</sup> Sermon 142.3, 413-417.

might cleave to God more fully, and so that we might understand that God is our life.

Some examples of this are as follows:

Don't stay in yourself, rise above even yourself; place yourself in the one who made you and your true self.<sup>209</sup>

The soul is not its own life, but it's God who is the life of the soul.<sup>210</sup>

Remove yourself, remove, I repeat, yourself from yourself; you just get in your own way. If it's you that are building yourself, it's a ruin you are building. *Unless the Lord has built the house, they have labored in vain, who build it* (Ps 127: 1).<sup>211</sup>

Ignore your own spirit, receive the Spirit of God. Don't let your spirit be afraid that when the Spirit of God takes up residence in you, your spirit will be squeezed into a corner of your body. When the Spirit of God takes up residence in your body, it won't shut your spirit out.<sup>212</sup>

Augustine makes clear that the self-sacrifice he is recommending does not entail a destructive form of self-hatred. Nevertheless, there is still a right way to love oneself and a wrong way to love oneself. The latter occurs when you leave God out of your life to love your time-bound self, which actually causes you to move away from your true self; whereas the former occurs when you love yourself in God. Augustine explains step-by-step how this proper self-love can come about in us: "Come back to yourself; but again, turn upward when you've come back to yourself, don't stay in yourself. First come back to yourself from the things outside you, and then give yourself back to the one who made you, and when you were lost sought you, and as a runaway found you, and when you had turned away turned you back to himself. So then, come back to yourself, and go on to the one who made you."<sup>213</sup> According to Augustine, this loving ascent from things in the

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<sup>209</sup> Sermon 153.9, 419.

<sup>210</sup> Sermon 156.6, 419.

<sup>211</sup> Sermon 169.11, 416.

<sup>212</sup> Sermon 169.15.

<sup>213</sup> Sermon 330.3, 397.

world to yourself, then from yourself to God, has a scriptural basis in the story of the prodigal son. And he exhorts those listening to his sermon, perhaps to their surprise and ours, to be the younger son, who wasted his inheritance by living a life of dissipation, and subsequently found himself living in the most desperate of straits. Augustine rhetorically asks his audience, ‘What does the Gospel say about the younger son?’ *And returning to himself*. He let go of himself in his debauched behavior, but he did eventually return to himself, and he did not remain in himself; he found the need to arise and go to his father. So after finding himself, he denies himself, which is indicated by what he plans to say to his father: *And I will say to him, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am now not worthy to be called your son* (Lk 15: 17-19). Augustine believes that it is in this respect that we should copy the younger son’s behavior. Just as he was in full possession of himself once again at the end of the story, by his new desire to be obedient to his father’s will, so, too, let us possess ourselves again in virtue of obeying God’s will for us. Augustine’s overall advice therefore is “Don’t do your own will, but that of the one who is dwelling in you.”<sup>214</sup>

In *The City of God*, Augustine describes the kind of obedience to God’s will that he is recommending to us as a form of worship. However, he admits that there is a slight difficulty in encapsulating the meaning of this worship in a single word in the Latin language: ... “to express this worship in a single word as there does not occur to me any Latin term sufficiently exact, I shall avail myself, whenever necessary, of a Greek word. *Latreia*, whenever it occurs in Scripture, is rendered by the word service.”<sup>215</sup> Augustine tells us that *Latreia* is better than any other perceived Latin equivalents (worship,

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<sup>214</sup> Sermon 330.4.

<sup>215</sup> *City of God* 10.1. See also *trin.*1.2.13.

religion, piety, etc.), because of its exclusive focus on service to God. A bit later on at *City of God* 10.3, he will discuss the service entailed by *Latreia* in more detail, and note that it requires a total surrendering of ourselves to God. Such surrendering is accomplished by loving God with all of our heart, with all of our soul and with all of our strength, which allow us to cleave to Him in unity. Augustine views this loving service to God as a community effort taken up within the ecclesial body of Christ, since “to this good we ought to be led by those who love us, and to lead those we love.”<sup>216</sup> When we love God with every moral and metaphysical fiber of our being, as it were, and when we love our neighbor in God and for God’s sake, we may call both true sacrifices, or works in which whatever is done is done so that we might be united to God.<sup>217</sup> It is this surrendering of self that makes up the righteousness of man, “that he submit himself to God, his body to his soul, and his vices, even when they rebel, to his reason, which either defeats or at least resists them; and also that he beg from God grace to do his duty, and the pardon of his sins, and that he render to God thanks for all the blessings he receives.”<sup>218</sup> Elsewhere, Augustine will say more strongly that being a slave to righteousness is what the true liberty of man consists in, but at the same time it is a “holy bondage, for he is obedient to the will of God.”<sup>219</sup> Once again he looks to a statement from St. Paul to bear all of this out and, specifically, the following from Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians: *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them* (Eph 2: 10). Augustine takes this to mean that we shall be made truly free when and only when “God fashions us,

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid, 10.3.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, 10.6.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid, 19.27.

<sup>219</sup> *Enchir.*30.

that is, forms and creates us anew, not as men—for He has done that already—but as good men, which his grace is now doing, that we may be a new creation in Christ Jesus.”<sup>220</sup> This is something that we cannot do by the power of our intellects and wills alone, no matter how holy they are, no matter how strong they are, but only with the grace of God. One may call this servitude, subjection, slavery, or even, as I have suggested earlier, a form of sacrifice of self.<sup>221</sup> The good news that Christ proclaims in the Gospel of Matthew, however, is that this yoke is easy and this burden is light: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Mt 11:28-30).

The distinction that Augustine is drawing here between selfless service to God and selfish service to oneself is the fundamental distinction in what many view to be his *magnum opus* in doctrinal theology, *The City of God*. It is the fundamental distinction of this work in my opinion, because it is the basis on which Augustine will make the subsequent division between the heavenly and earthly cities—the histories of which, from beginning, to middle, to end, he makes it the purpose of this work to track in excruciating historical detail and with insightful theological exegesis. But one need not take my word for it. According to Augustine, it is clear that “two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the

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<sup>220</sup> *Enchir.*31.

<sup>221</sup> From an Eastern perspective, Basil will view this as a form of subjection to God, but a subjection that is saving in power: “the subjection of men to God is salvation for those who are so made subject, according to the voice of the prophet, who says that his soul is subject to God, since of Him cometh salvation by subjection (Ps lxii.1), so that subjection is the means of averting perdition.” (*CE* 2.14).

Lord.”<sup>222</sup> This distinction is made time and time again by Augustine throughout the work, and is used as an explanative device to inform the reader as to why certain divisions in the human race have taken place throughout history. He will argue, for example, that such love of oneself, or of what is created, was the cause of Adam’s forfeiting paradise for humanity, Cain’s crime against his brother, and really all divisiveness in the human race, which is meant to be one in Christ.<sup>223</sup>

Of course, Augustine knows that carnally-minded people, i.e., those who belong to the earthly city, those who, to use the common expression, “raise Cain,” will see such a total obedience to God’s will as a restriction of their supposed “freedom” to choose as they want, or perhaps better, as their flesh wants: “when it’s said that all other things will be withdrawn, and there will only be God to delight us, it’s as if the soul feels restricted, because it has been used to delighting in many things; and the carnal soul says to itself, addicted to the flesh, tied up with fleshly desires, having wings stuck together with the birdlime of evil desires to stop it flying to God, it says to itself, ‘What will there be in it for me, where I shall not eat, I shall not drink, where I shall not sleep with my wife? What sort of joy will I have of that?’ This joy of yours comes from sickness, not from good health.”<sup>224</sup> Here, as in Sermon 229E, Augustine likens the human soul and its fleshly desires to a sick person wanting things they imagine will give them respite from their illness but will, in all actual fact, make them worse. Such is a truth that the sick person realizes only if and when his good health returns, which in turn eliminates those deleterious desires. When it comes to our moral health, we have a similar choice: either

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<sup>222</sup> City of God 14.28.

<sup>223</sup> See for example, City of God 15.7.

<sup>224</sup> Sermon 255.7, 418; see also Sermon 151.3, 419.

we obey the prescriptions of our doctor, Christ, or those of the flesh, our enemy.

Augustine makes clear that we should not suppose that because we choose the former “free will must be withdrawn. It will, on the contrary, be all the more truly free, because set free from delight in sinning.”<sup>225</sup> Nevertheless, the choice between which of the two we decide to take heed of has been, is, and always will be a choice that we make, and we and we alone have to live with the corresponding consequences.

Augustine thinks evidence of this can be found in scripture. Take Mt 23: 27,<sup>226</sup> for instance, where Christ laments the fact that the Jews exercised their carnal “freedom,” rejecting as they did the condescension of his grace: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.*

Augustine writes of this scriptural passage that Christ “really was looking after them, as he himself was happy to put it, in the way a hen looks after her chicks; in the way, I mean, that a hen enfeebles herself too, because of the feebleness of her chicks.”<sup>227</sup> It was because of their weakness, and the weakness of the whole of fallen humanity, that he was willing to enfeeble himself by becoming incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and that he was willing to suffer and die for our sins. In *Sermons* 105.11 and 265.11 (412), Augustine will explain in more detail how the hen “enfeebles herself” for its chicks, by lowering its voice to the chirps of the chicks, drooping, and ruffling its feathers. But his conclusion is simple enough: Christ had to permit the Jews nihilating initiatives, because he had to respect their free choice to sin, which resulted in the death of the prophets and those sent

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<sup>225</sup> City of God 22.30.

<sup>226</sup> See also Lk 13:34.

<sup>227</sup> Sermon 264.2, 417.

to them to effect such a communion. Augustine thinks the Jews provide a perfect example of the fact that, while God wills all men to be saved, all men are not in fact saved, and this “because men themselves are not willing.”<sup>228</sup>

Even for those of us who do accept Christ’s help, who choose to live at the humble level at which he chose to live, achieving victory over the flesh is no easy task for our wills to accomplish, and especially for those that are weighed down by past bad habits. Not to mention that in this life the flesh continually lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh in such a way that those experienced in this warfare cannot completely escape the enticements and pull their flesh exercises upon them.<sup>229</sup> Following Paul, Augustine believes that it is this warfare that does not allow us to carry out the good we want to do: *For it is not what I want to that I do; but what I hate that is what I do; but if what I hate is what I do, I agree with the law, that it is good. To want to do good is available to me, but to carry out the good I do not find in my power. But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and taking me prisoner to the law of sin, which is in my members* (Rom 7:15-16.18.23). From the time of Plato and Aristotle onwards, this is what the Greeks would refer to as *akrasia*, or weakness of will, understood as a condition in which compulsive patterns of behavior (i.e., bad habits) prevent us from acting in accordance with what we know to be good.<sup>230</sup> For Augustine, the good that is always within my power is not to consent to bad desires, but I cannot carry the good through by myself. There is a significant difference between these two: the former we might say is a power to refuse evil; the latter, by contrast, is a power to

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<sup>228</sup> *Enchir.*97.

<sup>229</sup> Augustine is thinking of the saints, whom he mentions on numerous occasions as not being able to achieve a total victory over the lusts of their flesh in this life. See for example, Sermon 163.6, 417.

<sup>230</sup> See Plato’s *Protagoras* 352a-357e, and Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics* 7.1146a31-1147b17.

cooperate with God to accomplish the good. This illustrates the importance of the secondary causality of man—in wanting to do the good—and of the necessary primary causality of God—in His making that desire effectual in the realm of human action. Hence this is the reason why Augustine can say that no human being, however morally strong of will and intellectually adept in mind, can accomplish the good by him/herself; and that all human beings, by themselves, can only accomplish what is evil.<sup>231</sup>

Augustine explains: “I do good when I do not consent to the evil lust; but I do not carry through with the good, so as not to covet or have any lust at all. So again, how does my enemy too do evil and not carry through with the evil? It does evil, because it stirs up an evil desire; it does not carry the evil through, because it does not drag me into committing the evil (*Ago bonum, cum malae concupiscentiae non consentio; sed non perficio bonum, ut omnino non concupiscam. Rursus ergo et hostis mea quomodo agit malum, et non perficit malum? Agit malum, quia movet desiderium malum: non perficit malum, quia me non trahit ad malum*).”<sup>232</sup> Augustine is clear that we should not take what the apostle says, *It is not what I want to that I do, but what I hate, that is*

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<sup>231</sup> Augustine ultimately credits St. Paul for the idea that God co-operates with us in doing good and abandons us when we will what is evil, but he also mentions Ambrose of Milan as teaching this idea. At *On the Grace of Christ* 48, Augustine will note that Ambrose, in his second book of his *Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke* (II, chapter 84, on Luke 3:22), “expressly teaches us that the Lord co-operates (*cooperari*) also with our wills (*voluntatibus nostris*).” Augustine will actually give us the text from Ambrose in question: “You see, therefore, because the power of the Lord co-operates (*cooperatur*) everywhere with human efforts, that no man is able to build without the Lord, no man to watch without the Lord, no man to undertake anything without the Lord. When the apostle thus enjoins: *Whether ye eat, or whether ye drink, do all to the glory of God* (1 Cor 10:31). Augustine will then provide similar texts from this work of Ambrose that make the same essential point that God’s help is necessary to do anything. For example, Book VI, chapter 25 on Luke 7:41 and Book X, chapter 89 on Luke 22, 61. The constant refrain of Augustine is that the assistance provided to our wills by divine grace for our justification, “by which God co-operates in all things for the good (*quo Deus diligentibus eum omnia cooperatur in bonum*) with those who love Him,” is necessary, life-giving, and eventually leads to the perfection of the human person. (Ibid, 55).

<sup>232</sup> Sermon 151.7, 419. This distinction can also be found in Sermon 152.2, 419 and Sermon 154.12, 419.

*what I carry out*, as implying that I want to be chaste, but am actually an adulterer; that I want to be kind, but am actually cruel; that I want to be religious, but am actually irreligious. While it is true that no matter what we do, no matter how saintly of a life we lead, we cannot resist having lusts of the flesh, it is, nevertheless, always within our power to resist actually being adulterous, cruel, and irreligious. In other words, we do not have to act on the evil lusts of the flesh, even if we cannot help but have them in this life.<sup>233</sup> This is something we can do, and Augustine views this dissent from evil desire as a significant contribution to one's salvation, writing:

It isn't the case, after all, that you don't carry out anything. Lust rebels, and you don't consent; you take a fancy to another man's wife, but you don't give your approval, you turn your mind away, you enter the inner sanctum of your mind. You see lust kicking up a rumpus outside, you issue a decree against it, to cleanse your conscience. "I don't want to," you say, "I won't do it." Granted it would be delightful, I won't do it, I have something else to delight in. *For I delight in the law of God according to the inner self.*<sup>234</sup>

Augustine will describe this elsewhere as keeping the flesh in check,<sup>235</sup> which is something that we do, but cannot successfully carry through without the grace of God. Other anti-Pelagian *Sermons* of Augustine deal with the notion of the will's consent, or its specification, while under the influence of God's grace. Take *Sermon* 165 (417), in which Augustine begins with the common anti-Pelagian sentiment that we should not place our hope in man but in God; and with the following quotation from Paul: *I ask you not to be weakened by my tribulations on your behalf, which is your glory* (Eph 3:13). Augustine interprets this to mean that the apostle is asking them not to lose strength,

which he wouldn't do, unless he wanted to rouse their wills. I mean, suppose they answered, 'Why do you ask us for what we don't have in our power?' Wouldn't it seem they had given him a fair answer? And yet unless the apostle knew that

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<sup>233</sup> Sermon 154.2, 419.

<sup>234</sup> Sermon 154.12. See also *City of God* 19.4.

<sup>235</sup> See for example, Sermon 155.2, 419.

there was in them such a thing as the consent of their own will, when they too were to do something themselves, he wouldn't have said *I ask you*. And if he said 'I order you,' the word would come from his mouth quite pointlessly, unless he knew they could apply their wills to his order.<sup>236</sup>

Of course, without God's help the human will is weak, and so the apostle added, *For this reason I bend my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named, that he would give you* (Eph 3: 14-16). Paul's statement here can be seen as another version of the famous Augustinian dictum from the *Confessions*, "Command what you will, and give what you command." And again, we might find ourselves asking the question Pelagius asked: How does it make any sense for, in this case, Paul, to ask God to give what he is at the same time demanding from his audience? Augustine answers for Paul: "because for God to be willing to give, you for your part have to accommodate your will to receive. How can you really wish to receive the grace of divine goodness, if you don't open the lap of your will to receive?"<sup>237</sup>

To sum up, there is no textual evidence from Augustine's corpus that necessarily implicates his mature theology of sin and grace into a form of predestinationism that would vitiate the nature of our wills as free. Quite the contrary: what we have seen from Augustine, in his doctrinal works, sermons, and scriptural commentaries, is a great concern to maintain a harmonious working relationship between God's grace and our free will as oriented towards the good. We have seen this particularly in his threefold emphasis on: 1) the grounding of the doctrine of deification in the body of Christ, of which we are acting members along with its Head; 2) the need for Christians to willingly engage in the economic act of self-sacrifice, or obedience to the primary causality of the

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<sup>236</sup> Sermon 165.1.

<sup>237</sup> Sermon 165.2.

divine will; and 3) the distinction without division between not consenting to the lust of the flesh and being able to carry through the good, according to which both man and God help to determine the outcome of salvation history. Even these three interrelated elements, however, do not give us the full philosophical-theological picture of Augustine's positive doctrine of predestination. That requires the further examination of his theory of the divine ideas, to which we now turn.

## Chapter 4

*The Divine Ideas: A Predestination of Potentialities*

Augustine's theory of the divine ideas, more than anything else, serves to reveal the enduring influence Platonism had on his thought. Indeed, it is almost impossible to prevent oneself from making comparisons to key concepts of Plato, such as the Demiurge (*demiourgos*), participation (*methexis*), and so on, while learning of this theory. Even the way Augustine describes it himself, especially in his various commentaries on the Book of Genesis, lends a *prima facie* legitimacy to these comparisons.

In his *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, for instance, Augustine will ask: "Or were all things in fact completed by God as in a craftsman's thought-out design, not in a stretch of time, but in that very power which made to abide in a timeless state even those things that we perceive as not abiding, but passing away in time?"<sup>238</sup> The answer to this question, he thinks, is that God eternally and intentionally "speaks" His creative designs in His Word, in whom "all things are primordially and unchangingly together, not only things that are in the whole of this creation, but things that have been and will be; but there is not a question of "have been" and "will be," there they simply are."<sup>239</sup> Augustine, however, makes the important qualification that we are talking here about the eternity of the Creator when we make reference to the divine ideas, not the eternity of the divine essence. Indeed, to understand things such as the succession of the ages and the resurrection of the dead Augustine believes we must consult "the eternity of

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<sup>238</sup> *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, 7, 28.

<sup>239</sup> *trin.*, 4.1.3.

the Creator, in whom we live, move, and have our being.”<sup>240</sup> It is only in the eternity of the Creator that some rare souls (i.e., those souls which are not weighed down by a carnal love of temporal things) may understand “the rolled up scrolls of the centuries, which *there* already are and always are, but *here* only will be and so are not yet; or that they could see there the change for the better not only of the minds but also of the bodies of men, each to its own proper perfection.”<sup>241</sup>

One of the more explicit ways Augustine makes this distinction can also be found in Book V of his *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. In chapter 15, where he discusses in what sense creatures can be said to have life in God, Augustine will cite two texts from the Book of Job (28: 12-13 and 28: 22-25), both of which he believes proves that all things “before they were made were in the knowledge of God their Creator.”<sup>242</sup> Here, these things exist in an ideal manner; they are life in God; they are eternal (*aeterna*) and unchangeable (*incommutabilia*). In addition, if God knew these things before making them, then it must follow that “before they were made they were with Him and known to Him as they live, and indeed are life, eternally and unchangeably.”<sup>243</sup> Augustine will caution, however, that as the eternal and unchangeable ideas of things they cannot be said to be with God as *the Word was with God* (Jn 1:1), in that they exist in God as Creator, not God as Generator or Spirator.<sup>244</sup> In other words, we can say that the divine ideas are not separated from the life-giving reality of God, for they are in God as Creator, but they are distinct (not divided) from God’s essential life as expressed in the activities of

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid, 4.4.23.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid, Book V, 15, 33.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid, Book V, 16, 34.

Generation and Spiration.<sup>245</sup> Augustine's distinction without division between the eternity of the divine ideas and the eternity of the divine nature directly corresponds to the Eastern distinction between the eternity of the divine will and the eternity of the divine essence.<sup>246</sup>

These creative designs, these rolled up scrolls of the centuries, that are with God as Creator, not as Generator or Spirator, are the divine ideas (*rationes*). According to Augustine, these are then placed in creation by God as the *rationes seminales*, which are the inbuilt rational structures that order the coming into being and passing away of things in time according to their natures. These *rationes seminales* are thus what account for things following predictable patterns of development, e.g., tadpoles develop into frogs, acorns into oak trees, and so on.<sup>247</sup> The ontological need for these *rationes seminales* is obvious for Augustine: "because if there were no such seminal force in the elements themselves, there would not be so many forms of life spontaneously generated from earth where nothing was sown; nor would there be so many animals on land and in water

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<sup>245</sup> Earlier at *DGnL*.II.6.12, Augustine will phrase this distinction in terms of whatever has been made by the Son is "life in Him," the Creator, which is different from the "Life of the Son," the Light of men (Jn 1:4).

<sup>246</sup> The eternity of the divine will is that of "aeonic" eternity. What is aeonic has a beginning, but that beginning is atemporal. Though outside of time, the aeonic is influenced by the establishment of the created order. But unlike the created order itself, the aeonic is immutable. In his article, "Creation and Creaturehood," Fr. Georges Florovsky admits that distinguishing between the eternity of the divine essence and that of the divine will is "paradoxical" but necessary "for the incontestable distinction between the *essence (nature)* of God and the *will of God*" (56). Taken from *Creation and Redemption*, vol. 3, in the *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*. Nordland Publishing Company: Belmont, Massachusetts, 1976. The aeonic realm is not as expressly talked about by Augustine. Nevertheless, he does say that there is a "special time" or timelessness that is enjoyed by the angels, who are with God in their contemplation of him, but not with Him in the sense of sharing in the divine nature (See for example, *Conf.*11.4.40).

<sup>247</sup> From the Orthodox perspective, St. Basil gives a similar account of the creation, stating that "its most basic structure consists of a series of unchangeable natures decreed in the act of creation, each possessing its own intrinsic power that gives rise to the distinctive activities we experience." (Ayes 315) See *Hexaemeron*.6.3; and 9.2. Given the fact that Basil's homilies on the creation were translated into Latin, and used by Ambrose of Milan in his own work on the creation in 386, I think we should take seriously the idea that Augustine was possibly, indirectly, influenced by Basil through Ambrose in his *Commentaries on Genesis*, which have been proven to take some cues from Ambrose. See Ayes 317 for an excellent discussion of this possibility.

which have come into existence without any mating of male and female, though they themselves, born asexually, grow up and produce offspring by copulation.” In other words, if there were not such seminal forces in the elements themselves, things would simply poof into existence from nothing; which is absurd. It follows that God, who is the creator of all of these seminal forces is *ipso facto* the creator of all things, for anything that we can observe as being brought to life “receives the beginning of its course from hidden seeds, and derives its due growth and final distinction of shape and parts from what you could call the original programming (*ab originalibus tanquam regulis*) of those seeds.”<sup>248</sup> Here we must make an effort to distinguish between the developmental patterns of rational and non-rational things. We can say that rational creatures are not bound to their pre-established rational structures in the same way as, say, a horse or rock, because of their essential possession of reason and free will. Humans, for instance, are unique in that their rational nature allows them to freely choose to turn towards or away from God.<sup>249</sup> Nevertheless, there is a pre-established number, weight, and measure that each human person should attempt to *conform* themselves to, i.e., the image of the Son (Rom 8:29).<sup>250</sup> Yet because of their natural capacity for reason and free choice they are not deterministically compelled to do so. While a rock cannot help but find its center of gravity close to the earth, and a hungry horse cannot help but go for the portion of food that looks most attractive to it, a human being can deliberately choose whether it will be

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<sup>248</sup> *trin.*3.2.13.

<sup>249</sup> See for example, *trin.*7.4.12.

<sup>250</sup> One of Augustine’s favorite quotations comes from the Book of Wisdom, namely, *You have arranged all things by measure and number and weight* (Wis 11:20). Augustine holds number (*numero*) to signify the specific form of a thing; weight (*pondere*) to signify its dynamic power, i.e., its natural tendency or “love”; and measure (*mensura*) to signify its relation to things other than itself, or its proper resting place in relation to everything else. These three factors make any created reality into a harmonious whole. For a more in depth study of how these three terms are used by Augustine, see W. Roche’s enduringly helpful article, “Measure, Number, and Weight in St. Augustine” *New Scholasticism*, 15 (1941), pp. 350-76.

in the image of God or not. The choice is an important one, with equally important consequences: “The self opens to God or to nothing, so that apart from God the self has no real or true form through which to understand God.”<sup>251</sup>

Our brief examination of the divine ideas above seems to suggest that they are at least similar to the Forms or Ideas of Plato, namely those realities which are present in the Demiurge’s mind, from which are created all things that are spatially and temporally conditioned. Yet such comparisons, as I hope to show in what follows, can only be pushed so far. And scholars who push this comparison too far wind up misinterpreting Augustine to the point where it looks as if he cannot sufficiently, philosophically, explain how the eternal causality of God interacts with the temporal causality of man. In what follows, I will argue that scholars have grossly misinterpreted Augustine’s view of the divine ideas on at least two counts, both of which are due to their over-zealousness to make Augustine out to be the “Christian Plato.”

First, in the often referenced *Question 46* (On Ideas), Augustine can be found placing the pre-temporal divine ideas in the mind of God. His following definition of “ideas” bears this out: they are “the principal forms or the fixed and unchangeable reasons of things that have themselves not been formed and consequently are eternal, always constituted in the same way and contained in the divine intelligence.”<sup>252</sup>

Elsewhere, he states that the divine ideas “existed in God’s knowledge, they did not exist in their own nature.”<sup>253</sup> Most scholars take the phrases, “contained in the divine intelligence,” “existed in God’s knowledge,” to mean, with not even a single sentence of

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<sup>251</sup> Matthew Drever, 241.

<sup>252</sup> 46.2.

<sup>253</sup> The Literal Meaning of Genesis, Book V, 18, 36.

textual evidence to support their claim, that Augustine equates God's mind with God's essence. This in turn makes the divine ideas, which are in God's mind, to reside in the eternity of God's essence.<sup>254</sup>

If anything, however, I think Augustine's placing of the divine ideas in God's mind implies He created with knowledge. As Augustine says, "In this art [i.e., the divine ideas] God knows all things that he has made through it, and so when times come and go, nothing comes and goes for God's knowledge. For all these created things around us are not known by God because they have been made; it is rather, surely, that even changeable things have been made because they are unchangeably known by him."<sup>255</sup> And if there were any doubt about my interpretation, Augustine will make the same exact point in

*Question 46 (On Ideas):*

But what religious person imbued with true religion, although not yet able to see these things, would nonetheless dare to deny—indeed, would not acknowledge—that everything that exists—that is, whatever is contained just as in its own genus by its own nature—was produced by God as its maker; and that, with him as their maker, all living things are alive; and that the universal soundness of things and the very order by which those things that undergo change proclaim that their trajectories through time are subject to a firm control are contained within and governed by the laws of the most high God? Once this has been established and conceded, who would dare to say that God created all things without good reason? If this cannot be rightly said and believed, it remains that all things were created in accordance with reason (*ratione*), but humankind in accordance with a different reason (*ratione*) than the horse, for it is absurd to think this [i.e., that they were created in accordance with the same reason]. Individual things, then, have been created in accordance with their own reasons. But where should these reasons be thought to exist if not in the very mind of the creator? (*Singula igitur propriis sunt creata rationibus. Has autem rationes ubi arbitrandum est esse, nisi in ipsa mente Creatoris?*)<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Maritain appears to take this view with respect to the divine ideas in general, whether speaking of Aquinas or Augustine. See *The Degrees of Knowledge*, pp. 305-306.

<sup>255</sup> *trin.*, 6.2.11. Similar statements to this effect can be found all throughout Augustine's corpus. See for example, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book V, 13, 29, and *Sermon 177.9*, 397.

<sup>256</sup> 46.2.

In his first tractate on the Gospel of John, Augustine will speak further of these different “reasons” according to which different things come into existence: “There is, however, in Wisdom itself, in a spiritual way, a certain reason by which the earth was made: this is life.”<sup>257</sup> Immediately after this statement Augustine will make an analogy concerning a craftsman’s creative knowledge and the creative Wisdom in which God made all things. He explains that a craftsman can only make a chest if he first has the chest in his “*ars*,” i.e., in his practical or creative knowledge. Once he makes a particular chest, there is still the chest in his “*ars*.” This paradigmatic chest, on which the particular chest is modeled, remains unchanging, serving as the blueprint for all other particular chests that will be built, and as the standard by which the excellence of all future chests is judged. Augustine concludes that as the earth was made by a certain reason, and that was called “life” for it, we are justified in saying that the chest in the “*ars*” of a craftsman is “life” for all particular chests that are modeled after it.<sup>258</sup> The point Augustine is driving at in this analogy should be clear: all created things are life in the creative function of the Word, in whom they live and move and have their being. This life just is the divine ideas. But as Augustine makes clear, the above analogy has Platonic undertones that can only be pushed so far. In his second tractate on the Gospel of John, Augustine continues to discuss the craftsman analogy and notes its limitations:

Do not imagine that [God] was in the world in such a way as the earth is in the world, the sky is in the world ... But how was he? As the master builder who governs what he has made. For he did not make it in the way a craftsman makes a chest. The chest which he makes is external to him; and when it is constructed, it has been situated in another place.... Suffusing the world, God creates; being everywhere, God creates [*deus autem mundo infusus fabricat, ubique positus fabricat*]; he does not direct the structure which he constructs as someone on the

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<sup>257</sup> *Io. ev. tr.* 1.16; CCSL 36.10.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*

outside. By the presence of his majesty he makes what he makes; by his own presence he governs what he has made [*praesentia sua gubernat quod fecit*].<sup>259</sup>

Augustine knows that as finite beings we have a hard time imagining how God creates. When we create something (whether that be a chest, another human being, etc.), that creation is always external to us, separated in its being from us. God's act of creation is not like this. God creates through his omni-presence, suffusing all things from the inside, from the very depths of their material and moral being; and as we have already established, this omni-presence of God does not include his essential existence for Augustine. What it does include is God's will and knowledge, or what Augustine refers to as the divine ideas.

The Eastern Orthodox tradition maintains the same general view of the divine ideas. Palamas, for instance, argues that there must be a reality in between the divine *ousia* and creatures, i.e., the divine *logoi*, for creatures to participate in for their existence. If there were not this middle reality, then creatures would have to participate in the divine *ousia* for their existence, an idea which Palamas thinks leads to pantheism.<sup>260</sup> For Palamas, as for the Cappadocians, Dionysius, and Maximus, the divine *logoi* are predeterminations (*proorismous*), foreknowings (*prognoseis*) and wills (*thelemata*) meant for the creation and perfection of what exists.<sup>261</sup>

The proper translation of the Greek *thelemata* is especially important in the philosophical-theological task of our understanding the divine *logoi*. *Thelemata* in this context should be translated as "divine wills," not as "acts" of the divine will or "products" of the divine will. This is so because the latter two translations would,

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<sup>259</sup> *Io. ev. tr.*2.10; CCSL 36.16.

<sup>260</sup> *Triads* III.2.23.

<sup>261</sup> See *Triads* III.2.26.

according to the Eastern Orthodox tradition, result in us understanding the divine *logoi* as creatures, and not as expressions of the uncreated God as He is accessible to us. In his *150 Capita*, Palamas makes it clear that any attempt to employ such translations would be to land oneself in heresy, for “it is not the energy of God that is a creature—certainly not!—but rather the effect and product of the energy.”<sup>262</sup> Palamas is arguing that the divine *energeiai* and the effects of those energies are not the same from an ontological standpoint. If they were, Barlaam and Akindynos would have been right to say as they did that the energies of God are mere creatures, thereby dragging down God’s energies to the level of what is created. Palamas thinks that such an identification would result in the collapsing of the divine volitions (*thelemata*) and divine participations (*metoxai*) into what is created.<sup>263</sup> But this would be absurd, “[f]or if the energy is in the category of creatures or if these are uncreated (What madness!) in that they exist before they have been created or before creatures (What impiety!), God would not have an energy.”<sup>264</sup> Palamas maintains, however, that God must have an energy and that this energy must be uncreated. This is a theological touchstone, as it were, that he shares with many other of the Greek Fathers and writers who preceded him in the Eastern Orthodox tradition.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> *Capita* 73.

<sup>263</sup> See *Capita* 87.

<sup>264</sup> *Capita* 140.

<sup>265</sup> See, for example, Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 19.49.2-4, which Palamas cites in *Capita* 72. See also *Capita* 81, where Palamas will quote Maximus: God is comprehensible “from his creatures according to his divine energies, namely his eternal will for us, his eternal providence over us and his eternal wisdom concerning us, and, to use the words of the divine Maximus, “his infinite power, wisdom and goodness” (Unidentified text); and at *Capita* 88 Palamas cites Maximus’ *Capita Theologica* 1.48 and 50 as further evidence for the divine *thelemata* being uncreated. Palamas will even cite St. Paul in *Capita* 82 (Rom 1:20) to make his case: *Since the creation of the world the invisible realities of God, namely, his eternal power and divinity, are perceptible to the eye of the mind in created things.* These invisible realities of God (= the energies) are perceptible to the eye of the mind in created things, meaning they are not identical to those created things themselves. Palamas will add Dionysius the Areopagite to the list of those who hold the energies to be uncreated as well. More specifically, he will reference the *DN* 2.11: “We give the name divine distinction to the beneficent processions of the thearchy. For in bestowing abundantly upon all beings participation in all good things it is distinguished in its unity and multiplied in its oneness and it

According to the Eastern doctrine of divine ideas, God created all things, spiritual and corporeal, out of nothing. The act of creation itself was one of God's will, not his essence, for God created freely according to his eternal and unchanging counsel. The word "counsel" in this connection implies not only a free or willful act, but a thoughtful one—the counsel of the three persons. It is the persons who create in and through their energies, not in and through the essence they commonly share. St. John Damascene helps to summarize the doctrine well, writing: "God creates by His thought which immediately becomes a work"<sup>266</sup> .... "God contemplated all things before their existence, formulating them in his mind; and each being received its existence at a particular moment, according to His eternal thought and will (*kata ten theletiken autou axronon ennoian*), which is a predestination, an image, and a model."<sup>267</sup> Commenting on this text, Vladimir Lossky notes that the term "*theletiken-ennoian*" (volitional-thought) is a "perfect expression of the Eastern doctrine of the divine ideas,"<sup>268</sup> because it tells us quite exactly what these ideas are—and what they are not—in God's counsel for all created beings. What they are not are the eternal reasons of created beings found in and determined by the essence of God, which they would be referred to through a form of exemplary causality as in Aquinas.<sup>269</sup> Rather, Lossky thinks the Greek Fathers were correct in viewing the divine ideas as dynamic, thoughtful, and intentional in their existence, and for placing them in

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enters a multiplicity inseparable from the One." Palamas explains that Dionysius holds to the uncreated nature of the processions/energies because "he calls them divine and says they are distinctions belonging to the whole Godhead." (*Capita* 85).

<sup>266</sup> John Damascene, *De fide orth.*, II, 2, PG, XCIV, 865 A.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid*, 837 A.

<sup>268</sup> Lossky, 94.

<sup>269</sup> It is worth noting that Lossky here accuses not only Aquinas but also Augustine as holding the view that the divine ideas are located in the essence of God (Lossky 95-96). While Aquinas is deserving of this accusation (cf. *De Divinis nominibus* 2.3), I think Augustine is not, as I will further make clear in what follows.

that which naturally comes with the necessary (non-volitional) essence of God, namely the divine energies. He writes: “the ideas are to be identified with the will or wills which determine the different modes according to which created beings participate in the creative energies.”<sup>270</sup> There are therefore as many divine ideas (*logoi*) or wills (*thelemata*) as there are individual created beings which relate to those beings in various ways, depending on the higher or lower capacities they possess to participate in the reality of God. It follows that the *logoi* spoken of by the Eastern Orthodox tradition are fundamentally different from, say, the Forms/Ideas of Plato, because they are not “species,” i.e., they are not what we would call secondary substances.<sup>271</sup>

In his *Ambiguum* 7, Maximus the Confessor speaks very well for the Eastern Orthodox tradition in making such a point of difference clear. For Maximus, every human being—and indeed every created thing—has his/her/its own corresponding divine idea (*logos*) in the Word of God (*Logos*) in terms of which they have been made.<sup>272</sup> Then, ideally, all created beings enact movement (*kinesis*) of one kind or another in an attempt to conform themselves to their corresponding *logoi*, “whether by intellect, by reason, by sense-perception, by vital motion, or by some habitual fitness...”<sup>273</sup> until they reach their ultimate perfection in God. That is, until they completely conform themselves to the *logoi* that God has of them, thereby no longer needing any motion, having achieved a stability

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<sup>270</sup> Lossky, 95.

<sup>271</sup> Aristotle’s famous definition of secondary substance from his *Categories* is as follows: “But people speak, too, of secondary substances, to which, as species, belong what are spoken of as the primary substances, and to which, as genera, the species themselves belong. For instance, a particular man belongs to the species “man,” and the genus to which the species belongs is “animal.” So it is these things, like “man” and “animal,” that are spoken of as secondary substances” (C 5). The problem is, as Sinkewicz points out from his commentary on the *150 Capita*, that “Without the energies God would have no individual subsistence. He would exist only on the level of a universal or secondary substance in Aristotle’s terms.” (Sinkewicz, 48). This in turn leads to the theological error of Sabellianism.

<sup>272</sup> *Ambiguum* 7, 1077C.

<sup>273</sup> *Ambiguum* 7, 1077C.

or rest. When it comes to human beings in particular, Maximus thinks that this goal of conformation to the divine ideas is implanted in us by nature (i.e., we cannot help but seek it to some extent given our nature), and that at the end of this conformation process we become “God, being made God by God [and so] to the inherent goodness of the image is added the likeness (cf. Gen 1:26).”<sup>274</sup> Or as he will say elsewhere: “our entire self will wholly pass over to God as an image to its archetype.”<sup>275</sup> Our self as image will therefore possess every perfection of our archetypal *logos*, i.e., every ontological or moral good that is appropriate to us as an individual.

The second point on which scholars have misinterpreted Augustine’s theory of the divine ideas concerns how God’s creative eternity, or perhaps better, the immutability of the divine ideas is understood. Most scholars believe that the undoubted influence that Neoplatonism had on Augustine’s theory of the divine ideas<sup>276</sup> led him to conceive the *rationes* of God as static, purely actual and intelligible realities in the manner of the Platonic Forms. Jacques Maritain, James Wetzel, Fr. Edmund Hill, Eleonore Stump, and Norman Kretzmann provide particularly good representations of this same basic position, though sometimes for different reasons, as will be made clear below.

Speaking for both Aquinas and Augustine, Maritain claims that, for them, God knows all created “essences in His uncreated essence which is His sole specifying

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<sup>274</sup> Ambiguum 7, 1084A.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, 1088A.

<sup>276</sup> See for example, *Confessions* 8.2, where we learn that Marius Victorinus translated certain *libri platoniorum* that Augustine read prior to his conversion and, indeed, that were the impetus for his conversion. The exact identity of the books Augustine read are unknown, but some scholars think they were likely Plotinus’ *Enneads* 1.6 (On Beauty) and Porphyry’s *De Regressu Animae*. Cf. Pierre Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers* 173-82. An overview of Augustine’s early knowledge of Neoplatonism around the time of the *Confessions* can be helpfully found in Robert Crouse’s “*Paucis mutatis verbis*: St. Augustine’s Platonism,” in George Lawless and Robert Dodaro (eds.), *Augustine and his Critics* (London: Routledge, 2000), especially pages 37-50.

*object.*”<sup>277</sup> Maritain concedes that this means that they would have to hold that “God has the entire course of time physically present [i.e., *in its actual being*] to His eternal Instant.”<sup>278</sup> And elsewhere he will specifically say that they view the entire course of time as physically present in the divine ideas—those realities “to which all things and all events and the whole succession of time are present at one stroke in their actuality and their existentiality, and in which there is absolutely nothing variable and absolutely nothing indeterminate.”<sup>279</sup> Immediately we can detect a problem: Does not Maritain’s interpretation of Augustine deny the inherent temporality of creation, which changes (and hopefully advances towards its perfection) over time? St. Basil provides a good summary statement of this worry in his nine homilies on creation known as the *Hexaemeron*, in which he writes that “the proper and natural adornment of the earth is its completion: corn waving in the valleys—meadows green with grass and rich with many coloured flowers—fertile glades and hill-tops shaded by forests.”<sup>280</sup> But in the divine ideas none of this was actually produced. Rather, through these ideas, the earth was impregnated with the power necessary to bring forth, at the appointed time, these various perfections. For Basil, if we were to say that in the divine ideas all of this was actually produced, then the changeability that makes up an essential aspect of temporal creation would be illusory.

Next we come to James Wetzel, who, in the last chapter of his extremely well-received and often cited book, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, defends the uncontroversial claim that humans exist under a temporal mode of being, while God exists under an eternal one. Wetzel then goes on to say that, from God’s eternal

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<sup>277</sup> Maritain, 70; and see 72.

<sup>278</sup> Maritain, 79; from Aquinas, see *I Sent.*, dist. 38, q. 1, a. 5.

<sup>279</sup> Maritain, 93.

<sup>280</sup> *Hexaemeron*, Homily 2.3.

perspective, He anticipates “all the saint’s failures of will. From God’s point of view, conversion does have closure. Human beings, having limited access through grace to God’s way of viewing things, nevertheless have no way of anticipating their own lives.”<sup>281</sup> We can know ourselves up to an extent in our time-bound condition, but never to the extent of anticipating our own lives completely, with all of our failures and triumphs of the will present to our memory. Yet God does have a perfect knowledge of the lives of the saints, according to Wetzel, and this because of His predestinating will already and eternally having bestowed on them the graces necessary for their salvation: “To put it baldly, I am claiming that in terms of how grace operates, the saints live out their lives as the effect in time of an eternal cause. The effect is necessary in the way that events, once they have occurred, are fixed. On this analogy, our lives are set out in advance, predestined in God’s eternity.”<sup>282</sup> Wetzel thinks it follows that, “Saints are empowered in will in so far as they can recollect the ordered self that God has created them to be,”<sup>283</sup> and are enervated in will insofar as they cannot. The problem with Wetzel’s interpretation of Augustine occurs in his claim that the effect is necessary in the sense of already happened, occurred, or actual. Augustine does not believe that there is an “ordered self” in the sense of a perfect, completed paradigm of a saint’s life that *that* saint can hopefully, partially recollect, and that exists in the mind of God in such a way that He cannot be temporally responsive to what *that* saint wills in time, with or without the help of His grace. Saints and sinners alike are temporally bound, as Wetzel himself will point out in various places throughout his book, and so it makes little logical sense for him to

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<sup>281</sup> Wetzel, 215.

<sup>282</sup> Wetzel, 216.

<sup>283</sup> Wetzel, 218.

say that my life narrative, my conversion story, my ultimate eschatological fate, has already been decided before it has been decided. Wetzel bases our hope of redemption on a fiction, an archetypal self that supposedly exists already “fixed” in the mind of the Creator. Plato’s influence on Wetzel’s interpretation of Augustine’s views on predestinating grace looms large, but more important, I think, is what conclusion this Platonic interpretation of Augustine leads us to accept, namely: a dualistic view of the person as two separated *personae*, one temporal and incomplete, the other eternal and complete. Such a dualistic way of thinking may have been familiar to Mani and his disciples, but not to the mature Augustine.<sup>284</sup>

Fr. Edmund Hill, O.P., one of the best twentieth century translators and commentators on Augustine’s *Sermons*, *On the Trinity*, and *On Christian Teaching*, thinks the divine ideas are just Plato’s ideas or forms, except for the fact that they are placed in the divine mind—in the Word; they are the rational plans of creatures, fully actualized, before the work of temporal creation takes place. For Hill, when in the beginning heaven and earth were created, they were planted as “hidden seeds” in the world as the *seminales rationes*, where the fully actualized ideas in the Word would then develop and shine forth, God willing, in their corresponding time-bound creatures. Hill likens this developmental process to the execution of a computer program.<sup>285</sup> The

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<sup>284</sup> As is often pointed out, when Augustine was younger, he remained a “hearer” among the theological sect of the Manicheans for around nine years, whose characteristic belief was in the dualism between good and evil. Such a dualism, they believed, was present at the microcosmic scale in the human person (the human soul being good, the body being evil) and replicated at the macrocosmic scale in the existence of a kingdom of light and a kingdom of darkness that make up the reality of the universe.

<sup>285</sup> P. 411, fn 2; *Sermons 94A-147A on the New Testament*. Hill offers the same interpretation of the divine ideas in his commentary on Book IV of Augustine’s *On the Trinity*, where in fn 68 he writes the following: “These *aeternae rationes* are the platonic ideas or forms, located by Plotinus in the first emanation Mind or Nous, and by Augustine in the Logos or Word of God.... The *aeternae rationes* are not to be identified with the *seminales rationes*, which he was talking about in Book III, 13, note 20, and which

problem with Hill's analogy is that it ignores the distinction Augustine makes between what is "actual" (*actualis*) and what is "complete" (*completus*). Hill takes the divine ideas to be fully actualized, like a computer program, when, in fact, Augustine considers the divine ideas to only completely contain *all possible potentialities for the good* a thing may have according to its nature, and depending on the free choices it makes or does not make, if the creature under consideration is something ontologically more than a rock or a horse. The divine plan for a specific rational creature of its kind cannot be modeled after a computer program, even one of quantum level complexity, because its plan as related to God and the totality of creation cannot be explained by the calculation of already actualized inputs that then lead to determined outputs. For Augustine, human and angelic behavior is unique in that it is mindful and willful, intelligent and free, capable of following divine instruction on what it ought to do, but not constrained to execute that instruction in running the natural course of their existence. I submit that rational creatures are, so to speak, "co-programmers" with God, to modify Hill's analogy in a way in which Augustine would approve, sharing their *potential* for doing what is good with the all-good God.

Finally, we have both Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann interpreting Augustine as holding God's foreknowledge to be immutable based on the fact that God's nature is immutable. According to them, if a temporal event were "earlier or later than or past or future"<sup>286</sup> in relation to God's knowledge, then He would be present in the successiveness of time, which they think would lead to an undermining of His simplicity.

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are, as it were, products of the eternal ideas planted as "seeds" in the creation, or the eternal program for things, conceived in the Logos, written into the structure of the created universe" (Hill, fn 68, page 182).

<sup>286</sup> Stump and Kretzmann, 434.

With this said, they do think that a relation can obtain between an eternal being like God and temporal beings like ourselves, and they describe such a relation in terms of ET-simultaneity (eternal-temporal simultaneity). ET-simultaneity is essentially a relation of co-existence, which means that what is eternal and what is temporal can occur simultaneously. However, Stump and Kretzmann further add very importantly that what is eternal and what is temporal cannot both be related “within the same mode of existence,”<sup>287</sup> as they are both irreducibly real modes of existence. To reduce what is temporal to what is eternal would render time illusory, and to reduce what is eternal to what is temporal would render eternity illusory.<sup>288</sup> Following Boethius and the medievals, however, Stump and Kretzmann claim it is absurd to deny the reality of either mobile time or eternity; and that there is no third alternative mode of existence.<sup>289</sup>

Since we must affirm the reality of two modes of existence, it is necessary to define ET-simultaneity in terms of two observers with two non-symmetrical epistemological perspectives: God’s eternal frame of reference and our temporal frame of reference. Stump and Kretzmann define ET-simultaneity as follows (note that x and y stand for entities and events):

For every x and for every y, x and y are ET-simultaneous iff  
 (i) either x is eternal and y is temporal or vice versa;  
 and  
 (ii) for some observer, A, in the unique eternal reference frame, x and y are both present – i.e., either x is eternally present and y is observed as temporally present, or vice versa;  
 and

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<sup>287</sup> Stump and Kretzmann, 436.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> It is important to note that Stump and Kretzmann do not provide an actual argument as to why it would be absurd to deny the reality of one or the other modes of existence mentioned. All they do is claim that “the medieval adherents of the concept of eternity held that both time and eternity are real and that there is no mode of existence besides those two” (Stump and Kretzmann, 436).

(iii) for some observer, B, in one of the infinitely many temporal reference frames, x and y are both present – i.e., either x is observed as eternally present and y is temporally present, or vice versa.<sup>290</sup>

As their description of the relation proves, Stump and Kretzmann believe that they can actually speak of the “unique eternal reference frame” as always being simultaneous with the “infinitely many temporal reference frames.” This is somewhat unusual insofar as they admit that explaining relational simultaneity in non-Newtonian scientific systems is problematic.<sup>291</sup> Nevertheless, they insist that it is conceptually unproblematic to claim that all temporal entities and events are in a relation of co-existence in God’s eternal “now,” that they are ET-simultaneous.

Stump and Kretzmann then proceed to apply their definition of ET-simultaneity to the now dated example of President Nixon’s death, which was a future contingent at the time that they wrote their article. Specifically, they look at how an eternal entity with its unique frame of reference can relate to this particular future contingent. According to them, while it may be true that Nixon’s death will only be realized at the time of his actual death (which we now know to be April 22, 1994), we must also say that Nixon’s death “is present to an eternal entity”<sup>292</sup> in the manner prescribed by their definition of ET-simultaneity. Next, however, they immediately make a point of denying a vision of Nixon’s death to an eternal entity: “It cannot be that an eternal entity has a vision of Nixon’s death before it occurs.”<sup>293</sup> Stump and Kretzmann concede that a vision of a future contingent event like Nixon’s death is impossible for God, because then an eternal event would be prior to a temporal event, and such an earlier-later relation cannot be

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<sup>290</sup> Stump and Kretzmann, 439.

<sup>291</sup> See Stump and Kretzmann, 437-438.

<sup>292</sup> Stump and Kretzmann 442.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

possible in eternity. With this said, it is also their claim that the sacrificing of God's vision of Nixon's future death does not take away "the actual occasion of Nixon's dying [being] present to an eternal entity."<sup>294</sup> As a matter of fact, all temporal actions and events associated with Nixon from the time of his birth to the time of his death are ET-simultaneous within God's eternal frame of reference. Stump and Kretzmann conclude that "there is a sense in which it is now [prior to Nixon's actual death] true to say that Nixon at the hour of his death is present to an eternal entity,"<sup>295</sup> yet they never explain what sense of "true" they are using.<sup>296</sup> How can an eternal being, while not having a vision of Nixon's death, still have true knowledge of the hour when Nixon will die? Moreover, what is the difference between an eternal entity having a vision of the future and having the future present to it? It appears that Stump and Kretzmann use temporal operators to explain both notions, yet they only choose to reject the former. Not only that, but Augustine actually speaks out vigorously against any such position as complete nonsense in *City of God* 13.11, where he writes that, it is "absurd to say that a man is in death before he reaches death (for to what is his course running as he passes through life, if already he is in death?), and ... it outrage[s] common usage to speak of a man being at once alive and dead, as much as it does so to speak of him as at once asleep and awake."

Another difficulty plagues the misinterpretation that Stump and Kretzmann attribute to Augustine, and it concerns the inconsistent way in which they understand God's omniscience itself. The following text calls attention to the inconsistency: "If we

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Stump and Kretzmann say nothing about the various theories of truth: identity, various correspondence, coherence and pragmatist theories. Nor do they say anything about the bearers of truth: sentences, beliefs, etc. I suspect if pressed, they would opt for an identity theory between the vision or intuition of the observer and a fact.

are considering an eternal entity that is omniscient, it is true to say that that entity is at once aware of Nixon resigning the Presidency and of Nixon on his deathbed (although of course an omniscient entity understands that those events occur sequentially and knows the sequence and the dating of them); it is true to say also that for such an entity both those events are present at once.<sup>297</sup> Given the fact that Stump and Kretzmann are on record earlier as having said that an eternal entity is atemporal and separate from the succession of time, it is inconsistent for them to now say that, from an eternal entity's one and the same epistemological perspective, temporal events can be simultaneous and yet also prior/posterior with respect to that eternal entity.

Stump and Kretzmann attempt to meet this charge of inconsistency by claiming that there is only "one objective reality that contains two modes of real existence in which two different sorts of duration are measured by two irreducibly different sorts of measure: time and eternity."<sup>298</sup> But if Stump and Kretzmann say that time and eternity are "two irreducibly different sorts of measure," one wonders how they could have justifiably postulated ET-simultaneity as an explanatory entity to begin with. After all, no relation can obtain among two *relata* that are totally unlike each other.<sup>299</sup> That is why when Stump and Kretzmann claim that an eternal entity infallibly knows the contingent truths of Nixon's resignation from the presidency and death as ET-simultaneous, we must question what sense of the word "know" they are using. Only by having two senses of "know" can they possibly avoid the absurdity that Nixon's resignation and his death are

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> We are taught as much from Plato, who in the *Timaeus* repeatedly expounds the idea that only like things can be brought into relation with each other. Cf. for example, *Timaeus* 45a-e. Plato. *Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis, 1997.

ET-simultaneous, and so occur at the same time. Even then, however, it is unclear how an event could be known as both occurring now in eternity and in the future.

Eleonore Stump still defends ET-simultaneity to this day, believing her two-tiered (eternal-temporal) ontology can sufficiently explain the interaction between God and man. In the *God of the Bible and God of the Philosophers* (2016), given as the annual Aquinas Lecture at Marquette University, she argues that the God of classical theism, i.e., the immutable, eternal, and absolutely simple God, is the God of the Bible, who is seen to interact with humankind in highly personal and collaborative ways as witnessed, for instance, in the story of Jonah. While her focus is on Aquinas's version of classical theism, she makes clear that what she says equally applies to Augustine as well.<sup>300</sup>

The main objection Stump attempts to answer is: How can an immutable, eternal, and absolutely simple God interact with a person such as Jonah without destroying the coherence of maintaining these three divine attributes in the process? In the story of Jonah, God rescues Jonah after he says a prayer, but would not this entail that God was somehow passively determined by Jonah's plea, thereby causing Him to be mutable, temporal, and complex?<sup>301</sup> Stump answers with a resounding, No, offering an analogy involving Erwin Abbott's short story, *Flatland*, to make her point. In brief, the main plot of *Flatland* revolves around a self-aware two-dimensional square living in a two-dimensional world. One day this square encounters and begins to converse with a similarly self-aware sphere, who inhabits a three-dimensional world. Of course, the sphere cannot adequately explain its three-dimensional existence to the square, who is

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<sup>300</sup> See Stump, 37-38, where she identifies both Augustine and Aquinas as classical theists of the same theological persuasion.

<sup>301</sup> See Stump, 35.

puzzled by this new mode of being it can never occupy in its two-dimensional state. Stump concludes that: “In the story, the two spatial modes of existence, that of Flatland and that of the sphere, are both real; and neither is reducible to the other or to any third thing.”<sup>302</sup> So too with respect to God’s immutable, eternal, and absolutely simple existence and how it can personally relate to our inherently mutable, temporal, and complex existence. According to Stump, Aquinas, Augustine, or any classical theist for that matter, believes that “reality includes both time and eternity as two distinct modes of duration, neither of which is reducible to the other or to any third thing. Nonetheless, on their view, it is possible for inhabitants of the differing modes of duration to interact.”<sup>303</sup> And once again, in addition to the previously mentioned analogy, Stump attempts to rely on ET-simultaneity to explain such interaction. The problem is she admits that “the presentness or simultaneity associated with an eternal God cannot be temporal presentness or temporal simultaneity.”<sup>304</sup> Here, then, is where she totally denies any kind of “real” relation or interaction possible between God and man. God can only be present or simultaneous with time-bound man if and only if He is present or simultaneous with time-bound man. No amount of analogies or philosophical conceptualization can hide this truth. Stump then hedges and says ET-simultaneity is a special kind of simultaneity, in which “all of time is encompassed within the eternal present ... just as the whole Flatland world can be here for someone in three-dimensional space,”<sup>305</sup> but can never bridge the original gap she created between God as eternal and man as temporal, because of the crippling Platonic assumption that they are two *separate* and irreducible forms of

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<sup>302</sup> Stump, 60.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Stump, 61,

<sup>305</sup> Stump, 62.

existence. Her ontology as a whole lacks the middle reality of the divine ideas, which are eternal by a different kind of eternity than that of the divine essence, namely that of the divine will and knowledge, and which are especially emphasized in the Eastern tradition and Augustinian theology.<sup>306</sup> Such incorporeal and eternal reasons may be above the human mind, as they are unchangeable, but they are really present to us in changeable creation. For “unless something of our own were subjoined to them, we should not be able to employ them as our measures by which to judge corporeal things.”<sup>307</sup> Because of their truncated two-tiered ontology, Stump and Kretzmann have to rely on the eternity of the divine essence to explain every attribute (immutability, eternity, and simplicity in particular) pertaining to God as God *and* how He relates to creation. This in turn forces them to say that every temporal entity and event in creation “is present at once to the whole life of eternal God,”<sup>308</sup> or what means the same thing, physically present at once to the eternity of the divine essence. Whether they admit it or not, Stump and Kretzmann have denied the reality of the temporal order in the defense of the immutability, eternity, and simplicity of the divine essence.

Augustine preferred, no doubt to keep the purely actual essence of God distinct from His will and knowledge, to say that the divine essence is existentially *distinct* (not divided) from the divine idea of a creature, with the latter being further distinguishable from the creature itself. For “the formula or idea on which a creature is fashioned is there in the Word of God before it is realized in the fashioning of the creature” and remains

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<sup>306</sup> The importance of the divine ideas in Eastern and Augustinian theology for creation and redemption has been well-canvassed in the secondary literature. See for example, Georges Florovsky, “Creation and Redemption” from Volume III of his *Collected Works*. Nordland Publishing Company, Belmont Massachusetts, 1976; and Roland J. Teske, “The Motive for Creation according to Saint Augustine.” *The Modern Schoolman* LXV, 1988.

<sup>307</sup> *trin.* 12.2.2.

<sup>308</sup> Stump, 64.

there after it comes to be.<sup>309</sup> This idea is life for the creature, i.e., what constitutes its creaturely perfection; and this idea is complete because the creature has “nothing in [its] natural manner of running [its] course in time which was not made causally in that primordial creation.”<sup>310</sup> For this primordial creation contains the nature proper to each thing according to its kind, and so “whenever a creature in its natural development in due course discloses and puts forth perfection, this added something was previously hidden within that creature, if not in a visible and tangible corporeal way, at least by a natural power.”<sup>311</sup> Augustine believes that the goal of this perfection process for creatures is to rest in God, not as He is for Himself (essentially), but as He exists for creation in terms of His will and knowledge expressed in the divine ideas (relatively).<sup>312</sup> We might say that the latter realities in God—those that are distinct from the divine essence—contain “fully, exhaustively, existentially, all there is of being, of the positive, of good, of the ontologically good and of the morally good, in creatures, because it itself causes or makes all of this.”<sup>313</sup> Nothing more of being is ever added to the divine ideas after their establishment. Augustine’s reasoning for this is that God “would not be the perfect worker He is, unless His knowledge were so perfect as to receive no addition from His finished works.”<sup>314</sup>

It follows that through the divine ideas God has a perfect existential and moral knowledge of the whole of creation from moment to moment, insofar as it exists as the kind of thing it now is and as it ultimately ought to be according to the divine ideas by

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<sup>309</sup> The Literal Meaning of Genesis, Book II, 17. See also Book IV, 23, 40.

<sup>310</sup> The Literal Meaning of Genesis Book VI, 11, 18.

<sup>311</sup> DGnL.II.15.30.

<sup>312</sup> See DGnL.IV.18.34.

<sup>313</sup> Maritain, 71.

<sup>314</sup> City of God, 11.21.

which it was originally made. As we saw previously, a divine idea constitutes God's rational plan for a particular creature that will help it keep its natural order and realize its full, God-given, potential. It is a plan that anticipates every good actuality that *that* creature can attain as related to God and the totality of creation. When it comes to any creature, there is no getting to that good before God, no anticipating it, no making it, since it has already been done by Him, who has done, is doing, and will do all good things in heaven and earth.

It is important to emphasize, however, that Augustine never says that what was made causally in that primordial creation is actual, or already existing. It was made "Invisibly, potentially, in their causes, as things that will be in the future are made, yet not made in actuality now (*Quomodo fiunt futura non facta*)."<sup>315</sup> This is something that scholars such as Maritain, Wetzell, Hill, Stump, and Kretzmann assume, perhaps because of their apparent penchant for reading Aquinas backwards into Augustine, or for reading Plato forwards into Augustine. But if one examines Augustine's corpus carefully, and especially his *Commentaries on Genesis*, where we find the bulk of his references to the divine ideas, Augustine only ever defends the position that the divine ideas contain fully, exhaustively, the *potential* goods for the corresponding creatures which are the bearers of these ideas. In his *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, for instance, Augustine claims that the "formulae contained each potentiality" for all creatures, "so that anything would be actualized from them that pleased the one who would make them."<sup>316</sup> Augustine will give numerous examples of this *passim* *DGnL*, including that of a tree and its various

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<sup>315</sup> *DGnL*.VI.6.10. For similar comments by Augustine on the divine ideas only containing the potencies of creatures, see *DGnL*.VI.4.5; *DGnL*.V.5.14; *DGnL*.V.7.20; *DGnL*.VI.5.7-8.

<sup>316</sup> *DGnL*.VI.14.25.

perfections: “Let us, then, consider the beauty of any tree in its trunk, branches, leaves, and fruit. This tree surely did not spring forth suddenly in this size and form, but rather went through a process of growth with which we are familiar.” Specifically, Augustine tells us, it is in the seed that “all those parts existed primordially, not in the dimensions of bodily mass but as a force and causal power.”<sup>317</sup> Saying that it is the potentiality of creatures that can be actualized according to the divine ideas ensures that the *ordo temporum* is not rendered illusory, being merely reduced to what is eternally actual and immutable. Augustine will make similar comments to this effect in his other two commentaries on Genesis, namely, his *Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichees* and *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*.<sup>318</sup>

Augustine was a firm believer in the potential aspects of created reality, writing elsewhere that all things in creation “have been seminally and primordially created in the very fabric, as it were, or texture of the elements; but they require the right occasion actually to emerge into being. For the world itself, like mothers heavy with young, is heavy with the causes of things coming to birth.”<sup>319</sup> But these things are not yet actual, possessing no definite number, weight, and measure, i.e., possessing no formed nature

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<sup>317</sup> *DGnL.V.23.44.*

<sup>318</sup> See, for example, *DGnM.I.7.11; DGnM.I.12.18; DGnI.3.10; DGnI.4.11; DGnI.4.12; DGnI.4.14; DGnI.4.18; DGnI.15.51.* In all of these texts, Augustine will speak of the potentiality of creation for its proper perfection in terms of the “unformed” or “formless” matter (what the Greeks call “chaos” = *χάος*) which God made *ex nihilo* and that was originally referred to as heaven and earth. This confused and chaotic matter is the “seed” of heaven and earth, i.e., it is capable of receiving formation according to the will and knowledge of God its Creator, but has not yet. The English translation of all of these texts that I am citing comes from Roland Teske, who comments at one point: “Augustine explains that unformed matter can be called heaven and earth, because it is the seed out of which heaven and earth will certainly come. It is a figure of speech, metonymy, which Augustine also illustrates by Christ’s words [i.e., Jn 15:15 and Jn 16:12]” (Teske, p. 59, fn 40) (*The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, Volume 84. Trans. by Roland J. Teske, S.J.. The Catholic University of America Press: Washington D.C., 1991).

<sup>319</sup> *trin.3.2.16.*

(number), no ultimate end to strive towards (weight), and no relations to anything else (measure).

We can say, for example, that no possible perfection of a human being is lacking in the corresponding idea for him in the Word, for God possesses perfect knowledge of human nature in itself and as it is lived in the concrete members of the species. The idea for a particular person contains each “good” potentiality for him, so that he would be actualized from his corresponding idea if he so chose to *conform* himself to it. Augustine noticeably picks up on this example in what can only be said to be a side issue of the final book of *The City of God*, i.e., whether or not infants who have died are going to be resurrected in the body which they would have had if they were given the chance to mature normally. Here, Augustine reinforces the point that the divine idea of any thing contains all *potential* perfections for that thing. He writes of the dead infant in particular that it was:

... wanting the perfect stature of its body; for even the perfect infant lacks the perfection of bodily size, being capable of further growth. This perfect stature is, in a sense, so possessed by all that they are conceived and born with it—that is, they have it potentially, though not yet in actual bulk; just as all the members of the body are potentially in the seed, though, even after the child is born, some of them, the teeth, for example, may be wanting. In this seminal principle of every substance, there seems to be, as it were, the beginning of everything which does not yet exist, or rather does not appear, but which in the process of time will come into being, or rather into sight. In this, therefore, the child who is to be tall or short is already tall or short.”<sup>320</sup>

One can see that the fundamental assumption of Augustine’s argument is that some thing cannot come from nothing and no thing ever could: If there was not some sense in which

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<sup>320</sup> *City of God* 22.14. Augustine has much the same to say about the potential reality of human beings in *DGnL.VI9.16*: “in that first creation of the world, when God created all things simultaneously, He created man in the sense that He made the man who was to be, that is, the causal principle of man to be created, not the actuality of man already created” (*In illa enim prima conditione mundi, cum Deus omnia simul creavit, homo factus est qui esset futurus, ratio creandi hominis, non actio creati*).

the infant already possessed the perfection of its bodily size and form of its members (potentially), then there would be no rational way to maintain that it could ever, through the process of time and its own deficient being, achieve these perfections (actually). These perfections would be some ‘things’ that literally originated in ‘nothing,’ but it is absurd to say that something can come from nothing.<sup>321</sup> Hence the need for there to be all of these perfections seminally in the principle of the human substance, i.e., in its corresponding divine idea.

This in turn raises an important question: If in fact all of the perfections of human nature and its conative and cognitive powers are contained in the divine ideas, then would not this mean that we as human beings are necessarily limited in the number of goods we can accomplish? Speaking of the human will in particular, Augustine writes: “Wherefore our wills also have just so much power as God willed and foreknew that they should have; and therefore whatever power they have, they have it within most certain limits; and whatever they are to do, they are most assuredly to do, for He whose foreknowledge is infallible foreknew that they would have the power to do it, and would do it.”<sup>322</sup> According to Augustine, these “most certain limits” imposed on the human will, because of God’s perfect knowledge of the human will, are necessary, but not necessary in any sense that would be controlling of our freedom:

For if that is to be called our necessity which is not in our power, but even though we be unwilling effects what it can effect—as, for instance, the necessity of death—it is manifest that our wills by which we live up-rightly or wickedly are not under such a necessity; for we do many things which, if we were not willing, we should certainly not do. This is primarily true of the act of willing itself—for if we will, it is; if we will not, it is not—for we should not will if we were unwilling.

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<sup>321</sup> Creation *ex nihilo* provides no exception to Augustine’s above argument, because creation did not poof into existence by its non-existent self, but rather came into existence as the deliberate act of God’s will and knowledge.

<sup>322</sup> City of God 5.9.

But if we define necessity to be that according to which we say that it is necessary that anything be of such or such a nature, or be done in such and such a manner, I know not why we should have any dread of that necessity taking away the freedom of our will.<sup>323</sup>

Death is not in our power; growing old is not in our power; being born is not in our power; and so too for a host of other things natural to human life too many to enumerate. These happen to us whether we will them or not. It is Augustine's claim that our wills are not necessary in this sense of "not in our power." However, they are still necessary in the sense that if one wills such and such an action, then of necessity one wills such and such an action, whether for good or ill. As a result of our possessing a definite nature, distinct from other natures in the mind of God, we are limited in the number of potential goods, and therefore evils—which are merely privations of goods—that we can willingly acquire or avoid as human beings. This necessary consequence of our partaking in one and same human nature, which has a corresponding complete divine idea to go along with it, is not necessary in any vicious, freedom-destroying sense. It is only necessary in how things actually are for us, because of the reality we inhabit as human beings.

The Greek Fathers also present a unified philosophical front when it comes to saying that God has a perfect knowledge of human nature through the divine ideas, with this perfect knowledge only including the potential perfection, or actuality, of man. Nyssa, for instance, writes in his *On the Making of Man* XXIX.1 that, "in the power of God's foreknowledge, all the fullness of human nature had pre-existence (and to this the prophetic writing bears witness, which says that God *knoweth all things before they be*)."<sup>323</sup> But he makes clear that the "fullness" he speaking of is potential:

just as we say that in wheat, or in any other grain, the whole form of the plant is potentially included—the leaves, the stalk, the joints, the grain, the beard—and do

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid, 5.10.

not say in our account of its nature that any of these things has pre-existence, or comes into being before the others, but that the power abiding in the seed is manifested in a certain natural order, not by any means that another nature is infused into it—in the same way we suppose the human germ to possess the potentiality of its nature, sown with it at the first start of its existence, and that it is unfolded and manifested by a natural sequence as it proceeds to its perfect state...<sup>324</sup>

He will repeat the same point elsewhere: “the form of the future man is there potentially, but is concealed because it is not possible that it should be made visible before the necessary sequence of events allows it.”<sup>325</sup> Nyssa is arguing that temporal things must follow a temporal sequence of development appropriate to their respective natures. It follows that a grain of wheat cannot instantly produce its fruit, or pre-exist in its mature state where it would bear its fruit. Similarly, the “seed” of a human being cannot instantly become an adult, or pre-exist as such; and so on for everything else created and that exists in time.<sup>326</sup> If it could be otherwise, then things in time could exist as actual before they are actual, which would be the very height of philosophical absurdity. The Greek Fathers thus understood the metaphysical and logical necessity of keeping creatures distinct from their corresponding ideas in the Word. It does not follow, however, that we as rational creatures cannot participate in our corresponding ideas. We can, and we should, for the more we do so, the more progress we make towards gaining the knowledge that God has of us in Him, i.e., the knowledge of how we ought to be in relation to God and the totality of creation, which constitutes our ultimate perfection. Nazianzen has a similar message to Nyssa when it comes to knowing ourselves in God. He will say, when we have ascended to our archetypal selves in the divine ideas, which

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<sup>324</sup> XXIX.3.

<sup>325</sup> XXIX.4.

<sup>326</sup> See Basil’s *Hexaemeron*, Homily 5.2 and 9.2 for more on the importance of preserving the temporal development of all created things.

we now desire but have not yet attained, then *we shall know even as we are known* (1 Cor 13:12). We shall know ourselves, in other words, as God knows us as we should be in Him; and to know ourselves as God knows us is something He actively wants for the whole human race.<sup>327</sup> Those who do not ascend to their archetypal selves, or those who fail to attain the likeness of God but still yet retain the image, will not be formed in such a way as to attain their ultimate perfection as creatures that are capable of God.<sup>328</sup>

Like the Greek Fathers, Augustine will often speak of our *conformation* to our corresponding divine ideas as constituting our ultimate perfection. One instance of this that particularly comes to mind can be found in Book XI of *The City of God*, where he will first say of the righteous angels that they know creation:

... not in itself, but by this better way, in the wisdom of God, as if in the art by which it was created; and, consequently, they know themselves better in God than in themselves, though they have also this latter knowledge. For they were created, and are different from their creator. In Him, therefore, they have, as it were, a noonday knowledge; in themselves, a twilight knowledge.... For there is a great difference between knowing a thing in the design in conformity to which it was made, and knowing it in itself—e.g., the straightness of lines and correctness of

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<sup>327</sup> *Oration* 28.XVII.

<sup>328</sup> Maximus writes in this connection: “[W]hoever abandons his own beginning [i.e., by not *conforming* himself to his corresponding *logos* in God] and is irrationally swept along toward non-being is rightly said to have “slipped down from above,” because he does not move toward his own beginning and cause according to which and for which and through which he came to be. He enters a condition of unstable gyrations and fearful disorder of soul and body, and though his end remains in place, he brings about his own defection by deliberately turning to what is worse. Keeping these things in mind the phrase “to slip down” can be understood properly. It means that someone who had the ability to direct the steps of his soul unswervingly toward God voluntarily exchanged what is better, his true being, for what is worse, non-being. (*Ambiguum* 7.1084D-1085A). Augustine will echo such a statement, claiming that all creatures are meant to be formed according to the divine ideas, and in this “conversion and formation the creature in its own way imitates the Divine Word, the Son of God, who is eternally united with the Father in the perfect likeness and equal essence by which He and the Father are one.” However, Augustine adds that if a creature does not imitate its *ratione* in the Word, if it turns away from its Creator, then it will remain “formless and imperfect” (*DGnL*.I.4.9). Augustine continues this train of thought in the next chapter of *DGnL*, but talks specifically of the formation (or lack thereof) of intellectual creatures. He notes that only in God being is the same as living and living is the same as living wisely and happily. When it comes to intellectual creatures, being is the same as living, but living is not the same as living wisely and happily. Augustine explains that this is because “when it is turned away from changeless Wisdom, its life is full of folly and wretchedness and so it is in an unformed state.” (*DGnL*.I.5.10). See also *DGnL*.I.9.17. For a more down to earth description of this turning away from God and the negative effects that this has on the life of human beings, see Augustine’s account of his own experience with this in his *Confessions* 8.5.

figures is known in one way when mentally conceived, in another when described on paper; and justice is known in one way in the unchangeable truth, in another in the spirit of a just man.<sup>329</sup>

Augustine believes that, as the spiritual beings we were meant to become, we have some access to this angelic, “noonday knowledge” of ourselves; but as we are also material beings, and as we often let this latter “aspect” of our being dominate the former, we tend to largely possess a “twilight knowledge” of ourselves. As St. Paul famously says, and as Augustine loved to quote in this connection, *Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we live by faith, not by sight* (2 Cor 5: 6-7). And to quote again from St. Paul: *For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known* (1 Cor 13:12). With this said, Augustine was confident that our supreme good lies in this “noonday knowledge” of ourselves, wherein we see how we ought to be as creatures of God; and that such a good, “is not far from every one of us: for in it *we live, and move, and have our being*” (Acts 17: 27-28).<sup>330</sup>

Equally important, too, is that Augustine views our participation in the divine ideas as “pleasing” to God, which calls attention to the fact that God desires all persons to conform themselves to him, as he is accessible to them: “God wants to make you like him.”<sup>331</sup> Yet such good news is immediately counterbalanced by what it implies, namely that we are not currently as like God as we should be. While we all are the image of God insofar as we possess a rational mind,<sup>332</sup> this does not necessarily mean that we are all

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<sup>329</sup> *City of God* 11.29. See also *DGnL.II.8.18*; *DGnL.IV.22.39*; *DGnL.IV.23.40*; *DGnL.IV.24.41*; *DGnL.IV.25.42*; *DGnL.IV.26.43*; *DGnL.IV.28.45*; *DGnL.IV.30.47*; *DGnL.IV.34.53*; *DGnL.IV.35.56*.

<sup>330</sup> *trin.8.3.5*.

<sup>331</sup> Sermon 9.9, 420.

<sup>332</sup> Augustine writes: “When man is said to have been made to the image of God, these words refer to the interior man, where reason and intellect reside” (*DGnM.I.17.28*). For similar statements on the

“like” God or exist ‘according to the likeness of God’ after which he originally created us (Gn 1:26).<sup>333</sup>

When Augustine speaks of man being made according to the likeness of God, I would argue that this refers to our development, in co-operation with Him, to conform ourselves to His will and knowledge. It has a perfective sense—to make us what God knows we ought to be according to His divine *rationes* for us. It is a form of creation distinct from the creation of all things together, after which He rested on the seventh day; we might call it continual creation, or the kind of creation of which Christ spoke of when he said, *My Father is working still* (Jn 5:17).<sup>334</sup> Augustine will stress that this creation demands action on our part. Near the end of *DGnM*, Augustine will state what it means for man to be made in the image and likeness of God, phrasing it in terms of the genders of male and female, respectively: “Thus let man be made to the image and likeness of God, male and female, that is, intellect and action.”<sup>335</sup> While some may object to

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mind/reason/intellect of man being made in the image of God, see *DGnM*.II.7.9; *DGnI*.16.55; *DGnL*.III.20.30.

<sup>333</sup> Genesis 1:26 as it appears in the Greek Septuagint reads: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ’ εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν. By contrast, we have the same text from the Vulgate: *et ait faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram*.

<sup>334</sup> See *DGnL*.V.20.40.

<sup>335</sup> *DGnM*.I.25.43. The Greek East appears to have a similar position to Augustine in identifying the image with the intellect/mind/or reason of man and the likeness with the actions required to make us ‘like’ God. A classic Orthodox text that bears this out is St. John of Damascus’ *On Virtues* from the *Philokalia*, vol. 2, pp. 341-342: “As a golden seal to this plain homily, we will add a brief account of the way in which what is most precious of all that God has created — the noetic and intelligent creature, man — has been made, alone among created beings, in God’s image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1: 26). *First, every man is said to be made in the image of God as regards the dignity of his intellect and soul* — as regards, that is to say, the quality in man that cannot be scrutinized or observed, is immortal and endowed with free will, and in virtue of which he rules, begets and constructs. *Second, every man is said to be made in the likeness of God as regards his possession of the principle of virtue and as regards his imitation of God through virtuous and godlike actions*. Such actions consist in having deep sympathy for one’s fellow men, in mercy, pity and love towards one’s fellow servant, and in showing heartfelt concern and compassion. ‘Be merciful,’ says Christ our God, ‘as your heavenly Father is also merciful’ (cf. Luke 6 : 36). Every man possesses that which is according to the image of God, ‘for the gifts of God are irrevocable’ (cf. Rom. : 29). But only a few — those who are virtuous and holy, and have imitated the goodness of God to the limit of human powers — possess that which is according to the likeness of God. May we too be found worthy of His sublime compassion, having conformed ourselves to Him through good actions and become imitators of all who have ever been

Augustine's identification of the male with intellect (image of God) and female with action (likeness of God), one must first remember that this is an allegorical reading of Genesis 1:26 on his part. In his subsequent literal interpretation found in *DGnL*, he will clearly state that "she certainly had a mind, and a rational mind, and therefore she also was made to the image of God."<sup>336</sup> Second, we must remember that male and female, taken in this allegorical spirit, are meant to complement each other in a kind of inseparable spiritual union. From this union of image and likeness, male and female, intellect and action, Augustine thinks spiritual fruit will be brought forth in the effect of holding "the flesh in subjection, as well as other things [that concern] human perfection."<sup>337</sup> According to Augustine, it is God that bids us to perfect the image in us according to His likeness through the performance of good works, and that He will "give us rest after all of these works."<sup>338</sup>

At *DGnI*.16, Augustine will further explain his literal approach to explaining the doctrine of the likeness. Here, he will speak of it in terms of the concept of participation. Augustine will ask why the Scriptures say, "Let us make man to our image and likeness." Are not all images like that of which they are images? He answers his own question in the affirmative, but notes that not every thing that is like something else can be said to be its image. For some thing to be called the image of something else it must have its origin from this other thing. In addition, we must make another distinction between what is 'like' and 'likeness' itself. For example, there is a difference between a chaste person and

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faithful servants of Christ. For mercy is His and to Him are due all glory, honour and worship, together with His unoriginate Father and His all-holy, blessed and life-creating Spirit, now and always and through all the ages. Amen." (emphasis mine)

<sup>336</sup> *DGnL*.III.22.34.

<sup>337</sup> *DGnM*.I.25.43.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid*.

chastity; a strong person and strength; a wise person and wisdom. The former persons being such and such depends on their relation to, or participation in, these latter realities. And these latter realities, Augustine thinks, are found “in God,” where there is chastity which is not chaste by participation; strength which is not strong by participation; and wisdom which is not wise by participation. Augustine concludes that whatever things God made that are like Him in these and other respects are like by participation in these likenesses themselves.<sup>339</sup> He explains these distinctions in relation to Gen 1:26: “the addition, ‘to the likeness,’ after it had said, ‘to the image,’ was meant to show that what was called the image is not like God in the manner of one participating in some likeness, but that this image is itself the likeness, in which all things participate which are said to be like. Thus there is in God chastity itself, by participation in which souls are chaste, and wisdom, by participation in which souls are wise, and beauty, by participation in which all beautiful things are beautiful.”<sup>340</sup> It follows that if the Scriptures mentioned only ‘likeness,’ they would not have sufficiently indicated our origin from Him; and if they had mentioned only ‘image,’ they would have sufficiently indicated our origin from Him, “but not that it was so like to Him that it was not merely like, but likeness itself.”<sup>341</sup> It is the likeness itself of God that forms us and brings us into the unity with God which we were meant for before the foundation of the world.<sup>342</sup>

According to Augustine, God wants to “love us for actually being what he now loves us that we might be,” in the complete divine idea he has for each one of us, “and

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<sup>339</sup> *DGnI.16.57.*

<sup>340</sup> *DGnI.16.58.*

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>342</sup> *DGnI.16.58.* See also *DGnL.IV.17.29.*

are not such as he hates because we are (*non quales odit quia sumus*),<sup>343</sup> in our presently incomplete and sinful time-bound condition. Augustine often preached this same lesson, that God does not love us as we are, but rather hates us insofar as we are sinful, thereby failing to achieve the likeness to Him we can and ought to achieve. This is analogous, he thinks, to how sick people hate themselves as they are, insofar as they are ill, and how doctors hate their sick patients, insofar as they hate their patients' illnesses. As the doctor of our souls, God has compassion for us, because while He hates us as we are, because we are afflicted with many "fevers" of the soul, such as avarice, lust, hatred, covetousness, lechery, and so forth, He wants to make us what we are not yet. He wants to make us better. He wants to make us like Him. Augustine thinks we see this particularly in the example of Christ, who only loved sinners because of the good he wished to make in them and for them, not because of the sin he found in them.<sup>344</sup> It is up to us to let him make us into the kinds of persons we are not yet, into spiritual men and women. We can and must help the wellness process along, according to Augustine, by making an effort with God, by listening gladly to what he orders, and by gladly doing what he orders. And if not gladly, we must force ourselves to "co-operate" with God, so that God, as doctor, and we, as patients, may persecute our illnesses together.<sup>345</sup>

Nevertheless, this healing of human nature will never make us what God is, no matter how healthy we become. God only promised to make us what He is, "after a fashion, that is to say, an imitator of God like an image, but not the kind of image that the Son is."<sup>346</sup> To give us some understanding of how we can be a kind of image of God but

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<sup>343</sup> *trin.* 1.10.21; CCSL 50.59. The Latin *odit* is a form of *odio*, meaning to hate or to dislike.

<sup>344</sup> Sermon 335L.5, 420 or later?

<sup>345</sup> Sermon 9.10.

<sup>346</sup> Sermon 9.9.

not the kind of image that the Son is, Augustine will draw on an example he often uses in his *Sermons*: that of the difference between the emperor, his son, and the coins that bear his image. Augustine thinks the emperor's image is carried differently by a gold sovereign than how it is carried by the emperor's son; these two different images of the emperor are not of equal ontological weight. So too, we are God's coins, but better ones, insofar as we are His coins endowed with life and intelligence, and so capable of knowing whose image we carry and to whose image we were originally minted.

Because we were created *imago Dei*, Augustine will say that it is the nature of the human person, and the human mind in particular, that it order itself according to the eternal pattern of righteousness present in God for it, which exemplifies how it ought to be as related to God and the rest of creation.<sup>347</sup> Following Augustine's previous coin analogy, we might say this is how we as God's coins are restruck in a way which actually surpasses our "first issuance," so to speak. When we let God restrike us in the furnace of charity, we quite literally touch the Master Minter himself, for the re-minting effected by divine ideas, as expressions of God's will and knowledge, are himself as He is accessible to us.<sup>348</sup>

The above minting process renews the image of God in us that was damaged by the fall and our own personal sins. Of course, this does not happen instantaneously: "The renewal of which we speak is not effected in the single moment of return, like the renewal which takes place in baptism in a single moment through the remission of all sins—none whatsoever remaining unremitted."<sup>349</sup> Rather, Augustine likens our rise to

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<sup>347</sup> *trin.*10.7.5.

<sup>348</sup> See *Conf.* 12.4, 38, where Augustine will speak of God's will and knowledge as being no less God than the divine essence. They are God, albeit God as He interacts with creation.

<sup>349</sup> *trin.*14.23.17.

contemplating God, or our greater and greater *conformation* to God's divine will and knowledge, to recovering after a bout of fevers or after some harm has been done to the body; our fevers may cease or a dart may be pulled from our body quite quickly, but that is different from the convalescing that takes place after which one's full health returns, which must take "effect by gradual process."<sup>350</sup> So too with our defaced and distorted image: It is one thing to remove the cause of its weakening, by the forgiveness of sins, yet it is quite another thing to go about strengthening it, which takes place by a gradual process of grace working *on* (passive) and *with* (active) our human nature and its various conative and cognitive powers. Augustine views this divinely-directed recovery process as a distinct form of grace from the grace of creation, to which he often refers to as re-creation.<sup>351</sup>

To support the view that God continues to be involved with his incomplete creation after its first establishment in the divine ideas, Augustine frequently cites Jn 5:17: *My Father is working until now, and I myself am working*. It is his claim that after the initial act of creation God holds together, and providentially provides for, everything that he has made; and that this is a form of creation that will take place in time until the final Apotheosis of creation, the "Sabbath of Sabbaths,"<sup>352</sup> when everything that has remained with God will enjoy eternal rest in God. However, everything else that has not

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<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

<sup>351</sup> See for example, Sermon 260D.2. Such a distinction between these two different kinds of creation can be found in the Eastern tradition as well. See for instance Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium* 4.3: "For we recognize a twofold creation of our nature, the first that whereby we were made, the second that whereby we were made anew. But there would have been no need of the second creation had we not made the first unavailing by our disobedience. Accordingly, when the first creation had waxed old and vanished away, it was needful that there should be a new creation in Christ."

<sup>352</sup> Sermon 9.21.

will be left to its own self-imposed temporal demise, returning from the nothingness from whence it came, and in which it foolishly placed its hope for happiness.<sup>353</sup>

Augustine is careful to keep the two forms of creation he has spoken of as distinct (creation and re-creation), and the corresponding realities that go along with them (immutable and time-bound): “the unchangeable formulae [or ideas] for all creatures in the Word of God are one thing... [and] yet another these which carrying on from those he is working until now.”<sup>354</sup> Augustine will return to this distinction multiple times in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. He gives an example of it in action: “I say that in that first establishment of things, in which God created all things simultaneously together, man was not to be found as he is now, not only as an adult but not even as an infant, not only as an infant, but not even as a fetus in his mother’s womb, not only this, but not even as the visible seed of a human being.”<sup>355</sup> In short, he was to be found as ‘complete’<sup>356</sup> in his

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<sup>353</sup> See *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book IV, 12, 23. Augustine speaks of this Sabbath day in Books 12 and 13 of the *Confessions*, too, noting that on this day temporal creation will participate in the eternity of its Creator. Such will be a day without end, a day on which God will be all in all, and creation will find final rest in Him (See for example, *Conf.* 13.24.35-25.38).

<sup>354</sup> *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book V, 12, 28.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid*, Book VI, 10. According to Augustine, the unchangeable ideas for creatures reside in the eternity of the divine will and knowledge (i.e., in the creative function of the Word of God), not in the eternity of the divine essence. They are expressions of the divine will and knowledge itself, and so cannot be placed into the category of creaturely existence. Augustine will discuss this at *DGnL*.IV.3-6 in terms of the numbers, weights, and measures that God used in that first establishment of things and after which He rested on the seventh day. He argues throughout these chapters that the numbers, measures, and weights of things are *in* God (*DGnL*.IV.3.7); that these three realities that constitute the complete natures of things are not “created beings” on pain of an infinite causal and explanative regress (*DGnL*.IV.4.10); that they are, specifically, in “God the Creator” (*DGnL*.IV.5.11); and that since creatures were ordered in the primordial creation to have their own numbers, measures, and weights, these three realities must not be placed “outside” of God, but nor can they be placed in the essence of God (*DGnL*.IV.6.12-13). However, only later in *DGnL* will Augustine specifically place these three realities in His will and knowledge, for God not only must be said to have originally created all things with knowledge (see, for example, *DGnL*.V.13.29), but also according to His decision as Creator, “whose will constitutes the necessity of things”—their numbers, weights, and measures. Augustine will also reiterate here that this determination of the divine will for created things in the divine ideas cannot be said to be “in the created world” or, as he said previously, “outside” of God (*DGnL*.VI.15.26).

<sup>356</sup> It is important to recall that Augustine makes a distinction between what is complete and what is actual. See page 105 of this dissertation. To say man is ‘complete’ in his corresponding divine idea is not to say that he is endowed from the beginning of his existence with all possible goodness of will and strength of understanding. What it means is that the divine idea for man completely contains *all possible*

corresponding divine idea. But man as he is found now, whether as an adult, visible seed, or at whatever stage of development in between, is partly complete, partly incomplete, in his own existence.

Perhaps now we can better understand why Augustine will make statements to the effect of: “it is what [God] wills that will of necessity be in the future, and it is those things that he has foreknown which will really be in the future;”<sup>357</sup> and “He knows unchangeably all things which shall be, and all things which He shall do.”<sup>358</sup> Taken out of context, the previous statements sound like an affirmation of predestination (maybe even double-predestination) to the ears of most scholars.<sup>359</sup> But by placing them within the context of Augustine’s theory of the divine ideas, I believe they only support a reasonable divine providence. First, the only things that will of necessity be in the future are those

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*potentialities for the good* he may have according to his rational nature. Because Augustine will make this distinction, I find it unfair to attribute to him the “Western” position that man before the fall was in no way potential, but perfect in will and understanding. Kallistos Ware will interpret Augustine in this way in his *Excerpts from the Orthodox Church*, Part II Faith and Worship: “According to Augustine, man in Paradise was endowed from the start with all possible wisdom and knowledge: his was a realized, and in no sense potential, perfection.” But for Augustine, man is only created as complete, not as perfect in the sense of already actual, or already at rest. Augustine will even point out that with respect to Adam’s paradisaic “freedom” that it does not represent the full perfection/deification (or Augustine will prefer “amelioration”) of man. Only the liberty of Christ does—the liberty of the second Adam. This is something I discuss extensively in Chapter 9 and hinted at in Chapter 1 as the solution to the problem of theological fatalism.

<sup>357</sup> The Literal Meaning of Genesis, Book VI, 17, 28.

<sup>358</sup> *City of God* 5.9.

<sup>359</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan thinks that Augustine’s mature theology—his “Augustinism” as it has come to be known—“had in many ways gone beyond even the Western theological tradition (not to mention the Eastern tradition) by positing a doctrine of predestination, including predestination to damnation, and of the irresistibility of grace.”<sup>359</sup> To support his interpretation, he first cites Augustine’s *City of God* 5.9, where Augustine claims that all human willings are part of the order of causes included in God’s foreknowledge. This by itself may not land Augustine in a fatalistic position, Pelikan argues, but his eventual inclusion of all human willings as the causal effects of God’s predestinating will does. However, the following text he cites from *City of God* 22.2 does not prove this: “according to that will of his which is as eternal as his prescience, certainly he has already done in heaven and on earth all the things that he has willed—not only things past and present, but even things still future.” This text is frequently mentioned by scholars trying to catch Augustine in a form of predestinationism when, in fact, it serves as a proof text for his innocence of such a charge. Firstly, we must note once again how careful Augustine is in specifying that it is the eternity of the divine will that is at stake here, not the eternity of the divine essence. That is, we are discussing God’s role as creator and not his role as generator of the Son and Spirator of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, what Augustine says is perfectly consistent with the Eastern doctrine of the divine ideas and how they unchangingly relate to created beings.

things that God wills, because the divine ideas are complete, not lacking any “good” potentialities for their respective creatures existing in time. Potentialities for evil provide no exception, for they are quite literally nothing on Augustine’s account; they are mere nihilations or privations that are parasitic upon the existence of the good but not constitutive of the good.

Second, the only things that will really be in the future are those things that God has unchangeably foreknown in the divine ideas, because it is based on them that God knows the future through their primordially complete causality, effected *through* the Son and *in* the Holy Spirit, which actualizes creatures at the appropriate times, in accord with the divine will and knowledge for those creatures, as well as their free choices, when considering the rational creation. Evil actions on the part of rational creatures once again provide no exception to the above account, because evil does not exist as a positive reality for Augustine. It has no proper mode of being in itself. With this said, in knowing all the potential goods of creatures through the divine ideas, God knows all the possible evils that could befall them as well, for such evils are nothing else than privations of the potential goods present in the divine ideas. In other words, God knows all possible evils through the goods of which they are privations. He knows how far they fall short of the ideal of what they can be in Him.

The king Hezekiah and his miraculous recovery from an illness he was suffering provides an occasion to witness Augustine’s theory of divine ideas in action. As the story goes, Hezekiah was going to die because of natural, secondary causes, but God extended his life by fifteen years after hearing his prayers. Augustine claims this is something that

God had foreknown he would do before the foundation of the world.<sup>360</sup> Since this was something God foreknew that he was going to do, it was something that was really going to be in the future. But how is this not an instance of divine pre-determination, if God's extending of Hezekiah's life was decided before he even existed? The answer is found in the divine idea for Hezekiah, which causally interacted with the time-bound man himself. We might say that, built into the very idea of Hezekiah, there is every kind of perfection that was, is, and would be offered to the man himself (even life of body and soul), provided that he patterns himself after God's eternally complete idea of him in the appropriate way, at the right time, and in the right circumstances. In Hezekiah's case, God's eternal will for Hezekiah and Hezekiah's own temporal will matched up, leading to his miraculous recovery recounted in 2 Kings 20:1; 2 Chronicles 32:24; and Isaiah 38:1. This is an instance of predestination, but one of potentialities, namely the "good" potentialities Hezekiah actualized by his free choice, helped along by God's good will for him. The worry remains, however, that this personal activity of God, hearing the prayers of a dying man, somehow threatens both divine transcendence and immutability. To which I answer it jeopardizes neither: God's essence remains transcendent, and God's will did not have to change to personally respond to Hezekiah, for God decided before the foundation of the world to give (maybe not always in the way people expect, to be sure) when people "ask" of Him with a sincere faith (Matthew 7:7). Augustine writes: "It gives us firm hope that no one who asks, seeks and knocks leaves the Lord's presence empty-handed."<sup>361</sup> Hezekiah asked, and so he received.

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<sup>360</sup> The Literal Meaning of Genesis, Book VI, 17, 28.

<sup>361</sup> Sermon 105A, date uncertain.

God's will according to the divine ideas is thus genuinely eternal on my view, because nothing new happens to God either essentially or accidentally on account of a new decision of His will. All of His decisions as to how to perfect his creation have already been prejudged on the basis of the everlasting divine ideas. Augustine writes of God's will: "His will is singly, simultaneously, sempiternally all that he wills, not willing now and then, on this or that. He does not will now what he nilled before, or nill now what he willed before, since that would show a changeable will, and anything changeable is not eternal, and 'our God is eternal.'"<sup>362</sup> Unlike human beings, God does not act under the aspect of time, sometimes choosing this, sometimes choosing that, "but by the eternal and unchanging, stable formulae of his Word, co-eternal with himself, and by a kind of brooding [*fovebat*], if I may so put it, of his equally co-eternal Spirit."<sup>363</sup>

In one of his early works, *On the Immortality of the Soul*, Augustine uses an analogy involving the will of an artist to make the point that something immutable can move something mutable without undergoing any change in itself: "there can be a certain thing which is not changed when it moves a changeable thing. For when the intention of the mover to bring the body which it moves to the end it desires is not changed, while the body which is acted upon is changed by this motion from moment to moment, and when that intention of accomplishment, which obviously remains unchanged, moves both the members of the artificer and the wood or stone which are subject to the artificer, who may doubt that what we have said follows as a logical consequence."<sup>364</sup> Nevertheless, God's will is really present in the *ordo temporum*, because His decisions are actuated at

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<sup>362</sup> *Conf.* 12.3.18.

<sup>363</sup> *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book I, 18, 36.

<sup>364</sup> *De immortalitate animae* 3.4. Trans. by George G. Leckie, *St. Aurelius Augustine: Concerning the Teacher and On the Immortality of the Soul*. D. Appleton-Century Company: New York, 1938.

the fitting time, in relation to the appropriate rational and non-rational creatures for their perfection. While God's will or creative Wisdom may *abide unchangeably* (Wis 7.27), this does not mean it is not temporally active in the perfection of creation. Augustine writes in his commentary on Psalm 138: "Wisdom stands firm, if we can properly say that she stands; the expression connotes immutability, not immobility [*dicitur autem propter incommutabilitatem, non propter immobilitatem*]. Nowhere is she other than she is here or there, never is she different from what she is now or was formerly. This is what God's utterance is."<sup>365</sup> And elsewhere, he tells us that, "[w]hile this wisdom is unchanging in itself, it does not hold itself aloof from anything that is, even in a changing mode of existence, because there is nothing that was not created by it."<sup>366</sup>

A concrete example of this kind of immutable movement can be witnessed in the coming of Christ. For Augustine, in the Word of God, "there was timelessly contained the time in which that Wisdom was to appear in the flesh."<sup>367</sup> And while it was decided in the pre-eternal counsel of Father, Son and Holy Spirit that the Son would manifest himself in the flesh of our humanity, only at the "right time" could such an idea be made actual in the person of Christ.<sup>368</sup> According to Augustine, it would be absurd to negate the very real and very temporal aspect of Christ's existence:

He contains in himself the deep treasures of wisdom and knowledge and fills minds with faith in order to bring them to the eternal contemplation of the immutable truth. Imagine if the almighty did not create the man, wherever he was formed, from the womb of his mother, but thrust him suddenly before our eyes! Imagine if he went through no ages from infancy to youth, if he took no food and did not sleep! Would he not confirm the opinion of that error, and would it not be believed that he did not in any way assume a true man, and would it not destroy what he did out of mercy if he did everything as a miracle? But now a mediator

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<sup>365</sup> *en. Ps.* 138.8; CSEL 95/4.135.

<sup>366</sup> *trin.* 3.2.15.

<sup>367</sup> *trin.*, 2.2.9.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid*, 4.5.26; see also 7.2.4.

has appeared between God and human beings so that, uniting both natures in the unity of his person, he may raise up the ordinary to the extraordinary and temper the extraordinary to the ordinary.<sup>369</sup>

Not only that, but for there to be Christ there first had to be Mary. And for there to be Mary there first had to be Adam, Noah, Abraham, and then David, from whose royal line she descended. Augustine claims that from Adam to Christ's birth there spanned five ages, with his birth marking the beginning of the sixth.<sup>370</sup> Christ was not actually incarnate in the divine ideas, or "physically present" in God's eternal instant, as Maritain, Wetzel, Hill, Stump, and Kretzmann must hold according to their sometimes Platonic-sounding ontological interpretations of Augustine, before he was sent. Rather, *when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, made of woman* (Gal 4:4). Like all temporally existing things, Christ the man required the right moment to "actually emerge into being."<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> *Ep.*137.3.9; CSEL 44.108, the works of St. Augustine: a translation for the 21 century.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.2.7.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.2.16. See also 4.2.11, where he notes that all the sacred and mysterious things shown to us about Christ before he was sent "were likenesses of him," but not actually him who was to come at the right time. And later at 4.5.30, Augustine claims that, while the angels could represent Christ before his incarnation in order to prefigure his future coming, "they could not take him over and just be him."

## Chapter 5

*Augustinian and Eastern Arguments for Divine Simplicity*

As we have seen throughout the last chapter, most scholars interpret Augustine as holding to a simple ontological equivalence between the eternity of the divine will and knowledge (as expressed in the *rationes*) and God's eternal essence. But once such an interpretation is viewed as a satisfactory stopping point within the context of our understanding of Augustine's view of divine and human interaction, no amount of philosophical hedging can then bring the eternal God into a meaningful, engaged, and personal relationship with temporal humanity. On this interpretation, God always remains separated from the drama of salvation history, or even worse, renders the latter illusory, as a kind of puppet theatre, in which all temporal events and entities are made physically present to His eternal now, as pre-determined and already accomplished facts that cannot change or develop according to a will other than God's alone. The zeal with which we have seen philosophers and theologians alike defend this interpretation of God's wholly transcendent and utterly dominating eternity ultimately stems from their desire to uphold what has been seen as the overriding theological focus of the Western theological tradition since the time of Augustine, namely the absolute simplicity of God; and we have seen them defend this interpretation even at the expense of the plurality of God, whether that be with respect to himself as three-persons (*ad intra*), or with respect to the economic dispensation of his many gifts for what is created (*ad extra*).

This chapter will examine a few of the most important texts from Augustine's corpus that could be used to support their interpretation. All of these texts will be seen as

falling into either one of two distinct but related arguments for God’s simplicity, what I will call the possession and participation arguments, both of which *appear* to not allow for a real distinction between the eternity of the divine essence and the eternity of the divine ideas. I will prove, however, that these arguments only support the idea that no real distinctions can be made in the divine essence itself, not precluding any such distinctions when it comes to the divine persons’ relations to their shared essence, or to each other as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or to creation as they work to perfect it according to the *rationes*. Augustine’s position in this regard will therefore be shown to closely mirror the Eastern Orthodox tradition on divine simplicity, which also does not allow for real distinctions pertaining to the divine *ousia* or *physis* as it is in itself (*auth kath’ authn*), but does in these other three respects.<sup>372</sup> In this chapter, I will specifically compare Augustine’s view on God’s simplicity with that of St. Gregory of Nyssa, whose view on the absolute simplicity and incognoscibility of the divine *physis*<sup>373</sup> will be used

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<sup>372</sup> The Eastern Orthodox tradition will make a threefold distinction (*diakrisis*) without division (*diairesis*) between: 1) the divine nature and the three Persons; 2) the three Persons and the divine energies; and 3) the divine nature and the divine energies. In the latter two distinctions, the energies are often referred to as the divine names, attributes, or whatever accepted term that can be used to designate that reality which is around the divine nature (*peri thn theian phusin*). Gregory Palamas has some particularly clear texts illustrating all three of these distinctions without divisions in his *150 Capita*. Even better, in these texts, he will reference many of the salient authorities on these distinctions within the Greek tradition, such as the Cappadocians, Pseudo-Dionysius, Cyril of Alexandria, and John Chrysostom. For example, *Capita* 34-40 discuss the Person-nature distinction. *Capita* 72-84 refer to the Person-energy distinction, especially with respect to the Holy Spirit and His gifts/energies. Finally, there are many *Capita* that make reference to the famous nature-energy (*ousia-energia*) distinction, such as *Capita* 65, 68, 74, 78, 82, 95, and 100-105. The Greek-East holds these distinctions in God to be real (*pragmatike*) distinctions, but they do not destroy His simplicity, because neither the three Persons nor the many different energies designate the nature of God as it is in itself, which is totally one, not made up of parts, and unlimited. As we shall see in the next chapter, Augustine does not deny these various distinctions present in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. He will argue that there is a difference in how we can or cannot understand these realities when we apply them to God, relatively or absolutely.

<sup>373</sup> In his article, “Simplicity of the Divine Nature and the Distinctions in God, According to St. Gregory of Nyssa.” *StVTQ* 21.02, pp. 76-104 (2006), Krivocheine notes that Nyssa preferred to use the term *physis* when talking about the Divinity of God, and that “the contrary could be said of St. Basil. He prefers the term “essence” to “nature.”” (Krivocheine, 76, fn 1). Krivocheine will say later that commonly the only major difference between these terms is that “nature” has more of an “ontological connotation,” whereas “essence” is used more in “respect to knowledge.” Nevertheless, he thinks that the two terms can

to represent that of the Eastern Orthodox tradition. I will prove that, at least with respect to their views on divine simplicity, “neither of them adopt a notion of absolute simplicity, e.g., as espoused by Thomas Aquinas, in which the persons of the Trinity and the divine energies are reduced to and simply identified with the divine essence (*ousia*) or nature (*physis*).”<sup>374</sup>

The first Augustinian argument to be considered, the possession argument, can be briefly summarized as follows: Since God is absolute being without any kind of composition, qualification, or modification, for Him to be great, just, almighty, and so forth for the rest of His attributes is the same as to be. The divine essence is therefore “the same as itself” and “is what it has.”<sup>375</sup> It must be what it has, for this is the only way to ensure that God can never be deprived of the attributes He possesses, or suffer any kind of change in those very same attributes. Augustine will make the possession argument multiple times in *On the Trinity*,<sup>376</sup> but the following is arguably one of its more impactful formulations:

It is generally accepted to be the case with the human virtues which are to be found in the human spirit that although they each mean something different from the others, they can in no way be separated from each other, and so men who are equal for example in courage are also equal in sagacity and justice and moderation. For if you say that they are equal in courage, but one man excels in sagacity, it follows that the other’s courage is less sagacious, and thus they are not even equal in courage, since the former’s courage is more sagacious; and you will find the same with the other virtues if you run through them all—it is not of course a question of fortitude of body, but of fortitude or courage of spirit.

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be used interchangeably, which is evidenced by what Nyssa says in places such as *CE.3.2.34* and 81 (Krivocheine 82).

<sup>374</sup> This quotation is an addition made by my dissertation director, Fr. John D. Jones, who originally pointed out to me the importance in Orthodox theology of God himself (persons, essence, energies) as being simple (sc. non-composite) in a way that can allow for real distinctions without bringing about any real divisions. The persons, essence and energies are really distinct from each other, but since they are not in any way divided from one another, God himself remains simple.

<sup>375</sup> *De civ.* 8.6, and 11.10.

<sup>376</sup> For more representative examples of the possession argument in Augustine’s *On the Trinity*, see *trin.* 1.4.26; 5.2.9; 6.2.11; 7.1.1; 7.2.6.

How much more then will this not be the case in that unchanging and eternal substance which is incomparably more simple than the human spirit? For the human spirit it is not of course the same thing to be, and to be courageous or sagacious or just or moderate; it can be a human spirit and have none of these virtues. But for God it is the same thing to be as to be powerful or just or wise or anything else that can be said about his simple multiplicity or multiple simplicity to signify his substance [*de illa simplici multiplicitate uel multiplici simplicitate dixeris quo substantia eius significetur*].<sup>377</sup>

Augustine thus uses the co-entailing unity present among the human virtues to argue that, in an analogous but much higher way, there is an even stronger kind of unity present in God's *substantia*. He takes this to prove that the Father cannot possess any perfections in greater measure than the Son (and by extension the Holy Spirit), who is God from God, and therefore must be co-equal to the Father in all things.<sup>378</sup> If any one of the three persons could possess even one divine attribute in greater measure than the other two, God would be made complex, or turned into a Trinity of unequal perfections. As a result, any one of the three persons must be equal in all things to the three considered together and vice versa. He continues:

Since, therefore, the Father alone, or the Son alone, or the Holy Spirit alone is just as great as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit together he is not to be called threefold in any sense [*triplex*]. Bodies, on the contrary, increase by a union of themselves.... In God himself, therefore, when the equal Son adheres to the equal Father, or the equal Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son, God does not thereby become greater than each one separately, for there is nothing whereby that perfection can increase. But he is perfect whether the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit; and God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is perfect, and, therefore, he is a Trinity rather than tripartite [*et ideo trinitas potius quam triplex*].

Nor since he is a Trinity [*trinitas*] is he, therefore, tripartite [*triplex*]; otherwise the Father alone or the Son alone would be less than the Father and the Son together. Although, to tell the truth, it is difficult to see how one can speak of the Father alone or the Son alone, since the Father is with the Son and the Son

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<sup>377</sup> *trin.* 6.1.6; CCSL 50.234.

<sup>378</sup> Augustine will maintain that all three Persons of the Trinity are equal in all things, except in their Personal characteristics (Generator, Generated, Processed) that cause them to be distinct from each other, so that we are able to name them Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

with the Father always and inseparably, not that both are Father or both the Son, but because they are always mutually in one another and neither is alone.<sup>379</sup>

If the Father and the Son and the Spirit were *triplex*, then they would be divided into three parts. As it is, however, they are always and inseparably a *trinitas*, because they are each perfect, whether we consider Father, Son, or Spirit. Augustine admits in this passage that it is well-nigh impossible to abstract what can be said of the Father alone from what can be said of the Son alone, since Father and Son are always together, possessing all perfections to an equal and infinite degree together.

Augustine clearly thought that the essential unity of God was important to be made known not just to his more theologically-philosophically adept readers, but also to the community of the faithful in the Church. In Sermon 341.8 (419), he preaches: “In God, though, everything that is said about him is one and the same; in God, you see, power isn’t one thing and sagacity another, courage one thing and justice another, or chastity another. Whichever of these you attribute to God, it isn’t to be understood as one thing and another, and none of them, in any case, is attributed to him worthily.” And later in that very same Sermon, “in God power is identical with justice (whatever you say in him, you are saying the same thing, since in fact you are not saying anything that is worthy of him) ... because all the things you say in that field are one and the same, and all have the same value.”<sup>380</sup> Augustine’s theological teaching and preaching when it comes to the simplicity of God’s eternal essence therefore appear to line up, in that they both convey the message that we cannot divide the divine essence by saying that it is the

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<sup>379</sup> *trin.*6.7.9-8.9; CCSL 50.237-8.

<sup>380</sup> *Sermon*, 341.10.

subject of many different perfections that it participates in to be good, just, wise, etc. Rather, Augustine holds the divine essence to have one and the same ontological value.

Augustine's possession argument for God's simplicity thus discusses His "essence," or what is "in Him." It is an attempt to talk about God as He is in Himself, which from the Eastern Orthodox perspective may appear a foolish and impossible endeavor,<sup>381</sup> but what matters for the moment is that Augustine is not saying that this is how God exists for creation. It is also important to keep in mind that Augustine is only broaching this topic of the undivided unity of God's essence to prove the co-equality of Father, Son, and Spirit, to prove that the divine persons are a Trinity and not tri-partite. Augustine at no point will claim that he knows exactly what the essential Life of God consists in, and/or that he can adequately express this Life *via* thought or speech.<sup>382</sup> After all, he uses an argument from analogy with the human soul and the unity of its virtues in his attempt to understand the substantial unity present in God. Augustine understood that

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<sup>381</sup> The Eastern Orthodox tradition is well-known for its insistence on the incognoscibility of the divine *ousia/physis*, whether by celestial or super-celestial minds. For an excellent discussion of this, especially in St. Gregory of Nyssa, see esp. Krivocheine, "Simplicity of the Divine Nature...", pp. 76-80. Augustine will actually make similar statements about the unknowability of God. See *DGnL.IV.6.13*, for example, where he writes: "But we are mortals and sinners, and our corruptible bodies are a load upon our souls, and the earthly habituation presses down the mind that muses upon many things. But even though our hearts were absolutely undefiled and our minds completely free from all burdens, even though we were already equal to the holy angels, the Essence of God would surely not be known to us as it is in Himself." Both the Eastern Orthodox tradition and Augustine would appear therefore to disagree with the Thomistic view that our beatitude in the next life consists in the satisfaction of our desire to know the divine essence, which becomes an intelligible species for the blessed to see by the eye of their mind: "There resides in every man a natural desire to know the cause of any effect which he sees; and thence arises wonder in men. But if the intellect of the rational creature could not reach so far as to the first cause of things, the natural desire would remain void. Hence, it must be absolutely granted that the blessed see the essence of God" (ST I, Q. 12, A. 1, ad 1).

<sup>382</sup> Hence why I think any claim that Augustine's views on the knowability of the divine essence should be identified with that of someone such as Eunomius, who held that the divine names had a "divine origin and the power to express the essence of things" (Krivocheine, "Simplicity of the Divine Nature..." 84), should be avoided. Augustine only mentions that "in God" goodness, justice, wisdom, etc. have the same ontological value to illustrate how much greater the unity is in God's substance than in even the highest image of it in the human mind and its various faculties and powers. It is not as if God's substance is broken up into various parts, however unified they may be.

no analogy, including this one, is perfect or able to intellectually comprehend the Being of God Himself.<sup>383</sup>

All of the significant Greek Fathers make this kind of distinction between God for Himself (who is absolutely simple and unknowable) and God for creation (who is willingly manifold yet without division and knowable), even though it might be said that they are less willing than Augustine to speak of the former as they are of the latter.<sup>384</sup> Archbishop Basil (Krivocheine) will in fact say of Nyssa in particular that, while he affirms the incognoscibility of the divine nature, this does not prevent him from holding to its simplicity. He does this to “defend the orthodox trinitarian doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father (in his polemics against Eunomius) and of the divinity of the Holy Spirit (in his writings against Macedonius).”<sup>385</sup> Like Augustine, then, Nyssa argues for divine simplicity to safeguard the co-equality of Father, Son, and Spirit.

We can see this in Book I of his *Contra Eunomium*, where Nyssa will claim that the simplicity of the divine nature is evident to all, and that even the dullest of persons understands that “simplicity in the case of the Holy Trinity admits of no degrees. In this case there is no mixture or conflux of qualities to think of; we comprehend a potency without parts and composition.”<sup>386</sup> Wisdom, power, goodness, and whatever else may be

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<sup>383</sup> It is worth mentioning that Nyssa will give a similar analogy involving the human soul and its various faculties and powers to understand the simplicity of God’s nature: “If therefore the human mind is not damaged in its simplicity by the many names used for it, how could one think that God, because He is called wise, just, good, eternal and all the names suitable to Him, should thus be of many parts or that the perfection of His nature could be reassembled by participation in them...” (CE.2.503).

<sup>384</sup> For similar statements about the absolute simplicity of God’s unknowable essence in the Cappadocians, see for example, Nyssa’s CE.1.38; Gregory Nazianzen’s *Orations* 30.XX and 31.XIV; and Basil’s *On the Holy Spirit* 18.45.

<sup>385</sup> Krivocheine, “Simplicity of the Divine Nature...,” 80.

<sup>386</sup> Eunom.1.19.

suitably predicated of the Holy Trinity, are not external properties in which They participate so that They may acquire them, but rather are properties rooted in Their very nature. Put briefly, the Trinity must be what It has. Nyssa writes in this connection:

Nothing defective concerning wisdom or power or any other good thing is found in Him for Whom the good is not just something acquired but is by nature (*phusei*) that which He is (*katho esti toiouton pephuke*). Thus he who claims to distinguish in the divine nature such lesser and greater essences, makes the Divine ... a composite of dissimilar things, and would lead us to believe that the subject is one thing and the participated things another, which implies further that by participation in them He comes to be in them something which He was not before.<sup>387</sup>

Nyssa offers this “possession” argument for the divine nature’s simplicity in order to combat Eunomius’ claim that God the Father is alone truly simple, and therefore possesses, to a greater degree than the Son and Holy Spirit, the various Divine perfections.

Nyssa’s version of the possession argument will also take center stage in his letter to Ablabius, *On ‘Not Three Gods.’* Near the beginning of this work, Nyssa makes a distinction between the strict use of the term “nature” and its common use. Using human nature as an example, he claims its strict use demands that we see it as indivisible and not separated between various human beings.<sup>388</sup> But in its common use, we do tend to see human nature as separated from one individual to the next, and we do frequently say things such as Peter, James, and John are “many men.” Bringing this examination of the term nature to bear on the divine nature and the three persons, Gregory concludes that,

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Gregory will explain this in his *Epistula* 38.2 as follows: “If now of two or more who are [man] in the same way, like Paul and Silas and Timothy an account of the *ousia* of men is sought, one will not give one account of the *ousia* of Paul, another one of Silas and again another one of Timothy; but by whatever terms the *ousia* of Paul is shown, these same will fit the others as well. And those are *homoousioi* to each other, who are described by the same formula of being.” Translation taken from page 70 of Johannes Zachhuber’s, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa: Philosophical Background and Theological Significance*, (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

just because we speak of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as being three persons, it does not follow that the divine nature is actually separated between them, thereby making three Gods out of one. Immediately after giving this response, however, Gregory notes that it will not be sufficient to quell the common use of the term divine nature. The only way to move forward on this issue is to examine the power (*dunamis*) of the Godhead:

Hence it is clear that by any of the terms we use the Divine Nature is not itself signified, but some one of its surroundings (*ti ton peri*)<sup>389</sup> is made known.... Since, then, as we perceive the varied operations of the power above us, we fashion our appellations from the several operations that are known to us.... He surveys all things and overlooks them all, discerning our thoughts, and even entering by His power of contemplation those things that are not visible, [hence] we suppose that Godhead (*theotes*) is so called from beholding (*thea*).... Now.... let him consider this operation, and judge whether it belongs to one of the persons whom we believe in the Holy Trinity, or whether the power extends throughout the Three Persons.<sup>390</sup>

According to Gregory, the way we can tell whether or not the power extends throughout the three persons is by examining whether their *energeiai* are one. For if their activities are one, which they are, then the power which is the source of them must be one. And if

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<sup>389</sup> The word “*peri*” in this expression has the sense of “around” the divine nature, but one must often be careful in its translation from the Greek, because its meaning is not only dependent on theological context, but also the grammatical case of the words associated with it. Krivocheine rightly notes that we must make a distinction in Nyssa’s writings “when he uses the words ‘divine nature’ in the accusative and when he uses them in the genitive (*peri ths theias phusews*) (Krivocheine, “Simplicity of the Divine Nature...,” 88, fn 82). Paying attention to the grammatical cases of the words ‘divine nature’ is important, because only in the accusative can we translate “*peri*” by “around” the divine nature, and then and only then “it can have a particular theological meaning.” Others in the Orthodox tradition render “*peri*” in the accusative in this way. See for example, Maximus the Confessor, *Chapters on Love* I.100: “The qualities that appertain to His nature/ [better: ‘around His Nature’ (*tôn peri auton*)], however, are accessible to the intellect’s longing: I mean the qualities of eternity, infinity, indeterminateness, goodness, wisdom, and the power of creating, preserving and judging creature.” Translation modified by Fr. John D. Jones. Of course, if these words were in the genitive, they would merely have the meaning “of the divine nature,” not thereby connoting any kind of real metaphysical relationship between the energies and the nature (Krivocheine, 88, fn 82). Sometimes translators of Nyssa will render “*peri*” by “about” or “concerning.” An example: “in order that we might have a certain understanding of what is thought piously about Him (*peri auton nooumenôn*)” (*CE.2.246*). Often translations such as these skirt the danger of not doing enough to connote a real relationship of the energies to the essence, or they imply one that is conceptual or logical, i.e., one that depends on human thought, such as we find in Aquinas’ “real” distinction between the Persons and the essence.

<sup>390</sup> *Ad Ablabium*, GNO 3/1.43-44; NPNF V.332-3.

the power is one, then the hypostatically manifested nature which is the source of that power must also be one.

Nyssa argues that just as there is oneness in the Divine nature, so, too, there is in the other names we apply to it: “But since the Divine, single, and unchanging nature, that it may be one, rejects all diversity in essence, it does not admit in its own case the signification of multitude; but as it is called one nature, so it is called in the singular by all its other names, ‘God,’ ‘Good,’ ‘Holy,’ ‘Savior,’ ‘Just,’ ‘Judge,’ and every other Divine name conceivable: whether one says that the names refer to nature or to operation, we shall not dispute the point.”<sup>391</sup> Nyssa will not dispute the point whether these Divine names refer to *physis* or *energeia* in God, because it is the oneness of God from Scripture (Dt 6:4) which he ultimately desires to prove. This is a oneness that must be devoid of all divisions in the *physis* of God, but does allow for real distinctions in the *energeiai* around It, and in the *hypostaseis* that manifest It.<sup>392</sup> Elsewhere Nyssa will describe this oneness

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<sup>391</sup> *Ad Ablabius*, NPNF 530.

<sup>392</sup> To give an adequate summary of the Eastern Orthodox tradition on these distinctions without divisions in God, let alone in Nyssa by himself, would prove to be impossible in this rather short chapter. However, some brief comments on Nyssa’s theological approach to them can now be made. Nyssa believes that the divine attributes, names, or energies—i.e., goodness, life, beauty, even God (*theotes*), etc.—do not correspond to the divine *physis*, but rather the divine *energeiai* which are around it. The names we give them cannot denote the nature as it is in itself, because then it would be “multiform and multi-composite, manifesting its manifoldness according to the differences designated in the names” (*CE.2.302-304*). With this said, the names do point to realities *in* God, and this is supported by Scripture, which, for example, often speaks of the Only-Begotten as “Door,” “Shepherd,” etc. We predicate these names of God “by way of intellection (*tou kat’ epinoian tropou*),” but they are not “purely a product of our intellection” (Kriwocheine, “Simplicity of the Divine Nature,” 85). Thus, when it comes to the *physis-energeia* distinction in Nyssa, we may conclude that it is a real distinction (or one existing in God, not just in our minds), and that it does not threaten divine simplicity, because it causes no divisions in the divine *physis*. The same kind of reasoning is used by Nyssa to argue that the *physis-hypostasis* distinction in God causes no real divisions in the His nature. A representative text: “By these expressions [i.e., ‘Light Unapproachable’ for the Father and ‘True Light’ for the Son], Scripture does not at all harm this simplicity, because their community and particularity are not of the essence, for if they were, their convergence would demonstrate that the subject is composite. But the essence remains itself, whatever it may be according to nature, being what it is” (*CE.3.10*). And, finally, we have the *hypostasis-energeia* distinction. According to Nyssa, the energies are common to all three of the divine persons, having their source in the Father, proceeding through the Son, and being perfected by the Spirit. They are energies *of* the Persons, and so not divided from them, but they are distinct, because they cannot be merely identified with Father, Son, and

as not requiring the identification of the subject (the Divine Being) with its various “energetic” and “Personal” attributes:

As for the statement that [God] is a judge, we understand by the word “judgement” a specific energy around Him, while by the word “is” we direct our mind toward the subject. We are clearly instructed by this not to think that the notion (*logos*) of the being (*tou einai*) is identical with the energy. Thus, when we say that He is generated or ungenerated, we separate our thought in a two-fold supposition, understanding by the “is” the subject and implying by “generated” and “ungenerated” the attribute of the subject.<sup>393</sup>

Krivocheine believes this passage should be seen as Nyssa defending his older brother Basil from Eunomian theological attack.<sup>394</sup> As is well-known, the Eunomians were critical of Basil, claiming that he identified energy and essence in the Son.<sup>395</sup> Nyssa’s response here is simple: God is one subject, but possesses different relational attributes, which are distinct but not divided from His Being.

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Spirit. Again, Nyssa thinks this is true according to Scripture: “Scripture teaches that faith in the name of the Father who vivifies all proceeds ... so that the life-giving grace has its point of departure (*aphormhtheisan*) in Him. As life, it gushes out, as from a source, through the Only-Begotten God, who is the true life, and makes perfect those who are made worthy by the energy of the Spirit” (*Maced.*, p.106.3-8). To summarize, we may say the energies are *of* the Persons and *around* the divine nature, distinct but not divided from both.

<sup>393</sup> *CE.3.5.*

<sup>394</sup> See Krivocheine, “Simplicity of the Divine Nature...,” 95-96.

<sup>395</sup> *CE.2.359.* Basil himself will respond to the Eunomians in his famous Letter 234. The Letter begins with the Eunomians posing a dilemma in terms of a question: “Do you worship what you know, or what you do not know?” Basil answers that to know (*to eidenai*) has many senses that correspond with the various ways God can be said to be, not essentially but energetically, as great, powerful, wise, good, just, etc. For Basil, we know God in terms of His energies as they economically come down to us; we cannot intellectually comprehend His essence. After this rebuttal, the Eunomians try a different argumentative approach, claiming that if God is simple, how can He exist in these multifarious ways? All these things we know “about” (*peri*) Him must be identical to his essence. Basil thinks this is absurd, for can we really say that there is the “same mutual force/power (*dunamis*) in his awfulness and His loving-kindness, His justice and His creative power, His providence and His foreknowledge, and His bestowal of rewards and punishments, His majesty and His providence?” We cannot. The energies are distinct from the essence and come down variously to us, performing their salvific functions in specific ways, depending on the providential dispensation required. As Basil will say, “the energies are various (*energeiai poikilai*) and the essence simple (*ousia áplh*). Through this knowledge of the energies, we can know that He exists (*hoti estin*) but not what He is (*ti estin*). According to Basil, our knowledge of God in these various ways must eventually give way to worship: “We know God from His power. We, therefore, believe in Him who is known, and we worship Him who is believed in.” St. Basil the Great: *Epistle CCXXXIV*, translated by Rev. Blomfield Jackson (modified by Fr. John D. Jones).

The second of the two arguments Augustine gives for God's simplicity, the participation argument, is really a variant of the first one due to its being based on the same fundamental understanding of God's essential unity, but it is couched in language that is sufficiently different to mention it here briefly as a distinct argument. We may summarize it as follows: God cannot be said to participate in His various attributes (mercy, justice, power, greatness etc. etc.), because then He would be inferior to those perfections in which he participates. He would need them to be merciful, just, powerful, great, and so forth. A representative example of this argument can be found at *On the Trinity* 5.2.11. Here, Augustine illustrates how God's essential relation with respect to the attribute of greatness (or any perfection for that matter) differs from that of something that partakes of greatness, such as a great house, a great valley, or a great heart. In each of the latter, its being is one thing and its being great another. Because of this fact, Augustine thinks true greatness is not had by any of these things. True greatness is that by which all of these things are made great. This is a greatness that is reserved for God alone, Who...

is not great with a greatness which he is not himself, as though God were to participate in it to be great; otherwise this greatness would be greater than God. But there is nothing greater than God. So he is great with a greatness by which he is himself this same greatness. And that is why we do not say three greatnesses any more than we say three beings; for God it is the same thing to be as to be great. For the same reason we do not say three great ones but one great one, because God is not great by participating in greatness, but he is great with his great self because he is his own greatness. The same must be said about goodness and eternity and omnipotence and about absolutely all the predications that can be stated of God, because it is all said with reference to himself.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> *trin.5.2.11*. Augustine will allude to this argument in many other places. See for example, *trin.5.3.12*; 6.1.2; 6.1.5; 6.1.7; 6.2.8; 7.1.2; 7.3.10.

As in the possession argument, the participation argument for God's simplicity makes clear that we are talking about God "with reference to himself" and not about God with reference to something else. In other words, we are talking about God's *essential* greatness, goodness, eternity, omnipotence, and so forth. None of what Augustine has said would prevent him from making statements about God's greatness, goodness, eternity, and power in relation to creation.

Augustine's possession and participation arguments have been heavily criticized by most scholars for their being overly concerned with the unity of God's essence at the expense of not paying enough attention to the personal diversity of Father, Son, and Spirit, and how they economically manifest their attributes in salvation history for the benefit of creation. Accordingly, so the argument goes, Augustine makes God out to be an absolutely simple monad with no real internal or external differentiation. What follows are some representative examples of this scholarly position in the secondary literature.

In *Being as Communion*, John Zizioulas simultaneously lauds the Cappadocians for bringing attention back to the notion of person as the ultimate ontological reality in the Trinity while at the same time excoriates Augustine for supposedly making the unity of the divine essence ontologically primary over and above the three persons. Using his own words: "By usurping the ontological character of *ousia*, the word *person/hypostasis* became capable of signifying God's being *in an ultimate sense*. The subsequent developments of Trinitarian theology, especially in the West with Augustine and the scholastics, have led us to see the term *ousia*, not *hypostasis*, as the expression of the ultimate character and the causal principle (*arche*) in God's being."<sup>397</sup> And he will say

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<sup>397</sup> *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1985), page 88.

elsewhere: “There can be no doubt that Augustine makes otherness secondary to unity in God’s being. God is one and relates as three. There is an ontological priority of substance over against personal relations in God in Augustine’s Trinitarian theology.”<sup>398</sup> Zizioulas, however, thinks the Cappadocians were right to prioritize the individual divine persons over their shared substance and, specifically, to expound the idea that all things properly originate from the person of the Father, not from the divine essence. This is a position that has become well-known in Greek Orthodox circles as the *monarchia* of the Father, according to which the first person of the Trinity is said to be the ultimate ontological source of all reality, Divine and created.<sup>399</sup> The Greek Fathers understood that this should not now lead to a hierarchical ranking of the individual divine persons as being more or less God than the others *a la* Arianism. That is why we have Nazianzen, for instance, writing that the monarchy to be believed is that of Father, Son and Spirit, for it is a monarchy “that is not limited to one person,”<sup>400</sup> but rather extends throughout the three, because of their unity of essence.

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<sup>398</sup> *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 33.

<sup>399</sup> The Monarchy of the Father is based on the idea that agency belongs to the person (*hypostasis*). Actions are not actions of the nature (*physis/ousia*), but of the person that manifests it. There is a classic text from John of Damascus’ *De Fide Orthodoxa* which illustrates this well. In this text, the Damascene makes a fourfold distinction between *energeia*, *ennergētikon*, *ennergētēma*, and *ennerrgôn* in God: “But observe that energy (*energeia*), capacity for energy (*ennergētikon*), the product of energy (*ennergētēma*), and the agent of energy (*ennerrgôn*) are all different. Energy is the efficient and essential motion of nature (*physis or ousia*). The capacity for energy is the nature from which the energy proceeds. The product of energy is that which is effected or caused by the energy. And the agent of energy is the subsistence or person (*hypostasis*) that uses the energy.” (*De Fide Orthodoxa*, III.15). The Monarchy of the Father thus consists in His *hypostasis* providing the source of being and unity in the Trinity with respect to the Son and Holy Spirit. The Father shares His divine nature with the Son and Spirit, thereby becoming Personally related to Them and They to Him. Because of this we may also say that, while all three are co-equal and co-eternal Persons, thereby sharing the same will/energy, in every common action of Theirs that extends from Them to creation, such action “has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit” (NPNF *Ad Ablabius* 526; see also 527 and 528). In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, then, there is a pride of place given to the person of the Father, who is the source of the essential Life of the Trinity and the economic life of created reality, but never in separation from the Son and Holy Spirit.

<sup>400</sup> *Oration* 29.II.

In contrast to the more Personal approach of the Greek Fathers is, as we have seen, Augustine's vehement defense of the unity of God's essence. It has thus become an easy critique to make that Augustine subsumes the Persons, along with their divine attributes, into the undifferentiated unity of the divine essence. Following from this, among other things, would be the undesirable consequence that Father, Son, and Spirit are non-relational to each other, as there would not strictly speaking be any "otherness" in the Godhead to be relational to, there being only the divine essence.

Richard Cross interprets the notion of person in Augustine's Trinitarian grammar in this way, viewing it, like the notion of substance, as non-relational.<sup>401</sup> It is important to note that he cites only the following passage from Augustine as proof of the soundness of his interpretation:

Therefore, as the substance of the Father is the Father himself, not as he is Father, but as he is, so too the person of the Father is not other than the Father himself. For person is said non-rationally (*ad se*), not in relation to Son and Spirit, just as he is called "God," "great," "good," "just" and all other such things. And just as it is the same thing for him to be as to be God, great, good, so it is the same thing for him to be as to be person. Why therefore do we not call these three together "one person," as "one essence" and "one God," but say "three persons" even though we do not say "three gods" or "three essences," unless it be because we want some one word to serve for this meaning by which we understand the Trinity, so that we would not be entirely silent when asked "what three," when we confessed there to be three.<sup>402</sup>

Cross apparently takes this "possession/participation argument" for the term person's non-relational status as self-evident in the above passage, for he gives almost no philosophical justification for it afterwards, except for a rushed statement to the effect of: person is not a relational term, because we do not use it as part of a two-place predicate,

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<sup>401</sup> cf. fn. 3, 216.

<sup>402</sup> *trin.* 7.6.11.

as we would in the case of the terms father, master, friend, and so forth.<sup>403</sup> Not only is this an exceedingly weak (and in my mind irrelevant) explanation as to why the term person is non-relational for Augustine, who says nothing here, or anywhere in Book VII of *On the Trinity* for that matter, of the requirements of terms to function as two-place predicates, but it also completely ignores the nuanced metaphysical distinction Augustine is making between the Father as viewed from the perspective of substance and the Father as viewed from the perspective of his intra-trinitarian relations. Augustine is very clear in saying that, when considered *in himself*, what the Father “is” is not the same as what he is *in relation* to the Son and the Holy Spirit. Since the Father is a person, the same goes for when we consider his personhood: from the perspective of substance, the person of the Father just is the Father himself as God; but from the perspective of relation, the Father is uniquely the begetter of the Son and the spirator of the Spirit, which are two other distinct persons to which the Father is related. To be fair to Cross, Augustine does focus most of his comments in the above passage on that which is non-relational in God, namely the divine substance; but the language of relation is sufficiently present here (if read in context), and elsewhere explicitly in Book VII, that Cross really has no philosophical justification for his claim that person, when said of God’s Trinitarian being, is merely a non-relational term. What is perhaps most odd to the reader is that after making this argument, Cross will say that “Augustine certainly does not deny that the persons are distinct by relations or that “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit” are relational words.”<sup>404</sup> How, though, can the Father, Son, and Spirit be relational words if they denote three distinct

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<sup>403</sup> See Cross, 218.

<sup>404</sup> Cross, 230.

persons? If indeed person is a non-relational word according to Cross, then how can the divine persons be truly relational?

Catherine Mowry LaCugna shares Cross' criticism of Augustine as over-focusing on God in himself, and so destroying any possibility of there being a truly relational God, whether with respect to himself or to creation. For LaCugna, "Augustine inaugurated an entirely new approach. His starting point was not the creedal and biblical sense of the monarchy of the Father, but the divine essence shared equally by the three persons."<sup>405</sup> While she admits that Augustine discusses the economic missions of the three persons in salvation history at the beginning of *On the Trinity*, in Books I-IV, she still claims that Augustine prioritizes the unity of the Trinity over the divine economy, and that this where his Trinitarian theology properly begins.<sup>406</sup> To support her interpretation of Augustine, LaCugna only uses the same primary text quoted by Cross from Book VII mentioned above. She writes of this text: "Earlier in the treatise [i.e., in Book V] Augustine had cited Father, Son, and Spirit as relative terms, but in this passage he denies the relative character of a divine person and equates person with substance. The person of the Father is the same as the being of the Father. The person of the Father is thus absolute, without relation to Son and Spirit."<sup>407</sup> We can see that LaCugna falls into the same interpretative morass of confusion as Cross when it comes to Augustine's metaphysical understanding of the trinitarian term 'person,' because she also fails to take into account the distinction Augustine is trying to make in this passage between the

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<sup>405</sup> *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), page 10.

<sup>406</sup> See LaCugna, 99.

<sup>407</sup> LaCugna, 89.

person of the Father considered in himself and the person of the Father considered with respect to Son and Holy Spirit.

It warrants mentioning that such was a distinction that was also made by the Cappadocians. Nyssa particularly resembles Augustine in this connection, writing that there is a difference with respect to what the Father is as regards the relation he has to the Son and “as regards the definition of his nature.”<sup>408</sup> He continues to argue that the same distinction must be applied to the Son: “But what he is, in his own nature, who exists apart from generation, and what he is, who is believed to have been generated, we do not learn from the signification of ‘having been generated,’ and ‘not having been generated.’ For when we say ‘this person was generated’ (or ‘was not generated’), we are impressed with a twofold thought, having our eyes turned to the subject by the demonstrative part of the phrase, and learning that which is contemplated in the subject by the words ‘was generated’ or ‘was not generated’—as it is one thing to think of that which is, and another to think of what we contemplate in that which is.”<sup>409</sup> Nyssa may speak in terms of thinking of “that which is” and “in that which is,” but he is driving at the same distinction as Augustine. He does so in order to prevent the supposition that God’s *physis* is the same as God’s *energeia*. It follows that when we say that the Father is ungenerate and the Son generate, we must always keep in mind their double reality in terms of being and action; the former consisting in their reality as subjects (as “Deity” or “Divine”), the latter consisting in the apprehension of that which uniquely belongs to them as subjects (as “not having been generated” and “having been generated,” respectively).

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<sup>408</sup> *Eunom.*3.4.

<sup>409</sup> *Eunom.*7.5.

David Bradshaw (2004), however, is one of many writing from an eastern orthodox perspective who thinks that, while the East has this distinction between God's being and activity, Augustine identifies the two in order to preserve divine simplicity, and that this position can ultimately be traced back to Aristotle, who says in *Metaphysics* XII that the substance of the Prime Mover just is actuality.<sup>410</sup> Bradshaw is correct in finding this position to an extent in Boethius and then St. Thomas. In *De Hebdomadibus*, Boethius writes: "in Him [God] *esse* and *agere* are the same.... But for us *esse* and *agere* are not the same, for we are not simple." Aquinas for his part says of God's being and activity: "*suum agere est suum esse*."<sup>411</sup> But then, without citing any specific texts from Augustine's corpus throughout his entire ten-chapter book that would support his interpretation, abruptly concludes that Augustine shares this same "Latin" understanding of divine simplicity. According to Bradshaw, "the Augustinian conception of divine simplicity entails that God is identical to His own will.... Nor will it do to say that God is identical with His will only in the sense of His capacity to will, not his will as actually realized. Divine simplicity rules out such distinctions."<sup>412</sup> I am more than willing to concede that there is some evidence that Boethius and Aquinas may have identified God's being and will,<sup>413</sup> but Augustine never argues for such an identification, which can be seen from what I have already shown. Bradshaw (2008) does not abandon this view of Augustine, writing: "Among the identities that Augustine infers from divine simplicity is

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<sup>410</sup> Aristotle *East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom*. Cambridge University Press (2004). See pages 290-295. The quotation from Aristotle he is relying on is from *Meta*.1072b20: "And since that which is moved and mover is intermediate, there is a mover which moves without being moved, being eternal, substance, and actuality."

<sup>411</sup> ST I.4.1; see also SCG II.9.4.

<sup>412</sup> Bradshaw (2004), 247.

<sup>413</sup> In addition to the text quoted before, see for example, ST. I.19.5 and *De Potentia* III.15, where he writes that "although will and nature are identically the same in God, they differ conceptually (*ratione*), insofar as they express respect to creatures in different ways."

that God is identical with his own will. By this he must mean God's expressed and determinate will, and not merely the will as a faculty as such, for to take the identity as applying only to the will as a faculty would introduce a distinction in God that would compromise his unity."<sup>414</sup> The only distinction Bradshaw thinks Augustine can possibly make between God's will as faculty and as expressed and determinate, if he desires to keep God simple, would not be real but notional.<sup>415</sup> What may seem ironic to readers of Bradshaw's work, however, is the fact that he is perfectly willing to allow the Greek East to make the same fundamental distinction between God's being and activity in terms of their *ousia-energeia* distinction, detailing its history from the time of Aristotle to its maturation in the Byzantine era with St. Gregory Palamas in pain-staking detail, but then denies the same kind of move as philosophically and theologically untenable with respect to Augustine.

There are also scholars like Colin Gunton who believe that the demand of divine simplicity has exacted upon Augustine's Trinitarian theology the lack of a real distinction between the essence of God and how that essence is expressed in the distinct persons of Father, Son, and Spirit. In *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, Gunton writes in this connection:

It is difficult for [Augustine] to understand the meaning of the Greek *hypostasis*. One reason is that he can make nothing of the distinction so central to Cappadocian ontology between *ousia* and *hypostasis*: "I do not know what distinction they wish to make" (*trin.V.10*). Certainly, it is unfair to say that he gets nothing of the point at all, for he goes on to say that, in view of the difficulty of translating the Greek terms into Latin, he prefers to say, with his Latin

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<sup>414</sup> Bradshaw (2008), 241. Bradshaw only cites here *Conf.* 8.6 and 11.10 to support his interpretation, but in both cases he fails to recognize that Augustine is speaking about God's essential being (*ad intra*), not God's relational being (*ad intra* or *ad extra*). There is a difference between these, as we know, but Bradshaw completely paints over it in his eagerness to find a continuity between Boethius and Aquinas and Augustine.

<sup>415</sup> See Bradshaw (2008), 249.

tradition, *unam essentiam* or *substantiam* and *tres personas*. Augustine at least realizes that different concepts are required if we are to express the distinction between the way in which God is one and the way in which he is three. It becomes clear, however, that the adoption of the correct Latin equivalents does not enable him to get the point, for, in a famous statement, he admits that he does not really see why the term should be used. ‘*Dictum est tamen tres personae non ut illud diceretur sed ne taceretur*’ (*trin.V.10*, cf. *trin.VII.7*): “this formula was decided upon, in order that we might be able to give some answer when we were asked, what are the three”) ... Moreover, Augustine reveals that he is unaware of what is going on when he makes it appear to be merely a matter of linguistic usage (*forte secundum linguae suae consuetudinem, trin.VII.11*).<sup>416</sup>

Gunton explains that the reason why Augustine cannot grasp the point of the Greeks’ *ousia-hypostasis* distinction is because he grounds his Trinitarian thought in the intellectual tradition of Neoplatonism and, specifically, in its conception of God as “the Absolute One.” It is the latter conception of God that imbues to Augustine’s conception of the Trinity an abstract notion of personhood and intellectualism that removes the Trinity from its proper liturgical, practical, and salvific context.<sup>417</sup> Gunton’s “Trinity in Modern Theology” makes the same kind of critique, adding the specific charge of modalism against Augustine’s Trinitarian theology:

[Augustine] stressed the unitary being of God at the expense of the plurality, and effectively generated a modalism in which the real being of God underlies rather than consists in the three persons. As a result, Augustine’s theology cuts off “the inner and eternal Trinity from the economic and revealed. It is as if much that is of interest to writers about the Trinity in later Augustinian theology could be said almost without reference to the divine economy of creation and salvation made real in the Son and the Spirit.”<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), pp. 39-40.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid*, 42-43. Gunton is not alone in this critique of Augustine’s philosophical connection to Neoplatonism, and the problems that this connection has for his theology. See also Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (London: Burns & Oates, 1970); Robert W. Jenson, *the Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); Vladimir A. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clark, 1957); Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

<sup>418</sup> *Trinity in Modern Theology*, 940-941.

Gunton's critique here, like all of the others we have seen above, is based on what I believe has been a faulty interpretation of Augustine's doctrine of divine simplicity—an interpretation in which God's simplicity and relationality through various essential (*ad intra*) and economic (*ad extra*) activities have been viewed as mutually exclusive realities; or perhaps even worse, as one and the same reality with no real differentiation. I will remedy this misinterpretation in the next chapter, where I will show Augustine's Trinitarian theology to be the *via media* between the theological extremes of Arianism and Sabellianism; the former being extreme in its claim that there is an unequal plurality in God, thereby destroying His unity; and the latter being extreme in its claim that there is no plurality in God, thereby destroying the individuality of the three persons. In successfully navigating his conception of God in between the shoals of these two heretical options, Augustine will be seen to dock his theological ship, as it were, in the safe harbor of the orthodox faith.

## Chapter 6

*Augustine's Conception of God: One in Essence, Three by Relation*

While we have seen that the common scholarly line to take is that Augustine holds to a modalistic conception of God, he actually defends neither the ontological primacy of the unity of the divine essence nor that of the diversity of the three persons. Rather, Augustine prefers what I would call a “both...and” approach to the Trinity, affirming simultaneously the unity of the Trinity and the Trinity in that unity. He tells us that such a preference was ingrained in him by scripture, which is full of passages that proclaim not only the oneness within God, but also distinctness within God: the “testimonies of the divine scriptures ... present our faith with the *unity* and equality of the *three*.”<sup>419</sup> For Augustine, if we were to say that God only has existence as some monadic and undifferentiated thing, the realities of Father, Son, and Spirit would be lost. Yet on the other hand, if we were to say that Father, Son, and Spirit only have existence as three independent individuals, the reality of their unity would be lost. Taking scripture to be authoritative on this issue, Augustine thinks that God’s three-in-oneness must be piously believed, even if one cannot understand it.<sup>420</sup> As mentioned in the very first chapter of this dissertation, however, Augustine was not a theologian satisfied with believing for the sake of itself; he desired to understand his faith, and this desire clearly extended to his faith in the Trinity, which he believed the One God is. Just how he did, and of equal importance, did not, understand the tri-unity of God in terms of the philosophical categories of essence and relation, is the subject of this chapter.

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<sup>419</sup> *trin.* 1.3.14, emphasis mine.

<sup>420</sup> See *trin.* 7.3.8.

Since Books V-VII of *On the Trinity* (ca. 413-416) are most relevant to Augustine's own understanding of God as one according to essence and three according to relation, they will receive the lion's share of my treatment. However, to set the stage, I think it important to briefly begin in Book I with Augustine's initial statement of the Catholic faith in the Trinity, because it encapsulates very well the overall Trinitarianism that he will painstakingly defend throughout the rest of the work, one which, as we shall see, has a threefold emphasis on: (1) the unity of the divine substance; (2) the plurality and co-equality of the three divine persons (*ad intra*); and (3) the distinct functions of Father and Son and Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation (*ad extra*). Using Augustine's own words:

(1) The purpose of all the Catholic commentators I have been able to read on the divine books of both testaments, who have written before me on the Trinity which God is [*de trinitate quae Deus est*], has been to teach that according to the Scriptures Father and Son and Holy Spirit make known a divine unity in the inseparable equality of one substance [*unius substantiae inseparabili aequalitate divinam insinuent unitatem*]; and therefore there are not three gods but one God;

(2) although indeed the Father has begotten the Son, and therefore he who is the Son is not the Father [*et ideo filius non sit qui pater est*]; and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but only the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, himself co-equal to the Father and the Son, and belonging to the unity of the Trinity [*ad Trinitatis pertinens unitatem*].

(3) It was not however this same three (their teaching continues) that was born of the Virgin Mary, crucified and buried under Pontius Pilate, rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven, but the Son alone. Nor was it this same three that came down upon Jesus in the form of a dove at his baptism, or came down on the day of Pentecost after the Lord's ascension, with a roaring sound from heaven as though a violent gust were rushing down, and in divided tongues 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 [Mark 1:1], or on the mountain when the three disciples were with him [Matt 17:5], nor when the resounding voice was heard, I have both glorified it [my name] and will glorify it again [John 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 [*inseparabiliter operum*]. This is also my faith inasmuch as it is the Catholic faith.<sup>421</sup>

The above passage can be seen as a kind of executive summary of the whole *On the Trinity*, minus the philosophical explanations of actually how God is one substance, how God is three persons, and how God actively manifests himself in his distinct persons to creation. In what follows, I will attempt to briefly go over Augustine's understanding of the "how" of each of these three points pertaining to the Catholic faith in the Trinity, so that we may not only once and for all dispel the frequent misinterpretation of Augustine's conception of God as an undifferentiated monad, but also highlight the relational aspects of God (both *ad intra* and *ad extra*) to better see how our human reality can harmoniously co-exist with God as He is accessible to us.

To that end, we begin with the prologue of Book V, where Augustine's description of God initially possesses a clear apophatic tenor. Here Augustine notes that not even men with the intellectual and spiritual aptitude of St. Paul are capable of "grasping [God] as he is"; he can only be seen *like a puzzling reflection in a mirror* (1 Cor 13: 12). The best we can do, according to Augustine, is understand God negatively, "if we can and as far as we can, to be good without quality, great without quantity, creative without need or necessity, presiding without position, holding all things together without possession, wholly everywhere without place, everlasting without time, without any change in himself making changeable things, and undergoing nothing."<sup>422</sup> We have to understand God, in other words, as being beyond Aristotle's nine categories of accidental being (*quantitatis, qualitatis, locus, temporis, situs, habitus, facere, pati, and*

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<sup>421</sup> *trin.* 1.4.7; CCSL 50.34-6.

<sup>422</sup> *trin.* 5.2.

*relatiuum*).<sup>423</sup> The first category of being, “*essentia*” or “*substantia*,” is soon after applied to God by Augustine, but not in the rationalistic way done by the Aristotelian philosophical tradition as a kind of limiting notion meant to imply that something is the subject of accidental properties. We have already seen that this way of understanding substance is rejected by Augustine in his possession and participation arguments for God’s simplicity.

Nevertheless, Augustine felt free to use the word *substantia* to speak about God, even while divorcing this word from its original philosophical context.<sup>424</sup> An example of this can be found in his *Commentary on the Psalms*: “We speak of man or animal, the earth, the sky, the sun, the moon, stone, the sea, the air: all these things are substances, simply in virtue of the fact that they exist. Their natures are called substances. God too is a certain sort of substance [*quaedam substantia*], for anything that is not a substance is not anything at all. A substance is something that is [*Substantia ergo aliquid esse est*].”<sup>425</sup> Augustine’s most extended discussion of the notion of substance with respect to God, however, comes in Books V and VII of *On the Trinity*, where one comes across the expression “*substantia uel essentia*” or one of its grammatical variants when Augustine discusses how one should speak about the Trinitarian God, thus indicating that he takes

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<sup>423</sup> The various predicables of Aristotle are most famously mentioned at *Categories* 1b25-2a4 and *Topics* I, 9, 103b20-24. Richard Cross (2007) has attempted to show that Augustine was aware of and purposefully rejected the use of categorical language when talking about God in *De Trinitate*. (*Quid tres? On What Precisely Augustine Professes Not to Understand in De Trinitate V and VII, Harvard Theological Review* 100.2: 215-32). Importantly, though, Augustine does not avoid the use of such language when talking about created things. See for example, *trin.5.5.6*. Nor does he completely throw out this philosophical apparatus when he analogously applies certain parts of it to our understanding of God’s reality.

<sup>424</sup> Lewis Ayres believes that Augustine’s “brief glosses” with regard to the meaning of *substantia* give enough evidence to prove that he was somewhat aware of a distinction like that between Aristotelian primary and secondary substance (See Ayres 200, *Augustine and the Trinity*).

<sup>425</sup> *en. Ps.* 68.5; CCSL 39.905.

the words *substantia* and *essentia* to possess roughly equivalent meanings.<sup>426</sup> The difficulty, of course, is that the correlative terms in Greek for *substantia* and *essentia*, i.e., *hypostasis* and *ousia*, are not viewed by the Eastern Orthodox tradition to be equivalent in their meaning. From the Cappadocians to John of Damascus and the later Byzantine theological tradition that followed with St. Gregory Palamas, these words took on very specific and distinct meanings from each other.<sup>427</sup>

In any event, Augustine will make clear in Book V that he prefers *essentia*:

“There is at least no doubt that God is substance (*substantia*), or perhaps a better word would be being (*essentia*); at any rate what the Greeks call *ousia*. Just as we get the word

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<sup>426</sup> See for example, *trin.5.1.3*; *5.2.10*; and *7.3.7*. Scholars have picked up on this equivalence as well. See Kyle Claunch, who says that “Augustine uses the term substance (Latin: *substantia*) with the Greek *ousia*, usually translated by essence” (Claunch, 789). See van Geest: “It is also evident from the fact that Augustine emphasizes God’s being as *essentia*, with *substantia* as synonym in *De Trinitate*, that his epistemological reflections were pervaded by hope. He continually stressed that it was impossible to express this *essentia* in words.” (165). See also Lewis Ayres, who notes that Augustine uses the Latin terms *substantia*, *essentia*, and *natura* synonymously (Ayres 82, *Augustine and the Trinity*). As evidence of this threefold terminological equivalence, Ayres cites *vera rel.7.13*.

<sup>427</sup> As we have seen in the case of Nyssa, there is a real distinction without division made between *ousia/physis* and *hypostasis* in God. *Ousia/physis* are terms used to designate the unknowable and simple essence/nature of God, whereas *hypostasis* is a rather broad term meaning “something with subsistence,” or “something that is” (Greek: *to on*/Latin: *id quod est*). When applied to the Trinity that God is, the term *hypostasis* has three referents: the persons of Father, Son, and Spirit; these are the primary realities in God according to the Eastern Orthodox tradition. John of Damascus will say, for instance, “the agent of energy is the subsistence or person (*hypostasis*) that uses the energy.” (*De Fide Orthodoxa*, III.15). Neither the *ousia/physis* nor the *energeia* have an independent existence from the *hypostasis*. There is no such thing as a free-floating essence/nature or energy in God—the essence/nature is hypostatically manifested in the Persons, and the energy is (or energies are) common to all Three. There is certainly nothing in the Eastern Orthodox tradition akin to the Thomistic understanding of God as *ipsum esse subsistens* (See for example, *Quaestio Disputatae De Potentia Dei* q. 7, a. 2, ad. 1 and *ST* 1, q. 4, a. 2), for this appears to do away with any kind of real distinction between being and essence in God. By contrast, the relations that *ousia/physis* and *energeia* have to the three *hypostaseis* in God will be referred to by St. Gregory Palamas as being substantial, real, and enhypostatic. In *Capita* 122, Palamas writes in this connection: “Not solely the Only-Begotten of God but also the Holy Spirit is called energy and power by the saints, just as they possess the same powers and energies in exactly the same way as the Father, since according to the great Dionysius God is called power, “in that he possesses beforehand in himself, and transcends, every power” (*DN* 8.2; *PG* 3:899D). And so the Holy Spirit possesses each of these two as understood or expressed together with him whenever the enhypostatic (*enhypostaton*) reality is called an energy or power, just as Basil, who is great in every way, says, “The Holy Spirit is a sanctifying power which is substantial (*enousios*), real (*enuparktos*) and enhypostatic (*enhypostatos*)” (*CE* 5; *PG* 29:713B). Of course, in quoting Basil, Palamas does not want us to view the Holy Spirit as enhypostatic in the sense that the energies are enhypostatic: the Holy Spirit is one of the Trinitarian hypostases, whereas none of the energies are hypostases.

“wisdom” from “wise,” and “knowledge” from “know,” so we have the word “being” (*esse*) from “be” (*essentia*). And who can more be than he that said to his servant, *I am who I am*, and, *Tell the sons of Israel, He who is sent me to you* (Ex. 3:14).<sup>428</sup>

The first reason for his stated terminological preference comes from the Greeks having another word (i.e., *hypostasis*) which, he thinks, they do not adequately distinguish from the word *ousia*:

I give the name essence to what the Greeks call *ousia*, but which we more generally designate as substance. They indeed also call it *hypostasis*, but I do not know what different meaning they wish to give to *ousia* and *hypostasis*. Certain of our writers, who discuss these questions in the Greek language are wont to say *mian ousian, treis hypostaseis* which in Latin means one essence, and three substances ... But because the usage of our language has already decided that the same thing is to be understood when we say essence, as when we say substance, we do not venture to use the formula one essence and three substances, but rather one essence or substance and three persons. Such is the way in which it is expressed by many Latin commentators, whose opinion carries great weight and who have discussed this subject, since they were unable to find a more suitable terminology for putting into words that which they understood without words.<sup>429</sup>

The Greeks say *mia ousia, treis hypostaseis* when speaking about the Trinitarian God, but the typical Latin translation of *hypostasis* by *substantia* results in the ambiguous expression: *una essentia uel substantia, tres substantiae*.<sup>430</sup> Augustine’s point is that the Greeks are using two words that seem to be etymologically the same (*sub-* and *hypo-* both mean “under” and *-stance* and *-stasis* both mean “stand”), thus making their theological expression uninformative. This is why Augustine will prefer to use the Latin *persona* and not *substantia* (Greek: *hypostasis*) when discussing the internal differentiation of God’s being into Father, Son, and Spirit.<sup>431</sup> But as noted in the above

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<sup>428</sup> *trin.5.1.3.*

<sup>429</sup> *trin.5.8.9-9.10; CCSL 50.216-217.*

<sup>430</sup> *trin.5.2.10.*

<sup>431</sup> It is well-known by now that Augustine first used the term ‘person’ in a technical, theological sense in *De Agone Christiano* (ca. 397). *The Christian Combat*, trans. by Robert P. Russell O.S.A. Taken

passage, Augustine thinks this is merely a better way in the Latin language to express God's unity and difference, His Oneness and Threeness. He is using a different term in a different language from that of his Greek contemporaries, but he is attempting to use it to refer to the same realities of Father, Son, and Spirit.

In Book VII, Augustine writes further about this difference between East and West when it comes to their respective Trinitarian vocabularies. He notes that “our Greek colleagues talk about one being, three substances, while we Latins talk of one being or substance, three persons (*tres personae*)... [I]n our language, that is Latin, being and substance do not usually mean anything different.”<sup>432</sup> Because of the possible ambiguity that can result from the Greeks' preferred way of speaking, Augustine conventionally adopts *persona* here as a more appropriate term than *hypostasis* when paired with *substantia* or *essentia*. With this said, *persona* as a term also has drawbacks to its use. Augustine will repeatedly say that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct and unconfused persons (Latin: *personae*/Greek: *prosopa*) from the divine essence. But as Basil of Ancyra and Basil the Great point out, the word person (*prosopon*) in its original etymological sense of “theatrical mask” was heretically used by the Sabellians in describing the three divine persons as being “masks” of a numerically identical, monadic God. Augustine, however, is clearly not so literal in his rendering of the term *persona*, and he even notes that the only reason why we use the word person (*persona*)—or any other word to talk about the divine *essentia* for that matter—is to be able to say something about the divine mystery, “so that we are not simply reduced to silence.”<sup>433</sup>

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from *The Fathers of the Church*, Volume 2. See for example, Chapters 14 and 16, where he decries those who would deny the existence of the three divine persons, and their eternity and equality, respectively.

<sup>432</sup> *trin.* 7.3.7.

<sup>433</sup> *trin.* 7.3.11.

We have also seen this to be the case for the Cappadocians and, specifically, Gregory of Nyssa with respect to the divine *physis*. In *On Not Three Gods*, Nyssa shows that we really have no idea what the word *physis* means when referred to God. That is why Nyssa gives up trying to account for the unity of the Three via the divine *physis*, but rather attempts to do so by examining the power (*dunamis*) of God.<sup>434</sup> For Augustine, it is merely a matter of convention what word we choose in this connection, whether the Latin *persona* or the Greek *prosopon/hypostasis*. In response to the question “Three what?,” we must say something, even if whatever we do say will always fall utterly short of adequately describing the threefold being of the one God.

The second and related reason for Augustine’s preference of *essentia* over *substantia* also appears in Book VII and has to do with the undesirable, simplicity-denying connotations brought on by the latter’s standard linguistic-philosophical use. Augustine will famously say that the difference between *substantia* and *essentia* lies in their derivation from different verbs—the former from *subsistere* and the latter from *esse*:

[subsistence] is rightly applied to things which provide subjects for those things that are said to be in a subject, as the color or form of a body.... But if God subsists, so that he may be properly called a substance, then there is something in Him as it were in a subject, and he is no longer simple.... But it is wrong to assert that God subsists and is the subject of his own goodness, and that goodness is not a substance, or rather not an essence, that God himself is not his own goodness, that it inheres in him as in its subject. It is, therefore, obvious that God is improperly called a substance [*abusive substantiam vocare*]. The more usual [*nomine usitatore*] name is essence, which he is truly and properly called, so that perhaps God alone should be called essence [*ut nomine usitatore intellegatur essential, quod uere ac proprie dicitur ita ut fortasse solum deum dici oporteat essentiam*]. For he alone truly is, because he is unchangeable. And, therefore, he revealed his name to Moses when he said: *I am who am: and He that is, has sent me to you* (Ex. 3:14).<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> See pages 140-141 of this dissertation for Nyssa’s actual argument for this.

<sup>435</sup> *trin.* 7.5.10; CCSL 50.260-1.

Because of its inherent meaning of providing “subjects for those things that are said to be in a subject,” which is antithetical to the understanding of God’s essential being as absolutely simple, proven by the possession and participation arguments, the word substance is the worse choice when compared with essence to use of God Himself. For Augustine, anything that is fittingly said of God with respect to Himself (*secundum substantiam*) must be identical to His unified being, otherwise God would be complex. Like Augustine, I will follow his preferred convention of using *essentia* to discuss the divine being, though in certain contexts (discussing the Nicene Creed, for example) and in my commentary on certain Books of *On the Trinity* (especially Books V and VI), I will use the more commonly adopted *substantia* as he does. Augustine lets us know why he will switch back and forth between *essentia* and *substantia* to discuss the “being” of God in Book V: It is because “many Latin authors, whose authority carries weight,” have used *substantia* “when treating of these matters, being able to find no more suitable way of expressing in words what they understood without words.”<sup>436</sup>

Augustine’s reluctance to speak of God in terms of the philosophical category of substance can also be witnessed in Book IV of the *Confessions*, where he describes God as “marvelously simple and unchangeable” (*mirabiliter simplicem atque incommutabilem*).<sup>437</sup> He uses the marvelous simplicity of God to argue against those who would try to claim that God is a subject of accidental predication, for this would imply that God is composite, possessing his attributes as if they were external to His

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<sup>436</sup> *trin.5.2.10*. After doing a quick Latin word search of Books V-VII from PL 42, it is clear that Augustine follows the terminological convention of these “Latin authors.” In Books V and VI, Augustine will use *substantia* around 4 times more often as *essentia*. However, in Book VII, he will use *essentia* over twice as much as *substantia*.

<sup>437</sup> *Conf. 4.16.28*.

being. However, as we have seen Augustine argue time and time again, God does not possess his power, greatness, beauty, etc. as if they were qualities of his divine substance, as if they were tacked on to His being. Rather, for God, *to be* is to be powerful, great, beautiful, etc.<sup>438</sup>

If Augustine does not understand God's essential existence as a substance with accidents, then how does he? The answer he gives to this question is: *idipsum esse*, being itself, which is not restricted by the spatial and/or temporal considerations of human categorical speech, thought, and existence.<sup>439</sup> It follows that God's uncreated and unchanging being cannot be understood along the lines of created and changing being, which can be explanatively captured by Aristotle's ten categories of being. But then how can we understand at all the *idipsum esse* that is God? Put bluntly, we cannot. Such is an inadequate name we give for the nameless God himself-in-himself. Augustine tells us that his naming of God as *idipsum esse* comes from his Latin version of Psalm 122:3, which reads as follows: "*Ierusalem quae aedificatur ut ciuitas, cuius participation eius in idipsum,*" "The Jerusalem that is being built as a city, it is a sharing in the selfsame, the identical."<sup>440</sup> Like Augustine, I will use the dual expression "selfsame, the identical" to translate the *idipsum esse* which God is. In his exposition of this Psalm, Augustine's questioning attitude reinforces the apophatic nature of this dual expression: "What is

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<sup>438</sup> From discussing Augustine's so-called "participation" and "possession" arguments for God's simplicity in the previous chapter of this dissertation, I take this to mean no more and no less than God does not participate in or possess His power, greatness, beauty, etc. as if there were separate realities from Himself. He *is* all of them, expressed personally as Father, Son, and Spirit. Put another way: God is not a substance in the Aristotelian sense of the term, according to which He would possess His attributes or perfections as accidents.

<sup>439</sup> For more on Augustine's naming of God as *idipsum esse*, see *trin.5.2.3; Commentary on the Psalms* 134.4; *Sermo 7.7*; and *De mor.ecc.1.14.24*; BA 1.172, where he says "therefore we must love God, ... of whom I will say nothing else than that he is being itself"—*Deum ergo diligere debemus, ... quod nihil aliud dicam esse, nisi idipsum esse*).

<sup>440</sup> See *trin.3.1.8*.

*idipsum*? What can I say other than *idipsum*? ... What is *idipsum*? That which always is in the same way, which is not now one thing, now another. What therefore is *idipsum*, unless that which is? What is that which is? That which is eternal. For that which is always one thing and then another is not, because it does not abide.”<sup>441</sup> Jean-Luc Marion concludes that, for Augustine, the *idipsum esse* that God is, “remains radically and definitively apophatic; it does not provide any essence, does not reach any definition, but only expresses its own inability to speak of God.”<sup>442</sup> The *idipsum* remains beyond the horizon of created being and any form of rational and non-rational forms of apprehension.

It remains beyond the horizon of created being because it is radically unlike created being: the *idipsum* is simple, while creation is complex; the *idipsum* is eternal, while creation is temporal; the *idipsum* is unchangeable, while creation is changeable; etc. However, it is fair to say that, out of the many differences that could be listed here between the *idipsum* that God is and created being, arguably all of them ultimately stem from our understanding of the unity actually enjoyed by the divine essence—a unity which everything that is created lacks just because of the fact that it was created. As we have seen in Augustine’s possession and participation arguments for God’s simplicity, while God cannot be said to possess or participate in perfections external to his being, anything created, insofar as it is created, must do so, for its being is always different from its being good, great, just, and so forth. While it is true that created things have a providentially ordained unity in the divine ideas, which they can potentially reach in God, such a unity cannot compare to or be co-equal with that of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

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<sup>441</sup> *en. Ps.* 121.5; CSEL 95/3.90-1.

<sup>442</sup> *Idipsum*: The Name of God according to Augustine, 180.

According to Augustine, the Trinity's unity of being leads to at least two corollaries. First, all of God's attributes should be expressed in the singular, not as three separate affirmations: "whatever is said with reference to self about each of them is to be taken as adding up in all three to a singular and not to a plural."<sup>443</sup> So, for example, while the Father is great, the Son is great, and the Holy Spirit is great, they do not possess three separate "greatnesses" but one greatness, which belongs to them all. The same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for the rest of the divine attributes. Second, like the Cappadocian Fathers, Augustine believes that because the Father, Son, and Spirit share the same essence, they have the same will, or energy, to use the Greek term.<sup>444</sup> One of his later statements concerning this comes from *Sermon* 398.3 (425): "Father and Son have one will, because they have one nature. I mean it is quite impossible for the will of the Son to differ in the least degree from the will of the Father. God and God, both one God; almighty and almighty, both one almighty." There are many other places in Augustine's corpus where one can find mention of this 'same essence-same will principle' as it pertains to the Trinity.<sup>445</sup>

The unity of substance that Augustine argues for with respect to the three Persons is not original to his theology, but finds its roots in the Councils of Nicaea (325 AD) and Constantinople (381 AD), both of which had previously said that the Son was *homo-ousios*, of the same substance or nature, as the Father. Both of these councils also endorsed a theology that was fundamentally and unequivocally anti-Arian. This is made

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<sup>443</sup> *trin.5.2.9.*

<sup>444</sup> See Basil's *Contra Eunomium* III.4, *On the Holy Spirit* 19 and 37; Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* I.394-97, *On the Holy Spirit* (GNO III.I, 92-93), *On the Holy Trinity* (GNO III.I, 10-12), *On Not Three Gods passim*, *On the Lord's Prayer* 3 (GNO VII.2, 41).

<sup>445</sup> See for example, *Epistula* 11.2 (CCSL 31.26-27); *trin.1.2.7*; *trin. 2.2.9*; *trin.4.5.30*; *Sermo* 215.8; *Sermo* 126.10; *Sermo* 213.7; *Contra serm. Arian.4*; and *Enchir.* 38.

evident from the Nicæan creed itself, which categorically rejects any kind of theology that maintains Father and Son to possess different and unequal substances. We see this to an even greater extent in St. Athanasius' amended version of the creed of Caesarea that would provide the theological inspiration for the Nicæan creed.<sup>446</sup>

Augustine will also rely on Scripture to argue for the unity of Father and Son and, specifically, Jn 10:30 (*I and the Father are one*): “What does it mean, “we are one”? We are of one and the same nature. What does it mean, “we are one”? We are of one and the same substance.”<sup>447</sup> The Arians, however, challenged the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father according to their interpretation of John 17:3 (*Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent*) to prove that the Father is the only true God; and their interpretation of 1 Tim 6:16, which states that the Father is alone God and alone immortal. For Arius and his followers, to say that

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<sup>446</sup> Athanasius' amended version of the creed of Caesarea is as follows. The translation is taken from H. M. Gwatkin, *The Arian Controversy*. Longmans, Green, and Co.: London, 1914: “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things, both visible and invisible; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, as only-begotten—that is, from the essence (*ousia*) of the Father—God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, being of one essence (*homoousion*) with the Father, by whom all things were made, both things in heaven and things on earth: who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, was made man, suffered, and rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, cometh to judge quick and dead. And in the Holy Spirit. But those who say that ‘there was once when he was not,’ and ‘before he was begotten he was not,’ and ‘he was made of things that were not,’ or maintain that the Son of God is of a different essence (*hypostasis* or *ousia*), or created or subject to moral change or alteration—these doth the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematize.” This creed uses the term *ousia* at three key points. First, it is used to describe the Son as being of the *ousia* of the Father (to emphasize the correlativity of the terms Father and Son). Second, it is then immediately used to conclude that the Father and Son are of the same nature or substance, i.e., *homoousios* (to emphasize their inseparability). Third, it is finally used to categorically reject the idea that the Son is of another *hypostasis* or *ousia* than the Father (to emphasize the error of the Arians, who thought the Son was of a different substance than the Father). We may summarize by saying that all three uses of *ousia* language in this creed are meant to connote the ontological closeness that properly exists between the Father and the Son. This creed also has a clear polemical purpose: To utterly condemn the Arian heresy. In chapter two of his book, Gwatkin writes of how Athanasius and the other bishops at the council of Nicæa accepted the Caesarean creed of Eusebius, which heretically viewed the Son as a secondary God caused by the will of the Father (Gwatkin, 26), for the express purpose of proposing amendments to it that would destroy Arianism once and for all (Gwatkin 29).

<sup>447</sup> *Sermon* 139.1, 417.

the Son is consubstantial with the Father would thus be to say that He is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, which would lead to the existence of two ultimate principles in reality—an absurdity according to their approach to scripture. They further thought that the ontological prioritization of the Father over the Son could be seen in the terminology used to describe them as persons, namely begotten and unbegotten. They assumed that these terms referred to the divine substance, and so they were led to the conclusion that the only-begotten Son necessarily differs in substance (*qua ousia*) from the unbegotten Father. Arius writes of his own theological position in his *Thalia* (or “the banquet,” ca. 323):

The one without beginning established the Son as the beginning of all creatures.... He [the Son] possesses nothing proper (*hidios*) to God, in the real sense of propriety, for he is not equal to God, nor yet is he of the same substance (*homoousios*).... There exists a Trinity in unequal glories, for their subsistencies (*hypostases*) are not mixed with each other.... The Father is other than the Son in substance (*kat' ousian*) because he is without beginning.... By God's will the Son is such as he is, by God's will he is as great as he is, from [the time] when, since the very moment when he took his subsistence from God; Mighty God as he is, he sings the praises of the Higher one with only partial adequacy. To put it briefly, God is inexpressible to the Son.... For it is impossible to search out the mysteries of the Father, who exists in himself.... What scheme of thought, then, could admit the idea that he who has his being from the Father (*ton ek patros onta*) should know by comprehension the one who gave him birth.<sup>448</sup>

Having been heavily influenced by Nicaea and Constantinople,<sup>449</sup> Augustine's conception of the divine unity was therefore careful to avoid the unequal plurality of natures or essences present among the divine persons in Arian theology.

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<sup>448</sup> Translation by Williams, *Arius* 101ff.

<sup>449</sup> While I cannot do a sufficient examination of the extent of the influence of Nicaea and Constantinople on Augustine here, Ayres proves its significance for Augustine in both of his full length studies on this topic. See his *Nicaea and its Legacy* and *Augustine on the Trinity*.

Augustine was also unwilling to veer too far off in the opposite extreme theological direction, commonly referred to as Sabellianism, or the position which treats Father, Son, and Spirit as three names of one numerically identical reality or person. He makes clear that the sameness of substance he is arguing for the three persons should not be seen as destroying their individuality:

we must maintain a faith which is unshakeable, so that we call the Father God, the Son God and the Holy Spirit God. Also, there are not three Gods, but that the Trinity is one God, not with different natures, but of the same substance [*neque diuersas naturas, sed eiusdem substantiae*]. Nor is the Father sometimes the Son and another time the Holy Spirit, but the Father is always the Father, the Son always the Son and the Holy Spirit always the Holy Spirit [*sed pater semper pater et filius semper filius et spiritus sanctus semper spiritus sanctus*].<sup>450</sup>

Lewis Ayres believes this passage from *On the Faith and the Creed*, and especially the language of *eiusdem substantiae*, is a clear reference to the Nicæan term *homoousios*, and is a prime example of Augustine's indebtedness to this Ecumenical Council.<sup>451</sup> Not only that, but the statement that the Father is always Father, the Son always Son, and the Holy Spirit always Holy Spirit is a clear rejection of the Sabellian view that God is a kind of three-faced Janus, switching "faces" whenever the economic need should arise, with these faces not possessing any independent subsistence of their own. To use the technical vocabulary of relations, Sabellianism views each relation in the Godhead as mutual (*mutua*) and symmetrical (*aequiparantiae*). In his *The Classical Theory of Relations*, Constantine Cavarnos defines this kind of relation very well as one "such that, when it holds from the referent to the relatum, a relation of the same nature or denomination holds from the relatum to the referent."<sup>452</sup> Hence there is not, properly speaking, two or

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<sup>450</sup> *De fide et symbolo* 9.20; CSEL 41.26.

<sup>451</sup> Ayres 81, *Augustine and the Trinity*. Similar texts may be found at *c. Adim.I; Io. ev. tr.* 36, 37, and 39; and *c. Max.* 12.

<sup>452</sup> Cavarnos, 81.

more distinct terms related to each other in a mutual, symmetrical relation, but rather one and the same nature or denomination is related back to itself. It follows that saying that all of the relations in the Godhead are mutual and symmetrical, as the Sabellians do, makes God out to be one in such a way that the same God is the Father, the same God is the Son, and the same God is the Holy Spirit.<sup>453</sup>

For Augustine, however, the one God always subsists as Father, Son, and Spirit simultaneously. Once again, this is a view of Augustine that is fully borne out by Scripture, and so must be believed with the sincerest of faith, even if it cannot be fully understood:

In very truth, because the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father, and the Holy Spirit who is also called *the gift of God* (Acts 8: 20; Jn 4: 10) is neither the Father nor the Son, they are certainly three. That is why it is said in the plural *I and the Father are one* (Jn 10: 30). He did not say “is one,” which the Sabellians say, but “are one.”<sup>454</sup>

Any theological view that rejects God’s Threeness, such as Sabellianism, must therefore be rejected as heretical.

So far, what we have seen is that Augustine does not opt for either a strictly pluralistic or monistic view of God. And so we might well ask: What, exactly, is his view of God? The short answer to this question is that Augustine opts for a relational view of the Trinity which God is, in which the causal relations of Father and Son and Spirit determine their differences from each other, while their shared essence maintains their

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<sup>453</sup> See *Sermo* 156.6, 419.

<sup>454</sup> *trin.5.2.10*. In addition to his doctrinal proclamations against Sabellius and his followers in *On the Trinity*, Augustine was known to preach against them as well. See for example, *Sermo* 229G.3, 416-417: “Whoever has seen me has also seen the Father.... Notice, by the way, that it’s not for nothing it says has also seen the Father. He didn’t say, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,” or he would be giving an opening to the Sabellians, who are also called Patripassians [i.e., Father-suffered-ites], who say the Father is the same as the Son.... Father, therefore, and Son are two. Two what? If you ask me that—Father and Son are two.”

unity with each other. Since we have already examined in sufficient detail Augustine's views on how God is one in essence, we shall now take a look at his overall doctrine of relation and how it applies to God. At the outset of such a discussion, I believe it important to mention that Augustine will only use the adverb "relative" and its cognate words eighty-one times in his entire corpus, and seventy-eight of them come from Books V-VII of *On the Trinity*.<sup>455</sup> From this material consideration alone, these three Books will be my primary theological and philosophical resource for explicating Augustine's understanding of any and all relations.

Augustine's main opponents in these three Books are the Arians, against whom he argues for the substantial unity of the Son and Holy Spirit with the Father, while simultaneously arguing for their real distinction from each other. Early on in Book V, Augustine will outline his basic approach to walking this fine line between substantial unity and real distinction in God. Perhaps to the surprise of his theological opponents Augustine agrees with the Arians that, because of God's absolute simplicity and immutability, nothing can be said of Him according to accident. Indeed, whether we are discussing *accidentia inseparabilia* or *accidentia separabilia*, these cannot be predicated of God.<sup>456</sup> While we do frequently use accident words to describe God, such as good, great, powerful, etc., these words do not point to realities superadded onto the divine substance. Harkening back once again to the possession and participation arguments, we can say that when we claim that God is good, we really mean that God is his own goodness; when we claim that God is great, we really mean God is His own greatness;

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<sup>455</sup> The other three references can be found at *trin.*15.3.5; *civ.*11.10; and *ep.* 170.6.

<sup>456</sup> *trin.*5.4.5; CCSL 50.209.

and when we claim that God is powerful, we really mean that God is His own power. That is, God does not possess or participate in these realities as if they were external to His own being, but rather they are distinct from but undivided from the divine substance.

Where Augustine notes his disagreement with the Arians is in their conclusion that everything said of God must refer to his substance. For Augustine, some of the things said of God are “said with reference to something else (*ad alterum*),”<sup>457</sup> or according to relation. A case in point are the relationship words used to designate the first and second persons of the Trinity, ‘Father’ and ‘Son.’ He writes of these two relationship words:

the terms [Father and Son] are not said according to substance [*secundum substantiam*], because each of them is not said with reference to himself [*ad se*], but both of these are used reciprocally, each with reference to the other [*ad alterutrum*]. Nor are they used according to accident [*secundum accidens*], because that which is called Father and that which is called Son is eternal and unchangeable in them. Consequently, although it is different to be the Father and to be the Son, still there is no undivided substance, because this is not said according to substance, but according to relation [*secundum relatiuum*]. And this relation is not an accident, because it is unchangeable.<sup>458</sup>

We might say therefore that the terms ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ signify realities that lie in between that which is accidental and that which is substantial, or that they signify the mutual relationships between the first and second persons of the Trinity.<sup>459</sup> These are relationships that are mutually exclusive (the Son can no more be his own Father as the Father can be his own Son), and so not predicable of their shared divine substance; and

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<sup>457</sup> *trin.* 5.1.6.

<sup>458</sup> *trin.* 5.5.6; CCSL 50.210-211. A similar text can be found at *trin.* 5.8.9; CCSL 50.215: “Thus, let us above all hold to this: whatever is said in reference to itself concerning that divine and exalted sublimity is said according to substance [*substantialiter*]; but what is said in reference to something [*ad aliquid*] is not said according to substance but relation [*non substantialiter, sed relative*]. The power of the ‘of one substance’ in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is so great that everything which is said concerning individuals with reference to themselves is understood as adding up not to a plural number but to the singular.

<sup>459</sup> Analogous comments can be made about the third person of the Trinity and the term ‘Holy Spirit.’

these are relationships that are non-accidental, because they are eternal and unchangeable.<sup>460</sup>

The ingenuity of what Augustine has done here rests in his re-purposing of the philosophical category of relation, which when applied to God is no longer accidental, in order to free up the requisite ontological space for the three persons to exist as distinct individuals within the divine substance. While Augustine's changing of the accidental ontological status of relation with respect to God may be seen by some as signaling a radical break from philosophical tradition and, specifically, the Aristotelian tradition, he actually borrowed quite a lot from the latter to construct his own theory of relation. Following Aristotle, Augustine conceived of a relation in the broadest sense as a characteristic with the peculiarity that the being which possesses it possesses it *of*, *towards*, or *for* another distinct being.<sup>461</sup> Or as Augustine will say, "the terms of any predication of relationship must have reference to each other."<sup>462</sup> The two beings/terms in question are often given the technical names of referent and relatum, respectively, though Augustine never refers to them as such. For example, in the relation Simmias is "taller than" Socrates, Simmias is the referent and Socrates is the relatum. The relation "taller

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<sup>460</sup> Arguing for the simplicity of the divine essence and the real existence of the persons based on mutual relationships of origination distinguishes Augustine's Trinitarian theology from that of Aquinas, with which it is often mistakenly identified. While Aquinas frequently cites Augustine as an authority of the Catholic faith in the *Summa Theologica*—more so in fact than any other religious authority—he notes his disagreement with Augustine on this important point: "Some [including Augustine], then, considering that *relation follows upon act*, have said that *the divine hypostases are distinguished by origin*, so that we may say that the Father is distinguished from the Son, inasmuch as the former begets and the latter is begotten.... *This opinion, however, cannot stand*" (ST, I, Q. 40, A. 2, co., emphasis mine). Given Aquinas' view that the divine persons signify in God relations as subsisting in the divine essence, capable of only being distinguished in our thought, his disagreement with Augustine should come as no surprise. For representative texts from the *Summa Theologica* that illustrate Aquinas' difference from Augustine concerning the relation of the divine persons to the essence cf. ST, I, Q. 28, A. 2, co.; ST, I, Q. 28, A. 3, ad. 1; ST, I, Q. 29, A. 4, co.; ST, I, Q. 30, A. 1, co.; ST, I, Q. 30, A. 4, co.; ST, I, Q. 31, A. 1, co.; ST, I, Q. 31, A. 2, co.; ST, I, Q. 39, A. 1, s.c.; ST, I, Q. 39, A. 1, co.; ST, I, Q. 39, A. 6, co.; ST, I, Q. 40, A. 1, co..

<sup>461</sup> See for example, *Cat.* VII.6a37-38; *Cat.* VII.8b1-2; *Top.* VI.146b38-40 and VI.142a28-30.

<sup>462</sup> *trin.* 7.1.2.

than” is a characteristic possessed by Simmias, but only in relation to Socrates, for considered by himself Simmias is not “taller than” anyone (Socrates or whomever else).<sup>463</sup> The existence of this relation depends on its inherence in the referent, but the essence of this relation is to hold from the referent to the relatum.<sup>464</sup>

Evidence of Augustine’s indebtedness to Aristotle in his general understanding of how relations exist and what they essentially are can be traced back to Book IV of the *Confessions*, where Augustine tells the reader that when he was around twenty, he read and completely understood a Latin translation of the *Ten Categories* of Aristotle. According to Fr. Paul Henry, there is no doubt that such reading material from The Philosopher influenced Augustine’s own view of relations: Augustine borrows his understanding of relations from “the *Book of Categories* but also from the *Nichomachean Ethics*. From Aristotle he takes the analysis of reciprocal and mutual relations, such as friend to friend, and father to son, and greatly improves upon it.”<sup>465</sup> We can see the truth of this for ourselves especially in Book VII of *On the Trinity*, in which Augustine will not only describe relations and their terms in almost the exact way as Aristotle does in the first four chapters of the *Categories*, but even use many of the same examples.<sup>466</sup>

Near the beginning of Book VII, Augustine will make the important distinction between what is said with reference to self and what is said with reference to another. He

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<sup>463</sup> See *Phaedo* 102 ff.

<sup>464</sup> See *Top.* VI.146b38-40.

<sup>465</sup> Henry, Paul S.J. *Saint Augustine on Personality: The Saint Augustine Lecture 1959*, Villanova University. The Macmillan Company: New York, 1960. P. 11

<sup>466</sup> For more on Augustine’s acquaintance with Aristotle’s *Categories*, see for example, Roland J. Teske, S. J., “Augustine’s Use of ‘Substantia’ in Speaking about God,” *The Modern Schoolman* 62 (1985), pp. 147-163; William E. Mann, “Immutability and Predication: What Aristotle Taught Philo and Augustine,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 22 (1987), pp. 21-39; George Rudebusch, “Aristotelian Predication, Augustine, and the Trinity,” *Thomist* 53 (1989), pp. 587-597; and Adrian Pabst, “The Primacy of Relation over Substance and the Recovery of a Theological Metaphysics,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 81 (2007), pp. 553-578.

writes: “when you say master, you point not to being but to relationship, which refers to slave; but when you say man, or anything similar that has reference to self and not to another, then you point to a being.”<sup>467</sup> Augustine believed all such creaturely relations to be dependent for their existence on the terms of those relations. For example, if there were no men, there could be no master-slave relationship, because there would not be a man to be a master and a man to be a slave. So too when we are discussing men, horses, and sums of money: the latter are said with reference to self and signify beings; but the terms “master,” “slave,” “draft-animal,” and “security” are said with reference to another and signify specific relationships. These would have no relational existence, so to speak, if it were not for their corresponding substance terms. All such relations are, to use the technical vocabulary of relations once again, mutual (*mutua*) and asymmetrical (*disquiperantiae*). This kind of relation can be defined as holding between two or more beings if and only if “when it holds from the referent to the relatum, a relation of a different nature or denomination holds from the relatum to the referent.”<sup>468</sup> In other words, it is a two-way relation amongst different natures or denominations.

Bringing this examination of relations to bear on God, Augustine infers that if the Father was not something with reference to himself, then he could not be talked about in relation to the Son or the Holy Spirit. Any relation for Augustine necessarily depends on the existence and nature of its terms, or as he famously says, “every being which is spoken of relatively is something apart from that relation [*aliquid excepto relatiuo*].”<sup>469</sup> This Aristotelian insight, when applied to the intra-trinitarian relationships within God,

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<sup>467</sup> *trin.*7.1.2.

<sup>468</sup> Cavarnos, 90.

<sup>469</sup> *trin.*7.1.2; CCSL 50.247-8.

shows that Augustine took seriously the distinct individuality of the three divine persons, each of which is necessary for there to be the triune God, and each of which equally manifest the unified divine essence. Moreover, since the three persons are “something apart” from or not reducible to their their relations to each other, Augustine must be said to have held that the intra-trinitarian relations are “real” relations, having an objective basis in reality, separate from the considerations of any finite intellect. After all, if the persons are real, objectively and ontologically, then the relations that obtain between them must be such as well. In this regard, Augustine will very clearly say that the Father’s being *qua* Father has reference not to himself, but rather to his only begotten Son; and that the Son’s being *qua* Son has reference not to himself, but rather to his unbegotten Father:

The Father is Life, not by a ‘being born’; the Son is Life by a ‘being born’ ... the Father, in that he is, is from no one; but in that he is the Father, he is on account of the Son [*Pater quod est, a nullo est; quod autem Pater est, propter Filium est*]. But the Son, both in that he is the Son, is on account of the Father, and in that he is, is from the Father [*Filius vero et quod Filius est, propter Patrem est; et quod est, a Patre est*] ... Therefore, the Father remains life, the Son also remains life; the Father, life in himself, not from the Son, the Son, life in himself, but from the Father.<sup>470</sup>

Not only does this have to do with what is said, but with what ‘is.’ The Father ‘is’ only Father if he has a Son; and the Son ‘is’ only Son if he has a Father. In other words, Augustine believes that in order for there *to be* either one of these two divine persons both of them must really, ontologically exist. What this shows is that the diversity of person present in the Trinity actually enhances Its unity, or indeed is the very cause of that unity. He clarifies this point with the example of the inseparable nature of the relation between human fathers and their sons, while noting its obvious limitations:

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<sup>470</sup> *Io. ev. tr.* 19.13; CCSL 36.196-7.

For example, a man and another man, if the one should be a father, the other a son. That he is a man is in respect to himself; that he is a father is in respect to the son.... For the name father has been said in respect to something [*pater enim nomen est dictum ad aliquid*], and son in respect to something; but these are two men. But in truth, God the Father *is* Father in respect to something [*At vero Pater Deus ad aliquid est Pater*], that is to the Son; and God the Son *is* Son in respect to something, that is, to the Father. But as those are two men, not so are these two Gods.<sup>471</sup>

When considering the Holy Spirit, we can say that Father, Son, and Spirit are not three Gods precisely because they are Father, Son, and Spirit, i.e., because they are what they are as persons in relation to each other; because they exist *ad aliquid*. But unlike human fathers and sons, they are perfect persons, whose relationships to each other are eternal and unchanging. For Augustine, this makes their relationships to each other actually perfecting of their essential unity and not accidental properties of an association of two or more separate beings. Augustine therefore preserves the unity of the Trinity by arguing for its Personal diversity, and preserves its Personal diversity by arguing for Its unity, each of which necessarily, ontologically implies the other.

As Rowan Williams says, “What should be particularly noted is that Augustine, so far from separating the divine substance from the life of the divine persons, defines that substance in such a way that God cannot be other than relational, trinitarian.”<sup>472</sup> Augustine certainly never views the divine substance as a kind of separate principle of unity within God, or as a separate causal source of the three Persons.<sup>473</sup> According to Augustine, the Trinity is nothing more and nothing less than the one God and vice versa:

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<sup>471</sup> *Io. ev. tr.* 39.4; CCSL 36.346.

<sup>472</sup> Williams, 180.

<sup>473</sup> In not attributing the unity of the Trinity to a separate divine essence, but the essence as lived in the dynamic inter-relation of the three persons, I think Augustine’s comment here should, at the very least, be seen as compatible with the idea of the monarchy of the Father that is prevalent in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. According to the East, it is the person of the Father that is entirely the source of the Son and the Holy Spirit, not the divine *ousia*.

... nor do we, therefore, call the Trinity three persons or substances, one essence and one God, as though three somethings subsist from one matter which [*tamquam ex una materia tria quaedam subsistant*], whatever it is, is unfolded in these three. For there is nothing else of this essence besides the Trinity [*non enim aliquid aliud eius essentiae est praeter istam trinitatem*] ... [In material things] one man is not as much as three men together; and two men are something more than one man ... but in God it is not so; for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit together is not a greater essence than the Father alone.<sup>474</sup>

One of the difficulties in our understanding of the Trinity, then, comes from the fact that within God (*ad intra*) “one is as much as three are together, and two are not more than one, and in themselves they are infinite. So they are each in each and all in each, and each in all and all in all, and all are one.”<sup>475</sup> The kind of part-whole logic that humans are inclined to engage in to understand other people and the material world around them simply will not work when it comes to the Trinity, which cannot be understood in such a piecemeal way. Elsewhere Augustine similarly writes:

... the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the Trinity, but they are only one God; not that the divinity, which they have in common, is a sort of fourth person, but that the Godhead is ineffably and inseparably a Trinity... You know that in the Catholic faith it is true and from belief that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, while remaining a Trinity ... the Trinity is of one substance and [the] essence is nothing else than the Trinity itself [*ut ipsa essentia non aliud sit quam ipsa trinitas*].<sup>476</sup>

I submit that the last two primary texts from Augustine show his commitment to the belief that the essence of the Trinity is not an extra fourth reality in God. We have seen him express this belief in various statements: “there is nothing else of this essence besides the Trinity,” “not that the divinity which they have in common is a sort of fourth person,” and “the essence is nothing else than the Trinity itself.” I take these statements to mean that the divine essence does not have an independent existence by itself and for itself.

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<sup>474</sup> *trin.* 7.6.11; CCSL 50.264-5.

<sup>475</sup> *trin.* 6.10.12.

<sup>476</sup> *Epistle* 120, 3.13, 3.17.

Rather, It exists in the realities of Father, Son, and Spirit. In the Greek East, we see the same belief expressed with the technical, theological term “enhypostatic” as it is applied to the essence and energies of the three Persons.<sup>477</sup>

With this said, Augustine does not collapse the three divine persons or their intra-trinitarian relationships into the absolute unity of the divine essence, nor does he do so with their relations toward creation. He always keeps distinct what is said of God by way of essence and what is said of God by way of relationship, because when it comes to “the things each of the three in this triad is called that are proper or peculiar to himself, such things are never said with reference to self but only with reference to each other or to creation, and therefore it is clear that they are said by way of relationship and not by way of substance.”<sup>478</sup> Augustine gives an example of each of these three realities pertaining to God: “That he is, is said of God with reference to himself; that he is Father is said with reference to Son, and that he is Lord is said with reference to the creation that serves him.”<sup>479</sup> In other words, what is said of substance in God, what is said of relationship in God, and what is said of relationship outside of God are not the same. They are not the same because they denote different and distinct realities pertaining to God.

When it comes to the three persons in particular, Augustine wants to ensure that they really exist as irreducible realities within the irreducible essence. To indicate the real existence of the persons—or their *subsistentia personarum*—he will make an often

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<sup>477</sup> St. Gregory Palamas will define the term “enhypostatic” at *The Triads* III.i.9 when speaking of how the deifying gift of the Holy Spirit can be said to be “enhypostatic.” He writes: “It is “enhypostatic,” not because it possesses a hypostasis of its own, but because the Spirit “sends it out into the hypostasis of another,” in which it is indeed contemplated. It is then properly called “enhypostatic,” in that it is not contemplated by itself, nor in an essence, but in a hypostasis.” For more on the use of the term “enhypostatic” in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, see fn 422 of this dissertation.

<sup>478</sup> *trin.*5.3.12.

<sup>479</sup> *trin.*7.3.9.

overlooked distinction between the Father and Son being *alium* and *alius*. The former can be translated as “another person,” the latter as “another thing or nature.” Such a translation is vindicated by Augustine’s own discussion of the term *alium* at *On the Soul and its Origin* 2.9,<sup>480</sup> where he writes: “*sed quia eum genuit de se ipso, non aliud genuit quam id quod est ipse. Excepto enim quod hominem assumpsit et uerbum caro factum est, alius est quidem uerbum dei filius, sed non est aliud; hoc est alia persona est, sed non diuersa natura.*” The distinction between *alium* and *alius* will also appear quite frequently in Augustine’s later works.<sup>481</sup> Though perhaps at *De civitate Dei* 11 (ca. 418) we receive one of its clearest expressions in the service of making known the real existence of Father and Son and Holy Spirit:

But the Holy Spirit is another person [*alium*] than the Father and the Son, for he is neither the Father nor the Son. But I say, ‘another person’ [*alium*] and not ‘another thing’ [*alius*], because he, like them, is simple, and, like them, he is the immutable and co-eternal Good.... For we do not say that the nature of the Good is simple because it is in the Father only, or in the Son only, or in the Holy Spirit only. Nor, as the heretics who follow Sabellius have supposed, is it a Trinity in name only without the real existence of the persons [*subsistentia personarum*].<sup>482</sup>

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<sup>480</sup> CSEL 60.343.

<sup>481</sup> See for example, *Io. ev. tr.* 36.9; 37.6; and 45. See also *Sermo* 140.2.

<sup>482</sup> *civ.* 11.10; CCSL 47.330. Here one must be warned not to equate Augustine’s understanding of the real existence of the divine persons with that of Aquinas. To see the contrast between Augustine and Aquinas on this issue more sharply, the notion of *relatio subsistens* (subsisting relation) must be given a bit of explanation. Aquinas first discusses this notion against the background of a larger question concerning whether ‘person’ in God refers to the divine essence, or whether it refers to the ‘*relatio*’—the unique being of the divine person. As is well-known, Aquinas famously says that in God relations cannot be accidental, and so they must subsist just like the divine essence itself. We must also keep in mind that the term ‘person’ is only used appropriately with respect to God for Aquinas if it refers to that which most fundamentally distinguishes one person from the others, which he believes is found in the only thing intrinsic to each of the persons—the divine essence. Aquinas writes in this regard: “a divine person signifies a relation as subsisting. And this is to signify relation by way of a substance, and such a relation is a *hypostasis* subsisting in the divine nature” (ST.I.q.29.a.4.resp.). For Aquinas, ‘person’ can refer to relation directly, but only as it refers to that relation as it is expressed in the existing *hypostasis* of Father, Son, or Spirit. This allows him to say that ‘person’ can refer to essence, provided that we keep in mind that this is so because *essence* and *hypostasis* are identical in God. Aquinas will say that the relationships of origin in God are real (ST.I.q.28.a.4.resp.), but we might question “how real?,” considering his doctrine of subsisting relation, which appears to leave us with a quadruple equivalence wherein ‘person’ = ‘relation’ = ‘hypostasis’ = ‘essence.’ Examining Aquinas’ notion of subsistent relations in the detail it demands for a full account would take us too far afield from our current objective. As a result, I will end my inquiry into

Even this view of holding to the real existence of the three persons has not escaped the ire of scholars. In his article, “The Plight of the Relative Trinitarian,”<sup>483</sup> Timothy Bartel claims that any kind of relative Trinitarianism that holds to the real and distinct existence of the three persons must pay the logical price of abandoning Leibniz’s Law (hereafter LL), or as it is often referred to as, the Law of the Indiscernibility of Identicals. Because of this Bartel claims that relative Trinitarianism does not pass logical muster and is a “dead end.”<sup>484</sup>

LL is summed up by Bartel as follows: “For any x and any y and any property P, if  $x=y$  then x has P if and only if y has P.”<sup>485</sup> Since relative Trinitarianism states that the Father and Son are consubstantial, or sharing in the same nature or substance, it follows that for it to dovetail with LL it must hold that the Father and the Son have all the same properties. The problem, however, is that according to both Eastern and Western orthodoxy the Father possesses a certain internal property as Father that is unique to Him (ingenerate), not shared by the Son or the Holy Spirit; the Son possesses a certain internal property that is unique to Him (generate), not shared by the Father or the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit possesses a certain internal property that is unique to Him (processed), not shared by the Father or the Son. These internal properties have their corresponding economic manifestations (pillar of cloud, the Incarnation, tongues of fire, and so on), which are made known throughout salvation history to the creation to bring it into

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this notion here. But it is worth mentioning that I am not the only one to take this view of Aquinas. See Richard Cross, “Two Models of the Trinity,” 285-286.

<sup>483</sup> “The Plight of the Relative Trinitarian” by Timothy Bartel from *Religious Studies*, Vol. 24 (1988), pp. 129-155.

<sup>484</sup> Bartel, 133.

<sup>485</sup> Bartel, 134.

communion with God. These properties are unique to each of the individual persons and are therefore incommunicable to the others. They are not, in other words, numerically identical with each other. Bartel specifically takes a closer look at the Son and what he calls His “incarnational properties.” According to Bartel, if we follow the dictates of LL it will validate any inference of the form:

“God the Son has incarnational property P;

God the Father lacks P;

Therefore, God the Son is not God the Father.”

Bartel thinks that it must therefore follow from this conclusion “that God the Son and God the Father are different deities.”<sup>486</sup>

In my mind this sort of logic chopping engaged in by Bartel, which is meant to delegitimize relative Trinitarianism, consists of a series of wasted swings. I would argue that LL only applies to the common deity of Father, Son, and Spirit for at least two reasons. First, if the scope of application of LL extended beyond the common deity of the Three to their unique properties as persons, then we would be led headlong into Sabellianism, or some other erroneous form of theological modalism. Second, the fact that the Son has certain incarnational properties that the Father does not implies no lack of deity in the Father or greater deity in the Son. For these properties do not concern the common deity of Father and Son, but rather in this case the Son’s unique economic relation to creation in the unified person of Christ. LL completely paints over the distinction that really exists between God’s internal properties (such as greatness, goodness, mercifulness, etc.) that are univocally, equally, and identically predicated of

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<sup>486</sup> Bartel, 138.

Father, Son, and Spirit, and those properties, whether internal or external, that are uniquely predicated of each of the Persons. With the aforementioned distinction, we can say without contradiction that God the Son, God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit are one and the same deity, but, very importantly, distinct persons with distinct economic functions.

With the charge that the relative Trinitarianism that Augustine is proposing flies in the face of basic logic being sufficiently rebuffed, we must now consider the particular person of the Holy Spirit, who Augustine views as both another person and the relation binding the Father and Son together. Here we necessarily have to take a brief theological and philosophical detour into Augustine's often misunderstood doctrine of the *filioque*. According to Augustine, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as well as from the Son (the doctrine of 'double procession'): "Nor, by the way, can we say that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son as well; it is not without point that the same Spirit is called [by the scriptures] the Spirit of the Father and the Son."<sup>487</sup> Eastern theologians have always preferred, of course, the statement that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *through* the Son, though there are notable exceptions even in the Eastern orthodox tradition on this point.<sup>488</sup> Augustine's pneumatology, however, is far more nuanced than a one-sentence expression can convey. While the Father and Son are one single principle when it comes to the proceeding of the Holy Spirit,<sup>489</sup> there is an important qualification

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<sup>487</sup> *trin.*4.5.29. See for example, Mt 10: 20 and Gal 4: 6.

<sup>488</sup> At the end of his *On the Holy Spirit*, for example, Basil concludes with the somewhat controversial doxology: "to the Father, with (*meta*) the Son together with (*sun*) the Holy Spirit." (Spir.3). He does not end with the more commonly-accepted-in-Greek-Orthodox circles statement: "to the Father through (*dia*) the Son in (*en*) the Holy Spirit."

<sup>489</sup> He makes this clear, for example, at *trin.*5.3.15.

that must be taken into account that brings Augustine's position closer to that of the East.

<sup>490</sup> This qualification can be found in Book XV of *On the Trinity*:

only he from whom the Son was begotten and from whom the Spirit principally [*principaliter*] proceeds, is God the Father. I have added principally therefore because the Holy Spirit is also found to proceed from the Son. But the Father also gave this to him, not as though he already existed and did not yet have it [*non iam existenti et nondum habenti*], but whatever he gave to the only-begotten Word, he gave in begetting him [*sed quidquid unigenito verbo dedit gignendo dedit*]. He so begot him, therefore, that the common gift should also proceed from him, and that the Holy Spirit should be the Spirit of both.<sup>491</sup>

He adds to this argument a litter later on in Book XV:

And he who can understand in that which the Son says: *as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son to have life in himself* (John 5:26), that the Father did not give life to the Son already existing without life, but so begot him apart from time that the life which the Father gave to the Son in begetting is co-eternal with the life of the Father who gave [*sed ita eum sine tempore genuisse ut uita quam pater filio gignendo dedit coaeterna sit uitae patris qui dedit*]; let him understand that, just as the Father has in himself that the Holy Spirit should proceed from the Father, it is so to be understood that his proceeding also from the Son comes to the Son from the Father [*de patre habet utique ut et de illo procedat spiritus sanctus*].<sup>492</sup>

For Augustine, then, the ultimate causal source of the Holy Spirit is still the Father, because “the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son is traced back, on both counts, to him of whom the Son is born.”<sup>493</sup> While both of the above passages from Book XV appear to be discussing the internal relations that the Spirit has to the Father (principally) and the Son, it could be argued that they leave open the possibility for the doctrine of double procession to apply to both what is said of God *ad intra* and what is

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<sup>490</sup> For more on Augustine's pneumatology in Book XV, see Basil Studer's “Zur Pneumatologie des Augustinus von Hippo (*De Trinitate* 15.17.27-27.50),” in *Mysterium Caritatis: Studien zur Exegese und zur Trinitätslehre in der Alten Kirche*, Studia Anselmiana 127 (Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1999), 311-27.

<sup>491</sup> *trin.* 15.17.29; CCSL 50.503.

<sup>492</sup> *trin.* 15.26.47; CCSL 50.528.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.5.29.

said of God *ad extra*. This in turn would seem to collapse the latter distinction in God, also known as the theology/economy distinction.

Those in the Eastern Orthodox tradition have been perennially bothered by this result, because they believe that such an *ad intra/ad extra* distinction in God must be maintained to accurately discuss the origin of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity and His activities outside of the Trinity. It should be noted that the Trinitarian controversies of the 4<sup>th</sup> C., such as Arianism, were sparked in large part because of a failure to do this, because of a failure to make a clear distinction between God as Father (ingenerate), Son (generate), and Spirit (processed) on the one hand, and God the Trinity as economically manifested in salvation history on the other hand. Rather, the Eastern Orthodox tradition holds to the idea that only the Father proceeds the Holy Spirit (internally), but Father and the Son can both be said to send the Holy Spirit (economically), e.g., at Pentacost, Christ's baptism, and the transferring of the Spirit to the twelve apostles on the evening of his resurrection.<sup>494</sup> The Father's sole procession of the Spirit within the Trinity can be defended by examining not only Scripture, such as Jn 15: 26, but also the creed produced by the Council of Constantinople in 381.

This Council says regarding the Spirit: "and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds (*ekporeuetai*) from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets." Note that it does not speak of the Spirit in its economic function as paraclete or helper. While this creedal statement concerning the Spirit clearly implies His Divinity, along with and equal to the

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<sup>494</sup> See *An Agreed Statement*, III, Theological.

Father and Son, it does not “specify the manner of the Spirit’s origin, or to elaborate on the Spirit’s particular relationships to the Father and the Son.”<sup>495</sup>

One could argue that the greatest difference between East and West on the filioque revolves around how to understand this original creedal language of procession, and the way key Greek/Latin terms have been used to discuss the Spirit’s origin from the Father and Its being sent forth into the world. The Greeks, to properly maintain the theology/economy distinction, will use the Johannine language of *ekporeuetai* to say the Spirit “proceeds” from the Father within the Trinity. The members of the North American Orthodox-Catholic consultation explain that, at the Council of 381, this Gospel text (Jn 15: 26) was slightly altered from “*to pneuma ... ho para tou Patros ekporeuetai*” to: “*to pneuma to hagion ... to ek tou Patros ekporeuomenon.*” This was done so that they could “emphasize that the “coming forth” of the Spirit begins “within” the Father’s own hypostatic role as source of the divine Being, and so is best spoken of as a movement out of (*ek*) him.”<sup>496</sup> Hence we can say that for the Greeks the term *ekporeuetai* has a technical and theological meaning that refers to the intra-trinitarian relationship between Father and Spirit. They will use other words such as *proienai* to say that the Spirit goes forward *into* the world, to refer to the Spirit’s economic mission. By contrast, the Latins use the words *procedere* and the related *processio* to discuss the origin of the Holy Spirit from the Father and from the Son. The problem is that both of these terms possess the general meaning of “movement forwards,” but neither of them connote the idea of this movement coming forth from a definite source or starting-point. Because of the generality of these

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<sup>495</sup> *An Agreed Statement*, II, ¶.2. The filioque thus cannot be said to have been a part of the original Creed of 381. It was in fact added some time later at the Council of Toledo in 589, then gaining subsequent theological traction in the West over the centuries that followed.

<sup>496</sup> *An Agreed Statement*, III, Terminology.

Latin terms, they can be used to refer to “the Son’s generation as well as the breathing-forth of the Spirit and his mission in time,”<sup>497</sup> which in turn muddies or downright conflates the theology (God *ad intra*) and economy (God *ad extra*) distinction.

Whether or not Augustine is guilty of this in his use of these Latin terms is something I will not discuss here. What is important to note I think is that, through all of the East and West debate over the filioque, there is, in both traditions, the commitment to viewing Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three co-equal persons. Whatever origin of the Spirit we might theologically prefer, both Augustine and the East view the Spirit as God from God, and along with the Son “light from light, and true God from true God.” Augustine will explain that the Holy Spirit is a joint gift of the Father and the Son, or the act of mutual love that eternally spirates from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father. Since their mutual love for each other is perfect, it must be a person on equal status with the Father and the Son. If the Holy Spirit was somehow less of a person than the other two, then the relation between Father and Son would be imperfect, or perhaps better, their mutual love for each other would be imperfect; which is absurd. Since “love itself is nothing but a kind of life which couples together or seeks to couple some two entities, the lover and the loved,”<sup>498</sup> God’s perfect love—the Holy Spirit—must be conceived as “some sort of ineffable communion [*ineffabilis est quaedam ... communitio*]<sup>499</sup> between the Father and Son, but at the same time as a person co-equal to the two realities he joins. The only way this is possible is if the Holy Spirit is given in such a way that he gives himself as God to Father and Son as he is being given from

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<sup>497</sup> Ibid.

<sup>498</sup> *trin.*8.13.9.

<sup>499</sup> *trin.*5.11.12; CCSL 50.219.

Father to Son and from Son to Father. For anything less would break up the perfect unity of the perfect persons:

Nor because they give and he is given is he, therefore, less than they, for he is so given as the Gift of God that he also gives himself as God [*Ita enim datur sicut dei donum ut etiam se ipsum det sicut deus*]. For it is impossible to say of him that he is not a master of his own power, of whom it was said: *the Spirit breathes where he will* [John 3.8] ... there is no subordination of the Gift and no domination of the givers, but the concord between the Gift and the givers [*concordia dati et dantium*].<sup>500</sup>

However, Augustine's view that the Holy Spirit is the "common love (*caritatem*) by which the Father and the Son love each other"<sup>501</sup> has been heavily criticized in the East, for it appears to depersonalize the Holy Spirit by reducing the third person of the Trinity to the mere loving relation between Father and Son. According to Boris Bobrinskoy, both Augustine and his theological mentor, Ambrose, viewed the Holy Spirit as the bond of love between Father and Son, thereby making the Holy Spirit less of a Person than the other two. On their pneumatology, "the Spirit is viewed essentially as the Gift of the new life flowing from the Father to the Son," not as a fully-fledged Person.<sup>502</sup> Kallistos Ware also thinks that once one calls the Holy Spirit the 'bond of love' between Father and Son, He becomes depersonalized.<sup>503</sup> Suffice it to say that Augustine's doctrine of the *filioque* has not received much positive attention in Eastern scholarly circles. Much of the criticism it has received, I submit, can be explained by examining not only the Latin term *processio*, but also the common historical perception of the category of relation. But as we shall see, this in turn can be attributed to a more fundamental (and misguided)

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<sup>500</sup> *trin.* 15.19.36; CCSL 50.513.

<sup>501</sup> *trin.* 15.17.27.

<sup>502</sup> Bobrinskoy, Boris. *Mystery of the Trinity: Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*. Trans. by Anthony P. Gythiel. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: New York, 1999. P. 274.

<sup>503</sup> See Ware, Kallistos. "The human person as an icon of the Trinity." *Sobornost*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1986). P. 9.

materialistic tendency of the human mind to understand the entirety of reality in bodily terms. First, however, let us briefly consider relations.

At least as far back as Aristotle, relation was viewed as the weakest of all types of beings, and least capable of independent existence.<sup>504</sup> Aristotle explains this by the fact that relations presuppose other types of more perfect beings to exist. For example, relations presuppose substances to make up their terms, and quantity and quality to make up the nature of those terms.<sup>505</sup> Aquinas will later make similar comments on the weak ontological status of relations, such as his famous statement: “*Relatio praedicamentalis est accidens minimae entitatis.*”<sup>506</sup> It should come as no surprise, then, that Orthodox theologians would think that Augustine’s view of the Holy Spirit as the bond of love between Father and Son depersonalizes the third person of the Trinity.

I have already shown, however, that in the context of the Trinity Augustine does not understand relation as one of the accidental philosophical categories of being talked about by Aristotle; the intra-trinitarian relations are expressions of God himself. Speaking of the Spirit in particular, Augustine writes: “But this communion is consubstantial and co-eternal ... and this again is a substance, because God is a substance, and *God is love* (1Jn 4:16).”<sup>507</sup> And at *De civitate Dei* 11.24 Augustine will explicitly say that the Holy Spirit is the “*sanctitas*” of both Father and Son, not as *qualitas*, but as *substantia* and *persona in trinitate*. Elsewhere, Augustine tells us why there is still great reluctance among some to accept this view of the Spirit as substantial *communio*: It is because the unity between two material bodies does not appear to be a fully-fledged reality when

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<sup>504</sup> See *Cat.*V.2a34-2b6.

<sup>505</sup> See *Cat.*V.2a34-2b6.

<sup>506</sup> *Elementa*, Vol. I, sect. 190; see also *Cursus Philos.*, qu. XVII, art. II, IV.

<sup>507</sup> *trin.*6.5.7; CCSL 50.235.

compared to the other two realities it joins. After all, if those two realities are separated, then that unity does not exist anymore, but they go on existing.<sup>508</sup> For Augustine, this view of the matter is one which is distorted by a mind that is weighed down by materialistic thinking. As he has argued on countless other occasions, since the Holy Spirit is God, and since the Holy Spirit is love, it follows that the love that binds the Father and the Son together necessarily is substance.<sup>509</sup>

To conclude this chapter on God's essential unity and relational diversity, I think it appropriate to end with Augustine's own summary of what he believes he has accomplished in Books V-VII concerning substantial and relative predication found at the beginning of Book VIII:

Those things which are predicated relatively the one to the other—as Father and Son, and the gift of both, the Holy Spirit—are predicated specially in the Trinity as belonging severally to each person, for the Father is not the Trinity, nor the Son the Trinity, nor the gift the Trinity: But that whenever each is singly spoken of in respect to themselves, then they are not spoken of as three in the plural number, but one, the Trinity itself, as the Father God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God; the Father good, the Son good, and the Holy Spirit good; and the Father omnipotent, the Son omnipotent, and the Holy Spirit omnipotent: yet neither three Gods, nor three goods, nor three omnipotents, but one God, good, omnipotent, the Trinity itself, and whatever else said of them, not relatively with respect to each other, but individually in respect to themselves.<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> See *De fide et symbolo* 9.20.

<sup>509</sup> See for example, *trin.*15.17.28-9; CCSL 50.503-4.

<sup>510</sup> *trin.*8.prologue.1.

## Chapter 7

*The Common and the Particular: God's Oneness of Essence and Threeness of Person according to the Cappadocians*

It has been discussed that the Cappadocian Fathers understood the person of the Father as the ultimate ontological notion in the Trinity, and as the person that is the source of unity for the entire Trinity.<sup>511</sup> But there is also an equally important emphasis in their doctrinal works on the oneness of the Trinity being a function of the unity of all three Persons, in their mutual and mutually exclusive causal relations to each other. While there is certainly truth in saying that the Cappadocian Fathers held to the logical priority of the Father, in that He is the origin (*arche*) and cause (*aitia*) of the Son and Spirit, they never thought this led to the Father having a genetic or metaphysical priority over the other two. This point has been well-discussed in the secondary literature, particularly by Albert Meesters and Joshua McNall.<sup>512</sup> My goal in this chapter is not to critically evaluate the work of scholars on these topics, but rather to briefly sketch how the Greek-speaking-East and the Augustinian-West agree that the unity of the Trinity is a function of the shared divine essence, hypostatically manifested in Father, Son, and

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<sup>511</sup> This interpretation of the Father's role within the Trinity is common in Eastern Orthodox circles. See Zizioulas' work entitled *Personhood*, p.40, where he discusses how the Cappadocians saw the unity of God being found in the person of the Father alone, not in the divine essence. See also Kallistos Ware, who has said that: "According to the Greek Fathers of the fourth century, whom the Orthodox Church follows to this day, the Father is the sole source and ground of unity in the Godhead." (*The Orthodox Way*, rev. edn (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995, p. 32)). John Meyendorff makes the same point about the Father's primacy in terms His unity-giving role in the Trinity, albeit less starkly than the other two. Quoting John of Damascus, Meyendorff writes: "If the Father does not exist, then neither does the Son and the Spirit; and if the Father does not have something, then neither has the Son or the Spirit. Furthermore, because of the Father, that is, because of the fact that the Father is, the Son and the Spirit are." (*Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), p. 183. Meyendorff is quoting from *De fide Orthodoxa*, 1.8)).

<sup>512</sup> See Meesters' "The Cappadocians and their Trinitarian Conceptions of God," page 409. See McNall, *A Free Corrector: Colin Gunton and the Legacy of Augustine*. Augsburg Fortress Publishers (2015), page 278.

Spirit, in their causal relations to each other. This will be no small achievement. As will be shown in the next two chapters concerning Augustine's essence-will distinction and its practical implications for the problem of theological fatalism, it is a philosophically necessary first step to not only allow for: 1) multiple and distinct 'realities'<sup>513</sup> to exist in God along with the essence, but also for 2) the true freedom of man to exist under the influence of God's non-essential help. The second point meaning, of course, not that God's help is unnecessary for our salvation, but that the grace granted to man comes from a reality in God not identical to His essence, i.e., from His will and knowledge. I submit that only by consistently making such a distinction between God's unity of essence and the relativity of the persons can any theology, East or West, take the requisite philosophical steps to make sense of the former divine reality and the latter human reality. This is something the Cappadocian Fathers, namely Basil the Great (ca. 330-379), Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 331-395), and Gregory Nazianzen (ca. 329-390), understood all too well.

One difficulty in attempting to illustrate this commitment of the Cappadocians to such a distinction, however, is the fact that none of them had a treatise specifically devoted to considering the Trinity as Augustine did in his *De Trinitate*.<sup>514</sup> Even if the general point could be argued otherwise, certainly none of them wrote a treatise on the Trinity of the sustained breadth and depth of Augustine. This makes it so that we must

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<sup>513</sup> I am using the term 'realities' to broadly refer to the *tria ontia* in God: *ousia*, *energeia*, and the three Trinitarian *hypostaseis*. In doing this I follow Gregory Palamas, who in his *150 Capita* will also refer to these three by using *ta ontia*. See for example, *Capita* 75: "There are three realities (*triōn ontōn*) in God, namely, substance (*ousias*), energy (*energeias*), and a Trinity of divine hypostases (*theiōn hypostaseōn*)." Saint Gregory Palamas, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*. Trans. by Robert E. Sinkewicz, C.S.B. Studies and texts (Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies), 83: Ontario, Canada (1988).

<sup>514</sup> See "The Cappadocians and their Trinitarian Conceptions of God" by Albert Meesters from *NZSTh* (2012); 54 (4): 396-413, p. 400.

reconstruct their Trinitarian conceptions of God in a somewhat piecemeal fashion from their various doctrinal works, which I will briefly attempt to do in this chapter, but with special emphasis on the essence (common)-person (particular) distinction that is so central to each of their conceptions of God. Much like Augustine, the Cappadocians will situate their conceptions between those of the Arians/Neo-Arians and Sabellius.<sup>515</sup> The former they accomplish by emphasizing the divine unity, or sameness of essence, of the three persons. The latter they accomplish by emphasizing the divine plurality of Father as Generator, Son as Generated, and Spirit as Processed.

We begin with Basil's theology of the Trinity, which finds mature form in his three-book *Contra Eunomium* (finished ca. 363 or 364), but which can also be helpfully pieced together from his *Epistles*. The core of Basil's teaching on the Trinity rests in his twofold emphasis on the unity and distinction in God. He warns us of the dangers of emphasizing either one of these two realities in God, writing: "Harsh rises the cries of the combatants encountering one another in dispute; already all the Church is almost full of the inarticulate screams, the unintelligible noises, rising from the ceaseless agitations that divert the right rule of the doctrine of true religion, now in the direction of excess, now in that of defect. On the one hand are they who confound the persons and are carried away into Judaism; on the other hand are they that, through the opposition of natures, pass into heathenism."<sup>516</sup> The former, the "Judaizers," are those who excessively defend the unity of God. These are the Sabellians, who do not acknowledge the subsistent representation

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<sup>515</sup> Whereas the Arians held that there was some likeness between Father and Son, the Neo-Arians, led by Aetius and Eunomius, were more extreme in their belief that there was no likeness (*anomoios*) between the Father and the Son.

<sup>516</sup> *CE*, 30.77.

of the persons.<sup>517</sup> The latter, the heathens, pass into defect on the “golden mean” scale of how to represent God as Trinity, because of their division of the divine unity. These are the Arians/Neo-Arians, who portray the three persons as having different natures from each other, with the Father’s being the greatest, or that one which can be identified as truly God.

Contrary to the Sabellians and the Arians/Neo-Arians, Basil believes the orthodox faith to rest in the idea that Father, Son, and Spirit are one in essence, but distinct in their particular properties or characteristics. He writes: “According to this [i.e., the Father and Son sharing one and the same nature or substance], divinity (*theotes*) is one. That is to say, it is according to the rationale (*logos*) of the substance (*ousia*) that the unity is thought, but, as in number (*arithmos*), the difference of each rests in the particular properties and in the particular characteristics (*tais idiotesi tais xarakterixousais*).”<sup>518</sup> *Contra Eunomium* 2.28 further reveals the distinction between *ousia* and *idiomata* or *idiotetes*:

Particularities (*idiotetes*), being added onto the substance (*ousia*) like marks or forms, distinguish what is common by means of individual characteristics (*tois idiazousi xaktersi*), but they do not cut the identity in nature (*homophues*) of the substance. For instance, deity (*theotes*) is common, fatherhood and sonship are individualities (*idiomata*); from the intertwining of each, the common and particular, there comes to us a grasp (*katalepsis*) of the truth, so that on the mention of the unbegotten light we understand the Father, and on that of begotten

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<sup>517</sup> I say “who did not acknowledge the subsistent representation of the persons” because even Sabellius spoke of persons (*prosōpa*) in the Godhead, but these persons did not possess true subsistence—an independent and particular existence of their own. Basil comments on Sabellius’ inadequate use of the term person in *Ep.* 210 as follows: “For it is not sufficient to enumerate the difference of the persons (*diaphoras prosōpōn*), but it is necessary to confess that each person exists in a true subsistence (*hekaston prosōpon en hupostasei alēthinē huparkon*). For not even Sabellius rejected this non-subsistent representation of the persons (*anupostatōn tōn prosōpōn anaplasmon*), saying that the same God, though one in substance, is transformed on every occasion according to necessary circumstances, and is spoken now as Father, and now as Son, and now as Holy Spirit.” (*Ep.* 210, 5.34-41). The word *prosōpa* can only be used to refer to Father, Son, and Spirit if the phrase “existing in true subsistences” or something to that effect is paired with it, otherwise such use of the word *prosōpa* would be an affirmation of the error of Sabellius’ theological modalism.

<sup>518</sup> *CE*, 1.19.

light we get the notion (*ennoian*) of the Son ... for this is the character of individualities, to reveal in the identity (*tautoteti*) of substance the otherness (*heteroteta*).

The added language of the common and the particular when applied to God seen here can also be found in his *Epistles*. It is on clear display, for instance, in *Epistle 236*, 6.1-22, where he defines the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* as that between the common and the particular:

*Ousia* and *hypostasis* have the distinction that the common has with reference to the particular (*to koinon pros to kath hekaston*); for example, just as “an animal” (*zoon*) has with reference to “a particular human” (*deina anthropon*). For this reason we confess one substance for the Godhead, so as not to hand down variously the notion of being; but we confess that the hypostasis is particular, in order that our conception of Father and Son and Holy Spirit may be unconfused and plain. For unless we think of the characteristics that are sharply defined in the case of each, as for example fatherhood and sonship and holiness, but from the general notion of being confess God, it is impossible to hand down a sound definition of faith. Therefore, we must add what is particular to what is common and thus confess the faith; the Godhead is something common, the paternity something particular, and combining these we should say: “I believe in God the Father.” And again in the confession of the Son we should do likewise—combine the particular with the common and say: “I believe in God the Son.” Similarly too in the case of the Holy Spirit, we should frame on the same principle our utterance of the reference to him and say: “I believe also in the divine Holy Spirit,” so that throughout the whole, both unity is preserved in the confession of the one Godhead, and that which is peculiar to the persons is confessed in the distinction made in the characteristics attributed to each.

The most important point we may glean from the above primary texts from Basil is that any accurate conception of the Trinity which God is will be made up of two elements, distinct but not divided from each other, namely the common divine essence and the particular characteristics of the persons. While Basil and the other Greek Fathers are unanimous in their opinion that the first of these elements cannot be known in any way, shape or form by humans or the bodiless powers, the latter can be, to the extent that it

can, through the economic and energetic manifestations of the persons in the divine missions.

How one may conceive of God in this way is famously discussed by Basil in *Epistle 234* (sent in 376 to his friend Amphilochius), which was written in response to the Eunomians' objection that since the divine essence is unknowable, if one worships it, one worships what one does not know. Part and parcel of this objection is the underlying Eunomian polemic that if God is truly simple, then all of the perfections we attribute to Him must be names of His substance. To which Basil responds:

We say that we know the greatness of God, His power, His wisdom, His goodness, His providence over us, and the justness of His judgment, but not His very essence (*ousia*).... But God, he says, is simple, and whatever attribute of Him you have reckoned as knowable is of His essence. The absurdities involved in this sophism are innumerable. When all these high attributes have been enumerated, are they all names of one essence? And is there the same mutual force in His awfulness and His loving-kindness, His justice and His creative power, His providence and His foreknowledge, His bestowal of rewards and punishments, His majesty and His providence? In mentioning any of these, do we declare his essence? ... The *energeiai* are various, and the essence simple, but we say that we know our God from His *energeiai*, but do not undertake to approach near to His essence. His *energeiai* come down to us, but His essence remains beyond our reach.<sup>519</sup>

Basil's point here is twofold. First, we can be said to know (*to eidenai*) God in many different ways according to his justice, creative power, etc. Second, by knowing God in these many different ways, according to these activities (*energeiai*), we can form some idea or concept of God (*ennoia*). Indeed, "the concept of God (*ennoia*) is gathered by us from the many attributes which we have enumerated.... We say that from his activities (*energeiai*) we know our God, but his substance itself we do not profess to approach."<sup>520</sup>

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<sup>519</sup> *Epistle 234*; PG 32 872C-873B; NPNF 8, 274.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.* Augustine has less patience in his response to a similar objection: "if you want to argue with me and score off me by saying to me, "Which God do you worship? What sort of God do you worship?"

It follows that while we cannot know the unity of God from the unknowable and unapproachable *ousia*, we can from the *energeiai* that come down to us.

The difference between *essence* and *energeia* in God that Basil is calling our attention to in order to counter the Eunomians is consistent with his overall philosophical distinction between knowledge of what a thing is (*ti esti*) and how it is (*hopos esti*) mentioned at *Contra Eunomium* 1.15.<sup>521</sup> To explain this distinction, he gives the following example: When we say that one man is the son of another man that does not tell us what he is, but only from whom he came to be. We can speak of both *what a man is* and *how he is* relative to another person, e.g., through the relation of sonship, but these are not the same. So, too, Basil thinks when we speak of God the Father: we can talk about what the Father is, even if we do not comprehend His being as God, and how the Father exists as unbegotten, not coming from either of the other two divine persons.

According to Lewis Ayres, Basil's account of identity and difference in the Trinity reveals his indebtedness to many philosophical groups, including Aristotelianism, Stoicism, Platonism, and Neoplatonism.<sup>522</sup> As partial proof of his claim, Ayres does a quick summary of how similar Basil's talk of the distinction between *ousia* and *idiomata* or *idiotetes* mirrors that of the early Stoics belief in there being a difference between a universal and non-differentiated substrate, what they called "*hupokeimenon*" or "*ousia*," as the pre-requisite for concrete existence, and its individuating particular qualities, what they called "*idiotetes*" or "*poiotetes*." Ayres argues that it is likely that Basil was further

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Show me what you worship," I will answer. "Even if there is something I can show you, you aren't somebody I can show it to" (*Sermon* 261.2, 418).

<sup>521</sup> PG 29, 545B.

<sup>522</sup> Ayres 199. See also page 62 of Philip Kariatlis' "St. Basil's Contribution to the Trinitarian Doctrine" from *Phronema*, Vol. XXV, 2010, pp. 57-83, where it is noted how Basil clearly drew upon his own Greek *paideia* to refute the heresies of his day and formulate his Trinitarian doctrine.

influenced in his idea of relations as being individuating characteristics by Aristotle through Porphyry.<sup>523</sup> Porphyry famously wrote of Socrates being individuated by his color, rationality, and his relationship to his father.<sup>524</sup> At *Contra Eunomium* 2.4, Basil echoes this by writing that Paul is Paul because he is a Jew from Tarsus, because he is a student of Gamaliel, and because he is a Pharisee who observes the Jewish law. These characteristics give us some idea of who Paul was as a concrete individual; they give us a concept of Paul. But what they do not give us is a knowledge of Paul's nature as a human being. Whether we are speaking of God's divine nature or Paul's human nature, there is no way of knowing these natures in the abstract, in themselves.<sup>525</sup>

Basil will also use the distinction between absolute and relative names to discuss the unity and diversity of God, respectively. At *Contra Eunomium* 2.9, Basil claims that absolute names refer to an essence (such as 'man'), whereas relative names refer to relationship (such as 'son' and 'the generated one'). The latter thus refer to *idiomata*. Ayres views Basil's use of terminology in this instance as more proof that he specifically used Neoplatonic and Aristotelian ideas concerning essential and relative terms, within Stoic parameters, to elucidate a coherent doctrine of God's unity of essence yet diversity of persons.<sup>526</sup>

We turn now to Gregory of Nyssa, who in many ways philosophically refined and developed his older brother Basil's theological ideas. Indeed, especially after Basil's death, Nyssa would often become an apologist for his ideas against those who would

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<sup>523</sup> See Ayres page 201.

<sup>524</sup> *Isagoge*, CAG 4.1.2.

<sup>525</sup> Basil makes it a general rule that "knowledge of the divine nature is impossible just as knowledge of any nature in itself is impossible" (Ayres 282).

<sup>526</sup> See Ayres 202.

threaten the Orthodox faith, even in some cases speaking for him.<sup>527</sup> Nowhere is Nyssa's willingness to step into his brother's theological shoes more importantly found, at least for the purposes of this dissertation, than in his discussion of the common/particular distinction in God that we briefly covered above in Basil.

Nyssa's philosophical elaboration of his brother's distinction can be situated within another discussion of his pertaining to two types of terms: the first are those that are predicated of many different subjects and indicate a "common nature" (*koinon phusis*).<sup>528</sup> For example, the term "Man" is predicated of Paul, Peter and Barnabas. The second are those that have a more limited scope, referring not to things common (*koinon*) but to things particular (*idion, idiazon, idiomata*).<sup>529</sup> As we shall see, it is with this terminological distinction in hand that Nyssa can argue, without grammatical, logical, or metaphysical contradiction, that God is one in nature but three in person. While certain scholars such as Jaroslav Pelikan have objected that since the Cappadocians make this distinction, they must hold that the divine nature is some "kind of Platonic universal," which is borne out by Nyssa's three men sharing one human nature example,<sup>530</sup> I find this objection to lack its sting. Nyssa ultimately views the divine nature as being hypostatically manifested in the Father, Son, and Spirit, and not having an independent existence of its own apart from them. Hence Nyssa would never, as Pelikan argues, view the divine nature as some kind of abstract universal over and above the three Persons.

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<sup>527</sup> See McNall 278 for more on this.

<sup>528</sup> *Epistle 38*, LNPf, Second Series, Vol. VIII, 137.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid*, 137.

<sup>530</sup> See Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), Vol. I of *The Christian Tradition*, 221ff.

Nyssa's *Ad Graecos* provides a particularly good introduction to how the essence (common)-person (particular) distinction can be properly conceived to exist in God. He begins this work by making clear that the term God cannot be used to refer to Person, but rather the one essence of the Holy Trinity:

If the term God were indicative of the Person, then out of necessity when we speak of the three Persons we would be saying three Gods, but if the term God signifies the essence, when we confess the one essence of the Holy Trinity we rightly teach as doctrine that there is one God since the term God refers to one essence. Therefore it follows that God is one both according to essence and terminology, not three.<sup>531</sup>

As an example of how this works, terminologically and metaphysically, Nyssa once again will talk of three men sharing in one and the same human nature: "since in the case of Peter, Paul and Barnabas we do not declare there to be three essences since they are of one essence, how much more so in the case of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will we not declare this properly? For if the essence is not to be divided into three according to the persons, it is obvious that neither should God be, because the term God does not indicate Person, but rather the essence."<sup>532</sup> He continues on this same point:

As everyone agrees, Peter, Paul and Barnabas are called one Man as far as humanity is concerned. Consequently, in itself, that is to say insofar as Man is concerned, there cannot be many of them. To say many "mans" is a misuse of language and is not said in a proper sense.<sup>533</sup>

On the other hand, Nyssa believes that it is not improper to say that three or more things share the same essence, but that they are distinguished by their individual subsistencies. For "something is distinguished from something else either by essence or by subsistence

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<sup>531</sup> All passages from Nyssa's *Ad Graecos* are translated by Daniel F. Stramara Jr. and are taken from his article "Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Graecos* "How it is that we say there are Three Persons in the Divinity but do not say there are Three Gods" (To the Greeks: Concerning the Commonality of Concepts). *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* Vol. 41, No. 4 (1996), p. 381.

<sup>532</sup> Stramara, 383.

<sup>533</sup> Stramara, 385-386.

or by both essence and subsistence, and thus Man is distinguished from horse by essence, whereas Paul is distinguished from Peter by subsistence, and in addition the specific human subsistence [e.g. Paul] is distinguished by both essence and subsistence from the specific subsistence of the horse [e.g., Bucephalus].”<sup>534</sup>

Examining the second kind of distinction drawn between individual human subsistencies, Nyssa believes that it is accurate to say that Paul and Peter are different persons because of the unique differences that constitute their subsistencies, e.g., “baldness, height, fatherhood, sonship or anything else of this sort.”<sup>535</sup> Nyssa will caution that the common essence of Peter and Paul, i.e., humanity, and the concrete manifestation of that essence in each of their unique persons is not the same, nor should ever be viewed as the same. This is so, he tells us, because “if anyone speaks about the individual, i.e., the subsistence, he immediately directs the mind of the listener to look for someone curly-haired, grey-eyed, a son, a father, et cetera. Whereas the term ‘species’ (that is to say essence) directs the listener to an understanding, namely: a rational animal, mortal, capable of understanding and knowledge; an irrational animal, mortal, capable of neighing and the like.”<sup>536</sup>

Nyssa concludes that, if we are willing to admit that such a distinction between species and subsistence is rightly made with respect to Man and those that participate in that essence, respectively, then such a distinction will apply even more so in the case of God and the three Persons. It follows that with respect to the eternal and divine essence, we are not able to say “such and such a God,” which would refer to each of the

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<sup>534</sup> Stramara, 388.

<sup>535</sup> Stramara, 389.

<sup>536</sup> Stramara, 389.

hypostases; nor can we say, when referring to the three persons, “God and God and God,” which would indicate the eternal and divine essence. Such (mis)references would constitute category mistakes of the highest order. That is why Nyssa thinks that we must profess one God, according to the unknowable and unapproachable divine essence, but who is ‘contemplated’<sup>537</sup> in the three Persons—Father, Son and Spirit.

According to Nyssa, while we cannot know the divine essence, we can know the mode of existence (*tropos huparxis*) unique to each of the three persons. These three modes of existence (i.e., ingenerate, generate, processed) are known through the causal relations that the three persons have to each other, and that are revealed to creation in the missions. In his own *Contra Eunomium*, Nyssa will explain the tri-unity of God with a similar example to one we have seen him use before: “things that are identical on the score of being will not all agree equally in definition on the score of personality. For instance, Peter, James, and John are the same viewed as beings, each was a man; but in the characteristics of their respective personalities, they were not alike.”<sup>538</sup> At *Contra Eunomium* 1.22, he then applies this distinction to the Trinity, which he regards as

... consummately perfect and incomprehensibly excellent yet as containing clear distinctions within itself which reside in the peculiarities of each of the persons: as possessing invariableness by virtue of its common attribute of uncreatedness, but differentiated by the unique character of each person. This peculiarity contemplated in each sharply and clearly divides one from the other: the Father, for instance, is uncreate and ungenerate as well: He was never generated any more than he was created. While this uncreatedness is common to Him and the Son, and

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<sup>537</sup> When Nyssa speaks of ‘contemplating’ God in the three persons, he means a form of knowing called ‘*epinoia*’ or ‘conceptualization.’ Nyssa refers to this as “the way we find out things we do not know, using what is connected and consequent upon our first idea of a subject to discover what lies beyond.” (*Eun.*2.182). Once we form an initial idea about something, we add new ideas to that initial idea until we reach the conclusion of our research. This adding of new ideas for the sake of discovering what lies beyond just is *epinoia*. Because *epinoia* plays a consequent function in our understanding of something, it is proper to say that its epistemological object, when applied to God, is the energies and not the essence. For the energies are consequent, or come after, the divine essence in terms of ontological ordering.

<sup>538</sup> *CE* 1.19.

the Spirit, He is ungenerate as well as the Father. This is peculiar and uncommunicable, being not seen in the other two persons. The Son in his uncreatedness touches the Father and the Spirit, but as the Son and the Only-begotten He has a character which is not that of the Almighty or the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit by the uncreatedness of His nature has contact with the Son and Father, but is distinguished from them by His own tokens. His most peculiar characteristic is that He is neither of those things which we contemplate in the Father and the Son respectively. He is simply, neither as ungenerate, nor as Only-begotten: this it is that constitutes His chief peculiarity.

Nyssa is telling us that each of the persons of the Trinity is unchanging because each is uncreated. They are all the same, identified, unified, or whatever we wish to call it because of their uncreatedness. What allows for real intra-personal diversity is the peculiarity proper to each person and which, therefore, is incommunicable to any of the others: the Father is ungenerate, the Son generate, and the Holy Spirit is neither ungenerate nor generate. According to Nyssa, these peculiarities have their basis in the causal relations that obtain between the three persons, and that within the common and uncreated divine nature, “as our faith teaches, there is a cause, and there is a subsistence produced, but without separation, from the cause.”<sup>539</sup> The former obviously being the Father, the latter being the Son. Nyssa will stress that this difference in cause is the only difference we can point to between Father and Son: “In our view, the native dignity of God consists in godhead (*theotes*) itself, wisdom, power, goodness, judgment, justice, strength, mercy, truth, creativeness, domination, invisibility, everlastingness, and every other quality named in the inspired writings to magnify his glory; and we affirm that everyone of them is properly and inalienably found in the Son, recognizing difference only in respect of unoriginateness.”<sup>540</sup> Unoriginateness, or having no cause of existence,

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<sup>539</sup> CE 1.26.

<sup>540</sup> CE 1.33. Note that Nyssa speaks here of the unity of the Son with Father in terms of the *theotes* itself, i.e., the *energeiai*, not the divine *physis*. As already discussed, Nyssa and his fellow Cappadocians held to the incognoscibility of the divine nature by the human or angelic intellect and to Its imparticipability

is peculiar to the Father alone; whereas the Son alone has the peculiarity of being directly caused by the Father. But in the ‘native dignity of the Godhead itself,’ Father and Son are one in wisdom, power, goodness, judgement, etc. They are, in other words, one in energy but two by their causal relations to each other.

Other works of Nyssa serve to highlight the causal differences present amongst the persons in the Trinity as well. He writes, for instance, in *To Ablabius*:

While confessing that the nature is undifferentiated, we do not deny a distinction in causality, by which alone we seize the distinction of the one from the other: that is, by believing that one is the cause and the other is from the cause. We also consider another distinction with regard to that which is from the cause. There is the one which depends on the first, and there is that one which is through that which depends on the first.<sup>541</sup>

The one that is “the cause” is the Father; the other “from the cause” is the Son; and the one that is “through that which depends on the first” is the Spirit. Because of these causal distinctions, Nyssa is thus able to say without contradiction that, while God’s nature is

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on the part of the entirety of creation. But this presents a problem: Because of the epistemological and metaphysical impossibility of encountering the divine nature, how can we say the Trinity is one God and not three Gods? Nyssa attempts to prove the unity of the persons and their shared nature from the oneness of their energy—that reality which is present around the divine nature and which is common to all three Persons. See, for example, *Ad Ablabius* NPNF 525, where Nyssa writes of the Godhead (*theotes*) that it refers to an *energeia* and “is so called from *thea*, or beholding, and that He who is our *theaths* or beholder, by customary use and by the instruction of Scriptures, is called *theos*, or God.” According to Nyssa, this energy extends throughout all three persons of the Trinity. To deny this is to go against Scripture which “attributes the act of seeing equally to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (Ibid, NPNF 525). Nyssa will cite here Ps. lxxxiv.9, Mt.ix.4, and Acts v.3. Not only does Scripture support the unity of the Godhead (and so the oneness of the Persons and their shared nature), but also the special character of Trinitarian operation: “but every operation which extends from God to the Creation, and is named according to our variable conceptions of it, has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit. For this reason the name derived from the operation is not divided with regard to the number of those who fulfill it, because the action of each concerning anything is not separate and peculiar, but whatever comes to pass, in reference either to the acts of His providence for us, or to the government and constitution of the universe, comes to pass by the action of the Three” (Ibid, NPNF 526-527). While we can say Father, Son, and Spirit are three persons, Their operation with respect to creation is one, because Their power and will which is the source of that operation is one. We can legitimately hold therefore that the life They give to creation is one life (not three lives), the judgment They pass on creation is one judgment (not three judgements), and so on. But neither, then, “can we call those who exercise this Divine and superintending power and operation towards ourselves and all creation, conjointly and inseparably, by their mutual action, three Gods.” (Ibid, NPNF 527).

<sup>541</sup> *Ad Ablabius*, GNO, III/1, 55.24–56.6.

one and the same, we can indicate in Him a difference in manner of existence (*tên kata to pôs einai diaphoran endeiknumetha*).<sup>542</sup> Nyssa attempts to concretize the point with an example that involves asking a husbandman about a particular tree and, specifically, whether it had been planted or had grown of itself. If he were to answer either that the tree had been planted or had not been planted, Nyssa rhetorically asks, would that tell us anything about the nature of *that* tree? No, it would “leave the question of its nature obscure and unexplained,”<sup>543</sup> but it would tell us how that tree exists. Applying this insight to the Godhead, Nyssa writes: “when we learn that he [the Father] is unbegotten, we are taught how he exists (*hopos ... einai*), and how it is fit that we should conceive Him as existing, but what He is we do not hear in that phrase.”<sup>544</sup> Nyssa wants to make clear that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each have their own personal property or mode of origination: the Father is unbegotten, the Son begotten, and the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father. Each of these personal properties tells us what relation that person has to the others as origin or caused,<sup>545</sup> but the essence of God is in no way known from them.

These personal properties also serve to reveal the inseparable relations present between the members of the Trinity. According to Nyssa, when it comes to the property ungenerate, it not only establishes the Father as being from no one, but also that “the word Father introduces with itself the notion of the Only-begotten, as a relative bound to it.”<sup>546</sup> Nyssa will say as clearly as can be that “the Son must always be thought of with

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<sup>542</sup> *Ad Ablabius*, NPNF 530.

<sup>543</sup> Cf. *Ad Ablabium* III.I, 56-57; NPNF Vol. 5, 336.

<sup>544</sup> *Ad Ablabius*, GNO 3/1.57; NPNF V.336.

<sup>545</sup> “Greek and Latin pro-Nicenes [articulate] the principle that we know the persons only by their relationships of origin” (Ayres 300).

<sup>546</sup> *CE* 1.38.

the Father (for the title of father cannot be justified unless there is a son to make it true).<sup>547</sup> A little later on at *Contra Eunomium* 1.39, in response to the Eunomian charge that the Son at one point did not exist, he further writes: “how can the Son ever be non-existent, when he cannot be thought of at all by himself apart from the Father, but is always implied silently in the name Father.” The very meaning of the name Father “is not understood with reference to itself alone, but also by its special signification indicates the relation to the Son. For the term ‘Father’ would have no meaning apart by itself, if ‘Son’ were not connoted by the utterance of the word ‘Father.’”<sup>548</sup> For Nyssa, it is not only that the name Father would have no meaning if used by itself, but also that the very being of the Father *qua* Father would have no existence by itself, since “without the Son the Father has neither existence nor name, any more than the powerful without power, or the wise without wisdom. For Christ is *the power of God and the wisdom of God*.”<sup>549</sup> Nyssa’s point in all of these quotations is simple: there would be no Generator without the Generated; no Generated without the Generator.

All such statements of the Father’s relativity to the Son and the Son’s relativity to the Father (and the Spirit’s relativity to the Father and the Son) form the philosophical and theological bedrock of the major distinction found in Nyssa’s theory of relative predication as a whole, which he believes is so basic and so straightforward that even children who have just begun their grammatical education grasp it without difficulty, but is no less important because of that fact: that is, the distinction between absolute and relative terms. In the following passage, Nyssa explains very well what he takes to be the

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<sup>547</sup> CE 1.38.

<sup>548</sup> CE 2.2.

<sup>549</sup> CE 2.4.

orthodox position on names which can be predicated of God absolutely or relatively, and those which can be predicated sometimes absolutely and sometimes relatively, depending on how they are used by the speaker:

God is called Father and King and other names innumerable in Scripture. Of these names one part can be pronounced absolutely, i.e., simply as they are, and no more: viz., imperishable, everlasting, immortal, and so on. Each of these, without our bringing in another thought, contains in itself a complete thought about the Deity. Others express only relative usefulness; thus, Helper, Champion, Rescuer, and other words of that meaning; if you remove thence the idea of one in need of the help, all the force expressed by the word is gone. Some, on the other hand, as we have said, are both absolute and are also amongst the words of relation; God, for instance, and good, and many other such. In these the thought does not continue always within the absolute. The universal God often becomes the property of him who calls upon him; as the saints teach us, when they make that independent being their own. The Lord God is Holy; so far there is no relation; but when one adds the Lord Our God, and so appropriates the meaning in a relation towards oneself, then one causes the word to be no longer thought of absolutely. Again; Abba, Father is the cry of the Spirit; it is an utterance free from any partial reference. But we are bidden to call the Father in heaven, Our Father; this is the relative use of the word.<sup>550</sup>

Nyssa views terms such as imperishable, everlasting, and immortal as absolute, then, because of their completeness, or because of their capability of being used by a speaker without having to reference some other thing. Whereas terms such as Helper, Champion, and Rescuer are relative, because they are used with reference to something else—those helped, those championed, and those rescued. Different still are terms that are both absolute and relative, depending on their use. Terms such as God and good could be used in either manner: God is universal, but also called upon by the saints; God is good, but also called our supreme good. In both cases, the absolute God, the absolute good, can be brought into a relation with us because of what we choose to do.

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<sup>550</sup> CE 1.38. For similar passages in Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium* discussing this absolute/relative distinction, see CE 2.11; CE 3.7; and CE 10.1.

In Nyssa's theology of the Trinity, there is thus a clear place for both what is absolute and what is relative with respect to God; the former being the divine nature, the latter being the divine persons causal relations to each other and their providential dispensations towards us. This in turn allows Nyssa to walk the theological middle road that lies between that of Sabellianism and Arianism. He writes in this connection:

Having heard of Father and Son from the Truth, we are taught in those two subjects the oneness of their nature; their natural relation to each other expressed by those names indicates that nature; and so do our Lord's own words. For when He said, 'I and My Father are one,' He conveys by that confession of a Father exactly the truth that He Himself is not a first cause, at the same time that He asserts by His union with the Father their common nature; so that these words of His secure our faith from the taint of heretical error on either side: for Sabellius has no ground for his confusion of the individuality of each person, when the Only-begotten has so distinctly marked Himself off from the Father in those words, 'I and My Father;' and Arius finds no confirmation of his doctrine of the strangeness of either nature to the other, since this oneness of both cannot admit distinction in nature.<sup>551</sup>

Like his older brother Basil, then, Nyssa locates the unity of the Trinity in the divine nature, hypostatically manifested in Father, Son, and Spirit. He views the differences of the three persons to be a function of their causal properties (i.e., ingenerate, generate, processed), each of which is incommunicable but also implicative of the other two. In addition, following Basil, we have seen that Nyssa holds that God's inherent relationality finds expression economically in His various providential dispensations towards us, which not only serve to economically reveal the Father, Son, and Spirit as distinct persons, but also the oneness of their greatness, power, wisdom, goodness, providence, justness of judgment, and anything else that is befitting of God.

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<sup>551</sup> *Contra Eunomium* 1.34.

The last of the Cappadocian Fathers, Gregory Nazianzen, best explains his theology of the Trinity in his *Theological Orations* (ca. 380).<sup>552</sup> Like Basil and Nyssa, Gregory places a clear emphasis on unity and distinction in God. Ayres in fact writes that “one of the most distinctive characteristics of Nazianzen’s Trinitarian theology is the manner of his emphasis on the harmony of unity and diversity in the Godhead. For Gregory, the generative nature of God eternally produces the triunity as the perfection of divine existence.”<sup>553</sup>

This is not an idea that Gregory reasons to, or argues for, but rather takes as a given of his theological point of view:

Monotheism, with its single governing principle, is what we value—not monotheism defined as the sovereignty of a single person (after all, self-discordant unity can become a plurality) but the single rule produced by equality of nature (*phuseos homotimia*), harmony of will, identity of action (*tautotes kineseos*), and the convergence towards their source (*pros to en ton ex autou sunneusis*) of what springs from unity ... though there is numerical distinction, there is no division in the being. For this reason, a one eternally changes to two and stops at three—meaning the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In a serene and non-temporal, incorporeal way, the Father is parent of the “off-spring” and originator of the “emanation” ... [but] we ought never to introduce the notion of involuntary generation.<sup>554</sup>

And elsewhere he similarly writes:

A perfect Trinity consisting of three perfect (*Triada teleian ek teleion trion*), we must abandon the concept of a monad for the sake of plenitude (*dia to plousion*), and go beyond a dyad (for God is beyond the duality of matter and form which constitutes material things), and we must define God as a Trinity for the sake of completeness (*dia to teleion*).<sup>555</sup>

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<sup>552</sup> The five *Theological Orations* of Gregory Nazianzen were preached at Constantinople between the years of 379-381. They are orations 27-31. These orations earned him the honorific title, The Theologian, which he shares with only one two others, Saint John the Evangelist and St. Symeon the New Theologian (11<sup>th</sup> C.). These orations are directed primarily against the Neo-Arians (led by Aetius of Antioch and Eunomius of Cyzicus) and the Arians, who respectively believed that the Son’s nature was radically unlike (*anomoios*) the Father’s and that the Son’s nature was like (*homoios*) the Father’s.

<sup>553</sup> Ayres, 244-245.

<sup>554</sup> *Orat.*29.2.

<sup>555</sup> *Orat.*23.8.

In *Oration 42*, Gregory conceives of this perfect one-in-three and three-in-one relation amongst the divine persons as a kind of cleaving together, not as a kind of coalescence in which the unique characteristics of the divine persons is lost: “The three have one nature—God. The principle of unity (*enosis*) is the Father, from whom the other two are brought forward and to whom they are brought back, not so as to coalesce (*sunaleiphesthai*), but so as to cleave together (*echesthai*).”<sup>556</sup>

With the principle of unity in the Trinity being provided by the person of the Father, we now need to ask: What provides the difference of the persons? Much of Gregory’s positive view on how the Three are distinguished from each other in the Trinity is found in his critique of the Eunomians and, specifically, their view that the names of Father/Unbegotten and Son/Begotten denote different realities of different ontological ranks. Since Gregory’s position closely resembles that of Basil and Nyssa (and not to mention Augustine), I will keep the following examination of this Trinitarian topic in his thought brief.

Nazianzen’s response to the Eunomians centers on the fact that they are fallaciously moving from the use of a conditioned or relative term to an unconditioned or absolute use of that term: “What do you mean by Unbegotten and Begotten, for if you mean the simple fact of being unbegotten or begotten, these are not the same; but if you mean Those to Whom these terms apply, how are They not the same? For example, Wisdom and Unwisdom are not the same in themselves, but yet both are attributes of man, who is the same; and they mark not a difference of essence, but one external to the essence.”<sup>557</sup> So too when it comes to Unbegotten and Begotten: Nazianzen believes these

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<sup>556</sup> *Orat.*42.15.

<sup>557</sup> *Oration* 29.X.

are not the same in themselves, but yet both are attributes, characteristics, or particularities of the divine essence, which is eternally and immutably the self-same. These terms must therefore point to a difference external to the essence; they point to a difference with respect to Cause.<sup>558</sup> Depending on the use of Unbegotten and Begotten, they can denote either the same reality (with respect to essence) or different realities (with respect to Cause); but never the same reality in any way that would destroy the unique and individual existence of the divine persons, nor different realities in any way that would divide the divine essence.

For Nazianzen, when using the term Father/Unbegotten with respect to Cause, it neither names an essence nor an action. Rather, it is the name of “the Relation in which the Father stands to the Son, and the Son to the Father. For as with us these names make known a genuine and intimate relation, so, in the case before us too, they denote an identity of nature between Him that is begotten and Him that begets.”<sup>559</sup> Nazianzen makes clear, however, that we should not conceive this distinction as one of pure reason, or as a construct of the human mind, with no basis in the reality of God. It is a real distinction because “He is identical with the Father in essence; and not only for this reason, but also because He is *of* Him.”<sup>560</sup> In other words, it is a real distinction because He is *related to* Him.

The fact that the relation of sonship is unique to the Son alone, i.e., is incommunicable to the Father, implies no deficiency in the Father. Likewise, the fact that the relation of fatherhood is unique to the Father alone implies no deficiency in the Son.

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<sup>558</sup> See *Oration 29.III*, where he says “in respect of Cause They (i.e., the Son and Holy Spirit) are not unoriginate.”

<sup>559</sup> *Oration 29.XVI*.

<sup>560</sup> *Oration 30.XX*.

In *Oration 31.IX*, Nazianzen will further engage in a brief discussion of why the Spirit is not another son of the Father, and so not a brother to the Son. He discusses this because it is the Eunomians belief that there must be something lacking in the person of the Spirit, otherwise He would be another Son. Nazianzen replies that there is nothing lacking in the Spirit, or to any other of the persons for that matter, because God possesses no deficiency. Rather, the difference of the persons, or what he believes is the same thing, their mutual relations to each other, “has caused the difference of their names,” while simultaneously implying no deficiency of substance in any one of them. It is the “very fact of being Unbegotten or Begotten, or Proceeding [that] has given the name of Father to the First, of the Son to the Second, and of the Third, of whom we are speaking, of the Holy Ghost that the distinction of the three persons may be preserved in the one nature and dignity of the Godhead.” For Nazianzen, it is these properties that make them really three persons, and it is their shared Godhead that makes them one essence, which successfully avoids their unity being conceived in Sabellian terms, or their causal distinctions from each other leading to the Eunomian division of the Godhead into separate and unequal persons.

Summing up the overall Cappadocian view on the Trinity would take far more than a short chapter such as this to do it justice. However, I believe that at the very least I have shown that they have a combined commitment to a view of the Trinity that is strikingly similar to that of Augustine. More specifically, both Augustine and the Greek Fathers held to a theology of God possessing a dual emphasis on unity and diversity, the common and the particular: the unity of God being provided by the common divine essence, manifested in the intra-trinitarian life of the three Persons (especially in the

person of the Father for the Greeks); and the diversity of God being provided by the particular causal relations of Father to Son, Son to Father, and Spirit to Father and Son.

## Chapter 8

*The Augustinian Distinction between God's Essence and God's Will*

In the previous two chapters, we have considered the distinction found in both Augustine and his Cappadocian contemporaries between the divine essence and the divine Persons. We have also seen in chapters 5 and 7 of this dissertation that the Greek-East (for example, in the work of Gregory of Nyssa) makes a further distinction between the *physis/ousia* and *energeia* of God. Those in the East hold that it is through the latter reality which is “around” the divine nature/essence that we come to know, draw near to, or experience God the Trinity.

At this point, however, we might well ask: Why make such a fuss over these abstract and abstruse topics in theology? What advantage can doing this possibly have for solving the practical problem of predestination, and for positively understanding man's true freedom as a creature of God? The beginning of the answer to this complex question rests in the need for there to be *real* relations in God. We have seen that the alternative which denies this is a complete non-starter: If there were no internally distinct and real relations among Father, Son and Spirit, and if God was only conceived of as an abstract and undifferentiated essence, then His reality would lack any personal subsistence. There would only be the completely necessary, unchanging, and eternal divine essence into which the three persons, their causal relations to each other, and their attributes are coalesced. It is thus unclear how God's essence could interact with creation in any cooperative, meaningful, and personal way.

In this regard, we can say that the divine essence, considered by itself, is philosophically irrelevant to solving the problem that is the topic of this dissertation. For an answer we must look instead to the relative reality of God, which is made up of two distinct sides: the first consisting of the intra-trinitarian relations of unbegotten, begotten, and procession (*ad intra*); and the second consisting of the numerous economic relations that the three persons have towards creatures in heaven and on earth through their divine energies (*ad extra*). It does not take an erudite theological wisdom to conclude that the former relations are also, considered by themselves, philosophically irrelevant to the problem at hand, since they only obtain because of the internal activities of Father, Son, and Spirit as they are considered with respect to each other, apart from creation. In short, these intra-trinitarian activities/relations belong to the ‘realm’ of theology. The problem of predestination, however, belongs in the ‘realm’ of the divine economy, in which God as Trinity does not exist apart from creation, but actively, through His will and knowledge, attempts to continually perfect it and bring it into communion with Him.

As we have already seen in chapter 4, for Augustine and the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the locus of the economic relations that obtain between God and the time-bound creature are found in the eternal divine will and knowledge, i.e., in the divine ideas. Nevertheless, there is still great reluctance on the part of scholars working today to accept the idea that Augustine mirrors the Eastern Orthodox tradition in this regard and, specifically, that Augustine’s theology was nuanced enough to even have a distinction between God’s essential and economic life. In this chapter, I venture to dispel this stereotype even more forcefully by examining examples from Augustine’s corpus of two

more ways in which he makes a distinction between God's essence and/or intra-trinitarian relations (*ad intra*) and His will and knowledge (*ad extra*).

Before discussing these two ways and some texts from Augustine's corpus which illustrate them, I think it is important to briefly note the difference in terminology used by Augustine and the Greek East. As we shall see shortly, Augustine prefers to say we can make an essence-will distinction in the reality of God, whereas it is traditional of the East to say we can make an essence-energy distinction.<sup>561</sup> I submit that nothing is really lost in going from the Latin to the Greek or vice versa, however, because the East views the energy of God to be identical to His will. Gregory Palamas, for instance, states that "the energy which bestows substance, life and wisdom and which in general creates and conserves created beings is identical with the divine volitions."<sup>562</sup> And elsewhere he will rhetorically ask: "what is the will of God, if not an energy of the divine nature?"<sup>563</sup> St. John of Damascus will also identify the divine energies with the divine will, writing: "His creative and preserving and providing power is simply his good-will."<sup>564</sup> Augustine's Cappadocian contemporaries further show agreement on this important point. Basil the Great, for instance, says that the creation of the world was a result of God's deliberate

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<sup>561</sup> While it is traditional for the Greek-East to speak in these terms, there are notable exceptions. In his article, "St. Athanasius' Concept of Creation," Georges Florovsky shows that there is in St. Athanasius' writings, especially in his *Discourses against the Arians*, mention of a distinction between the divine nature/essence and will, or *theologia* and *oikonomia*. Athanasius made this distinction "to discriminate strictly between the inner Being of God and His creative and "providential" manifestation *ad extra*, in the creaturely world" (Florovsky, 51). The inner essential being of God is totally independent of creation and totally necessary (i.e., in the sense that God simply exists as He is, not choosing to be this or that). On the other hand, His creative and providential manifestation in the creaturely world is a result of the free divine will.

<sup>562</sup> *Capita* 87. In saying that the divine energy is "identical" with the divine volitions, Palamas is not arguing for the coalescence of the various energies with the volitions of God. This would lead to numerous theological paradoxes that Palamas is aware of and careful to avoid. See for example, *Capita* 100-103. What Palamas means is that the will is an energy of the divine nature.

<sup>563</sup> *The Triads* III.iii.7.

<sup>564</sup> *De Fide Orthodoxa*, Book II, Ch. 29.

choice (*aproairetos*) or will; and that it did not take place through a necessary activity “as the flame is the cause of the brightness.”<sup>565</sup> Gregory of Nyssa agrees with his older brother Basil, claiming God’s creative activity to be one of His will (*thelesis* or *boulesis*), not His essence.<sup>566</sup> Krivocheine notes in fact that when Nyssa speaks in a trinitarian context, he will use the term “energy” in the singular to call attention to the fact that the energy mentioned is that of the three Persons—the life-giving power that comes from the Father, proceeds through the Son, and is completed in the Holy Spirit. This life-giving power just is the divine good will: “[the energies of the Three are] a certain unique movement and communication of the [divine] good will, performed from the Father through the Son toward the Holy Spirit.”<sup>567</sup> We can make this identification of the divine will with the energy, because “it is manifest that there is no difference between will and energy in the divine nature.”<sup>568</sup> These texts should suffice in proving that when Augustine will speak of an essence-will distinction in God, as I will show below, he is not speaking in opposition to the Greeks, who believe that the orthodox faith demands that there be an essence-energy distinction in God. Rather, they are referring to the same realities in God, even if they are using a slightly different theological vocabulary.

In addition to his previously discussed distinction between the eternity of the divine essence and the eternity of the divine ideas, there are two other major ways Augustine’s essence-will distinction will manifest itself in his corpus. The first of these is found in the distinction Augustine makes between God’s essential activities of generation and procession and His creative activity as producer of heaven and earth. In order to

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<sup>565</sup> *Hexaemeron* 1.7; PG 29 17B-C; NPNF 8, 56.

<sup>566</sup> See *On the Soul and Resurrection* PG 46 121B, 124B; NPNF 5, 457-458.

<sup>567</sup> *Tres dii*.

<sup>568</sup> *CE*.2.228.

distinguish these activities in God, Augustine had to make a corresponding distinction between God's essence and will, respectively. The alternative, which only takes into consideration God as He is for Himself (*idipsum esse*), as I have shown repeatedly, would be theologically and philosophically absurd: For God as He is for Himself just is His essence, completely necessary, completely actual, completely simple, and so cannot be directly and ontologically responsible for what is contingent, partly actual and partly potential, and complex, i.e., all that is created. In theological theory and practice, Augustine could not be more opposed to such a one-sided and truncated idea of God. Evidence of this can be found in both his early and later works, both pastoral and doctrinal, in which we can clearly witness Augustine assign distinct roles to the divine essence and to the divine will as two realities that properly pertain to God *as* God.

For the sake of brevity, I will limit my consideration of primary texts to those that can be classed as doctrinal,<sup>569</sup> starting with a text from Book XII of the *Confessions*, which highlights the impassible divide between God as *idipsum esse* and creation:

And whence could it derive even that sort of being but from you, “the source of all beings” of any sort? Yet they are all unlike you to the degree of their distance from you—a distance not in space, since you are not at this or that point, in this way or that way, but yourself-in-yourself, yourself-in-yourself, yourself-in-yourself, “holy, holy, holy,” Lord, the God all-powerful [Rev. 4.8] [*itaque tu, domine, qui non es alias aliud et alias aliter, sed idipsum et idipsum et idipsum, sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, dominus deus omnipotens*]. At the origin, which you are, you made something of nothing in your wisdom, which is generated from your essence [*in principio, quod est de te, in sapientia tua, quae nata est de substantia tua, fecisti aliquid et de nihilo*]. Yet heaven and earth were made, not generated from you. Had they been generated from you, they would have been the equal of your Only-Begotten Son, and therefore equal to you; but it cannot rightly be said that anything is your equal that was not generated from you. Nor was there

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<sup>569</sup> For those who are interested in what Augustine has to say pastorally on the distinction between generation and creation, and how this demands that there be a corresponding distinction between God's essence and will, see the following representative texts: *Sermo* 214.2 and 214.5, 391; *Sermo* 118.1, 418; *Sermo* 119.2, probably after 409; and *Sermo* 214.2.

anything apart from you, God, triune Unity and united Trinity, that you could have used in creation.<sup>570</sup>

While God is the source of all created realities, what is created nonetheless remains radically unlike the divine source from whence it came. Indeed, any sort of created reality remains always distant from God, not in terms of His place, quality, quantity, etc., as He is not bound by the categories of space-time, but in terms of who he is “himself-in-himself.”

To maintain this ontological distance of creature from Creator, Augustine believes we must recognize the distinction between generation and creation: While God the Father generates his Wisdom (the Son of God) from his essence, he creates heaven and earth *ex nihilo* in his Wisdom, with such creation coming about exclusively through the causation of the divine will. At *Confessions* 12.4.38, he writes in this connection:

When, our God everlasting, they hear or read the biblical account, they realize that you stand far above past and present time in your changeless continuity, yet everything temporally conditioned you have made. Your will, which is yourself, made everything, not from some new purpose or change of a prior one. You made it not from your own substance, in your all-forming likeness. You made it rather from nothing, which is unlike you in lacking all form. Yet it became like you when you gave it form, turning it back toward you in all its gradated potentials, assigned to each by its degree of being, so that ‘all you made is good.’

Augustine begins this passage with an apparent antinomy, i.e., God is wholly immutable and yet He has made all that is temporal and changeable, the resolution of which can only be accomplished by relying on a different reality in God that is distinct from the divine essence. This different reality ‘in’ God is His will, which is Himself. Augustine’s claim that the divine will is “God” invites comparison with the Eastern Orthodox view that the divine energy is no less “God” than the divine essence, in that it is a reality that properly

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<sup>570</sup> *Conf.*12.2.7; CCSL 27.219.

pertains to God *as* God. The divine energy is distinct but not divided from the divine essence. However, unlike the utterly transcendent divine essence, the divine energy is immanent in creation and capable of being participated in by what is created.

In addition, Augustine's idea that the divine will is responsible for creation,<sup>571</sup> while at the same time distinguishing this creative activity from the Generation of the Son according to the divine essence, finds its roots in the Christian East with St. Athanasius, who was perhaps the first to extensively argue for the distinction of these activities in God. He did so especially to combat the Arian idea that the Son's Generation was an act of the "will and deliberation"<sup>572</sup> (*boulhsei kai thelhsei*) of the Father. Indeed, Georges Florovsky notes that Athanasius' "whole refutation of Arianism depended ultimately upon this basic distinction between "essence" and "will," which alone could establish clearly the real difference in kind between "Generation" and "Creation."<sup>573</sup> But it also would *a fortiori* lead to the condemnation of any theological position, such as the Logos-theology of the Apologists and Origenism, that failed to distinguish between the "categories of the Divine "Being" and those of Divine "Revelation" *ad extra*, in the world."<sup>574</sup> As Florovsky makes clear, Athanasius' interest in this distinction was not just polemical in character. Even before the Arian controversy broke out, Athanasius was

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<sup>571</sup> Rowan Williams will write of *Confessions* 12.6-13 that, "Augustine and his readers can only conclude that creation is caused by God's will alone; and what that will establishes as the logical precondition of everything else is that the world will be capable of change." Williams, *Augustine on Creation*, 68.

<sup>572</sup> *Discourse* III.59.

<sup>573</sup> Florovsky, 53. Athanasius thus believed that there was a difference in kind between the activities of generation and creation, because of the difference in the realities in God that are respectively responsible for them: "generation is not subject to will (*boulhsei*)," as the Arians thought, but rather is a "property of the substance (*ousias*)" (Florovsky, 55). For more examples of this distinction in Athanasius' *Discourses*, see I.19, I.20, II.24 and 29, I.36, II. 57, III.60, 61, and 62.

<sup>574</sup> Florovsky, 42. Florovsky will note that both of these schools of theological thought were utilized in one way or another by the Arians, who thereby perpetuated this error into the 4<sup>th</sup> C. For more on this, see Florovsky 42-46.

“wrestling with the problem of Creation,” which he saw as inextricably related to the foundation of Christian faith: “the redemptive Incarnation of the Divine Word,”<sup>575</sup> with such redemption taking place with the understanding that there is a radical divide or “*hiatus*” between God’s Being and the contingent being of what is created. But to make good theological sense of this divide required the distinction between “Generation” and “Creation,” and their respective sources in the essence and will of God. Athanasius may have been one of the first in the Eastern Orthodox tradition to make these distinctions without divisions in God, but he certainly was not the last. St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. John of Damascus, St. Gregory Palamas, and St. Mark of Ephesus would all follow in the footsteps of Athanasius in this regard.<sup>576</sup>

*On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*, Book I.4, provides another excellent example of Augustine speaking of God’s essence as responsible for generating the Son and spirating the Spirit, whereas God’s will is responsible for creating everything out of nothing. Here, Augustine notes that everything that God made was very good, “but they are not good in the same way as God is good, because he is the one who made, while they were what was made. Nor did he beget them from himself, to be what he is himself, but

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<sup>575</sup> Florovsky, 49.

<sup>576</sup> I am indebted to the research of Florovsky, who will give representative examples of this distinction without division in God in all of the major works of these Saints on pages 60-61 of his article, “St. Athanasius’ Concept of Creation.” Perhaps the most striking example out of all of the ones given comes from St. John of Damascus’ *De Fide Orthodoxa*, and which I will therefore repeat here: “For we hold that it is from Him, that is, from the Father’s nature, that the Son is generated. And unless we grant that the Son co-existed from the beginning with the Father, by Whom He was begotten, we introduce change into the Father’s subsistence, because, not being the Father, He subsequently became the Father. For the creation, even though it originated later, is nevertheless not derived from the essence of God, but is brought into existence out of nothing by His will and power, and change does not touch God’s nature. For generation means that the begetter produces out of his essence offspring similar in essence. But creation and making mean that the creator and maker produces from that which is external, and not of his own essence, a creation which is of an absolutely dissimilar nature” (I.8; PG 94, 812-813). The Generation of the Son from the Father is therefore an effect of nature (*ths phusikhs gonimothtos*), whereas creation is an act of will (*thelhssews ergon*). See Florovsky 61.

he made them out of nothing, so that they would not be equal either to him by whom they were made, or to his Son through whom they were made; and that is as it should be.”

Augustine realizes, however, that since creation is not begotten, he will have to answer the question, ‘How does it come to be?’ What power of production is responsible for its existence? Augustine answers that, “It is God’s will, you see, that is the cause of heaven and earth.”<sup>577</sup> As a matter of fact, in the *Miscellany of 83 Questions*, Augustine claims that whenever God’s causality in relation to creation is mentioned, it is his willing that is meant. He thinks this point must be emphasized, otherwise some may get the false impression that somehow creation is generated from God’s essence as the Son is generated or as the Spirit is spirated, thereby raising creation onto an equal ontological footing with the divine essence and the three persons in which it is manifested. This in turn would destroy the Creator-creature distinction—the distinction on which all of our wisdom rests: “the whole discipline of wisdom, which is for the purpose of instructing human beings, consists in distinguishing the Creator from the creation and in worshipping the one as Master and acknowledging the other as subject.”<sup>578</sup>

Augustine’s desire to safeguard the Creator-creature distinction by denying creation’s participation in the essence of God can also be seen in his other *Commentaries on Genesis*. At the beginning of his *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, for instance, Augustine reiterates in summary form the central tenets of the Catholic faith:

that God the almighty Father made and established the whole creation through his only-begotten Son, that is, through his wisdom and power consubstantial and co-eternal with himself, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, who is also consubstantial and co-eternal. So Catholic teaching bids us believe that this Trinity is called one God, and that he made and created all things that are, insofar as they are, to the effect that all creatures, whether intellectual or corporeal, or what more briefly

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<sup>577</sup> Ibid.

<sup>578</sup> *Miscellany of 83 Questions*, LXXXI.

according to the words of the divine scriptures can be called invisible or visible, are not born of God, [*non de Deo nata*] but made by God out of nothing, and that there is nothing among them which belongs to the Trinity except what the Trinity created—this nature was created.<sup>579</sup> For this reason it is not lawful to say or believe that the whole creation is consubstantial or co-eternal with God.<sup>580</sup>

Augustine cannot be any clearer that all created things are made and established by God the Trinity, as a unitary act of Father, Son, and Spirit, but that they are not born of God, i.e., they are not God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God. Rather, they are made and established by God the Trinity from nothing, and so they cannot be said to be consubstantial or co-eternal with Him. Here, admittedly, Augustine is not explicit in saying that it is the divine will which makes every created thing out of nothing, but it is implicitly understood that this is the case. After all, if the divine essence is not ontologically responsible for creation, then something else in the Trinity must be. This other reality in the Trinity is the divine will, as I have suggested above. We can therefore say for Augustine that it is not the Trinity in its essential Life that brings creatures into existence out of nothing and continues to create them even up until now (Jn 5:17), but rather the common will of Father, Son, and Spirit, which is life for them. It would at least be a logical conclusion for Augustine to draw, because the intra-trinitarian Life of the divine persons (i.e., the Father in His essence begetting the Son and the Father in His essence spirating the Holy Spirit) does not “belong” to created things, nor thus can it be said to cause them.

We have already seen that Augustine thinks it would be absurd to say that God created without knowledge, willy-nilly making this or that, with no purposeful number,

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<sup>579</sup> The “nature” referred to here is the human nature of Christ. In the form of man, Christ is a creature, created by the Trinity; but out of everything else created, he “belongs to the Trinity,” because of his hypostatic union with the Son.

<sup>580</sup> *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*, 2.

weight, or measure.<sup>581</sup> It follows that His creative will was simultaneously directed by His knowledge of what is fitting for each thing as the kind of thing that it is, both with respect to its proper nature and as it should be in Him. For there is “no shape, no structure, no union of parts, no substance whatsoever which can have weight, number, measure unless it is through that Word, and by that creator Word to whom it was said: *You have ordered all things by measure, number and weight* [Wisd. 11.21].”<sup>582</sup> God thus creates willfully, but also knowingly, according to certain measures, numbers, and weights. Augustine thinks these two activities in God are distinct from each other, not only from the authority of Scripture (1 Cor 1:24: *Christ the power and wisdom of God*), but also from certain philosophical-theological presuppositions to which he is deeply committed.<sup>583</sup> The idea that the common will of the Trinity is responsible for creation, as well as how the divine will must be distinct without division from the divine knowledge, is implicit in the above passage from the *Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis*. But these points can be reasoned to quite naturally when read within the broader context of Augustine’s theology of the relation of the Trinity to creation as a whole, which is

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<sup>581</sup> See pages 95-96 of this dissertation.

<sup>582</sup> *Io. ev. tr.* 1.13; CCSL 36.8.

<sup>583</sup> Of these philosophical-theological presuppositions I highlight two in particular. First, Augustine’s claim in Chapter 19 of *On the Predestination of the Saints* that God’s foreknowledge and predestinating will cannot be confused. There must be a real distinction (*in re ipsa*) between them, otherwise God would be responsible for everything that He foreknows, including all future sins of rational creatures. In the East, Palamas will later make the similar point that if we identify or coalesce God’s will with God’s foreknowledge, then we will be left with an absurd theological dilemma: “either God will not know all things beforehand for he does not will everything that happens, or he wills also evil things because he has foreknowledge of all things” (*Capita* 100). Second, in *DGnL.V.13-15*, Augustine will repeatedly make the point that God knew all things in Wisdom *before* they were made. Augustine will say that this knowledge is in God and is life for creatures, and that all creatures “before they were made were in the knowledge of God their Creator” (*DGnL.V.15.33*). Hence Augustine thought that God’s knowledge of creatures was distinct from, or “before,” God’s making of them. Yet these two actions of God were clearly not divided from each other, for, to use the words of Augustine: “Who would be so insane as to say that God had made things that He did not know?” (*DGnL.V.13.29*).

perhaps manifested most clearly in his concept of the divine ideas previously discussed in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Books II-IV of *On the Trinity* provide us with an opportunity to witness yet another way in which Augustine makes a clear distinction between God's inner essential Life—the Life that He lives for himself alone—and God's economic life—the life that He lives for creation and its perfection. Generally speaking, these three Books are concerned with communicating his theology of mission, or with how we should understand the theophanies of the Old and New Testaments.<sup>584</sup> According to Augustine, the divine missions temporally reveal (but do not constitute) in some kind of visible, spiritual, and/or intellectual way the eternal processions of the Trinity, i.e., the begetting of the Son from the Father, and the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. While God in himself always remains beyond the dramatic unfolding of salvation history for Augustine, the divine missions serve the crucial function of revealing to us the real distinctions amongst the three persons in the Trinity; they are what make the mystery of the eternal Triune God knowable, as far as is possible, for believers. Contrary therefore to the “economic theologians,” such as Justin Martyr and Tertullian, Augustine never holds that the sendings of the Son and the Holy Spirit are to be identified with the transcendent mystery of God in himself. While showing the theophanies not to be a direct manifestation of the divine essence may be an obvious point of orthodoxy in the East, and one I think that is equally present in the Augustinian-West, there has been much reluctance to accept this interpretation of the Augustinian view. Possibly the two best

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<sup>584</sup> In Book II, he sets himself the task of deciding which of the divine persons visibly appeared in the Old Testament. In Book III, he is concerned with determining whether angels were ever employed in the service of creating theophanies. In Book IV, he examines how the New Testament theophanies may be said to differ from those of the Old Testament.

scholarly examples of this resistant attitude are found in the works of the twentieth-century theologians Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, whose “essentialist” interpretation of Augustine’s theology of mission has remained prevalent up to the present day.

In his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth is quite straightforward in how he interprets the entire Western tradition’s, including Augustine’s, view of God’s self-revelation to humankind: “What is God as God, the divine individuality and characteristics, the *essentia* or ‘essence’ of God, is something which we shall encounter either at the place where God deals with us as Lord and Saviour, or not at all.”<sup>585</sup> According to Barth, we can nonetheless encounter God in the world, but there is no real plurality with respect to His operations, for “God’s essence and His operation are not twain but one. God’s operation or effect is His essence in its relation to the reality distinct from Him, whether about to be or already created.”<sup>586</sup> Barth only admits a notional (unreal/logical) distinction between God’s essence as such and His operations, not one at the level of His Being.

Karl Rahner, on the other hand, argues that Western Trinitarianism is a fundamentally flawed endeavor, because of the separation it entails between the economic and immanent trinities. More specifically, he identifies four problematic aspects in the Western doctrine of the Trinity:

1) The removal of the Trinity from the practical life of faith into the realm of theological speculation. Rahner will (in)famously say in this connection:

“Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere ‘monotheists’ ... [and] should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious

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<sup>585</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*: Edinburgh, 1936ff., vol. 2/1, p. 261.

<sup>586</sup> P. 426.

literature could well remain virtually unchanged.”<sup>587</sup> I find this claim to be both sweeping and inaccurate. In the Western Church, we call to mind and worship the Trinity in every divine service: We make the Sign of the Cross in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the priest will pray at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, ‘Through Him, and with Him and in Him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever’; we often sing hymns of praise throughout the Mass to all three persons of the Trinity; etc. The point in bringing up these few examples (among many) is to prove that, even with respect to the major part of religious literature that most affects the “practical life” of Western Christians, i.e., that part which pertains to the liturgical life of the Church, Rahner’s claim about the unimportance of the doctrine of the Trinity rings false. Eastern Christian worship services and spiritual life are also thoroughly grounded in and expressive of the presence of the Trinity.

2) The emphasis it places on the unity of the divine essence over and above the diversity of the three divine persons. God is both one in essence and three by relation, but it is typical of Western theologians to “begin” with *de Deo uno*, thereby giving the impression “as if everything which matters for us in God has already been said in the treatise *On the One God*.”<sup>588</sup> Rahner will say that, while Aquinas was the first to explicitly separate the oneness of God from His triuneness, he only did so because of Augustine’s influence. The Greek Fathers, by contrast, “begin” with the diversity of the three persons and then move on to

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<sup>587</sup> Rahner, 10-11. Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel, with an introduction, index and glossary by Catherine Mowry LaCugna, Crossroad Herder Book (New York: Crossroad, 1997).

<sup>588</sup> Rahner, 17.

consider the unity of God's essence.<sup>589</sup> Rahner's second charge is easy to answer, however, as Augustine neither *literally* (Books I-IV deal with the divine missions of the three persons) nor *logically* (Books V-VII deal with the tri-unity of the Godhead and how we should speak of it) begins with a narrow focus exclusively on the oneness of the divine essence.

3) The claim that all of the actions of the three persons *ad extra*, in the economy of salvation, are indivisible. It is commonplace to express this doctrine in the following Latin phrase: *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*. Rahner thinks Augustine is guilty of this charge due to the closeness of the relationship Augustine posits between the temporal missions (*ad extra*) and the eternal processions (*ad intra*), so close a relationship in fact that he identifies the two.<sup>590</sup> As my brief survey of key texts from Books II-IV below will show, however, Augustine is innocent of this charge as well.

4) The utter disregard of hints as to the Trinitarian being of God, except from the New Testament.<sup>591</sup> Anyone familiar with Augustine's corpus knows this is patently untrue. Augustine is perfectly willing in Books II-IV of *On the Trinity*, for instance, to discuss which of the *three* divine persons appeared to Old Testament figures in various theophanic experiences.

Rahner believes that Augustine is primarily to blame for the above four theological failings, though he never quotes or cites specific passages from Augustine's corpus to

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<sup>589</sup> Rahner, 16-17.

<sup>590</sup> See for example, Rahner, 11 and 29.

<sup>591</sup> Rahner 20-21.

support his criticisms.<sup>592</sup> In response to Augustine’s theology, Rahner argues for what in my mind can only be the complete antithesis of what he takes to be the Western theological option, holding that “the economic trinity is the immanent trinity” and vice versa.<sup>593</sup> It follows from this axiomatic identification of the immanent and economic trinities that the Trinity which God is reveals itself to humanity exactly as it is in Godself.<sup>594</sup> Augustine’s position is more nuanced than Rahner portrays it, however, incorporating the idea that there is a distinction (not a division) *between* the divine missions (*ad extra*), which reveal the personal properties of begetting, begotten, and procession, *and* the three Persons as they are related to each other and their shared essence (*ad intra*).

What we have encountered in the work of Barth and Rahner are the two main ways scholars have and still do interpret Augustine’s theology of mission: either 1) it collapses the inner (*ad intra*) and outer (*ad extra*) sides of the Trinity into each other, or 2) it separates these two sides of God, thereby removing God as He is for Himself (essentially) from God as He is for us (economically). Rather than blindly agree with either Barth or Rahner, however, we must do our due theological diligence and examine what Augustine actually has to say with respect to God’s relation to creation, and how He makes Himself known to it throughout salvation history. Before examining what he has to say in Books II-IV of *On the Trinity* with respect to these issues, I want to give a brief explanation why I will engage in a somewhat out-of-order approach of considering Book

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<sup>592</sup> For more on this failure to cite specific texts from Augustine in Rahner, see Drayton C. Benner’s “Augustine and Karl Rahner on the Relationship between the Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, Vol. 9, no. 1 (January 2007), pp. 24-38.

<sup>593</sup> Rahner, 22.

<sup>594</sup> Rahner 34-35.

III first, and then Books II and IV. My reason for starting with Book III is that it, more than the other two, tells the reader what reality in God is ontologically responsible for all of the theophanies of the Old and New Testaments—i.e., the divine will—whereas Books II and IV are more about giving specific examples of theophanies from Scripture. Since my dissertation as a whole is more concerned with proving that Augustine believed God’s reality included more than just an abstract and undifferentiated essence, and how this helps to solve the problem of predestination, my approach to considering these three central Books in *On the Trinity*, which will attempt to emphasize this other reality distinct from the divine essence, should make good philosophical and theological sense.

Augustine mentions the divine will as a distinct reality in God early in Book III, noting that it and it alone is the cause of everything in creation, ordering every created thing for the good: “The power of God’s will, after all, extended to producing through created spiritual agents sensible and perceptible effects in the material creation. Is there indeed any place where the Wisdom of almighty God does not achieve what she will, *Wisdom who deploys her strength from one end of the universe to the other, ordering all things for the good* (Wis 8:1).”<sup>595</sup> Even more explicit in its emphasis on the divine will having a proper role to play in God is the following text from *On the Trinity* 3.1.9:

From that lofty throne, set apart in holiness, the divine will spreads itself through all things in marvelous patterns of created movement, first spiritual then corporeal; and it uses all things to carry out the unchanging judgement of the divine decree, whether they be corporeal or incorporeal things, whether they be non-rational or rational spirits, whether they be good by his grace, or bad by their own will.... And so the whole of creation is governed by its creator, *from whom and by whom and in whom* (Rom 11: 36) it was founded and established. And thus God’s will is the first and highest cause of all physical species and motions. For nothing happens visibly and in a manner perceptible to the senses which does not issue either as a command or as a permission from the inmost invisible and intelligible court of the supreme emperor, according to his unfathomable justice of

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<sup>595</sup> trin.3.1.6

rewards and punishments, favors and retributions, in what we may call this vast and all-embracing republic of the whole creation.<sup>596</sup>

The first point Augustine makes is that the divine will is immanent in creation, because it is responsible for the creating, sustaining, and re-creating of all spiritual and corporeal things according to God's salvific purposes, or what Augustine calls here the "unchanging judgment of the divine decree." The second point he makes is that the whole of creation is governed by its "Creator," or God as related to the creation, namely the divine will, which is the first cause of all visible things and movements in the creation. As Augustine will say later, the first and supreme cause of all things created, "like the rising and setting of heavenly bodies, the births and deaths of animals, the countless variety of seeds and growths, clouds and fogs, snow and rain, thunder and lightning, thunderbolts and hail, wind and fire, cold and heat, and so forth" ... and rarer things that happen in nature, "such as eclipses and comets, monstrous births, earthquakes and the like" is the "will of God."<sup>597</sup> One should also note how careful Augustine is to say that we live and move and have our being in our "Creator." However, the "supreme emperor," who is God himself, sitting in his lofty throne, separated from us in holiness, remains utterly transcendent of what he has created, imparticipable and unknowable.

Augustine makes a distinction between God in Himself and God in His creative function, or between God's essence and will, respectively, because of the theological need to preserve both the integrity of the divine reality *ad intra* and *ad extra*—the former being expressed essentially in the intra-trinitarian divine processions, the latter being expressed willfully and knowingly in the creation and the divine missions. To give a false

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<sup>596</sup> CCSL 50.135-6.

<sup>597</sup> *trin.*3.3.19.

dilemma to the effect of “either God reveals Himself exactly as He is in Godself, or He reveals nothing of Himself,” as we saw Barth and Rahner argue, is not something Augustine is logically willing to accept. Rather, Augustine understands the will of God to be “God,” albeit God as He makes Himself available to us and, indeed, to the entirety of spiritual and corporeal creation. Augustine will repeat the same basic point in different ways and many more times in Books II and IV as he continues to elaborate his theology of mission.

In Book II, for example, when he is discussing the theophanies of the Old Testament, Augustine will give a preliminary definition of what it means for something to count as a divine mission, which he phrases in terms of the distinction between what is visible and what is invisible:

Since then it was a work of the Father and the Son that the Son should appear in the flesh, the one who so appeared in the flesh is appropriately said to have been sent, and the one who did not to have done the sending. Thus events which are put on outwardly in the sight of our bodily eyes are aptly called *missa* because they stem from the inner designs of our spiritual nature. Furthermore, that form of the man who was taken on is the person or guise of the Son only, and not of the Father too. So it is that the invisible Father, together with the jointly invisible Son, is said to have sent this Son by making him visible. If the Son has been made visible in such a way that he ceased to be invisible with the Father, that is if the substance of the invisible Word, undergoing change and transition, had been turned into the visible creature, then we would have had to think of the Son simply as sent by the Father, and not also as sending with the Father. As it is, the form of servant was so taken on that the form of God remained immutable, and thus it is plain that what was seen in the Son was the work of Father and Son who remain unseen; that is that the Son was sent to be visible by the invisible Father together with the invisible Son.<sup>598</sup>

Using the Incarnation as a case in point, Augustine tentatively defines a divine mission as an event which is put on outwardly, capable of being seen by our bodily eyes, yet

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<sup>598</sup> *trin.2.2.9.*

ultimately having its efficacy on the hidden, spiritual part of our human nature.<sup>599</sup> When it comes to the Incarnation, we can properly say that the coming of Christ was one of the missions of the second person of the Trinity, both because of His material visibility in the form of man and because of the internal spiritual help granted to us because of that mission, namely the potential to have a right relation to God, to be adopted sons and daughters of the Most High. Augustine is careful to say, however, that it is the invisible Father and the invisible Son who sent the second person of the Trinity by making Him visible in the humanity of Christ. The maintaining of the invisibility of the Son is important, for if it was not, and if the Son's invisible substance as God was somehow changed into that of a visible creature, He would no longer be a joint sender of Himself with the Father. Rather, He would simply be sent, transformed from God into a creature, thereby ceasing to possess the power to redeem the whole of fallen humanity through the spiritual renewal we required.<sup>600</sup> Thankfully, Augustine tells us, this is not the case: the Son was visibly sent in such a way that His invisible substance as God remained unchanged.

Augustine believes that the same kind of visible/invisible distinction can be made with respect to the sending of the Holy Spirit:

He was visibly displayed in a created guise which was made in time, either when he descended on our Lord himself *in bodily guise as a dove* (Mt 3:16), or when ten days after his ascension *there came suddenly from heaven on the day of Pentacost a sound as of a violent gust bearing down, and there appeared to them divided tongues as of fire, which also settled upon each one of them* (Acts 2:2). This action, visibly expressed and presented to mortal eyes, is called the sending of the Holy Spirit. Its object was not that his very substance might be seen, since he himself remains invisible and unchanging like the Father and the Son; but that

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<sup>599</sup> I say "tentatively" because it is only in Book IV that Augustine will give his definitive definition of a divine mission.

<sup>600</sup> See 2 Corinthians 4:16: *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed [by God] day by day.*

outward sights might in this way stir the minds of men, and draw them on from the public manifestations of his coming in time to the still and hidden presence of his eternity sublime.<sup>601</sup>

And a bit later on:

The Spirit did not make the dove blessed, or the violent gust, or the fire; he did not join them to himself and his person to be held in everlasting union. Nor on the other hand is the Spirit of a mutable and changing nature, so that instead of these manifestations being wrought out of created things, he should turn or change himself into this and that, as water turns to ice. But these phenomena appeared, as and when they were required to, *creation serving the creator* (Wis 16:24), and being changed and transmuted at the bidding of him who abides unchanging in himself.<sup>602</sup>

Augustine will actually speak of the Spirit's *proprium*, or that which he distinctively is, in the economy of salvation, as the will of God in his *De Genesi adversus Manicheos* 1.5.8 and 1.7.12.<sup>603</sup> Moreover, in his *Gn. Litt.* 1.5.11, Augustine refers to the Spirit as the love and benevolence of God, and then strongly implies that these are to be conceived as the good will of God: "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, so that, when God would say in His Word, *Let there be light*, the creature would be established, according to its capacity, in the good will and benevolence of God."<sup>604</sup>

So far, we have seen Augustine make similar comments about the sendings of the Son and Spirit, and how both persons can be properly understood as visible and invisible to what is created. We might now well ask: What about the Father? According to Augustine, the Father cannot properly be said to be sent, but that does not prevent Him

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<sup>601</sup> *trin.* 2.2.10.

<sup>602</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>603</sup> The same equation is made at *Gn. Litt. Imp.* 16-18.

<sup>604</sup> The Latin for this passage is as follows: *superferebatur utique spiritus dei, quia subiacebat scilicet bonae uoluntati creatoris quidquid illud erat quod formandum perficiendumque inchoauerat, ut dicente deo in uerbo suo: fiat lux, in bona uoluntate, hoc est bono placito eius pro modo sui generis maneret, quod factum est.* CSEL 28.10. Augustine will make similar comments about the Spirit's economic function at *Gn. Litt.* 1.7.13 and 2.6.14.

from appearing to His creation when the times and circumstances require: “why should we not take it to be the Father who appeared to Abraham and Moses, and indeed to anyone he liked in any way he liked, by means of some changeable and visible creature under his control, while in himself and in his own changeless substance he remained invisible?”<sup>605</sup> We are made aware of the Father’s presence to His creation many times in scripture. For example, during the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt, scripture tells us: *But God went before them by day in a pillar of cloud and showed them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire; and the pillar of cloud did not fail by day, nor the pillar of fire by night before the people* (Ex 13:21). Augustine thinks it would be nonsensical for anyone to believe that these manifestations of God the Father to the Jews revealed His very substance. Rather, he thinks they were actuated when needed by material creation serving the Creator.<sup>606</sup> Scripture also speaks of the Father visibly manifesting His person to creation in other noticeable ways:

*Sinai mountain was smoking all over, because God had come down upon it in fire, and smoke was rising from it like the smoke from a furnace, and the whole people was utterly bewildered; and there were trumpet blasts going on very loudly. Moses would speak, and God would answer him with a voice* (Ex 19:18). And a little further on, after the law had been given in the Ten Commandments, it says, *And all the people could see the voices and the flares and the trumpet blasts and the mountain smoking* (Ex 20:18). And a little further on still, *The whole people was standing far off, but Moses went into the mist where God was; and the Lord said to Moses etc.* (Ex 20:21). What is there to be said here, except that surely no one is crazy enough to say that smoke, fire, clouds, mist and so forth are the very substance of the Word and Wisdom of God which is Christ, or of the Holy Spirit? As for God the Father, not even the Arians ever dared to say such a thing. So all these occurrences consisted of created things serving the creator and impressing themselves on the senses of men as the divine arrangements required.<sup>607</sup>

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<sup>605</sup> *trin.*2.4.17.

<sup>606</sup> *trin.*2.5.24.

<sup>607</sup> *trin.*2.5.25.

Here, as before with the Son and the Holy Spirit, Augustine argues that a real distinction must be made with respect to the Father's invisible and unchanging substance and how He visibly chooses to manifest Himself to what is other than Himself, i.e., spiritual and corporeal creation. The alternative which holds that the substance of God the Father or God the Son or God the Holy Spirit is beholden to economic or cosmological motifs is to Augustine a clear instance of theological stupidity, one avoided even by the Arians, at least with respect to the Father. How Augustine philosophically argues for this distinction in Book II to avoid this theological pitfall has been somewhat implicit in one important respect, namely in terms of its not specifically mentioning the role of the divine will in the effecting of the theophanies touched upon above. With this said, the Incarnation of the Son, the dove, gust of wind, and tongues of fire of the Holy Spirit, and the smoke, voice, fire, and mist of the Father are explicitly revealed to be expressions of the divine will in Book III, as I have previously noted.

My goal in examining these primary texts from *On the Trinity* concerning the revelation of the Son, Spirit, and Father to humankind has been to prove that Augustine holds the theophanies in the Old and New Testaments to truly reveal God, not as He is as *idipsum esse*, but as He is for us. I submit that Augustine understands the theophanies as revealing God's will and knowledge (*rationes*), which will become further evident in our examination below of two of his *Sermons* that have to do with the Transfiguration. As I have said earlier in this dissertation (chapter 4), these *rationes* are eternal and unchanging. They are truly said to be with God as Creator. They are life for their corresponding creatures in the Word. They *are not* to be identified with creatures. The Greek-East also holds that the theophanies are not just created effects, or products of the

divine will and knowledge. They are the volitional-thought (*theletiken-ennoian*) of God.<sup>608</sup>

There is great reluctance, however, to accept this Eastern-friendly interpretation of Augustine I am suggesting when it comes to the theophanies. In his article, “Theophanies and Vision of God in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective,” Bogdan G. Bucur will limit his consideration of theophanies in Augustine to a study of passages from the *De Trinitate*, especially Books I-IV, much as I have done up to this point. Bucur begins by distinguishing three kinds of theophanies (*trin.3.10.19*):

1. Those involving angels in performing their divine function as messengers.
2. Those involving angels bringing about a change in pre-existing matter to fulfill a divine purpose.
3. Those involving a material representation made for a specific occasion, with such a representation passing away after it has fulfilled its divine purpose.

Bucur states that Augustine believes that the messages of 1) were those of a “real, created angelic being,”<sup>609</sup> but that God still remains the ultimate source of such a theophanic experience: “The power of the will of God reaches through the spiritual creature, even to the visible and sensible effects.”<sup>610</sup> Bucur then immediately denies that God’s will is really present in such a theophanic experience, because of the fact that God’s will is only present insofar as the angel speaks *ex persona Dei*.<sup>611</sup> That is, the effect of this angelic speaking has only so much of God’s will in it as the angel is speaking out of the person of

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<sup>608</sup> For a discussion of the term *theletiken-ennoian*, see page 100 of this dissertation.

<sup>609</sup> Bogdan G. Bucur. “Theophanies and Vision of God in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective,” *SVThQ* 52:1 (2008), 67-93. P. 70.

<sup>610</sup> *trin.* 3.1.6.

<sup>611</sup> *trin.3.10.20*.

God. Theophanies of the second variety consist of matter being changed, re-ordered, and/or formed by an angel. In this case it is not the angel but the matter that is used by God to accomplish some salvific function.<sup>612</sup> In doing so, Bucur thinks this matter will “come to signify something about God and God’s will.”<sup>613</sup> Once again, however, the implication is that such a theophany cannot put us in touch with the reality of God. For this matter is created and thus can only signify, but not actually connect us to, the uncreated divine reality. The final kind of theophany consists of God bringing bodies out of nothing in order to accomplish certain salvific ends, such as we find in Lk 3:22; Acts 2:3; Ex 3:2; Ex 13:21; Ex 19:16; etc. For Bucur, Augustine viewed these bodies as being “brought into existence by the will of God,”<sup>614</sup> citing *trin.3.4.9*: “the will of God is the first and highest cause of all the forms and movements of corporeal beings.”

After describing these three kinds of theophanies as nothing more than created representations of God, Bucur will note the polemical backdrop against which Augustine formulated his own views on the theophanies in *De Trinitate*. More specifically, the 4<sup>th</sup> C. Trinitarian controversies between the Modalists, Homoians, and supporters of the faith of Nicaea.<sup>615</sup> The latter group attempted to fight back against the Homoian idea that the Son is inherently visible, and thus changeable, meaning He is less God than the inherently invisible Father. Pro-Nicenes before Augustine would respond by making a distinction between the invisible nature of the Son, which does not come down to us, and His visibly manifesting Himself in the “species” produced by the divine will.<sup>616</sup> According to Bucur,

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<sup>612</sup> *trin.3.10.19*.

<sup>613</sup> Bucur, 71.

<sup>614</sup> Bucur, 71.

<sup>615</sup> Bucur, 74.

<sup>616</sup> Bucur, 75.

this is a distinction that carries over into Augustine's own theological treatment of theophanies in Books I-IV of *De Trinitate*, but he attempts to reconcile the existence of the visible and invisible in a new way from that of his pro-Nicene predecessors, i.e., "by severing the ontological link between the two, so that the species is no longer 'owned' by the subject of the *natura*."<sup>617</sup> Bucur thinks this is especially evident of theophanies in which an angel speaks for God. The angel is created and God speaks His words through it, thereby making His will known. There is therefore no presence of God Himself in such an angelic theophany. Rather, there is only "God's 'impersonation' by an angel."<sup>618</sup> I would agree with Bucur that the visible "stuff" of a theophany (i.e., the 'species') is not part or parcel of God the Son or God the Father's invisible *natura*. Their invisible and shared nature, for Eastern or Western theology at the time of Augustine, does not "own" the species.

Whether 'impersonated' by an angel, or signified by 'pre-existing' or 'created out of nothing' matter, God's substance does not appear, but this does not prevent His will and knowledge from being made known, and clearly, in these Old and New Testament theophanies. These theophanies are not owned by His *natura*, but they are by His will and knowledge. I would argue that, if anything, this helps to reinforce the idea that Augustine held to a strict distinction between God's substance (that does not appear to creation) and God's will and knowledge (that are made known at key times throughout salvation history).

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<sup>617</sup> Bucur, 76.

<sup>618</sup> Bucur, 77.

Bucur continues that Augustine's theology of theophanies "also marks a break with the transformative character of theophanies,"<sup>619</sup> of which the Lord's Baptism and the Taboric Light of the Transfiguration deserve special note. According to the Eastern Orthodox tradition, these are events in salvation history where the divine presence of God is made known to humans, not through some created intermediary, but directly through the uncreated energies.<sup>620</sup> It follows that these theophanies engender real changes of salvific importance in those who experience them. A representative example of the Eastern doctrine of the transformative character of theophanies can be found in Dionysius' *Divine Names* 1.4, where it is written:

"Then [in the next life] ... when we have attained a Christform lot ... we shall "always be with the Lord" (I Thess.4: 13). In altogether pure contemplations, we shall be filled with His visible theophany, which shall shine round about us in most brilliant splendors, as were the disciples in that most divine Transfiguration."<sup>621</sup>

This text from Dionysius' *Divine Names* is clear that what the disciples experienced during the Transfiguration was the uncreated light of Christ's divinity, His visible theophany, and that those who have attained a Christform lot will also experience this in the next life. According to Fr. John D. Jones, in any theophany the "divine hiddenness

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<sup>619</sup> Bucur, 80.

<sup>620</sup> In this way the Greek Christian tradition continues the OT rabbinical idea that the Shekinah of God, i.e., "the majestic presence or manifestation of God which has descended to "dwell" among men," is the divine presence itself. Rabbis used the word Shekinah to avoid the common, but in their mind inappropriate, anthropomorphizing connotations inherent in the word God, who is above every human name and expression. Some such as Maimonides interpret the Shekinah of God to be a created light which is an intermediary between God and man, but this is a minority position. The Biblical passages from which the word Shekinah is derived, such as Ex. 24:16 (*the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai*), are typically taken to indicate the dynamic and real presence of the divine. The Shekinah does not dwell among all men, but rather only those Israelites who were of "pure and therefore aristocratic lineage and who were wise, brave, wealthy, and tall." A pure heart manifested in good deeds (e.g., studying the Law, prayer, hospitality) makes one worthy of the Shekinah, whereas sin (e.g., idolatry, lechery, the shedding of blood) causes it to depart. See Kaufmann Kohler and Ludwig Blau, "SHEKINA (lit. "the dwelling")," from the unedited full text of the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia.

<sup>621</sup> *DN* 1.4, 592 B-C.

(*kpuphioths*)” is not revealed—nothing created, angel or man, can experience this ‘we know not what.’ What can be experienced, however, is a divine name, power, or energy of the divine. These realities bring us back to God and make us like Him, to the extent possible, “according to a divine image/icon and similitude/likeness (*kata thein eikona kai homoiwsin*).”<sup>622</sup> The actual meaning of the term ‘theophany,’ Dionysius tells us, dovetails with this role that the divine names, power, or energies play in perfecting us: It refers to “that vision, which manifesting the divine similitude depicted in it as giving form to unformed realities, raises up those who have such visions to what is divine.”

A theophany therefore grants us access to “divine things themselves” (*twn theiwn autwn*),<sup>623</sup> through which we become deified. St. Gregory Palamas will insist that this text from the *DN* illustrates that there must a continuity between what the disciples experienced in this life during the Transfiguration and what the blessed will enjoy in the next. He will claim that “we can never experience or see God through the natural powers of our intellectual or perceptive capacities.”<sup>624</sup> Nor can we experience or see God through the mediation of any created entity.<sup>625</sup> As a result, if we are truly said to experience the uncreated and divine presence, our sensory and intellectual faculties must be transformed by God’s grace; they must be enhanced beyond their natural capacities. We must receive eyes we “did not possess before,”<sup>626</sup> or as he will say elsewhere, “eyes transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>627</sup> Palamas will speak of this transformation/enhancement

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<sup>622</sup> Fr. John D. Jones. “Filled with the Visible Theophany of the Lord: Reading Dionysius East and West.” *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, Vol. 53 (2012) Nos. 1-2, pp. 13-41. Pp. 18-19.

<sup>623</sup> *CH* 4.3, 180C.

<sup>624</sup> *Triads*, I.3.35.39.

<sup>625</sup> *Triads*, III.1.11; III.2.18-19. See also Jones 27.

<sup>626</sup> *Triads* III.3.22.

<sup>627</sup> *Sermon on the Transfiguration* I, quoted from Jones 29.

occurring not only in the next life,<sup>628</sup> but also in certain rare theophanic experiences such as the Transfiguration, Paul's rapture in the 'third heaven,' and the protomartyr Stephen seeing the heavens open just before he died.<sup>629</sup>

Unlike Bucur, Jones does not pass judgment on whether or not Augustine has a transformative theology of theophanies.<sup>630</sup> But we must ask: Is Bucur's interpretation of Augustine in this respect an accurate one? Two quick points must be made before I offer my answer to this question. First, regardless of the transformative power (or lack thereof) of theophanies, both my comments and Bucur's on *trin.I-IV* have shown that there must be a distinction without division between the nature and will in God. Bucur himself will say the theophanies are created effects of the divine will, not the divine *natura*. Second, when it particularly comes to the theophany atop Mount Tabor, the Transfiguration, Bucur does not cite any primary texts from Augustine's corpus to draw the conclusion that this event does not provide human beings with the chance for a real encounter with the uncreated will and knowledge of God. Rather, he will rely on the authority of Michel Barnes. Using the words of Barnes, Bucur concludes that for Augustine "what appeared in events such as the theophany atop Mt Tabor was created matter being used as an instrument of communication by the Trinity," and that "while an encounter with such an instrument ... was an occasion for faith in God,"<sup>631</sup> that is all this event could provide. Bucur then writes that "it could not, obviously, have any transformative power."<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>628</sup> See for example, *Triads* I.3.37, where he quotes Maximus in this connection.

<sup>629</sup> Jones, 30.

<sup>630</sup> Jones will show that St. Albert and St. Thomas Aquinas do not allow for the Transfiguration to reveal the uncreated divinity of the Son, because of their rather peculiar epistemological stances, which bar us from seeing anything more than the humanity of Christ in this life. See Jones pp. 19-25

<sup>631</sup> Both of these quotations come from Barnes, Michel René. "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt 5:8 in Augustine's Trinitarian Theology of 400." *Modern Theology* 19:3. P. 349.

<sup>632</sup> Bucur, 81.

I would argue that the interpretation that Bucur and Barnes give of Augustine on theophanic experience at the very least fails to recognize primary texts that could be used to support a more “Eastern” reading of his theology in this regard. As two representative examples, I will discuss *Sermons XXVIII* and *XXIX*, both of which are sermons Augustine gave on the Transfiguration. In *Sermon XVIII*, Augustine says that Christ shone like the sun. He was “the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”<sup>633</sup> Seeing this glorious light, Peter suggested that they all stay on top of Mt Tabor, free from the trials and tribulations of the world. Peter then offered to set up three tents—one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Suddenly, a bright cloud appeared, overshadowing them. From it, a voice spoke, telling Peter that while he saw three persons, there was really One: The Word, Christ, the Word of God present in the Law, and the Word of God present in the Prophets. The voice also said that “This is my beloved Son.” Augustine is careful to point out, then, that the voice did not say these are my beloved sons, including Moses and Elijah, but only Christ. For Augustine, in the Transfiguration, what the apostles experienced in their earthly bodies was Christ himself, the only begotten Son of God the Father: “Here is the Lord, here the Law and the Prophets; but the Lord as Lord; the Law in Moses, Prophecy in Elijah; only they as servants and as ministers. They as vessels; He as the fountain: Moses and the Prophets spoke, and wrote; but when they poured out, they were filled from him.”<sup>634</sup> What they experienced was Christ as Lord, the source of all creation, the Word of God the Father. They saw Christ in his divine, uncreated glory: “And in this glory is fulfilled what He hath promised to them that love him, *He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and*

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<sup>633</sup> Sermon 28.2.

<sup>634</sup> Sermon 28.4.

*I will love him* (John 14:21). And as if it were said, What will you give him, seeing you will love him? And I will manifest Myself unto him. Great gift! Great promise! God does not reserve for you as a reward any thing of his own, but Himself.”<sup>635</sup> I do not think any passage in the entire Sermon is more forceful in showing Augustine’s commitment to the belief that Christ Himself is visibly manifest to all those who love him. Christ does not reveal himself through some symbol of divinity or created intermediary, but rather, Augustine tells us, he reveals himself in his true divinity. *Sermon XXIX* echoes what has already been said, and makes clear that Christ visibly appeared to the apostles “in his own Person.”<sup>636</sup> It is worth noting that at no point in this *Sermon* does Augustine feel the need to refer to some created intermediary or visible symbol to play the role of middle-man, so to speak, between the disciples and Christ.

I should mention that similar views on the real presence of Christ as Lord in the Transfiguration are expressed by Augustine in *De Genesi ad Litteram* and his *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount*.<sup>637</sup> Whatever interpretation of these texts one prefers, there is no denying that Augustine held that the divine nature, by itself, simply could not account for, either theologically or ontologically, the divine missions as he has

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<sup>635</sup> Sermon 28.5.

<sup>636</sup> Sermon 29.1.

<sup>637</sup> For example, at *DGnL*.12.26.54, Augustine says that the apostles had an intellectual vision of God himself, in which they were taken up from any kind of material symbolization of the divine and were carried away to a region “of intellectual or intelligible realities where the clear truth [was] seen without any likeness of the body, where it is not obscured by any clouds of false opinions.” Moreover, Fr. Roland Teske will comment that “the apostles also attained such a vision of God. In his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Augustine explains each of the Beatitudes, including, “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.” Augustine says that the pure of heart will be given the ability to see God, like a clear eye to perceive eternal realities. But then he adds, “These things can be fully attained even in this life, as we believe the apostles fully attained them.” *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount*, I, iv, 12, cited in Teske, “St. Augustine and the Vision of God,” 153.

defined them. We have already examined his *tentative* definition of them in Book II, but he gives their *definitive* definition in Book IV:

So the Word of God is sent by him whose Word he is; sent by him he is born of. The begetter sends, what is begotten sent. And he is precisely sent to anyone when he is known and perceived by him, as far as he can be perceived and known according to the capacity of a rational soul either making progress toward God or already made perfect in God. So the Son of God is not said to be sent in the very fact that he is born of the Father, but either in the fact that the Word made flesh showed himself to this world; about this fact he says, *I went forth from the Father and came into this world* (Jn 16:28). Or else he is sent in the fact that he is perceived in time by someone's mind, as it says, *Send her to be with me and labor with me* (Wis 9:10). That he is born means that he is from eternity to eternity—he is *the brightness of eternal light* (Wis 7:26). But that he is sent means that he is known by somebody in time.<sup>638</sup>

While Augustine singles out the Word of God to define what constitutes the essence of

His mission, His “being sent,” what Augustine says applies to any of the divine *missa*.

One of the divine persons can be said to be sent when and only when that person is

“known and perceived by [someone], as far as He can be perceived and known according

to the capacity of a rational soul either making progress toward God or already made

perfect in God.” Augustine’s definition thus makes it clear that a divine mission only

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<sup>638</sup> *trin.*4.5.28. Of course, a key question with respect to Augustine’s definitive definition of a divine mission is: what, exactly, does Augustine mean in saying that to be sent is to be ‘known by somebody in time?’ Does this ‘knowing’ consist solely of a mental operation which can be accomplished through one’s own cognitive powers, or does it consist in the animation and transformation of such mental operation through the power/grace/love of the Holy Spirit? Augustine will clearly opt for the latter. In his Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, for example, Augustine will speak of how we are said to “see” God. He interprets the Beatitude, *Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God*, as identical to the operation of the Holy Spirit working through and with those who are pure of heart. Speaking of all of the Beatitudes, Augustine writes: “It seems to me, therefore, that the sevenfold operation of the Holy Spirit, of which Isaias speaks (Is 11:2), coincides with these [sc. Beatitudes]” (I.4.11). Specifically, he will go on to say of this Beatitude that it coincides with the Holy Spirit’s gift of understanding (Ibid). This gift of understanding, given by the Holy Spirit, allows the pure of heart to “see” eternal realities. It grants man the power to “see” God (I.4.12). A little later on, Augustine will claim that this gift of mental sight just is the love of God “diffused in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:3-5) (I.5.13). For similar comments by Augustine on this Beatitude, see *Sermon 53* on Matt. 3:5-8. When therefore Augustine speaks of some persons as ‘knowing’ God the Son, whether in his allusions to the Book of Wisdom or in his *Sermons* on the Transfiguration, I would argue that he believes this to consist in the co-operation of time-bound man willing or desiring to know God and the Holy Spirit granting this mental sight through His power/grace/love.

qualifies as such if it has a concrete and real effect on the believer, meaning that a divine mission is inherently relational to what is other than God (*ad extra*). After all, God has no need of the divine missions. Their existence is only required because there is creation, and because that creation is in need of its proper perfection or in need of maintaining its proper perfection in God. Augustine concludes that when the Son is said to be sent, this cannot be understood in terms of His being begotten by the Father, which is a relation that in itself has nothing to do with creation. Rather, His being sent can be understood in two ways: either in terms of His appearing to the world in the form of man in the Incarnation, or in terms of His being known and perceived by someone in time. Focusing on the latter understanding of mission more so than the former, Augustine then writes about the Son and the Holy Spirit: “As being born [sc. generated] means for the Son being from the Father, so being sent means for the Son being known to be from the Father. And as being the gift of God means for the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father, so being sent means for the Holy Spirit his being known to proceed from the Father.”<sup>639</sup> Here again Augustine does not let us forget that the Son and the Spirit can only be said to be properly sent if mention is made of who or what they are being sent to, i.e., spiritual and corporeal creation.

Augustine will also reiterate in Book IV that none of the missions of the divine persons constitute or reveal the divine essence. To use Bucur’s turn of phrase, they are not ‘owned’ by the *natura*: “If you go on to ask me how the incarnation itself was done, I say that the very Word of God was made flesh, that is, was made man, without however being turned or changed into that which he was made; that he was of course so made that

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<sup>639</sup> *trin.*4.5.29.

you would have there not only the Word of God and the flesh of man but also the rational soul of man as well; and that this whole can be called God because it is God and man because it is man.” And speaking about the Father and the Holy Spirit, Augustine thinks “surely no one wishes to say that whatever creature it is that produced the Father’s voice is the Father, or that whatever creature it is that manifested the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove or in fiery tongues is the Holy Spirit.”<sup>640</sup> Whether Augustine views these or the other *missa* of Father, Son, and Spirit as transformative of those who experienced them may still be an open question to Eastern and Western theologians alike, or at least one that needs further examination before a definite decree is made. Or perhaps in the minds of others it is an open and shut case. Either way, East or West, we can agree with Augustine that the divine *missa* are not expressions of the essential Life of the Trinity, but rather expressions of the uncreated divine will and knowledge.

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<sup>640</sup> *trin.4.5.31.*

## Chapter 9

*Conclusion: Our Liberty in the 'totus Christus'*

In previous chapters, we have seen Augustine use an essence-will distinction in God to distinguish between the eternity of the divine essence and the eternity of the divine ideas (chapter 4), between the generation of the Son/spiration of the Spirit and the act of creation, and between the internal processions and the divine *missa*, the latter of which include the theophanies (chapter 8). Evidence of this distinction in the works of Augustine notwithstanding, scholars still have reservations when it comes to the theology-philosophy of Augustine. Some still consider Augustine as leaning more towards holding the divine essence as providing the unity to the Trinity than the three divine persons themselves (chapter 5), even though I have shown reason to doubt this over-simplification of Augustine's Trinitarian theology (chapter 6). The Cappadocian tradition, by contrast, emphasizes the unity of the Trinity as coming from the Persons, and especially the Person of the Father (chapter 7). Regardless of these and other differences, the Western-Augustinian and Eastern-Patristic traditions held that there must be real distinctions in God to account for how God necessarily exists for Himself (*ad intra*) and how He freely exists for creation (*ad extra*).

In this concluding chapter, I will examine the latter way God exists in terms of the Incarnation of the Word and Its extension or prolongation in the Church, understood by Augustine as the '*totus Christus*' or 'whole Christ.' I will do this because Augustine believes the Incarnation represents the most radical act of God to freely exist for His creation, especially for human creation, to effect its redemption and to ensure its liberty

(*libertas*) from the thralldom of sin. Indeed, nowhere else do we see the Augustinian distinction between God's essence and God's will applied with greater theological need than with respect to the doctrine of election by grace as it pertains to Christ, Who is the only natural Son of God *essentially*, but Who *willingly* emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave (Phil 2:6-8).

I have already alluded to the importance of properly understanding the human person and its liberty in the context of self-sacrificial service to God (chapters 2 and 3). But in this chapter, I delve into the deeper relational meaning of Augustine's notion of human liberty as total obedience to the providential will of God, exemplified in the highest way by Christ, the Mediator between God and man, the Head of the Church. More specifically, I make good on my promise in chapter 1 to find the solution to the problem of predestination in Augustinian thought, or the problem of divine election in the Letters of St. Paul, in the person of Christ. I will accomplish this through the exegesis of key earlier and later texts in the Augustinian corpus that illustrate his Christocentric anthropology. Given the Augustinian distinction between God's essence and God's will, we are now able to fully appreciate how genuine human freedom, or liberty, is not the freedom to choose this or that, nor is it the freedom to sin. Rather, our liberty is to will as Christ wills, i.e., to always and unfailingly obey the will of the Father. The theological strategy that Augustine employs in the texts I will examine to argue for his idea of human liberty is rooted in Scripture (especially the Letters of St. Paul), but he will pair this with appropriate philosophical explanations of the inherent relationality of human beings to God's will and knowledge (*rationes*) and one's neighbor in the ecclesial Body of Christ. Much of this dissertation was an attempt to prove *via* textual analysis and argument that

Augustine has an essence-will distinction akin to the one we find in the Greek-East. We are finally able to see the philosophical “pay off,” as it were, of this in specific texts from Augustine that concern what constitutes a free human response to the will of God: Christian liberty pertains to the non-essential (*ad extra*) ‘reality’ of God, i.e., His will or energy. In addition, we are able to see this unencumbered from philosophical-theological objections which would attribute to Augustine an essentialist model of God,<sup>641</sup> or a separation between the temporal human will and eternal divine will,<sup>642</sup> any one of which (if true) would make such an examination a complete non-starter.

While we have seen that most scholars, following in the learned footsteps of Cicero, consider Augustinian “liberty” as negating the possibility of human responsibility in the realm of moral-political action, I will now be able to argue that this is a result of their misunderstanding Augustine’s fundamentally Christocentric anthropology and its emphasis on the *real* relation between the human will of Christ and His members to the divine will. Christian liberty lives and moves and has its being in the Church. It is a liberty that belongs to man “not merely as man, but as a member of Christ. Such a liberty is designed to bring about, within the deepest recesses of each member of Christ, a union between God and man that calls Christ to mind.”<sup>643</sup> It is a liberty that is defined by the expression of God’s will in the human will, through the obedience of the latter to the

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<sup>641</sup> One ought to particularly recall the objection Romanides makes to Augustine on pages 17-19 in chapter 1 of this dissertation.

<sup>642</sup> We saw this with Stump, Kretzmann, Hill, Wetzel, and others throughout chapter 4 of this dissertation.

<sup>643</sup> *The Theology of the Mystical Body*, Mersch, 91.

former. Even in His most difficult time on earth, this is something Christ the man did to effect the redemption of all: *yet not my will, but yours be done* (Luke 22:42).<sup>644</sup>

Over the course of this dissertation, I have shown that Augustine was not oblivious to the difficulties attendant on the notion of Christian liberty. These difficulties arise in its distinctions between God's grace and free will: "the discussion about free will and God's grace has such difficulty in its distinctions, that when free will is maintained, God's grace is apparently denied; whilst when God's grace is asserted, free will is supposed to be done away with."<sup>645</sup> Moreover, we know that Augustine will sum up the mystery of divine and human interaction by relying on St. Paul: *there is question not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God showing mercy* (Rom 9:16). If, however, there is question not of him who wills nor of him who runs, then how can we say that any human being contributes anything meaningful to their own salvation? These are variations on the same problem with which this dissertation began: the problem of divine election by grace found in the Letters of St. Paul and, by extension, the mature theology of sin and grace of Augustine. One will recall that this was the problem that caused Augustine to write in Book II of the *Retractions*: "I labored indeed on behalf of the free choice of the human will, but God's grace overcame, and I could only reach that point where the apostle is perceived to have said with the most evident truth, *For who makes you to differ? And what have you that you have not received? Now, if you have received it, why do you glory as if you received it not?* (1 Cor 4:7)."

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<sup>644</sup> The idea that Christ's perfect liberty was a function of His perfect obedience to the will of the Father can be found in the synoptic Gospels, but especially in the Gospel of John: See Jn 4:19, 34; 5:30, 36; 6:38ff.; 10:17; 14:31; 15: 10.

<sup>645</sup> *On the Grace of Christ*, 52.

The answer to this problem, which we have seen Augustine hint at in his earlier and later works, in his preaching and teaching career, is arguably the greatest lesson we can learn from the entirety of Scripture: “The whole aspect and, if I may so speak, the entire countenance of the Holy Scriptures is seen, in a mystery very deep and salutary, to admonish all who carefully look upon it, *that he who takes pride should take pride in the Lord.*”(1 Cor 1:31).<sup>646</sup> Christ is the center of all theological reflection, and indeed the whole of Christian teaching can be understood, to the extent that it is possible, in the person of Christ.<sup>647</sup> Augustine writes elsewhere that, “All this [sc. Scripture] proclaims Christ, the head that has ascended into heaven and the body that toils on earth to the end of time.”<sup>648</sup> Paul for his part will sum up his entire preaching career as having been a witness to Christ, for *I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified* (1 Cor 2:2). I intend to conclude this dissertation on the liberty of human beings with the co-operation of divine grace by judging their interaction in the way Paul and Augustine prescribe, i.e., according to Jesus Christ, and particularly Him crucified. However, I am aware that to “say about the Mediator as much as would be worthy of Him would occupy too much space, and indeed no man could say these things in a befitting manner.”<sup>649</sup> That is why I will limit my comments about the Mediator primarily to a discussion of His liberty consisting of His human obedience to the will of

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<sup>646</sup> *Enchir.*25.98.

<sup>647</sup> The importance of Christ in understanding the whole of Christian teaching is made apparent in Paul’s Letters. See for example, Acts 9:3; 22:4; 26:13ff; Phil 3:12; Col 3:11; Gal 3:28; Eph 1:10. Paul and Augustine will identify Christ as the center towards which all Christian doctrine converges, including Paul’s doctrine of election by grace. The famous quotation from Romans 8:29, for example, bears this out: *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.* For more on the centrality of Christ in Paul and Augustine, see Emile Mersch’s *The Whole Christ*, pp. 80-150 and his *Theology of the Mystical Body*, pp. 47-74.

<sup>648</sup> *Contra Faustum manichaeum* XXII, 94.

<sup>649</sup> *Enchir.*10.33.

the Father. In doing this I follow the theological strategy of the Jesuit priest and renowned systematic theologian Emile Mersch, who thinks that “we must focus attention on Christ’s humanity,” because all of the divine commands that are meant to sanctify the human race, that are designed to make it an “organism of grace,” if obeyed, are present in the “decree that willed the humanity of Christ, or rather are basically realized in the very way that humanity exists.”<sup>650</sup> Since Christ contains all human perfections within Himself, because of His total obedience to the will of the Father, Augustine thinks it follows that “[t]here is no more eminent instance, I say, of predestination than the Mediator Himself. If any believer wishes thoroughly to understand this doctrine, let him consider Him, and in Him he will find himself also.”<sup>651</sup> Augustine does not make explicit reference to the Gospel of John here, but he must have had it in mind: *If any man will do the will of Him, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of Myself* (Jn 7:17). A proper understanding of divine predestination, grace, and human liberty can only be found in the person of Christ. It cannot be found in abstract thought or abstruse theological concepts. It will escape the grasp, however learned, of those who do not wish to live as Christ lived, to will as Christ willed, and love as Christ loved.

We will now examine some early and later works of Augustine in which this Christocentric anthropology is made known. One of the early and more “philosophical” works of Augustine where we find this emphasis on the importance of Christ is *On the*

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<sup>650</sup> Mersch, 202. These ‘divine commands’ or the ‘decree that willed the humanity of Christ’ are expressions of God’s will and knowledge. They are the divine ideas. One of the best commentators on St. Paul, Ferdinand Prat, S. J., will say that from baptism “special relations with each of the three divine Persons are derived: a relation of sonship with the Father; a relation of consecration to the Holy Spirit; a relation of mystical identity with Jesus Christ.” It is this last relation of mystical identity with Christ that “explains everything,” including the how we ought to conceive of the liberty of man as a creature of God (F. Prat, *The Theology of St. Paul*, II, 320).

<sup>651</sup> *On the Gift of Perseverance*, 67.

*Catholic and Manichaeian Ways of Life.*<sup>652</sup> Augustine's overall goal in writing it is to defend the harmony of the Old and New Testaments *contra* the Manichaeans, but I am more interested in the first Book of this work, which contains a description of how Christians ought to live. Especially of interest is Augustine's idea of the true unity of human nature being found in the rational soul as related to God.

Augustine will begin by discussing the question, 'What is man?,' from a rational perspective. It is clear that he views beginning with authority as superior, however, because "when we learn anything, authority precedes reason."<sup>653</sup> Why? Because our "fallen" minds are confounded by intellectual error due to sin and evil. Nevertheless, in order to appease the weakness of the Manichaeans, "who think, and speak, and act contrary to right order and insist that, first of all, a reason be given for everything," he states that he will submit to their demands and "employ a method of discussion which [he considers] faulty."<sup>654</sup> According to this rational perspective, Augustine says man is a union of body and soul. Man cannot be either the body or soul by itself. "For although they are two things, soul and body, and neither could be called man were the other not present (for the body would not be man if there were no soul, nor would the soul be man were there no body animated by it)."<sup>655</sup> With this said, there is a pre-eminence that we

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<sup>652</sup> *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, Volume 56. The Catholic and Manichaeian Ways of Life*, Trans. by Donald Gallagher and Idella Gallagher. Written in 388 and revised in 390

<sup>653</sup> mor.2.3.

<sup>654</sup> mor.2.3.

<sup>655</sup> mor.4.6. Augustine's basic view of man being composed of three elements, i.e., spirit, soul, and body, does not change over the course of his writings. Nor does his view that to these three elements must be added a fourth: the spirit of Christ, obedience to the Laws of God, or however one wants to put the *right relation* between man and God that Augustine takes to be necessary for the former's perfection. See for example, *de.fide.et.symb.*10.23, where Augustine speaks of the "death" of man in terms of falling away from God (Eccl. 10:14) and the "life" of man in terms of serving *the law of God* (Rom 7:25), or obeying *the spirit of God* (1 Cor 2:14). It is important to note that Augustine will not always use the terms soul (*anima*) and spirit (*spiritus*) in a consistent manner. But he does generally and for the most part take "soul" to mean the principle of life of all rational and irrational creatures, whereas "spirit" has a dual sense: Sometimes he uses it according to Scripture, whereas other times he will use it according to what we might call its more

must acknowledge in the soul, because how we live a good life primarily pertains to the soul. Good morals or virtues are “acts of the soul.”<sup>656</sup> Augustine thus identifies who we are as persons primarily with the soul, because that is what he takes to be the epicenter of our ethical action. He will make similar points about the will and mind, or, to use the expression of the Apostle, the inner man.<sup>657</sup>

It should come as no surprise that Augustine thinks that we really cannot understand Christian life solely through an anthropocentric lens, by examining the soul and body unity that is man and how he is moral/virtuous. Augustine therefore quickly shifts from the rational perspective to one based in authority and, specifically, the authority of scripture. The foundation of this new perspective is that God exists and He is

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philosophical meaning. In the first sense, spirit “represents the highest faculty of the human soul which raises man above the lower animals.” In the second sense, it has the Stoical meaning of the “imaginative power or sense-memory, common to both man and beast.” (Robert P. Russell, fn 14, p. 325). Etienne Gilson has also mentioned this difference in vocabulary when it comes to the soul and spirit in Augustine in his seminal work, *L'introduction à l'étude de S. Augustin* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Paris 1949), pp. 56-57.

<sup>656</sup> mor.5.8.

<sup>657</sup> Augustine will interchange the terms ‘soul,’ ‘will,’ ‘mind,’ and ‘inner man’ when appropriate. See *On the Grace of Christ* 49, in which he seems to use all of these terms in an equivalent manner to discuss the place in man where God effects His grace. When it comes to the human will, Augustine often speaks of it in terms of being the “root” of good or bad action. This is in accord with Scripture, for the Lord says, *a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit* (Matt 7:18); and the Apostle says that greed is *the root of all evils* (1 Tim 6:10), indicating that he views love to be the root of all right action (*On the Grace of Christ*, 19). Augustine supposes that, if these two trees, one good and one evil, “represent two human beings, one good and one bad, what else is the good man except one with a good will, that is, a tree with a good root? And what is the bad man except one with a bad will, that is, a tree with a bad root? The fruits which spring from such roots and trees are deeds, are words, are thoughts, which proceed, when good, from a good will, and when evil, from an evil one” (Ibid). These two different trees, these two different human beings, these two different wills are formed in two different ways. The good “tree” that bears good “fruit” is formed through the assistance of grace, “for God Himself co-operates (*cooperatur*) in the production of fruit in good trees, when He both externally waters and tends them by the agency of His servants, and internally by Himself also gives the increase (1 Cor 3:7)” (*On the Grace of Christ*, 20). By contrast, the bad “tree” that brings forth bad “fruit” is deformed by its insistence to rely on its own inadequate power, thereby separating itself from Him who is the source of all goodness and life. Augustine will just as readily speak of a person as consisting in what his mind thinks: “What a person thinks as a person; that, you see, is where the person properly is, in his thoughts.” (*Sermon* 217.2, 418). It should come as no surprise that this is yet another theological insight he takes from St. Paul, who would often make a distinction between the inner (spiritual/mental) and outer (fleshly/bodily) man, and claim that true personhood consists of this inner man, which, God willing, is renewed from day to day (2 Cor 4:16). According to Augustine, the inner man (*homo interior*) consists in the highest and best part of the soul, namely the mind (*mens*). See *trin.*12.1-4.

the supreme good for man. When we strive after Him, we live good lives. When we reach Him, we are happy. Augustine has no truck for objections such as God does not exist: “As for those who may deny that God exists, I cannot concern myself with arguments to persuade them, for I am not even sure that we ought to enter into discussion with them at all.”<sup>658</sup> Moreover, the work that he is engaging in right now is meant for those who want to know the way of life of the Catholic Church, and so these are persons who do not deny God’s existence or claim that He is indifferent to how we act. Quite the contrary: these are persons who firmly believe that God guides the life of man through Divine Providence which,

although man had fallen away from its laws and on account of his greed for mortal things had deservedly begotten a mortal offspring, did not altogether abandon him.... We shall never be able to understand how great, how admirable, and how worthy of God this providence is, nor finally, how true all that we are seeking for, that is, unless we begin with things human and familiar to us and, through faith in the true religion and the keeping of the commandments, proceed without forsaking the path that He has prepared for us by the appointment of the patriarchs, the bond of the law, the predictions of the prophets, the mystery of the Incarnation, the testimony of the apostles, the blood of the martyrs, and the conversion of the Gentiles...<sup>659</sup>

After telling us that we must begin with all of these “things” to achieve an understanding of Divine Providence, Augustine focuses his attention on Christ. What does Christ say is the ultimate Good for us? What does He say with respect to how we attain this Good? The answer to both questions can be found in following the command: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.* (Matt 22:37). Augustine thinks that from these words of Christ we know “what we must love and how much we must love.... In God is to be found all that is best for us. God is

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<sup>658</sup> mor.6.10.

<sup>659</sup> mor.7.11-12.

our supreme good. We must not stop at anything below Him, nor seek anything beyond, for the first is fraught with danger and the second does not exist.”<sup>660</sup> When we love God, we are united to Him. This unity, Augustine tells us, should be conceived in a spiritual or mental way. “We strive after Him by loving Him; we reach Him, not by becoming altogether what He is, but by coming close to Him, touching Him in a wonderfully spiritual way, and being illuminated and pervaded utterly by His truth and holiness (*At eum sequimur diligendo, consequimur vero, non cum hoc omnino efficitur quod est ipse, sed ei proximi, eumque mirifico et intelligibili modo contingentes, ejusque veritate et sanctitate penitus illustrati atque comprehensi*). Following St. Paul, Augustine thinks that our unity with God through the *via amoris* cannot be frustrated: *I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor virtue, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom 8:38-39).<sup>661</sup> We love God through our “soul (*animus*) and mind (*mentis*).” In loving God, our mind becomes “like God” (*Deo similis*), to the extent that this is possible, “when it humbly submits itself to Him for enlightenment.” Indeed, Augustine thinks that the mind achieves its greatest likeness to God “by the submission which produces likeness,” but it acquires an unlikeness to God when this desire “turns the mind from obedience to the laws of God, by making it desire to be its own master, as He is.”<sup>662</sup> It is precisely when the human mind humbly submits to God, when it recognizes it is not sufficient of its own cognitive and conative resources to be its own master, that it enjoys liberty. Augustine will add that the “more fervently and

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<sup>660</sup> mor.8.13.

<sup>661</sup> Augustine believes we can find the same basic message in the Old Testament in the words of the Prophet: *It is good for me to adhere to God* (Ps. 72.28).

<sup>662</sup> mor.12.20.

earnestly the mind does this, the happier and more exalted it will be, and when ruled by God alone, will enjoy perfect liberty” (*Quod quanto fecerit instantius ac studiosius, tanto erit beatior atque sublimior, et illo solo dominante liberrimus*). Augustine mentions once again that this love of God, which constitutes our liberty, takes place “in Christ Jesus our Lord” (*in Christo Jesu Domino nostro*).<sup>663</sup>

Augustine understands our liberty to take place in Him, because Christ is *the virtue of God and the wisdom of God* (1 Cor 1:24). Christ also called Himself *the truth* (John 14:6). To love virtue, wisdom, and truth is therefore to live the ideal Christian life—the life of Christ. Augustine recommends to the Christians reading *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae* to love with their whole heart, whole soul, and whole mind

the virtue which is inviolate and invincible, the wisdom which never gives way to folly, and the truth which is not altered but remains ever the same. It is by this that we come to see the Father Himself, for it has been said: *No one comes to the Father but through me* (Jn 14:6). It is to this we adhere by sanctification (*sanctificationem*) for, when sanctified (*sanctificati*), we are inflamed with that full and perfect love which prevents us from turning away from Him (*qua sola efficitur ut a Deo non avertamur*) and causes us to be conformed (*conformemur*) to Him rather than to the world. *He has predestined us*, as the Apostle says, *to be conformed to the image of His Son* (Rom 8:29) (*Praedestinavit enim, ut ait idem Apostolus, conformes nos fieri imaginis Filii ejus*).<sup>664</sup>

Augustine will characterize this full and perfect love *qua sola efficitur ut a Deo non avertamur*, which causes us to be *conformemur* to Him, in terms of the four cardinal virtues, namely, temperance, fortitude, justice, and prudence. It follows that: “temperance is love preserving itself whole and unblemished for God, fortitude is love enduring all things willingly for the sake of God, justice is love serving God alone and, therefore, ruling well those things subject to man, and prudence is love discriminating rightly

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<sup>663</sup> mor.12.21.

<sup>664</sup> mor.13.22.

between those things which aid it in reaching God and those things which might hinder it.”<sup>665</sup> We might call this Augustinian virtue ethics, the entire goal of which is to attain the supreme Good for man, which is God.

Augustine makes clear that this love of God includes love of oneself and neighbor. Indeed, it is impossible that love of God can exclude the other two. This is because a man only loves himself in the right way if he attains his supreme Good, and this is God. We must love our neighbor also, for Christ commands us to *love thy neighbor as thyself*. (Matt 22:39).<sup>666</sup> Augustine then reasons that, if you love yourself in the right way when you love God more than yourself, then “what you do on your own behalf, you must do also for your neighbor, so that he, too, may love God with perfect love.”<sup>667</sup> To love our neighbor is thus to lead him to the same Good we are pursuing. According to

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<sup>665</sup> *mor.15.25*. Throughout *mor.* Augustine will give more detailed descriptions of these virtues as they pertain to Christian life. In what follows I include a brief summary of the essential aspects of these virtues according to Augustine. We begin with temperance, which is meant to prevent our passions from overtaking us, thereby causing us to desire things other than God. Augustine will say this virtue is exercised by stripping off the old man and putting on the new (Col 3:9-10). That is, strip off Adam, the sinful man, and put on Christ, the righteous man (*mor.19.35*). While temperance consists in not desiring worldly things in an improper manner, the function of fortitude is to give them up. The hardest thing to “give up” in this life, or what is our “heaviest yoke” is undoubtedly the trials and tribulations that affect our bodies. As examples of Christian fortitude, Augustine will cite Job (Job 1:2) and the woman who gave over to the tyrannical executioner every one of seven sons instead of blaspheming God, and who then eventually underwent the same torture and death (2 Mach 7:1-42) (*mor.23.42-43*). The essence of justice consists in serving the Creator and not the creature (Rom 1:25). It consists in not only listening to but taking to heart the words of Christ: *No man can serve two masters* (Matt 6:24). Accordingly, Augustine thinks that each of us must “serve with gladness the Lord whom he loves ... and with respect to all other things, that he govern those which are subject to him and endeavor to subject the rest.” (*mor.24.44*). Finally, the function of prudence is to judge what ought to be desired and what ought to be avoided. Augustine accords prudence a special place of honor among the virtues already discussed, because without prudence no other temperate, patient, or just acts can be “accomplished.” Augustine thus understands prudence to be at work in all of the other virtues, insofar as its job is to “keep constant watch so that we are not led astray by the imperceptible working of an evil influence” (*mor.24.45*), which would cause us to be intemperate, impatient, or unjust. It is temperate, patient, just, and prudent love of God that constitutes “human perfection.” (*mor.25.46*). Elsewhere Augustine will say this human perfection is illustrated in the actions of Christ, but especially His Cross, in which every one of these virtues shines forth to their greatest extent capable for a human being. See for example, *ymb.3.9*.

<sup>666</sup> Augustine will make the point elsewhere that, if we do not follow this command of Christ, if we do not “embrace the multitude and society of men wherein fraternal charity is operative,” then our faith will bear “less fruit.” (*de.fide.et.symb.9.21*).

<sup>667</sup> *mor.26.49*.

Augustine, this is what is meant by the saying of Scripture, *Bear one another's burdens, and in this way will you fulfill the law of Christ* (Gal 6:2).<sup>668</sup> In one of the most creative analogies he ever uses, Augustine will compare the bearing of one another's burdens with how deer swim across a channel:

When deer swim across a channel to an island in search of pasture they line themselves up in such a way that the weight of their heads carried in the antlers is borne by one another thus: the one behind, by extending its neck, places its head on the one in front. Moreover, because there must be one deer which is at the head of the others and thus has no one in front of itself to lay its head on, they are said to take the lead by turns, so that the one in front, wearied by the weight of its head, retires to the end of the line, and the one whose head it was supporting while traveling in the lead takes its place. In this way, bearing one another's burdens, they traverse the channel until they come to solid ground.<sup>669</sup>

In an effort to find continuity between the Old and New Testaments, Augustine will state that perhaps this behavior of deer is what Solomon had in mind when he said: *Let the deer of friendship and the foal of your affections converse with you* (Prov 5:19).

Augustine thinks that the reason why we must bear the burdens of others is because of Christ and, specifically, the "thought of how much the Lord has endured for us." Just as Christ did not deem it satisfactory to only look after Himself, but took away the burden of our sins, so, too, we should imitate Him in "willingly bear[ing] one another's burdens."<sup>670</sup>

Book I of *On Christian Instruction* (396-397)<sup>671</sup> will similarly place Christ at the center of Christian morality. Near the beginning of this work, we get a discussion of the famous use/enjoyment (*uti/frui*) distinction. There are some things which should be

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<sup>668</sup> 83 *Questions*, 71.1.

<sup>669</sup> 83 *Questions*, 71.1.

<sup>670</sup> 71.3.

<sup>671</sup> *On Christian Instruction* trans. by John J. Gavigan. This work has received high praise. See for example, what the 17<sup>th</sup> C. Benedictine editors of *De Doctrina Christiana* say: "a work in conformity with the dignity of the subject, wrought with scholarly care and surely not unworthy of a place at the front of the Bible alone with the Prefaces of St. Jerome." See page 8 of *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, Volume 2.

enjoyed, some things which should be used, and others which are to be enjoyed and used. Speaking of the first two kinds of things, Augustine writes: “Those which are to be enjoyed make us happy. Those which are to be used help us as we strive for happiness.” The inversion of this distinction among things cannot but lead to unhappiness, for if we strive “to enjoy the things which we are supposed to use, we find our progress impeded and even now and then turned aside.”<sup>672</sup> Augustine is here thinking of our enjoyment of “lesser goods,”<sup>673</sup> which we ought to use as stepping stones to reach our highest good. Augustine will identify our highest good not with God as He essentially is, but with the three Persons, as they are accessible to us: “The proper object of our enjoyment, therefore, is the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Same who are the Trinity, one supreme Being, accessible to all who enjoy Him.”<sup>674</sup> How, though, are we able to enjoy God the Trinity? Augustine answers that the mind must be cleansed. We may consider this cleansing to be a “sort of traveling or sailing to our own country,” because it is not a “moving from place to place, but by a holy desire and lofty morals.”<sup>675</sup> No cleansing of the mind such as this would be possible, however, without the Incarnation of Christ, in which the second Person of the blessed Trinity deigned “to share even such great weakness as ours and show us the way to live according to human nature, since we ourselves are human.”<sup>676</sup> Augustine will refer to Christ in the form of his humanity as the only Way (Jn 1:10) by which we can travel back to God, but also as our final destination,

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<sup>672</sup> I.3.3.

<sup>673</sup> Augustine gives variations on this general advice to Christians *passim De Doctrina Christiana*: We should not be conformed to this world by enjoying the creature instead of the Creator (I.12.12); We must “die to this world.” (I.20.19); the entire temporal dispensation is something that we ought to use, “but not with any permanent affection and pleasure” (I.35.39); etc.

<sup>674</sup> I.5.5.

<sup>675</sup> I.10.10.

<sup>676</sup> I.11.11.

insofar as He is the Word. Or as he will say: “Therefore, although He Himself is our native land, He made Himself also the Way to that native land.”<sup>677</sup> Elsewhere he adds that this humble action on the part of Christ was free, i.e., willed by Him: “what more generous or more merciful thing could He do, who was willing to abase Himself for us as the Way by which we might return to Him.”<sup>678</sup>

Augustine therefore believes and understands Christ, the God-man, to constitute the full meaning of what Christian life should be. When it comes to the Incarnation in particular, Augustine notes that there is a curative symmetry between Christ as our *medicus* and medicine and we as Christians:

Just as medical care is the road to bodily health, so this Care has received sinners to heal them and make them strong again. And as physicians bind up wounds in an orderly and skillful manner, so that even a certain beauty may join the usefulness of the bandage, so the medicine of Wisdom, by assuming humanity, accommodated Himself to our wounds, healing some by opposite remedies and others by like remedies. A Physician, in treating an injury to the body, applies certain opposites, as cold to hot, wet to dry; in other cases he applies like remedies, as a round bandage to a circular wound or an oblong bandage to an oblong wound, not using the same bandage for every limb, but adapting like to like. Likewise, the Wisdom of God, in healing humanity, has employed Himself to cure it, since He is both the physician and the medicine.<sup>679</sup>

Not only in the Incarnation, but also in His Resurrection from the dead and His Ascension into heaven Christ “shows us forcibly how willingly He who had the power to take it up again laid down His life for us.”<sup>680</sup> Augustine will say that it is for the express purpose of building up His Church here and now that Christ has willingly done all of these things for our salvation. To the extent possible, we must imitate Christ in these

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<sup>677</sup> I.11.11.

<sup>678</sup> I.17.16.

<sup>679</sup> I.14.13. See also 11.12 of *The Christian Combat* and 4.8 of the *Faith and the Creed* for this idea that the Incarnation was a healing event for fallen humanity.

<sup>680</sup> I.15.14.

ways “without complaint” and “even with joy,”<sup>681</sup> because the Church is the body of Christ (Eph 1:23). It is His spouse (Eph 5: 23ff). As such, Christ as Head recapitulates those in His body, though they do not have the same functions or gifts (Rom 12:4), “by the bond of unity and charity—its health, so to speak.”<sup>682</sup> Augustine does not shy away from saying that this consolidation process of the Church by Christ and His members often consists of disciplinary action, or the cleansing of the mind of His members through various trials and tribulations. But these are to act as medicine for them, so that when the body of the Church is joined to Christ as Head,<sup>683</sup> His spouse the Church will not have *spot or wrinkle or any such thing* (Matt 16:19).

That Augustine talks specifically of cleansing the mind is significant, for it is in the mind that we are created in God’s image. The nobility of man comes from the fact that he is created to the image and likeness of God (Gen 1: 27), “not insofar as he is housed in a mortal body, but in that he is superior to brute beasts because of the gift of a rational soul.”<sup>684</sup> Hence Augustine will conclude that “man is most excellent at that time when his whole life tends toward the unchangeable Life and clings to Him with all its affection. However, if He loves himself for his own sake, he does not refer himself to God, but, since he has turned to himself, he is not turned toward something unchangeable.”<sup>685</sup> Because he is not turned toward something unchangeable, he therefore

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<sup>681</sup> I.15.14.

<sup>682</sup> I.16.15.

<sup>683</sup> Augustine will add one more theological layer to this picture of the Church as *totus Christus*—or Christ as Head and Christ as members. As Christ is the Head of the Body that is the Church, we may similarly call the Father the Head of Christ. According to Augustine, the Father “does not have His origin from the Son, the latter has His origin in the Father; the former is the principle of the Son, for which reason He is also called the *head of Christ* (1 Cor 11:3); but Christ, too, is called the principle (Jn 8:25), but not of the Father; the latter [the Son] is called the Image of the former (Col. 1:5).” (*de.fide.et.symb.*9.18). It follows that Christ is the Head of the Church and the Head of Christ is God.

<sup>684</sup> I.22.20.

<sup>685</sup> I.22.21.

loves a lesser good. Later in his theological career, Augustine will discuss in exacting detail how the whole mental and willful life of man must be referred to God in his psychological analogies for the Trinity.<sup>686</sup> For Christian life, then, the doctrine of the *imago Dei* was of great importance. How do we restore the image of God in us? How do we attain to the likeness of God? We do so through the rule of love: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” but God “with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.” We have all of our thoughts, all of our willings, and all of our life from Him. We are made in the image of God and according to His likeness, so Augustine thought we ought to direct all of these to Him. God is the only reality (for lack of a better word) that should be “loved for His own sake.”<sup>687</sup>

But without Christ the doctrine of the *imago Dei* would be meaningless and ineffectual. It would be incapable of being realized in Christian life within the unity of the Church. We need Christ to be our Road and Reward, Way and Destination. Since Christ “wished not only to show Himself as the reward of those who have arrived at Him, but also, to those who were only coming to the beginning of their journey, to show

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<sup>686</sup> These psychological analogies are described most famously in Books VIII-XV of *On the Trinity*, but reference to them can be found elsewhere. See for example, *Conf.*13.3.12; *Gn.litt.imp.*16.61. Generally speaking, they are meant to show that just as there is a threefold unity in man, who is one substance in a threefold aspect, in the various faculties and actions of the soul, so, too, God, in a much higher way, possesses a unity in essence, but also a threefold aspect by way of the mutual relations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The best and highest analogy can be found in Book XIV: “Therefore this trinity of the mind is the image of God not because of the fact that the mind remembers itself and understands itself and loves itself, but because it can also remember, understand, and love him by whom it was made. When it does so, it becomes wise. But if it fails to do this, even while remembering itself and understanding and loving itself, it is foolish. And so let the mind remember its God towards whose image it was made, and let it understand and love him. Or to say the same thing more briefly, let it worship God, who is not made, by whom because itself was made, it is capable of and can be partaker of him; wherefore it is written, *Behold the worship of God, that is wisdom* (Job 28:28) (*trin.*14.12.15; CCSL 50A.442-43). Augustine concludes that a person is most fully in the image of God when he possesses the following activities: *meminisse Dei, intellegere Deum, dilligere Deum*. Augustine is careful to use active verbs here to reinforce the idea that we are most like the Trinity when we are actively remembering God, actively understanding God, and actively loving God.

<sup>687</sup> I.27.28.

Himself as the way, He willed to assume human flesh. So there is also this verse: *The Lord created me in the beginning of His ways* (Prov 8:22), so that those who wished to come might begin from Him.”<sup>688</sup> The balance Augustine strikes between understanding Christ in these two senses, in the form of His humanity and in the form of His divinity, to speak of the function of grace to bring us together on the road to salvation in order to sanctify us, is mirrored in the Letters of St. Paul. But as Mersch notes, Paul does not give us an exact formula to understand the relation between Christ as our Road and Reward, Way and Destination. Rather, it is sometimes the case that “Christ’s humanity scarcely appears in this work of union; it is God who gathers men together and draws them to Himself, with some intervention on the part of Christ’s humanity that is not clearly defined.”<sup>689</sup> At other times the humanity of Christ appears as the great means employed by God to save men.<sup>690</sup> This latter case seems to be more frequent.”<sup>691</sup>

According to Mersch, we see the same doctrine being supported in the Eastern Church, especially in the work of Cyril of Alexandria. Cyril thought that the Christ’s humanity could give life to the entire human race because it was united to the Word. It is not because of what it is in itself that allowed Christ’s humanity to enliven the human race he joined to Himself in the Incarnation. Rather, it is because of what it is in the Word—the Light and Life of men.<sup>692</sup> These insights about the two-natured Christ from Paul and the Doctors of the Early Church, East and West, became crystallized into dogma at the Council of Chalcedon (451):

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<sup>688</sup> I.34.38.

<sup>689</sup> Cf. Rom 3:24-27; 5:1-11; 6:23; 13:25ff.; Gal 4:4-7; Eph 1:3-14; Col 1:13-20.

<sup>690</sup> See Rom 5:11-21; 6:1-11; 1 Cor 1:30ff.; 6:15-20; 2 Cor 5:14-21; 8:9; Gal 2:19ff.; 3:26-29; Eph 1:18-22; 2:4-10; 13-22; 3:1-10; 4:3-16; Phil 3:14, 17, 21; Col 1:26ff.; 2:2-19; 3:1-4.

<sup>691</sup> Mersch, 200.

<sup>692</sup> See *In Ioan.*, I, 9.

Following in the footsteps of the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach belief in one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We declare that He is perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, that He is true God and true man, composed of rational soul and body, that He is consubstantial with the Father in divine nature and consubstantial with us in human nature, “in all things like as we are, without sin” (Heb 4:15); that before all ages He was born of the Father according to His divine nature, and in these latter days was born of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, for our sake and for our salvation, according to His human nature; that one and the same Christ, the only-begotten Son our Lord, must be acknowledged as existing in two natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, undividedly, inseparably, with no suppression of the distinction between the natures on account of the union, but rather with the individuality of each nature safeguarded and coming together in one person and subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God the Word, Jesus Christ the Lord.<sup>693</sup>

Christ has two perfect natures, human and divine, each of which exists unconfusedly, unchangeably, undividedly, and inseparably from the other. They are united in the Person of the Word, not in the natures themselves, and so there is nothing contradictory in their union with each other. Each of the natures of Christ, “though in union with the other, performs actions proper to itself: the Word does that which belongs to the Word, and the flesh does that which belongs to the flesh.”<sup>694</sup> Because of the unity of His human nature with His divine nature, Christ in the form of His humanity exists according to a perfection (*perfectio*), or to use a word more often employed by Augustine, an amelioration (*melioratio*),<sup>695</sup> that even the best of fallen humanity do not. Christ was unable to die, unable to sin, unable to abandon the good. Mersch is clear that this *melioratio* of Christ’s human nature, which made it unable to do these things, is primarily the result of the divine action of the Word.<sup>696</sup> If this divine action were to be suspended or

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<sup>693</sup> Denz., 148, quoted from the *Theology of the Mystical Body*, p. 202.

<sup>694</sup> Mersch, 203.

<sup>695</sup> *83 Questions*, PL, 40, 85.

<sup>696</sup> Throughout *The Theology of the Mystical Body*, Mersch will refer to the perfection of Christ in the form of His humanity as an ‘entity of union.’ What we witness in the Incarnation is a union of two natures that is unique and without comparison. The same must therefore be said when it comes to the perfection of Christ. “As the union is a union, so the perfection is an “entity of union,” and we cannot say anything more adequate or basic about it.” Augustine takes the perfection of Christ’s humanity, or indeed the perfection of

withdrawn from the assumed humanity, then so would its perfection. Others such as Msgr. Fulton Sheen will refer to this unity of Christ's human nature with His divine nature as a form of instrumental causality.<sup>697</sup>

To understand how this dependence relation between the assumed humanity and the Word functions, Mersch offers up a comparison. Consider the illumination of the air by the sun. The light is a "property of the air." It is "intrinsic to the air." However, the air is only illuminated when it is in "contact with the sun," or when it is "penetrated by the sun." Suspend or withdraw the light shed by the sun and there is no illumination of the air. According to Mersch, this proves that "the illumination in the air is a sort of diminished continuation and participation of the sun's illumination; it is, so to say, the brilliance of the sun as realized and expressed by the air in its own way."<sup>698</sup> The brilliance of the sun belongs to the air, but only because the sun unceasingly causes it, because the sun communicates its brilliance to the air. Augustine will also use light and

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anything that is created, to be a function of its internal coherence or unity, which is given to it by God (*DGnI*.10.32). Mersch continues that the perfection of Christ in particular has no meaning or possibility "except in expressing in one nature the union with the other nature and in formally causing the first nature to be a united nature." Thus, while the Word may be the primary cause of Christ's human nature to be united with His divine nature, the unity between Christ as man and Christ as God can only be real if they are both related to each other, if they are united in one Person. Mersch claims that, either we can think of this entity of union "in thinking of the union, in believing in the Incarnation, and in envisaging the two natures, or else what we have in mind is not it at all." (Mersch, 215). We may refer to this perfection, or entity of union, as "divinization, grace, fullness of grace," or whatever other way Christian tradition refers to it (Mersch, 221).

<sup>697</sup> Sheen writes that Christ's "human nature is as entire and intact as any human nature; He is as perfectly human as any of us, being man in the truest sense of the term." (28-29). He is such because He is an instrument of His divine Personality, because He is the perfect expression of God in the form of humanity. Sheen views this instrumental relationship between Christ as man and Christ as God not as "an instrument separate from His Person, as a pencil is separate from my hand, but united as my hand is united to my brain." (29). To support his claim, Sheen cites the classic Latin axiom: *Actiones sunt suppositorum*. Actions belong to the person, not to the nature. Applying this axiom to Christ, we must conclude that every action of His human nature belongs to His Person. Since His Person is the Word, the second Person of the blessed Trinity, it follows that "each and every action of His human nature had an infinite value because done by the Person of God" (31). Augustine does appear to place the unity and perfection of Christ's human nature in the Person of the Word, for "anything that is said of the man Christ has reference to the unity of the person of the Only-begotten" (*Enchir*.15.56). See also *Enchir*.10.35.

<sup>698</sup> Mersch, 367.

air to discuss the unity and distinctness of the two natures, God and man, that occurs in the Incarnation. In *Epistle 137*, Augustine observes that “there are some who request an explanation of how God is joined to man so as to become the single person of Christ, as if they themselves could explain something that happens every day, namely how the soul is joined to the body so as to form the single person of a man.” He continues later on:

For as the soul makes use of the body in a single person to form a man, so God makes use of man in a single person to form Christ. In the former person there is a mingling of soul and body; in the latter person there is a mingling of God and man; but the hearer must abstract from the property of material substance by which two liquids are usually so mingled that neither retains its special character, although among such substances light mingled with air remains unchanged. Therefore, the person of man is a mingling of soul and body, but the person of Christ is a mingling of God and man, for, when the Word of God is joined to a soul which has a body, it takes on both the soul and the body at once. The one process happens daily in order to beget men; the other happened once to set men free.

Augustine concludes that we must understand the union of a soul and body to form man, and the union of the divine Logos with a soul and body to form Christ, along the lines of how light is mingled with air, not as we would two liquids that are mingled together in such a way that neither one retains its unique character. Light illuminates the air, so that it, too, shines like the light; but at no point in this illumination process does air stop being air or light stop being light.<sup>699</sup> So, too, when Christ wills the divine will. His will remains His own and God’s will remains His own; and they each remain wholly their own and wholly each other because of their relation to each other.

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<sup>699</sup> Such an idea is mirrored in the Thomistic belief that the intellect in act is the intelligible in act (*intellectus in actu perfectio est intellectum in actu*) (ST I, q. 87, a. 1, ad 3). What this means is that the act of the intellect is the actual intelligible thing that is known, and the actual intelligible thing that is known is the act of the intellect. This results in there being no gap between the knower and the known. For example, when I come to know the Augustinian view of the unity of the two natures of Christ, my intellect, formally speaking, assimilates that knowledge and becomes what it knows. But my intellect remains my intellect and this aspect of Augustine’s Christology remains this aspect of Augustine’s Christology; they each remain distinct, but also become one.

Lest we get any idea that this made Christ the man's contribution insignificant or irrelevant to the Word's taking on of human nature in order to perfect it, we must add that "the divine action has to be received in the human nature, and *quid-quid recipitur, recipitur ad modum recipientis*."<sup>700</sup> That is, the divine action of the Word must be received according to the capacity of Christ's human nature. It follows that with respect to His human nature the unifying process cannot be merely passive, external, or material. Nor can it be one devoid of consent. Quite the contrary: "the human nature [of Christ] had to be intensely active in receiving it, even though this activity itself was received. The reception had to be accomplished in the deepest center, the very root of the nature, and hence had to be brought about in a suitable way, that is, through an act of immanent spontaneity; to lay hold of the human nature as it is, the reception had to take place in that nature's inner source of activity, which is liberty."<sup>701</sup> Liberty is the essential core of human nature, and so the divine action of the Word had to be in consonance with it in taking on the nature. Christ the man had to consent to be one Person with the Word. If there were no such consent, then the union would be "violent" and would not be "human in its term."<sup>702</sup> In *The Theology of the Mystical Body*, Mersch will attempt to clarify this free unity of man with God in the person of Christ in terms of "filiality." For the human nature of Christ to be the human nature of the Son, the perfection bestowed upon it, due to its union with the Son, had to have been "designed to fit it to be the Son's humanity, to equip it to act in a way that is becoming of the Son while yet acting in accordance with its own nature; how could such perfection be other than 'filial?'"<sup>703</sup>

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<sup>700</sup> Mersch, 207.

<sup>701</sup> Mersch, 210.

<sup>702</sup> Mersch, 210.

<sup>703</sup> Mersch 362.

Just as the grace of union is “filial” or fitting to Christ’s human nature, and so cannot destroy the inner core of that nature, i.e., its liberty, so, too, must be the grace of headship. Christ as Head of the Church enjoys true liberty in His carrying out of the role of mediating our sanctification through the power of the Holy Spirit. But if this is so, Mersch adds, Christ must “influence the lives of Christians by a grace that is essentially ‘filial.’”<sup>704</sup> The grace that Christ imparts to Christians exists because of His action, which is an amelioration for us. The perfection it effects in us is “the simple prolongation in Christ’s members of the personal union with God and the Son that is fully realized in the head and that affects the members according to the measure of their union with the head.”<sup>705</sup> Thus, the more united someone is with Christ, the more perfect they are, and so the more free they are; the less united someone is with Christ, the less perfect they are, and so the less free they are. On the eve of His death, Christ prays to the Father that we might enjoy this active, internal, spiritual, and freeing unity: *That they may be one, as we also are.... That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us.... That they may be one, as we also are one: I in them and Though in Me; that they may be made perfect in one.* (Jn 17: 11, 21ff.)

According to Augustine, the grace that Christians possess is a derivation of the grace of headship conferred on Christ through His unity with the Son. Our predestination and adoption as sons of the Most-High, therefore, must be seen in continuity with Christ’s eternal relation of sonship to the Father: “God calls many to be His sons, in order to make them members of His only-begotten, predestined Son.”<sup>706</sup> Mersch believes that

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<sup>704</sup> Mersch, 366.

<sup>705</sup> Mersch, 371.

<sup>706</sup> *De.praed.sanct.*30, 31; see also *De dono.persev.* 24.

what Augustine teaches better than any other theologian is the “living, interior, and, as we should say today, psychological unity that brings Christians and Christ together in a single organism, a single man, a single Christ.”<sup>707</sup> It is this “interior” emphasis of Augustine that allows him to argue that we and Christ constitute a single man.

The *Sermons* and *Commentaries* of Augustine bear this out rather well, as Mersch points out. The following indented passage, as well as the footnotes, are from pages 350-351 of his *Theology of the Mystical Body*:

Since we are He<sup>708</sup> and He is we,<sup>709</sup> and since we belong to Christ<sup>710</sup> and are Christ,<sup>711</sup> we must have His Father as our Father<sup>712</sup> through the action of the same Spirit<sup>713</sup> who has brought about the birth of the Son in our midst. For the incarnation of the Word who is the Son continues on in the mystical body through the Spirit. ‘The Word incarnate is called the nuptials, for in the man who is assumed the Church is joined to God.’<sup>714</sup> ... In this man, the Church also is assumed by the Word.’<sup>715</sup>

The multiple pleas for oneness that Christ makes in his sacerdotal prayer are answered in the mystical body through the grace of the Holy Spirit. The apostles, disciples, and the faithful are capable of being one body, one Church, one life, one mind, one will, but they cannot accomplish this on their own. They need a unifying principle which will make them come together in unity under the Headship of Christ. And they received just such a unifying principle on the day of Pentecost. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, they

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<sup>707</sup> Mersch, 350.

<sup>708</sup> St. Augustine represents Jesus Christ as saying: “I sanctify them in Myself, because they too are I”; *In Ioan.*, CVIII (PL XXXV, 1916), where the thought is repeated three times.

<sup>709</sup> “And we are He”; *Sermo* 133, 8 (PL XXXVIII, 742).

<sup>710</sup> “We pertain to Christ”; *Sermo* 144 (PL XXXVIII, 790). “We ought not to say that we are strangers to Christ, whose members we are, and we ought not to regard ourselves as a different person”; *In Ps.* 54 (PL, XXXVI, 629).

<sup>711</sup> *In Ps.* 26 (PL, XXXVI, 200); *In Ioan.*, XXI (PL, XXXV, 1568).

<sup>712</sup> *In Ioan.*, LXXV (PL, XXXV, 1829).

<sup>713</sup> *Sermo* 71, 28 (PL, XXXVIII, 461).

<sup>714</sup> *Quaestionum Evangeliorum*, Lib. I, 31 (PL XXXV, 1329).

<sup>715</sup> *In Ps.* 4 (PL, XXXVI, 77).

became the founding members of the Church, with Christ as its Head, the Holy Spirit as its soul, and they as its body. Augustine likens this to what the soul is to the body of man: “What the soul is to the body of man, that the Holy Ghost is to the body of Christ, which is the Church.”<sup>716</sup> While the Head of the Church now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and the individual members of the Mystical Body come into being and pass away, “the Church remains one because that which gives it its abiding personality is the Pentacostal Spirit.”<sup>717</sup> The individuality of the members of the Church is not lost because they share in It. Christ makes this clear in the words he spoke the night before He died: *I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more. But you see Me: because I live and you shall live.*<sup>718</sup> *In that day you shall know*

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<sup>716</sup> PL 38, col. 1231.

<sup>717</sup> Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen, *The Mystical Body of Christ*. Sheed and Ward: New York, 1935. P. 121. To explain the unity between Christ and Christians, Sheen will rely on a discussion of the early Church and various theological insights from St. Thomas and St. Augustine. In his characteristic fashion, Sheen will aid his explanation of this theological mystery with helpful analogies to make it more concrete. One in particular stands out and is re-used throughout his book, namely, the analogy of life: “The condition of the early Church can be represented better by the analogy of life. They [i.e., the apostles, disciples, and the faithful] were like the elements in a chemical laboratory, capable of being part of a body, and yet not a body, because lacking a soul. We know up to one hundred percent the chemicals which enter into the constitution of a human body, and yet with all our superior knowledge of chemistry, we cannot make a body in our laboratories. Why? Because we lack the power to give a unifying principle or a soul to those chemicals which will make them mutually coalesce into that new emergent which we call life. (107-108).

<sup>718</sup> In his *Commentaries on the Gospel of John, Tractate 75*, Augustine will describe this unity of us in Christ and Christ in us as a kind of sonship through adoption by grace, as the relation between the bride and the bridegroom (Mt 9:15), and even in terms of the Lord’s own words: “I am the vine, you are the branches.” Regardless of how one wishes to conceive of it, this unity gives us life eternal, makes us who we truly are, and allows us to be wholly free. Commenting on the Lord’s words, “Because I live you shall live also,” Augustine thinks that this points to the need for redemption from original sin that has, whether for good or ill, been seen as the cornerstone of his theological anthropology. Just as in Adam we can say that all men have died, so, too, in Christ we can say all will be made alive (1 Cor 15:21-22). The Lord’s words also, however, point to the need for our co-operation in the process of redemption, one that continues up till today in the action of the Church. More specifically, Augustine thinks that we must choose to die to ourselves. Die to the old man, and put on the new, who is possessed by the Spirit (Rom 13: 14; Col. 3:12-13): “Because we did not live, we are dead; because He lived, we shall live also. We were dead to Him when we lived to ourselves; but, because He died on our behalf, He lives both for Himself and for us.” (75.3). Augustine is very clear that our complete redemption is not yet at hand—the image of God in us has not been fully restored. We still walk by faith and not by sight. We still do not “know” how Christ is in His Father, and us in Christ, and Christ in us. We will only know this unity as it is meant to be known on the day on which we shall live, “for then shall be completed that very state which is already in the present begun by Him, that He should be in us, and we in Him.” (75.4). Msgr. Fulton Sheen describes this dying to ourselves in a Christocentric way: “The redemption of Christ’s Mystical Body can become complete only

*that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.* (Jn 14: 18-20). Christ did not say I am My Father, you are Me, and I am you. He keeps distinct all of the parts of the Mystical Body by saying *I am in My Father, and you in Me and I in you.*

We and Christ constitute a single man, because we are all possessed by the same Pentacostal Spirit, but we and Christ are different, because we all possess different functions in the single man that constitutes the ‘whole Christ’: “That one man is assumed, whose head is Christ ... he is the one assumed. He is not outside us; we are in His members.... Let us abide in Him and be assumed; let us abide in Him and be the elect.”<sup>719</sup> Here we have Augustine explicitly making a connection between the doctrine of the mystical body and the doctrine of election. If we abide in Christ, if we become one of His members, if we are assumed by Him, then we are elect. If we do not abide in Christ, if we do not become one of His members, if we are not assumed by Him, then we are not elect. The words of Jesus come to mind: *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me* (Jn 14:6). To be elect, or what means the same thing, to come to the Father, we must be sons of God in Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit. With this said, our sonship is different from that of Christ. We may be called sons of God, “but He is God’s Son in a different sense.... He is the only Son, we are many. He is one, we are one in Him. He is born, we are adopted. He is the Son by nature, begotten from eternity; we are made sons by grace in time.”<sup>720</sup> While there is a difference, there is

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as we, through the influence of his grace, reproduce His own life in ours.... Christianity reveals that we are called in some way to prolong His Life, Death, and Resurrection in our lives, because of our solidarity with Him.” (298-299). We know what to do then, but how can we successfully accomplish this re-living of Christ’s Life, Death, and Resurrection? In a word: obedience. We must exercise humble obedience to what the Father in heaven wills for us, namely, to restore the image and likeness of God in us. To achieve this lofty goal, one that Christ did in the form of his humanity, we too must be willing to be “obedient unto death, even to death of the Cross.” (Phil 2:8).

<sup>719</sup> *In Ps.* 64, 7.

<sup>720</sup> *In Ps.* 88, 7.

also a close-knit unity, for our sonship by grace and His Sonship by nature become one in Christ. It is in Him, “redeemed as we are by His blood and washed clean by Him, [that] we are sons and are the Son; for though we are many, we are one in Him.”<sup>721</sup> We are “members of the only-begotten Son of God.”<sup>722</sup>

Because of how strong our unity is with Christ, Augustine will tell us that for God to love the Son completely, He must love His adopted sons along with Christ. God cannot love the Son and not love us.<sup>723</sup> In a similar way, if we are to love God the Father and God the Son with all of our heart, soul, and mind, then we must love the other members of the Body of Christ that make up the *totus Christus*. Love of God and love of neighbor cannot be separated from each other:

For God’s sons are the body of God’s only-begotten Son; and since He is the head and we are the members, the Son of God is one. Therefore he who loves the sons of God, loves the Son of God; and he who loves the Son of God loves the Father. Nor can anyone love the Father unless he loves the Son; and whoever loves the Son, loves also the sons of God. Which sons of God? The members of the Son of God.<sup>724</sup>

Augustine will insist that when we love our brothers and sisters, who are members of the Body of Christ, we must love Christ Himself, who is the Head of that Body; and when we love Christ, we love the Son of God, for Christ is the Word; and so when we love the Son of God, we cannot help but love the Father, whose Word He is. Love does not admit of divisions:

Choose the object of your love; the rest will follow. Perhaps you say: I love God alone, God the Father. You are wrong; if you really love, you do not love the Father alone; no, if you love the Father, you also love the Son. Very well, you may reply, I love the Father and I love the Son. But I love only God the Father and God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ who ascended into heaven and sits at the

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<sup>721</sup> *In Ps.* 123.

<sup>722</sup> *In Ioan.*, CX, CXI.

<sup>723</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>724</sup> *In epist. ad Parthos*, X; PL XXXV, 2055.

right hand of the Father, the Word by whom all things were made, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us; I love no one else. You err; for if you love Him, the head, you also love the members; and if you do not love the members, you do not love the head either. Let no one bring in a distinction between love and love, for love is of this nature: as it is a joining together in one, it makes one and, as it were, fuses together everything embraced by it. Take some gold, melt the whole mass, and a single ingot comes forth.<sup>725</sup>

It is when our love of God and neighbor is total, complete, and undivided that we can properly say we are of one spirit with Christ. For this kind of love joins us together and makes us one with Him and each other in such a way that there is one mystical person, the whole Christ. Since we are one person with Christ, we share in His predestination: *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren* (Rom 8:29).

Yet not all are one person with Christ, and so they do not share in His predestination. To become conformed to His image, so that we are one person with Him, we must fight. More specifically, we must fight the desires of the flesh. Hence Augustine will characterize Christian life as a combat.<sup>726</sup> In the *Christian Combat* (397), Augustine will say that anything that we do to combat the desires of the flesh, or concupiscence (*cupiditas*), is an imitation of Christ.

Near the beginning of this work, Augustine will contrast the mediation to life provided by Christ and the mediation to death provided by the devil. By a good life of virtue, humility, and godliness we become one with Christ. We become ‘like’ Him. On the other hand, “so by a bad life of wickedness, pride, and ungodliness do we become ourselves one with the devil. That is to say, we become like the devil and, just as our

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<sup>725</sup> Ibid.

<sup>726</sup> This was a common idea in early Christian writing, which can be traced back mainly to the language found in St. Paul’s second letter to Timothy. See for example, 2 Tim 4:7.

body is subject to us, so we are made subject to him.”<sup>727</sup> To avoid this subjection to the devil, or perhaps better, slavery, we must fight against the desires of the flesh that would lead us away from God. Augustine will cite the Apostle as saying in this connection: *I so fight as not beating the air; but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps after preaching to others, I myself should be found rejected* (Eph 2:2). The chastisement of the body the Apostle speaks of is merely an imitation of Christ. Hence why he recommends us to imitate him as he is an imitator of Christ: *Be imitators of me as I am of Christ* (Phil 3:20).

Augustine anticipates that some will now ask how we are to keep our flesh in check, and whether or not this is a free choice of the will:

Lest anyone pose the very question of how we are to bring our body into subjection, I reply that it is easy to understand and do, provided we are already living in subjection to God by a good will and unfeigned charity; for every creature, willingly or unwillingly (*velit nolit*), has been made subject to its one God and Lord. This is a reminder to serve our Lord God with an undivided will (*tota voluntate*). The just man serves Him in a spirit of freedom (*liberaliter*), but the unjust man serves him like a shackled slave (*compeditus servit*). Yet, all are subject to divine Providence. Some conform with filial obedience and cooperate with (*faciunt cum*) Providence in the performance of good, while the rest are cast into chains, like slaves, being dealt with according to their merits.<sup>728</sup>

Augustine believes Christ in the form of his humanity to be the best example of a person who kept the flesh in check, who lived in subjection to God with a good will and unfeigned charity, who served God with an undivided will and a spirit of liberty, and who *conformed* himself to God with filial obedience. All of this is made clear in the sacred

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<sup>727</sup> 2.2.

<sup>728</sup> *DaC* 7.7. The full Latin text for this passage can be found in PL 40 and is reproduced here: Sed ne quis forte hoc ipsum quaerat, quomodo fiat ut corpus nostrum servituti subjiciamus; facile intelligi et fieri potest, si prius nos ipsos subjiciamus Deo, bona voluntate et sincera charitate. Nam omnis creatura, velit nolit, uni Deo et Domino suo subjecta est. Sed hoc admonemur, ut tota voluntate serviamus Domino Deo nostro. Quoniam justus liberaliter servit, injustus autem compeditus servit. Omnes tamen divinae providentiae serviunt: sed alii obediunt tanquam filii, et faciunt cum ea quod bonum est; alii vero ligantur tanquam servi, et fit de illis quod justum est.

Scriptures, which “testify concerning His Son who, in the words of the Apostle,” *was born of to Him according to the flesh of the offspring of David* (Rom 1:3).<sup>729</sup> Any suggestion that the Son did not assume our human nature must be condemned. For Augustine, “He assumed a complete human nature, joining Himself to man’s intellectual nature through the soul, and, through the soul, uniting Himself to the body.”<sup>730</sup> Because he assumed a complete human nature, Christ also had to combat the flesh.

Yet Christ totally and completely obeyed the will of the Father, and He did so with a decisive spontaneity, evidenced in the command He gives us to follow: *Let your speech be, “yes, yes;” “no, no.”* (Matt 5: 37). The Apostle speaks of this also: *There was not in Him now “yes” and now “no,” but only “yes” was in Him* (2 Cor 1:19).<sup>731</sup> The decisiveness of Christ’s human will is a result of being the Father’s Word: “What is the Father’s doctrine, if not the Father’s word? Therefore Christ Himself is the Father’s doctrine, if He is the Father’s Word. But the Word cannot be the Word of no one, but has

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<sup>729</sup> 10.11.

<sup>730</sup> 18.20. Augustine held that the human nature assumed by the Word for His earthly mission had a human intellect and human will. To say otherwise is the same as saying “He was not a man.” (19.21). There is ample evidence that Augustine maintained this view throughout his earlier and later theological career. For example, in *de fide et symbolo* (393), Augustine tells us that the Son took upon Himself a “complete human nature, namely, body, soul, and spirit ... [and that] we should be on our guard against any notion that any particular component of our nature had no share in the assumed nature and its unrelated to our salvation.” (4.8). In the *Enchiridion* (ca. 421), Augustine will claim that it is wrong to say “that any part was lacking in that human nature He put on, except that it was a human nature altogether free from any bond of sin.” (10.34).

<sup>731</sup> One of the better philosophical-theological explanations of why Christ’s will is so decisive is given by Emile Mersch, who believes its decisiveness is due to its “totality.” According to Mersch, when Christ is willed, “He is willed in his entirety, by a decree that is one even in its term, because in Christ it forms the unity of this term.” Everything that exists thus has its proper place and right order in the decree that willed Christ. Because Christ was willed by a total and unified will—the will of the three persons—He is totality and unity. It follows that “those who are Christ’s members are willed by the prolongation of Him and insertion into Him,” into the unity that He is. This is a unity grounded in love, not only in the love that God has for mankind, but also the love that we have for God and neighbor. Indeed, the “will that wills Christ, who is totality, may be conceived as a total will which includes all the special decrees that affect each man and cause each man to save himself.” (Mersch, 278). It is this totality of will, its unity, its undividedness, its total goodness, that lead to the decisive spontaneity of Christ to always say “yes” to good and “no” to evil. When we will the will of Christ, we, too, are able to let our “yes” mean “yes” and our “no” mean “no.”

to be the Word of someone, and the doctrine that He announced is Himself and not just His, because He is the Word of the Father. What is so much yours as you? And what is so little yours as you yourself, if what you are belongs to another?”<sup>732</sup> We may now want to ask: Can this filial obedience of Christ, testified to in the sacred Scriptures, instantly willing to do the will of the Father, allow for His free co-operation with the Father? Could He have ever said ‘no’ to the Father, or would such an ability to say ‘no’ even matter to His liberty?<sup>733</sup> What about in our case as Christians? Can our total and complete obedience to the divine will allow for our free cooperation? Augustine will answer as we saw him answer in his *Sermons* and works sent to the semi-Pelagians: “Man would not be

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<sup>732</sup> *In Ioan.* 29.

<sup>733</sup> In relation to these questions concerning Christ’s inability to sin, inability to die, and inability to abandon the good, we can ask another: If Christ only ever in fact said ‘yes’ to the will of the Father, then what would Augustine make of the temptations of Christ after His baptism detailed in Mk 1:12, 13; Mt 4: 1-11; and Lk 4: 1-13? Were they not really temptations because Christ could not have succumbed to them? Perhaps the pericope in the Gospel of Matthew, according to which Jesus asks the Father three times to be delivered from the cup of His passion (Mt 26: 39, 42, 44), gives us the best means to reflect on these kinds of questions in Augustine and come up with a plausible answer. For Augustine, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus could in a sense be said to have “wished for something other than what the Father willed” (*Contra Maximinum* 2.20; PL 42). But elsewhere in his *Commentaries on the Psalms* he will go on to explain what exactly this means and how this does not jeopardize the sinless liberty of Christ, but rather illustrates the weakness of the members of His ecclesial Body: “How did our Lord marry two wills so that they became one in the humanity he bore? In his body, the Church, there would be some people who, after wanting to do their own will, would later follow the will of God. The Lord prefigured these people in himself. He wanted to show that though they are weak, they still belong to him, and so he represented them in advance in his own person. He sweated blood from his whole body, as a sign that the blood of martyrs would gush from his body, the Church.... He revealed the human will that was in him, but if he had continued to insist on that will, he would have seemed to display perversity of heart. If you recognize that he has had compassion on you, and is setting you free in himself, imitate the next prayer he made: *Yet not what I will, but what you will be done, Father* (Mt 26:39). (*En.in Ps.*93.19; CCSL 39.1319). It is important to add, however, that Christ is the Head of this Body, and so Augustine will continue that: “[Jesus] took on sadness this way as he took on flesh. He was sorrowful, as the Evangelist says. If he was not sorrowful when the Evangelist says, ‘My soul is sorrowful, etc.’, then too when he says, ‘Jesus slept,’ he did not sleep; or when he says, ‘he ate,’ he did not eat; and therefore nothing sensible will remain, so that it could even be said that his body was not real. Whatever is written about him, therefore, is true and happened. Therefore he was also sorrowful, but he assumed true sorrow willingly, as he assumed true flesh” (Ibid). Augustine would thus unequivocally defend all of the natural ‘aspects’ of Christ’s humanity (e.g., His hunger, faith, desire to make persons righteous, fear of death, etc.), and they are no less ‘real’ for Him because He did not insist upon them and thereby go against the will of the Father. For an excellent comparison of Augustine with other patristic writers on how to specifically interpret Jesus’ actions in Gethsemane, see “Ancient and High-Medieval Interpretations of Jesus in Gethsemane: Some Reflections on Tradition and Continuity in Christian Thought,” by Kevin Madigan. *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (1995), pp. 157-173.

perfect if he were to obey God's commandments out of necessity, and not by his free will. This is a very simple matter, as far as I can see."<sup>734</sup>

As in *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine will state that the spiritual environment in which we exercise our freedom is the Church, made up of the Head and the Body. The unity holding the Church together is twofold, in that the Body of the Church is one in nature, and the Spirit of both Head and Body is the one Spirit of Christ. Augustine writes in this connection:

For, though the Body of the Church is one in nature, anyone can discern what a great difference there is between the Head and the other members. If that Man is the Head of the Church, by whose assumption 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,' the other members are all the saints by whom the Church is made perfect and entire. Now, the soul gives life to and quickens our whole body, but, in the region of the head, the soul perceives sensations of life, sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch, but in the other members, only the sensation of touch. And on this account, in carrying out their functions (*operandum*), all the members are subject to the head. But, the head occupies a higher position in order to take counsel (*consulendum*), since, to a certain extent, it plays the role of the soul itself, which takes counsel (*consulit*) for the body; for all the senses are to be found in the head.<sup>735</sup>

Here, then, we receive another psychological analogy for understanding the unity present in the Church. The soul in relation to the head perceives the sensations of life, sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch, whereas the soul in relation to the other parts of the body only perceives the sensation of touch. Since all the senses are to be found in the head, it occupies a higher position than the body and takes counsel for it. So too in the Church as *totus Christus*: All goods for Christians can be found in Christ, the Mediator between

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<sup>734</sup> 10.11. Not only does our freedom come from our wills, but also from God's omnipotence itself. In chapter 2 of this dissertation, we saw Augustine argue for the omnipotence of God in a way that requires the nature of our wills as free to be respected. The argument he gave centered on the fact that 'God cannot contradict his own will.' And since God created the will of man to be free, it follows that He cannot now override that freedom through His grace. In short, grace cannot contradict nature. The same basic argument is repeated elsewhere in Augustine's corpus. See for example, *Enchir.*24.95 and *Symb.*, 1.2.

<sup>735</sup> 20.22.

God and man. All the cognitive and conative resources needed for right-living are in Christ, who not only “enjoys the benefit of Wisdom Itself, by which all men are made wise, but also is the very personification of Wisdom.”<sup>736</sup> We as Christians do not possess these goods by ourselves as if they were our private possessions. We possess them in common with each other, together with Christ.<sup>737</sup> Christ is the Wisdom and Power of God (1 Cor 1:24), but He is also our wisdom and power as acting members of the Church, carrying out our different functions (*operandum*). Because Augustine views the wisdom and power of Christ to be uniquely ours as members and uniquely His as Head, any implication that the Body of Christ just passively reflects His wisdom and power *a la* Protestantism must be avoided.<sup>738</sup>

Augustine will systematize many of the insights we have gleaned about Christ and Christian liberty in his *On Faith, Hope, and Charity* or *Enchiridion* (ca. 421).<sup>739</sup> It is clear

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<sup>736</sup> 20.22.

<sup>737</sup> For a similar discussion of the unity of the Body of Christ in Augustine, see pages 56-57 of this dissertation.

<sup>738</sup> As is well-known, Protestants hold that the justification of Christians is a kind of “juridical imputation” and “legal fiction.” That is, when God looks upon the members of the Church, He sees “nothing in them but the justice of Christ” (Mersch, 158), and He regards this justice as if it were their own. Luther will preach this message of Christian passivity in the face of the justice of Christ in many of his sermons. See for example, *Sermo de duplici iustitia*, 1519, in *Werke* (Weimar, 1884), II, 146: “By faith in Christ the justice of Christ becomes our justice, and all that is His and He himself becomes ours.... He who believes in Christ, cleaves to Christ and is one with Christ, having the same justice as He.” See also *In epistolam ad Galatas commentarius*, 1535 (ibid, XL, I, 197): “Therefore we are not said to be formally holy, as a wall is said to be white because of its inherent whiteness. Inherent holiness is not enough. Hence Christ is our whole sanctity.” And finally, see *Tischreden*, 2933 (Weimar, 1914), III, 96: “We wish to remain in the justice that is in the category of relation and not of quality, that God may regard us as pious and righteous; we cannot regard ourselves as such.” *Enarratio psalmi* LI, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar, 1914) XL, 2, p. 324. Luther will not assign a meaningful role to Christians in the working out of their own salvation, because he thinks they are, in the deepest recesses of their souls, sinners who can do nothing to alter their situation. Following Luther and Calvin, Protestants take original sin to have completely corrupted human nature. Or as Luther says, “natural things [including human beings] are wholly corrupt in the sight of God.” *Enarratio psalmi* LI, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar, 1914) XL, 2, p. 324.

<sup>739</sup> Translated by Bernard M. Peebles, who writes of this work: “it is his only systematic treatment of the Church’s doctrine as a whole, and, coming late in his career as a bishop, shows that fulness of understanding and precision of analysis which his long years of pastoral care and active combat against heresies had produced in him. It is no wonder, then, that the *Enchiridion* has been drawn upon heavily as a synthesis of Augustinian teaching from the days of Peter Lombard (if not before) to our own times” (359-

from his *Retractions* that Augustine had a high opinion of this late work: “In this, in my opinion, I have adequately covered how God is to be worshipped, a worship which Divine Scripture defines as man’s true wisdom.”<sup>740</sup> Augustine calls for no emendations or additions to be made to it. Though originally meant to be a short handbook on the faith and the creed, the *Enchiridion* became quite long and contains Augustine’s definitive definition of Christian liberty. Chapters 8-14 of the *Enchiridion* discuss the liberty of man in terms of obedience to the divine will (which Augustine thinks is how God ought to be worshipped and man’s true wisdom), an obedience necessary to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, to be a member of the *totus Christus*.

At the beginning of Chapter 8, Augustine ventures “to learn what are the causes of good and evil, so much of them, at least, as is required for the path which leads us to the kingdom where there will be life without death, truth without error, happiness without sorrow.”<sup>741</sup> In other words, he aims to discuss the causes of good and evil as they pertain to rational, free action. We learn that the cause of all good things is the goodness of God, whereas the cause of evil things can be traced to the “desertion from the unchangeable good on the part of the will of the changeable good (*boni mutabilis voluntatem*), first in the case of the angels and then in that of man.”<sup>742</sup> It is from the *voluntas* of men and angels that comes all the evil of the rational nature, which includes “ignorance of duty,” “lust after harmful things,” “error,” “pain,” “fear,” and “unwholesome delectation.”<sup>743</sup>

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360). In *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, Volume 27, Robert P. Russell O.S.A. agrees with Peebles and notes that “Augustine’s most complete and systematic handling of the subject of faith and the Creed is to be found in his *Enchiridion*, or *Handbook, On Faith, Hope, and Charity*” (312). There is a continuity in his views in *De fide et symbolo* (393) and the *Enchiridion* (ca. 421), though these works are separated by almost thirty years (Russell, 313).

<sup>740</sup> *Retractions* II.89.

<sup>741</sup> 8.23.

<sup>742</sup> 8.23.

<sup>743</sup> 8.24.

Augustine will later describe the sin of angelic and human creation as it not doing what God willed, “but what it willed.”<sup>744</sup> However, in the case of man in particular, he was also punished by the death of the body. We this in the Book of Genesis in the fall of Adam and Eve. God gave Adam fair warning of this punishment should he disobey His command (Gn 2:17 and 3:19). God also endowed Adam with “free will (*libero arbitrio*).” Yet He put Adam “under obedience and pain of death,” placing him in this paradisaal state, “as if giving him a foreshadowing of life to come.”<sup>745</sup> According to Augustine, “God would have been willing to maintain even the first man in that state of salvation in which he had been placed and, at a fitting time, after the generation of children, to lead him, without intervention of death, to a better state, where not only would he have been unable to sin but even to have the wish of sin.”<sup>746</sup> Of course, Adam did not obey the command of God, and so he did not rise to a better life. Oh unhappy fall! Augustine thinks that this desertion of God by Adam represents the nature of man misusing its power to reject and disobey the “command of its Creator (*praeceptum sui Creatoris*), which it might have easily heeded, which had profaned the image (*imaginem*) of the Creator that was within it by insolently turning away from His light.”<sup>747</sup> How was this rejection, disobedience, profaning, and insolent turning away on the part of man accomplished? Augustine answers that it was through a misuse of his *libero arbitrio*.

In Chapter 9, Augustine will continue to discuss the misuse of human free will, as well as its proper use in terms of the person of Christ. When man misuses his free will,

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<sup>744</sup> 26.100.

<sup>745</sup> 8.25.

<sup>746</sup> “*Quapropter etiam primum hominem Deus in ea salute in qua conditus erat, custodire voluisset, eumque opportuno tempore post genitos filios sine interpositione mortis ad meliora perducere, ubi jam non solum peccatum non committere, sed nec voluntatem posset habere peccandi*” (28.104).

<sup>747</sup> 8.27.

this results in a kind of death (*perdidit*) for himself and it. Or as Augustine will say: “*nam libero arbitrio male utens homo, et se perdidit et ipsum.*”<sup>748</sup> He compares this kind of death with a man who freely chooses to commit suicide. If a man kills himself, he must have been alive to do so. But now that he is no longer alive, he cannot restore himself back to life. So, too, when it comes to a man who has sinned through an evil use of his *libero arbitrio*: “sin is victorious and his free will is lost (*victore peccato amissum est liberum arbitriu*).”<sup>749</sup> When Augustine says free will is “lost” (*amissum*), he does not mean “totally destroyed,” “incapable of being repaired,” or “gone forever.” He clarifies immediately by saying “lost” in the sense being “enslaved” to sin. Augustine will quote St. Peter in this connection: *for by whatever a man is overcome, of this also he is the slave* (2 Pt 2:19). It follows that if man is overcome by sin, he is the slave of sin.

Augustine reasons that, since what St. Peter says is

... surely true, what liberty, I ask, can a slave have except when it pleases him to sin. For that service is liberty which freely does the will of the master. Accordingly, he is free to sin who is the servant of sin. Wherefore, no one is free to do right who has not been freed from sin and begins to be the servant of justice. And such is true liberty because he has the joy of right-doing, and at the same time dutiful servitude because he obeys the precept. But, for the man sold into the bondage of sin, where will that freedom of right-doing come from unless he be redeemed by Him who said: *If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed?* (Jn 8:36).<sup>750</sup>

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<sup>748</sup> 9.30.

<sup>749</sup> 9.30.

<sup>750</sup> 9.30: *quae cum vera sit, qualis, quaeso, potest servi addicti esse libertas, nisi quando eum peccare delectat? Liberaliter enim servit, qui sui domini voluntatem libenter facit. Ac per hoc ad peccandum liber est, qui peccati servus est. Unde ad juste faciendum liber non erit, nisi a peccato liberatus esse justitiae coeperit servus. Ipsa est vera libertas propter recti facti laetitiam, simul et pia servitus propter praecepti obedientiam. Sed ad bene faciendum ista libertas unde erit homini addicto et vendito, nisi redimat cujus illa vox est, “Si vos Filius liberaverit, tunc vere liberi eritis?”*

We have already witnessed Augustine say that being pleased to sin, or misusing free will, leads to an unwholesome delectation. True liberty cannot consist in this disordered desire. It is servitude to the wrong master, and so results in a loss of our free will.

There are five components to the Augustinian definition of true liberty given in the above passage. Augustine is quite clear that 1) *that* service is liberty *qui sui domini voluntatem libenter facit*. It is a service that requires us to 2) *esse iustitiae coeperit servus*. It involves 3) *recti facti laetitiam*, but at the same time 4) *pia servitus propter praecepti obedientiam*.<sup>751</sup> Finally, true liberty for man is only possible because of 5) the redemptive activity of the Son. It is this last component that Augustine emphasizes above the others, for if the Son's redemptive activity does not join itself to the free will of man, he is not able to do what is right.<sup>752</sup> As Christ says, *I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:5). Augustine thinks that the importance of (5) can also be found in the writings of St. Paul. For example, Eph 2:8-10, where Paul mentions the importance of Christ for understanding how we are able to perform good works: *For his workmanship we are created in Christ Jesus in good works, which God has made ready beforehand that we may walk in them (Ipsius enim sumus figmentum creati in Christo Jesu in operibus bonis, quae praeparavit Deus, ut in illis ambulemus)*. Augustine takes this to mean that we will only be "truly free" (*vere liberi*) when God "forms and creates (*format et creat*) us, not as men (*homines*)—for that He has already done—but to be good men

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<sup>751</sup> The joining of (3) and (4) together are important, because mere obedience to the law is not sufficient for salvation. According to Augustine, we must take joy in or love following God's commandment, for although it "appears sometimes to be kept by those who do not love Him, but only fear Him; yet where there is no love, no good work is imputed, nor is there any good work, rightly so called; because *whatsoever is not of faith is sin* (Rom 14: 23), and *faith worketh by love* (Gal 5:6)." (*On The Grace of Christ*, 27).

<sup>752</sup> 9.30.

(*boni homines*), which He now accomplishes by His grace.” The re-formation and re-creation of men into good men, or this ‘amelioration’ (*melioratio*) of human beings, takes places “in Christ Jesus” (*in Christo Jesu*), where we shall become a “new creature” (*nova creatura*).<sup>753</sup> Augustine does not mean a “new creature” in the sense of fundamentally changing our human nature into some other superior nature, angelic or otherwise, but rather according to the words of the Apostle: *Create a clean heart in me, O God* (2 Cor 5:17; Ps 51:10).<sup>754</sup>

We encounter a similar position in the Old Testament. In the Book of Proverbs, it is written: *The Lord created me in the beginning of his ways* (Prov. 8:22).<sup>755</sup> Augustine interprets the phrase ‘in the beginning of his ways’ as meaning the Head of the Church, Christ, “in His assumed human nature.”<sup>756</sup> It is Christ in the form of His humanity that we have an example of a “pattern of life,” or a “sure path by which we may come to God.”<sup>757</sup> Christ’s pattern of life, which is the path by which we may come to God requires the virtue of humility, one which pre-eminently shines forth in the temporal mission of Christ. The Word “deigned to exemplify in His own Person that humility which is the path over which we have to travel on our return [to God]; for *he did not think it robbery to be equal to God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave* (Phil.2: 6-7).”<sup>758</sup> In

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<sup>753</sup> 9.31. St. Paul will say that this is a kind of second creation (cf. Gal 6:14; Eph 2:8ff.; Rom 8:18-23 and 12:2), one which is as gratuitous as our creation from nothing, but even more glorious (cf. 2 Cor 4:6 and 5:17ff.). See also Mersch, 273.

<sup>754</sup> Augustine views the heart to be the “true temple of God” in us. (*de.fide.et.symb.7.14*). Undergoing an amelioration of the heart, no matter how great it may be, does not constitute a change in nature. Even Christ, who was perfectly man, did not stop being a man because of the perfection of His humanity. Christ’s human nature was not somehow changed into His divine nature. Instead, the perfection He received made Him ‘man’ in the fullest sense of the term.

<sup>755</sup> The Vulgate substitutes “possessed” (*possedit*) for “created” (*creavit*).

<sup>756</sup> *de.fide.et.symb.4.6*.

<sup>757</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>758</sup> *Ibid.*

line with the main theme of the Book of Proverbs and the entire Old Testament, i.e., attaining wisdom by humbly obeying the will of God,<sup>759</sup> Augustine will cite the next verse of Paul’s Letter to the Philippians (Phil.2: 8): *He Humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross*. Both the Old and the New Testaments teach us that wisdom requires humility, humility requires obedience, and obedience leads to death, but also life everlasting.

As in his earlier doctrinal works outlining the correct Christian faith, Augustine will note that, “if a man has attained the age of reason, he cannot believe (*credere*), hope (*sperare*), or love (*diligere*) unless he wills (*nisi velit*), nor attain to the prize of God’s heavenly call (Phil 3:14) unless he runs voluntarily (*nisi voluntate cucurrerit*).”<sup>760</sup> How, though, can we reconcile this affirmation of the importance of the will with the claim that *there is question not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God showing mercy* (Rom 9:16)? Augustine answers that this just points to the need for *both* the will of man *and* God showing mercy, though the latter takes primacy over the former: “The will of man alone is not enough, if the mercy of God be not also present—then neither is the mercy of God alone enough, if the will of man be not also present.”<sup>761</sup> The dynamic relation between the mercy of God and the will of man Augustine mentions here remains perfectly consistent with his doctrinal teachings on sin and grace (chapter 2 of this

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<sup>759</sup> Augustine will also characterize the obedience mentioned in the Old Testament in terms of fear of the Lord and goes so far as to say that this obedience constitutes the real existence of any person. Augustine approvingly quotes the Book of Ecclesiastes in this regard: *Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is every man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every despised person, whether it be good, or whether it be evil* (Eccl 12, 13:14). Augustine writes of this quotation, “What truer, terser, more salutary enunciation could be made? *Fear God*, he says, *and keep his commandments: for this is every man*. For whosoever has real existence, is this, is a keeper of God’s commandments, and he who is not this, is nothing.” (*City of God* 20.3). See also *83 Questions*, 71.1.

<sup>760</sup> 9.32.

<sup>761</sup> 9.32.

dissertation) and his preaching on human freedom (chapter 3 of this dissertation). We must freely co-operate with God's grace—or 'consent' to it—for it to be effectual in our lives. Augustine believes that God's offer to give grace, which is an offer he extends to the whole of humanity, does not have a positive effect on an individual until it has been given. But for it to be given, it must be received; and for it to be truly received, it must be willingly accepted. I have previously shown that Augustine's conception of this co-operation between the gift-giver (God) and gift-receiver (man) is philosophically-theologically the same as the Eastern Orthodox tradition's notion of *sunergia*.<sup>762</sup>

The will of man alone fails to accomplish (*non implet*) the good,<sup>763</sup> but since God's mercy alone accomplishes all good whatsoever, His will remains primary. When it comes to our good works, we ought to "ascribe all to God, who both makes the good will of man ready to be helped (*adjuvandam*) and helps (*adjuvat*) it when it has been made ready."<sup>764</sup> But it must be emphasized again that it is only with his 'consent' that God 'makes the good will of man ready to be helped and helps it when it has been made ready' *in* Christ Jesus, whose workmanship we men are, and in whose good works, understood broadly in terms of His life, death, and resurrection, we must walk (*ambulemus*) to be made good men (*boni homines*). Our calling as Christians therefore is to be like Christ, to in a sense re-live His life, death, and resurrection.

We can only fulfill this calling with the help of God, and "this is by the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (*haec est gratia Dei per Jesum Christum Dominum*

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<sup>762</sup> See footnote 72 of this dissertation, where I show the results of my lexical study comparing the meaning of *cooperatio* in Augustine with *sunergia* in the Cappadocians. There I find that the meaning of these two terms and their respective philosophical-theological uses to which they are purposed are, for all practical purposes, identical.

<sup>763</sup> Recall Augustine makes the same distinction between 'not consenting to bad desires' and 'accomplishing the good.' See chapter 3 of this dissertation.

<sup>764</sup> 9.32.

*nostrum*).<sup>765</sup> It is by this grace that we become like Christ. It is how we become sons of God (Rom 8:14). As we saw in chapter 1 of this dissertation, Augustine thinks it is in the person of Christ that “we have the grace of God shown forth in a manner altogether sublime and clear. What had the human nature in the man of Christ deserved that it should be taken up, in a fashion without parallel, into the unity of the person of the only of God? What good will, whose firm and good intention, what good works had gone before to make that man worthy to become one person with God?”<sup>766</sup> The answer to both questions is none whatsoever. Grace does not depend on merits. Even for the Son of man grace retains its gratuitous or freely-given quality, and it is this grace “which enabled the man Christ to be free from the possibility of sin (*per quam factum est ut homo Christus nullum habere posset peccatum*).”<sup>767</sup> Augustine will insist that it is the person of Christ that fully reveals the reality of the freely-given grace of God as it relates to human nature, “for he took up (*assumptus*) humanity in such a way that it was transformed for the better (*melius*), and it was filled out (*formaretur*) by him in a manner ... [that is] inexpressibly excellent (*ineffabiliter excellentius*).”<sup>768</sup> We can see this in the plan by which Christ was born of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary:

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<sup>765</sup> 10.33.

<sup>766</sup> 11.36.

<sup>767</sup> 11.36.

<sup>768</sup> 83 *Questions*, 73.2. Augustine is careful to say that this assumption of humanity by the Son is according to “habit” (*habitus*), but in a very particular sense of this term, so as not to imply any changes in the actual natures of man or God. He defines the sense of habit he is using as that “the very things added [to other things] are changed in order to produce a habit and are in some way shaped by the things for which they produce the habit.” Augustine gives clothing as an example. When it is laid out or thrown on the ground, it does not have the form which it has when it is pulled over the head, arms, torso, legs, and other members of the body. But when it is put on, “it receives a shape which it did not have while off, although the members themselves, with the clothes on or off, remain in the same state.” (83 *Questions*, 73.1). For Augustine, the Son was “clothed with a humanity” by somehow “uniting” (*uniens*) and “adapting” (*conformans*) it to His divinity (83 *Questions*, 73.2). In other words, the Son assumed humanity in such a way as to “fill it out,” “better it,” “complete it,” but not in such a way as to make it in something that it is not—whether that be some superior intellectual nature or God Himself. God and man are one Person in Christ, Who is perfectly God and perfectly man.

Since, then, a thing may be born of something, yet in such a way as not to be its son, and, again, since not everyone who is called son is born of him whose son he is said to be, surely the plan by which Christ was born of the Holy Spirit, but not as son, and of the Virgin, yet as son, manifests to us the grace of God. For it was by this grace that a man, without any antecedent merits, in the very inception of his existence, was so united in one person to God the Word that the very same person was the Son of God who was Son of man, and the very same person was Son of man who was Son of God. Thus, in the taking on of the human nature, the grace itself somehow became so natural to the man as to admit no possibility of sin.<sup>769</sup>

Augustine thinks that the distinction between Christ being born of the Holy Spirit, but not as son (*non sicut filius*), and Christ being born of the Virgin Mary, but as son (*sicut filius*), is crucial in understanding how grace makes any man, including Christ in the form of his humanity, better in the sense of not being able to sin.

Christ was a special case, however, because in the very beginning of his existence (*in ipso exordio naturae suae quo esse coepit*) His human nature was so united to His divine nature that they became one in the second Person of the blessed Trinity. As a result, we as Christians may say that Christ is the Son of God and the Son of man, but He is one and the same Person. The unity in Christ between His two natures in His singular Person is accomplished by grace (the “grace of union” as it is often called). It is a grace that became so natural (*naturalis*) to Christ in the form of his humanity that He could not sin.<sup>770</sup>

Though Augustine does not discuss it here, I believe what he has said about Christ being born of the Holy Spirit, from the beginning of His existence, fits rather nicely with

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<sup>769</sup> *Cum itaque de aliquo nascatur aliquid etiam non eo modo ut sit filius, nec rursus omnis qui dicitur filius, de illo sit natus cujus dicitur filius; profecto modus iste quo natus est Christus de Spiritu sancto non sicut filius, et de Maria virgine sicut filius, insinuat nobis gratiam Dei, qua homo nullis praecedentibus meritis, in ipso exordio naturae suae quo esse coepit, Verbo Deo copularetur in tantam personae unitatem, ut idem ipse esset filius Dei qui filius hominis, et filius hominis qui filius Dei: ac sic in naturae humanae susceptione fieret quodam modo ipsa gratia illi homini naturalis, quae nullum peccatum possetmittere.*

<sup>770</sup> Augustine will speak of this inability to sin of Christ elsewhere. See for example, 13.41.

the idea found in his *Commentaries on the Gospel of John* that Christ was always twice-born. He was born of the Spirit, but not as son, and born of the Virgin Mary, but as son. Because of always being twice-born and, specifically, because of His unity of Person provided by the Word through grace, Christ the man could not sin. He could not but do the will of the Father,<sup>771</sup> to which He was obedient even unto death on a cross.

All men are born of the flesh, but not all are born of the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel of John, this was the lesson that Christ attempted to teach Nicodemus, who went one night to visit the Lord to learn about salvation. Christ says to him, “Amen, Amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus was puzzled by these words of the Lord. He did not understand how someone could be twice-born. “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb, and be born again?” In response, Christ points out that there is more to being human, more to being free in will, than what can be found in the reality of the flesh: “Amen, Amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Wonder not that I say to thee, you must be born again. The Spirit breatheth where He will; and thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence He cometh, and wither He goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit” (Jn 3: 5ff). The Spirit breathes where He wills, and so is everyone that is born of the Spirit. However, those who live according to the flesh may be physically alive, but they are spiritually, mentally, and willfully dead. As St. Paul says, *the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives* (1 Tim 5:6). Even those such as Nicodemus,

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<sup>771</sup> Recall that the will of the Father and the Son (and the Spirit) is inseparable. See for example, 12.38.

who are by all accounts naturally good men, cannot be said to be alive unless they are born again of the Spirit.

In the relevant portions of his *Tractates* on the Gospel of John (*Tractate* 11), Augustine will describe Nicodemus as one of those who believed in Christ's name, because they saw the signs and miracles which He performed. Nicodemus calls Him Rabbi, Master. He says Christ is a teacher that has come from God. But Christ did not "trust" Himself to Nicodemus. For Augustine, only "to them who have been born again does Jesus trust Himself." Those such as Nicodemus, who are not born again, are "catechumens," in that they "believe in the name of Christ." They may even bear the cross of Christ on their forehead, not being ashamed of His crucifixion. However, they do not understand the divinity of Christ, and the Spirit of unity that He imparts to all of those who are born again. Augustine writes: "Let us ask him [sc. Nicodemus], 'Do you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink the blood of the Son of man?' He knows not what to say, because Jesus has not trusted Himself to him."<sup>772</sup> Those who are born again not only believe, but also understand that Christ is God the Son, the Word made flesh. They understand the statement, which I might add imposes a limitation on their wills, *except a man eat my flesh, and drink my blood, he shall not have life in him* (Jn 6:54). Augustine thinks the way in which we are first incorporated into the life of Christ, so that we may eat His flesh and drink His blood, is through the waters of baptism. Indeed, "by His baptism He brings over them that believe; all their sins, the enemies as it were that pursue them, being slain, as all the Egyptians perished in that sea."<sup>773</sup>

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<sup>772</sup> 11.3.

<sup>773</sup> 11.4.

When the Lord speaks about the necessity of being born again, Nicodemus fails to understand that the Spirit is speaking to him. He still thinks in terms of the flesh. More specifically, “he thinks of his own flesh, because as yet he thinks not of Christ’s flesh.”<sup>774</sup> We might say that Nicodemus failed to have the Pauline revelation that we are all one body in Christ, and so when Christ said, *except a man eat my flesh, and drink my blood, he shall not have life in Him*, he could not profit from it.<sup>775</sup> As is the case with most of fallen humanity, Nicodemus only understood those who are born once, according to their own mortal flesh.<sup>776</sup>

Perhaps this focus on being born of the Spirit is why Augustine will follow his discussion of Christ’s inability to sin with a disclaimer on the importance of the life-giving waters of baptism for all Christians, whether young or old:

He, by the likeness of sinful flesh in which He was crucified, showed that, whereas no sin was in Him, still in some sense He died to sin, in dying to the flesh in which was the likeness of sin; and that, while He Himself had never lived the old life of sin, He made His resurrection the symbol of our new life, quickened out of the old life of sin in which we had been destined to die. Such is the meaning of the great sacrament of baptism which is solemnized among us: that those who attain to this grace die to sin (*morientur peccato*), just as we say He died to sin, in that He died to the flesh (*quia mortuus est carni*), that is, to the likeness of sin (*peccati similitudini*); and that they live through being reborn at the font, whatever may be the age of the body, just as He lived rising again from the tomb (*et vivant a lavacro renascendo, sicut ipse a sepulcro resurgendo, quamlibet corporis aetatem gerant*).<sup>777</sup>

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<sup>774</sup> 11.5.

<sup>775</sup> Nicodemus was not alone in his lack of understanding. We are told that some others who followed Jesus said among themselves, “This is a hard saying; who can hear it?,” and they followed him no more.

<sup>776</sup> Augustine writes of Nicodemus that he “knew but one birth, that from Adam and Eve; that which is from God and the Church he knew not yet: he knew only those parents that bring forth to death, knew not yet the parents that bring forth to life; he knew but the parents that bring forth successors, knew not yet the ever-living parents that bring forth those that shall abide. Whilst there are two births, then, he understood only one. One is of the earth, the other of heaven; one of the flesh, the other of the Spirit; one of mortality, the other of eternity; one of male and female, the other of God and the Church.” (11.6).

<sup>777</sup> 13.41-42.

Christ had no need for rebirth in the Spirit, for He was always born of the Spirit.<sup>778</sup> We see this especially in the Gospel of Matthew 3:14-15, when Jesus comes to John to be baptized. John recognizes Jesus' holiness, saying, *I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?* Jesus replies: *Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.* Jesus saw His life, death, and resurrection as fulfilling all righteousness. We might ask: fulfilling all righteousness for whom? Not for Himself, of course, because He had no sin for which He had to repent or confess. Rather, the fulfillment of righteousness He speaks of is for all human beings which are His workmanship, and in whose good works we must walk in order to be righteous men like Him.<sup>779</sup> Christ is able to transmit His righteousness to us, or *fulfill all righteousness*, because He constitutes a single person with us—a *persona mystica*. He is the Head of this person, we are the Body. What the Head possesses (righteousness), so, too, do the members, but only through the Head.

Augustine will stress that Christ underwent His baptism and death, “not through a pitiable necessity (*non miseranda necessitate*), but rather through the mercy of His will (*sed miserante potius voluntate susceptum est*), that One might take away the sin of the world.”<sup>780</sup> In other words, His submission to be baptized and die for our sins were free and merciful acts, not coerced and necessitated acts. Christ's entire life from his birth to his death was freely chosen by Him for our salvation: “At the opportune moment, when He willed, when He knew, then He was born; for He was not born without willing to be

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<sup>778</sup> 14.48.

<sup>779</sup> The righteousness of Christ becomes ours when and only when we have faith in Him. Augustine will quote Paul in this connection: *That I may be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith* (Phil 3:9). See *On the Grace of Christ*, 14.

<sup>780</sup> 14.49.

born.... God was born when He willed it, and when He willed it He died. He was born as He willed to be born, of a virgin; He died as He willed to die, on the Cross. Whatever He willed, that He did.”<sup>781</sup> Near the end of Chapter 14, Augustine concludes that Christ’s entire life should serve as a model for Christians here and now, this side of heaven.

Augustine asks: “What, then, was wrought upon the cross of Christ, in His burial, in His resurrection on the third day, in His ascension into heaven, in His sitting at the right hand of the Father was so wrought as to serve as a model for the life which the Christian here leads, and in reality, not simply as a mystical showing-forth in words (*ita gestum est, ut his rebus non mystice tantum dictis, sed etiam gestis configuraretur vita christiana quae hic geritur*).”<sup>782</sup> Following St. Paul, Augustine will consider each of these aspects of Christ’s life as requiring Christians to follow suit, or perhaps better, to walk in these good works themselves. His crucifixion requires a crucifixion of our *flesh with its passions and desires* (Gal 5:24). His burial requires us to be *buried with Christ by means of baptism into death* (Rom 6:4). His resurrection requires that, *just as Christ has arisen from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we walk in newness of life* (Rom 6:4). His ascension and sitting at the right hand of the Father requires us to *seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God* (Col 3:1).

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<sup>781</sup> *Symb.*3.8.

<sup>782</sup> 14.53. Christ fulfills a triple role in His divine mission, that of Teacher, King, and Priest. He teaches, governs, and sanctifies all creation. According to Msgr. Fulton Sheen, Christ continues this threefold divine mission today in the Church, or “the *totus Christus* (the Whole Christ), as St. Augustine calls it, [which continues] the Incarnation by prolonging the ... actions of the historical Christ.” (66). The actions of those in the Church, beginning with the Apostles and Mary, but continuing now almost twenty centuries till today, are in a sense the actions of Christ. If the actions of the historical Christ were attributed to His divine Person, and if the Church and Christ are one (though, of course, we must make the distinction between Christ as Head and us as Body), then the actions of those in the Church must in a sense be referred to the second Person of the blessed Trinity. They are the extension of the life of Christ. As Sheen writes, “The Church ... is that in which Bethlehem revives in every baptism and the Cenacle in every Mass, the instruction of the doctors of the Temple in every definition, the pardon of Peter in every absolution, and the Crucifixion in every persecution.” (75).

Augustine believes that it is only by living the life of Christ that we can attain everlasting life for ourselves. Does this fact necessarily impose limits on the lives we can profitably lead to work out our own salvation? Does this fact necessarily require sacrifice and even death<sup>783</sup> on our part? Augustine would answer yes to both questions, but this is not a pitiable kind of necessity, or one in which the nature of the will as free is destroyed. Rather, it is a limitation on the nature of the will that will lead to its full realization, along with the entire nature of the human being of which it is a power. It is a limitation that makes us better, freer, and more alive. Msgr. Fulton Sheen will draw on Augustine to make this point in a particularly forceful manner, noting that it is in the Church that this renewal of human nature and its powers takes place. According to Sheen, one of the characteristics of the Church, understood as *totus Christus*, is its undeniable freedom, i.e., the freedom of its Head and its members. Some may view the authority of the Church, passed down from Christ to the Apostles, and from the Apostles to Bishops, as a restriction on their freedom to do what they want. Others may even see this Apostolic authority as a form of enslavement. But for Sheen this is a mistake on their part. Liberty does not mean the ability to disregard law, to do what one wants, or to reject all authority. Instead, “obedience to law is the condition of all freedom.”<sup>784</sup> Sheen gives the following examples to this effect:

Aviators are free to fly only on condition that in the construction of their machine they respect the law of gravity; we are free to use words only on condition that we accept the standard meaning of those words and the authority of the dictionary; we are free to drive automobiles on the street only on condition that we obey the traffic laws; an artist is free to draw a triangle only on condition that he respects its intrinsic nature and draw it with three sides.... Every traveler who follows a road submits to a restriction of his freedom. The road limits his freedom, for if it

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<sup>783</sup> The death Augustine speaks of may include martyrdom, but it can generally be understood as death to sin.

<sup>784</sup> Sheen, 205.

were not for it, the whole forest primeval would be his road; but in submitting to the limitation of a road he finds he is more free to travel.<sup>785</sup>

The same reasoning is applicable, Sheen thinks, when it comes to the laws of the Church. These laws are no doubt limitations placed upon us, but they are placed upon us by Christ, through the Apostles and their episcopal successors. As the Head of the Mystical Body<sup>786</sup> that is the Church, Christ only commands Christians to obey laws that are meant for their perfection. He commands Christians to walk in His good works, to travel back to God the Father through Himself, for He is the only Way by which we can come to the Father. We may conclude “that the more we obey the laws which make for our perfection, the more free we become; and the more we disobey those immanent laws which make for our development the more enslaved we become.”<sup>787</sup> Sheen will use an example to explain. Suppose I thought freedom to be exception from the laws of health. In that spirit of false liberty, what if I thought eating as much as I wanted to and drinking as much as I wanted to, whenever I wanted to, was freedom? What would happen to my life? I would become unhealthy, weak, and less able to enjoy my life. We might say this is an example from the “physical” order of how freedom cannot be equated with license, but Sheen thinks that we can observe similar truths in the “intellectual” order and, ultimately, in the laws and life of Christ himself:

The more I submit myself to the truths of geography, the more free I am to travel; the more I bow down to the necessities of mathematics, the more free I am to know the stars and the secrets of the universe; and, on the contrary, the more I reject the truths of history, the more I become enslaved to ignorance.... [W]e have been called to be the children of God, partakers of His divine knowledge. It follows then that the more I submit myself to the laws of Christ and His Church, which is the Kingdom of God on earth, the more my perfection grows and the

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<sup>785</sup> Sheen, 205.

<sup>786</sup> Fr. Emile Mersch S. J. defines the mystical body as “the assemblage of those who live or ought to live in Christ.” (Mersch, 51).

<sup>787</sup> Sheen, 206.

more my freedom increases.... [W]hen I bow down my will to the law of Calvary, I do not surrender my liberty any more than an acorn loses its nature when it dies to itself to be reborn in the oak; when I obey the truth of the teaching authority of the Church I no more relinquish my freedom than I relinquish my freedom of writing when I submit to the laws of grammar. When I obey the commands of the Mystical Body of Christ, I am obeying that which makes me perfect not only in my body, because it subjects it to reason, not only in my mind, because it subjects it to the higher knowledge of faith, but perfect in my being, body and soul, because it leads me to perfect union with Him who is God.<sup>788</sup>

The Truth present in the laws and life of Christ, while demanding sacrifice, imposing restraints, and limiting our freedom, will grant us genuine liberty. As the Lord himself says, *The Truth shall set you free* (Jn 8:32). But the Truth is Christ, and so we must obey “only what Christ wills,” we must think “only what He thinks,” and we must love “only what He loves.”<sup>789</sup>

Perhaps St. Paul says it best: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus* (Phil 2:5). We also know from Paul that letting this mind of Christ be in us, or possessing a Christ-form mind, goes beyond external imitation of what He did in His earthly ministry. It is *conforming* ourselves to His entire life,<sup>790</sup> but especially to his humility in the Incarnation. For when Paul says, *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*, he continues: *who emptied (kenosis) Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as man* (Phil 2: 5-7). *That you may be filled unto all the fullness (pleroma) of God* (Eph 3:19). We find out, then,

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<sup>788</sup> Sheen, 206-207.

<sup>789</sup> Sheen, 208. Later on, Sheen writes: “We never reach the heights of unity until there is a fusion of love, of thought, and of desire, a unity so profound that we think with the one we love, love with the one we love, desire what he desires, and this unity is found in its perfection when the soul is made one with the Spirit of Christ which is the Spirit of God.” (258). Mersch makes similar comments to Sheen on our need to imitate Christ. Indeed, he will say that our imitation of Christ is the perfection of the moral law, which consists in acting, feeling, willing, and thinking as “He would have done and as He actually does within the soul, from the first vigorous stirrings of Christian life.” (91). It requires death, but “the death it requires is the exact contrary of eternal death: it is a complete detachment from self and from sin and leads to the attachment to good.” (289).

<sup>790</sup> See for example, Phil 2:1-11; Gal 3:5; 2 Cor 5:4; Col 2:12; Eph 4:9.

that genuine liberty is the freedom to live as Christ humbly chose to live, so that we might also be filled with the fullness of God. It is this liberty that makes one a Christian. Again, following the apostle, we can say without reservation over any possible loss of our freedom: *I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God who loved me and delivered Himself for me* (Gal 2: 19-20). *And in nothing shall I be confounded, but with all confidence, as always, so now also shall Christ be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ; and to die is gain.* (Phil 1:20-21). Emile Mersch describes this as the reduction of “ourselves and our thought to the thoughts and consciousness of Christ.”<sup>791</sup> In this reductive process, Christ is the primary actor. Christ draws us to Himself; He makes us one in Him; He grants us life through Him. But we still must act along with Christ. The activity we need to perform in order to accomplish this reduction of ourselves and our thought is cooperative with that done by Christ. We are even able to say that it is its effect, as long our activity is good. Mersch relies on Augustine to make this point: “The members of Christ must understand, and Christ must understand in His members, and Christ’s members must understand in Christ; for head and members are one Christ.”<sup>792</sup> Augustine will argue that this double understanding of Christians in Christ and Christ in Christians demands a double passion:

How great must the surface of a man’s body be, if he can be killed by all men? But here we have to understand that there is question of us, of our Church, of Christ’s body. Jesus Christ is one man, head and body; the Savior of the body and the members of the body are two in one flesh and in one voice and in one passion; and when wickedness will have passed, they will be one in repose. The passion of Christ is not in Christ alone; or rather, it is in Christ alone. For if you take Christ as head and body, the passion of Christ is in Christ alone. But if you take Christ as the head alone, the passion of Christ is not in Christ alone. If you, any person now

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<sup>791</sup> Mersch, 86.

<sup>792</sup> *In Ps.* LIV.

listening to me, are among Christ's members, or even if you are not among my auditors (although actually you hear me, if you are one of Christ's members), whatever you suffer at the hands of those who are not among the members of Christ, was lacking to Christ's sufferings. This is why your suffering is now added, because it was then lacking. You are filling out the measure, you are not making it flow over. You are suffering as much as ought to be your contribution to the complete passion of Christ, who has suffered as our head, and who now suffers in His members, that is, in us. Each of us, in his little way, is paying into this common treasury what he owes, and we all contribute our share according to our means. The measure of suffering will not be full until the world comes to an end.<sup>793</sup>

Our full *conformation* to Christ will take place in the next life, and will consist in the inability to sin and the inability to even wish to sin. Augustine believes that there "he will not be able to will evil, and yet he will not be deprived of his free will. In fact, his will will be much more free, in that it will be in no way subject to sin. For the will is not to be blamed, nor should we say that it was no will or that it was not free, when we so will to be happy that we not only do not will to be wretched, but are quite unable to wish to be (*postea vero sic erit, ut male velle non possit; nec ideo libero carebit arbitrio. Multo quippe liberius erit arbitrium, quod omnino non poterit servire peccato. Neque enim culpanda est voluntas, aut voluntas non est, aut libera dicenda non est, qua beati esse sic volumus, ut esse miseri non solum nolimus, sed nequaquam prorsus velle possimus*).<sup>794</sup>

Only then will we understand how good a human being is which is "capable of not

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<sup>793</sup> *In Ps.* 61; PL 36, 730. The Council of Trent makes similar comments about the importance of Christ's passion and its prolongation or extension in our passion. See Session XIV, c.8.

<sup>794</sup> 28.105. This is similar to Augustine's claim at *City of God* 5.10, where he notes that there is a difference between the necessity "according to which we say that it is necessary that anything be of such or such a nature, or be done in such and such a manner," and the necessity according to which we say that events are fixed in the sense of already happened, or not within our power. Augustine thinks we should not "have any dread of that necessity [i.e., necessity understood as that anything be of such or such a nature, or be done in such and such a manner] taking away the freedom of our will." On Augustine's theological anthropology, it is necessary that human beings are created in the image of God, because God made them that way (Gen 1:26); they are meant to be *conformed* to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29); and such *conformation* can only be done in a Christ-like manner, or by in a sense re-living the life of Christ in our own lives with the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. The kind of necessity Augustine speaks of is thus not freedom-destroying, fatalistic or deterministic. Rather, it is liberating because it leads to the full perfection of man.

sinning, though one would be better which was incapable of sinning.” Only then will we understand how good that immortality is in which man was “capable of not dying, though that which is to be is of a higher order, in which he will be incapable of dying.”<sup>795</sup> These men who are incapable of sinning and who are incapable of dying will have “no will to sin.”<sup>796</sup>

Have any of fallen humanity accomplished the good works of Christ in such a way as to perfect themselves to the point where there can be no further addition, to where they are exactly as good as God wants and knows them to be in Christ, to where they have no will to sin? Augustine answers no, once again citing the apostle as proof. Out of all men, there is none in the present life who were privy to as many great revelations as Paul. Yet Paul himself says, *Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that He would take it away from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness* (2 Cor 12:7-9). Augustine takes it to be obvious that, “if there were already in the apostle that perfection of love which admitted of no further addition, and which could be puffed up no more, there could have been no further need of the messenger of Satan to buffet him.”<sup>797</sup> The very fact that the messenger of Satan was able to buffet him proves that the love of God and neighbor that Paul possessed was not yet perfect. It was still in the process of being strengthened by God day by day (2 Cor 4:6).

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<sup>795</sup> 28.105.

<sup>796</sup> 29.111.

<sup>797</sup> *On the Grace of Christ*, 12.

Not only that, but we must not forget how imperfect Paul was when he was known by the name Saul. The case of the radical conversion of Saul of Tarsus is recounted in Acts 9 and is discussed by Augustine many times in his *Sermons* to teach his flock about the literal self-sacrifice required to be one of Christ's followers. In Sermon 116.7 (418),<sup>798</sup> for example, Augustine explains to his congregation that before his conversion Saul had no good merits whatsoever; he was in fact "crazy with fury" in his zeal to uphold his ancestral traditions, in the name of which he persecuted Christians; he was bloodthirsty and hateful. Yet on the road to Damascus, Saul received a divine intervention in the form of a question from God: *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?* (Acts 9:4). While Saul could not harm the head of the body of Christ in heaven, he was nonetheless harming its members here on earth. But what good was this doing Saul? *It is hard for you to kick against the goad* (Acts 26:14). Augustine takes this to mean that in persecuting the members of Christ, in kicking against the goad, Saul was really only harming himself. God's question to Saul made him realize that we are all part of one body, whether we be Christian or Jew, man or woman, slave or free. It made him realize that the universal ontological community of nature we all possess, insofar as we are all human beings, should be joined with an economic effort on our part to effect an equally universal moral communion, in which we know and love the same ultimate Good that is God the Father and Christ whom He has sent, through the love of the Holy Spirit. The realization of the strong community that is shared among human beings, and that is meant to be strengthened through knowledge and love of God and neighbor, was not forced upon Saul. It was merely sparked by a question, to which Saul could either freely answer

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<sup>798</sup> See also *Sermon* 168.4, 416.

back as Saul was wont to do, or as we know St. Paul did.<sup>799</sup> God's intervention did not take away Saul's will to choose the kind of life he wanted to live, the character he wanted to develop, or the choices he wanted to make. Rather, all it did was free Saul from the many sinful obstacles preventing him from confessing God in his heart.

What St. Paul accomplished in freely turning to God is something that we can too, provided we let God into our hearts by believing in Him and Christ whom He has sent. The way we do this is by denying ourselves so that we may confess God. Saul denied his self, his "Saul-ness," and became St. Paul. As we have seen, the apostle will recommend that we imitate this self-sacrifice, but only insofar as he himself imitates Christ (Phil 3:20). Augustine thinks that we all must exercise the same kind of self-sacrifice exercised by Paul, and that Christ speaks of in the Gospels, e.g., at Jn 12:25: *Whoever loves his soul let him lose it*; and at Mt 10:39: *And whoever has lost his soul on my account will find it*. Or in Augustine's own words, "deny yourself, man, woman, so that you may be made an angel. Deny yourself, mortal creature, so that by confessing God you may earn the right to live forever. Look here; you love this temporal life; you don't want to deny it, and you wish to deny God; God, whom you've denied, whom you have refused to confess, withdraws from you; and you will continue to have the temporal life, which you refused to deny."<sup>800</sup> One ought to recall St. Paul's distinction between the *psychikoi/pneumatikoi*, which fits well with Augustine's claim that, while God wants you to live the eternal life of the angels—to be *pneumatikoi*—He will nonetheless respect your decision to remain living the temporal life you love by denying God. But having made this decision, God will justly withdraw from you. He will leave you as the *psychikoi* you have chosen to be

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<sup>799</sup> *Sermon* 116.7.

<sup>800</sup> *Sermon* 313D.2, around 419.

and are naturally on your own. To deny God therefore is to deny yourself the amelioration of your human nature required to enjoy eternal life. In a related *Sermon*, we receive an extremely succinct definition of the meaning of deny yourself that links it with Augustine's idea of liberty. According to Augustine, "Deny yourself" means "Don't you live in yourself," and "Don't you live in yourself" means "Don't do your own will, but that of the one who is dwelling in you."<sup>801</sup> How can the words of Christ not come to mind? *Yet not what I will, but what you will be done, Father* (Mt 26:39).

It is the person of Christ, His thoughts, His willings, His actions, and His love, that is the answer to the problem of predestination in Augustine's mature theology of sin and grace—the answer that he would give to his Christian contemporaries, i.e., most notably the monks of Hadrumetum and Marseilles—and that has been continually decried since then as leaving no space for the liberty of man under God's providentially guiding hand. Christ was totally free, because He wholeheartedly says "yes" to the Father, even "yes" to death on a cross. He was totally free because He totally willed the will of the Father. To the wisdom of men, this may appear as irreligious and ugly nonsense. But as the apostle says, the wisdom of God confounds the wisdom of men (1 Cor 1:27). It is our Way and our Truth and our Life and our Liberty. For all who walk in the footsteps of Christ, who live the way that He humbly chose to live, some understanding of the mystery of how God's grace perfects human nature in free co-operation with it is achievable. For those who do not, no such understanding will be gained. In the words of Fr. Mersch, citing heavily from the Gospel of John, the mystery of divine and human interaction may be

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<sup>801</sup> *Sermon* 330.4. See also *City of God* 14.4.

... above our understanding (Jn 1:18; 5:37; 3:12; 6:46; 17:25); but in Christ it draws near to us and becomes something familiar. Jesus never speaks of it as a cold and distant truth made known to us to humble our minds. On the contrary, He exhibits it as a light (1:9; 3:19-22; 12:32ff., 44ff.), as a life (1:4; 3:16), as a vision that God grants us (6:44; 14:7; 17, 19; 15:26; 16:13). Our part is to open our minds to the light that is offered (1:6, 10; 3:19, 32; 5:34, 38), to believe (20:21), to love (8:42; 14:20-23), to obey the commandments (7:17; 15: 10), to make ourselves docile (5:24; 6:37, 40, 44, 65; 8:47), above all to attach ourselves to Christ (7:28; 8:19; 14:6, 20; 17:2, 3, 7, 8, 24); then we shall acquire a certain understanding of the incomprehensible. This understanding is not the fruit of an accumulation of concepts, but comes from living contact with the living truth, *because I live, and you shall live* (14:19).<sup>802</sup>

We are only free when we willingly attach ourselves to Christ. For Augustine, freedom in the sense of total independence, or complete control over one's self-development, is illusory; and freedom in the sense of the freedom to sin, or in having alternative options for doing, thinking, and willing what is evil, is using the term freedom in an equivocal sense, like when one speaks of a slave as free, or when one speaks of someone who is dead as if he is alive. In short, such a person is not even talking about the same reality as Augustine, but rather a false "freedom" not deserving of the name. As Augustine learned all too well from St. Paul, *Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in wantonness and impurities, not in strife and envying; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh and its desires* (Rom 13: 13-14). This is the true liberty of man and his eternal life.

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<sup>802</sup> Mersch, 407.

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