

According to Augustine

By W. Gary Crampton, Th.D.

AUGUSTINE THE MAN

Saint Augustine (AD 354–430) is considered to be the post-apostolic “patron saint” of both the Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism. He has been canonized by Rome as “Saint Augustine,” and within Roman Catholic circles ranks second only to Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) in stature. But this is a profound irony. Because even though Augustine was a member of the Catholic church (as opposed to the sectarian Donatists), and held to the catholicity of the church (i.e., its universality), he was not a Roman Catholic. Roman Catholicism has no right to claim Augustine as its own.

It is true that Augustine accepted a form of monarchical church government. He even seemed to assume that the Roman bishop was primary. But this, taught Augustine, was more in line with a “first among equals” primacy. And in no sense did he view the Roman bishop as the supreme pontiff and vicar of Christ on earth. Augustine’s doctrine of the church was indeed much too “high church” to be considered truly Protestant. But he had no notion that the church depended on the papacy, nor did he ever acknowledge any form of papal infallibility. These were teachings of Vatican I (1869–1870); they were not Augustinian.¹

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1. John H. Gerstner, *Lectures on Augustine* (Orlando: Ligonier Ministries, 1984) tape 1.

2. Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956) 381–383.

3. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 323.

4. C. Gregg Singer, “Augustinianism,” *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Everett F. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988) 80.

5. *Enchiridion* is currently published under the title of *Faith, Hope, and Charity* (New York: Newman, n.d.).

6. See Norman L. Geisler, “Augustine of Hippo,” *Evangelical*

B. B. Warfield correctly said that Augustine’s doctrine of the church was inherited from his predecessors, whereas his doctrine of salvation by grace alone (*sola gratia*) through faith alone (*sola fide*), in Christ alone (*solus Christus*) was not. This latter doctrine clearly distinguishes Augustine from Roman Catholicism, and places him in the camp of the Reformers. Warfield wrote: “For what was the Reformation, inwardly considered, but the triumph of Augustine’s doctrine of grace over Augustine’s doctrine of the church.” And “the real Augustine was the Augustine of the doctrine of grace.”²

In fact, so dominant was Augustine’s doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone, that the medieval church assigned him the honorific title of “doctor of grace” (*doctor gratiae*). Indubitably, Augustine is to be understood as a Protestant saint. In the words of Warfield: “Augustinianism is but the thetical expression of [Protestant] religion in its purity.”³

Augustine was surely the finest scholar and theologian of the (post-apostolic) early church. Gregg Singer wrote: “As a theology, Augustinianism represents the supreme achievement of the early church.”⁴ Augustine’s was that theology that we today call Calvinism. Although he never wrote a *summa*, such as Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, or Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, nevertheless, his influence on the whole of Protestant theology is undeniable. Augustine’s *Enchiridion* (“handbook”),⁵ written in 421, is his finest systematic treatise on Christian doctrine. In it he gave a succinct outline of the basic doctrines of the faith.

The three major heresies which faced Augustine—Manichaeism, Donatism, and Pelagianism—all served to hone his theological and philosophical prowess. The writings which Augustine left for posterity are massive. There are over 200 books, along with some 220 letters.⁶ Apparently, Augustine was so well aware of

the importance of his writings, that near the end of his life (426–428), he wrote his *Retractions*,⁷ in which he surveyed and revised some of his earlier teachings. He died editing his writings.

As to Augustine's bibliography, it is practically interminable. It is nearly impossible to keep up with the works written about the man and his labors, much less to read them.⁸ Augustine may well be the most influential theologian and philosopher in the history of the Christian church. Adolf Harnack called him the greatest man "between Paul the apostle and Luther the Reformer, the Christian church has possessed."⁹ Daniel Williams averred that "theology in Western Christianity has been a series of footnotes to Augustine."¹⁰ And John Mourant wrote:

In the history of western thought few men have attained the profundity, the originality, and the intellectual stature of Augustine. He has been aptly characterized as one of the great seminal thinkers of all time. In western civilization he created a whole climate of philosophical and theological opinion which not only determined the course of western thought in its formative period but virtually affected the whole of its historical development even down to the present. In a word, Christian thinking and ways of believing have always had and always will have the impact of his genius.¹¹

To be sure, there are errors in the theology and philosophy of Saint Augustine (these will be mentioned below). But we need to keep in mind that all post-apostolic, Reformed theology is, in a very real sense, "doing theology" while standing on the shoulders of the great North African bishop. And even some theological midgets are able to see more clearly than theological giants, when standing on their shoulders.

AUGUSTINE'S LIFE

Aurelius Augustine¹² was born on November 13, 354, in Tagaste,¹³ North Africa (modern day Soux Ahras, Algeria). His father, Patricius, was, at that time, a non-believer.¹⁴ His mother, Monica, on the other hand, was a Christian.¹⁵ She taught her son the basic tenets of Christianity from his earliest years. Augustine later said that it was these teachings which he could never fully eradicate from his thoughts. In the sovereign, providential outworking of God's eternal plan, it was the faithful upbringing by Monica, along with the constant prayers for her prodigal son, that eventually led to Augustine's

conversion in 386. On Easter of 387 he received the sacrament of baptism.¹⁶

Augustine's baptism was postponed in his early years due to two factors: First, the lack of concern on his father's part; and second, the desires of Monica that the sins of her son's youth be "behind him," prior to the "washing away of sin." There were some in the early church who desired to wait for the recipient of baptism to reach his adult years, so that all youthful sins would be removed in the act of baptism itself.¹⁷ This early doctrine of baptismal regeneration is still adhered to by the Roman Catholic Church. Augustine held to a modified form of this teaching.¹⁸ For example, in his *Confessions*, Augustine maintained that it was at the time of his water baptism that he received the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins.¹⁹

In his *Confessions* (which he wrote after he became bishop of Hippo), the title of which came from Psalm 32:5, Augustine has given us somewhat of a spiritual autobiography of the first thirty-three years of his life. The purpose of "the thirteen books of my *Confessions*,"

Dictionary of Theology, edited by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984) 105–107; David F. Wright, "Augustine," and "Augustinianism," *New Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988) 58–63; Allan D. Fitzgerald, editor, *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); and *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vols. I–VIII, edited by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983). Numbers of the works of Augustine cited in this essay are found in Volumes I–VIII of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*.

7. Aurelius Augustine, *Saint Augustine: The Retractions*, translated by Sister Mary Inez Bogan (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968).

8. Benedict J. Groeschel, *Augustine: Major Writings* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996) 1–2.

9. Cited in John Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000) 24.

10. Daniel D. Williams, "The Significance of St. Augustine Today," *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, edited by Roy W. Battenhouse (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955) v.

11. John A. Mourant, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Saint Augustine* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, n.d.) 3.

12. The first (or personal) name "Aurelius" does not appear in Augustine's own writings, but it is attested to by contemporaries (Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 305).

13. Tagaste is also spelled Thagaste.

14. It is believed that Patricius was later converted, and baptized into the Christian faith, in 370, the year before he died (Augustine, *Confessions* 9:9; Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 46).

15. The Roman Catholic Church later canonized Monica as Saint Monica, patron saint of motherhood.

16. *Confessions* 9.6.

17. Battenhouse, "The Life of St. Augustine," *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 19–20, 56.

18. Augustine, *Enchiridion* 43, 52, 119.

19. *Confessions* 9.6.

said Augustine, is to “praise the just and good God for my evil and good acts, and lift up the understanding and affections of men to Him.”²⁰ This is evident from the very beginning of the work, where we read:

Great are You, O Lord, and great is Your power, and of Your wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Your creation, desires to praise You—man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that You “resist the proud,”—yet man, this part of Your creation, desires to praise You. You move us to delight in praising You; for You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You.²¹

Using the *Confessions* as our primary guide,²² first we will trace the spiritual pilgrimage of Saint Augustine. Then we will survey and get an overview of some of his work and teachings.

Both of Augustine’s parents desired their precocious son to be educated in the finest schools available. Even marriage to a “worthy” wife was to be postponed until after the completion of his education. Thus, after receiving rigorous training in Tagaste in his early days, when Augustine reached the age of eleven, he was sent to Madaura for five years of advanced studies. Here he acquired extensive knowledge in the poets, the orators, and languages, particularly Latin. (Interestingly, Augustine never did master Greek, nor did he ever learn Hebrew.²³)

From Madaura he went to Carthage for more studies (371–374). There, at the age of seventeen, Augustine took up with a (never named²⁴) concubine, who always remained the love of his life.²⁵ Sadly, in that day it was a

commonly accepted and legitimate practice (not only in the state, but [even more sadly] in the church as well²⁶), for one to live with a mistress until he found the right marriage partner. Here Augustine was following the (sinful) custom of his day. One year later, in his eighteenth year, Augustine and his concubine had a son, named Adeodatus (“given to God”).

In Carthage, at the age of nineteen, Augustine “discovered” the discipline of philosophy through the reading of Cicero’s *Hortensius*. The precocious teenager, who always had a zeal for knowledge, was now consumed by it. The *Hortensius*, he said, “enflamed me.”²⁷

Noteworthy is the fact that even after his conversion to the Christian faith, Augustine continued to believe that it was beneficial to study the writings of non-believers. For example, in his *City of God*, he spoke about the “commanding genius” of scholars such as Aristotle, Plotinus, and Plato. He commented particularly that “those Platonic philosophers excel all others in reputation and authority, just because they are nearer to the truth than the rest, even though they are a long way from it.”²⁸

Augustine recognized that God has given a measure of understanding to all men, and that Christians can learn even through non-Christian scholars. All such study, of course, must be carried out with great care, that one not “fall into error.” And, he said, all study must be analyzed in light of the teaching of Holy Scripture, because the Bible alone is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God.²⁹

Looking back on his life from the standpoint of a converted soul, Augustine spoke of these years as times of restlessness. Without even realizing it, he was in need of a Savior. He was as the prodigal son in Jesus’ parable (Luke 15:11–32), a wanderer from his Christian training. As a little boy Augustine was devising evil. And at sixteen years of age he stole pears from a neighbor’s yard, even though he did not like pears. He sinned, he confessed, simply for the pleasure of sinning. “Who can unravel that twisted and tangled knottiness? It is foul. I hate to reflect on it. I hate to look on it. But You [God] do I long for. . . . With You is perfect rest, and life unchanging. . . . [but] I sank away from You, O my God, and I wandered too far from You, my stay, in my youth, and became to myself an unfruitful land.”³⁰

Notably, W. T. Jones, in his anti-Christian bias, suggested that Augustine’s pear tree incident was nothing more than a “neurotic exaggeration of guilt and sin, an unhealthy otherworldliness.” Whereas Augustine, in his newly regenerate state saw sin for what it really is,

20. *Retractions* 2.32.

21. *Confessions* 1.1.

22. Peter Brown’s biography, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), has also been followed closely in this overview of Augustine’s life.

23. *Confessions* 11.3.

24. Joseph C. Morecraft, III, points out that to protect the anonymity of this unnamed woman, Augustine uses the words *unam habitum*, which is a Latin phrase for “I lived with only one woman.” Morecraft, “Augustine of Hippo,” *The New Southern Presbyterian Review*, edited by Wayne Rogers (Fall 2006) 79.

25. When Augustine was later separated from this beloved concubine, it hurt him dearly. He said that his heart “was racked, and wounded, and bleeding” (*Confessions* 6.15).

26. See Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 353, 356.

27. *Confessions* 3.4.

28. Augustine, *City of God* 8.5–12; 11.5.

29. *Enchiridion* 8,16–17; *Letters* 82.1.3.

30. *Confessions* 2.10.

and affront to the holiness of God, Jones only saw it as a form of “unhealthy otherworldliness.”³¹

In Carthage, Augustine was attracted to the teaching of the Manichees (a sect of Persian ascetic materialists). At this point in his life there were two things in particular which caused him to reject the Christian Scriptures: 1) the problem of evil; and 2) the anthropomorphic statements in the Bible regarding God. Allegedly, the Manichees had an answer for both.

Augustine’s problem with evil was mainly due to his own propensity to sin. The inner struggle was too great for him to handle. “I was tossed to and fro,” he wrote, “and wasted, and poured out, and boiled over in my fornications.”³² This problem “wearied me and drove me into the arms of heretics [Manichees].”³³

The Manichees’ solution to the problem of evil was their belief in a radical dualism. Mani, the early third century founder of this gnostic religion, who considered himself to be the prophesied “Paraclete” and the greatest of all the prophets, taught that there were two absolute, independent, and co-eternal principles or gods. One was good (light) and the other was evil (darkness). As both of these deities were absolute, independent, and co-eternal, neither is able to overthrow the other. They must exist together throughout all eternity.³⁴ Man, therefore, has a legitimate excuse for his sin; he is not responsible for it. As stated by Augustine: “For it still seemed to me that it was not we that sin, but that I know not what other nature sinned in us.”³⁵

As to the anthropomorphisms, the Manichees explained away the God of Scripture with an early form of higher criticism. They took the anthropomorphic statements concerning God as literal. If the Bible says that God has eyes (Psalm 32:8), ears (Psalm 54:2), arms (Isaiah 52:10), and so forth, then He must have a confining body. The Manichees also denied that Christ took upon Himself a genuine human nature. In the gnostic mindset, this is necessarily evil. Augustine wrote that “it seemed to me most unbecoming to believe You [God] to have the form of human flesh.”³⁶

These things being so, the Manichees concluded, the God of the Bible cannot truly be God. Too, the Manichees (wrongly) taught that the Old Testament endorsed a number of sinful activities (e.g., polygamy, the escapades of Samson). Such a book, they claimed, cannot be recognized as God’s Word. Furthermore, Mani and his followers debunked the notion of “faith,” particularly as it is set forth in Christianity. “Faith,” they held, is contrary to “reason.” During this time in his life, Augustine was not able to combat these false teachings.³⁷

In the disciplines of philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy, however, the Manichees left too many unanswered questions for the searching mind of Augustine. Even their leading teacher, Faustus, was unable to clarify the issues. Augustine became disillusioned with Manichaeism, and later he exposed its fallacies. For example, he devoted the first part of his *The Advantage of Believing* (c. 391) to the refutation of the Manichaean attacks on the Old Testament. And in his *Against Faustus the Manichaean* (c. 398), Augustine unmasked the errant teachings of Faustus.

During this whole time, Monica followed her prodigal son about, continuing to mourn for him. In one visit to Ambrose, bishop of Milan, she was told “leave him [Augustine] alone for a time, only pray God for him; he will of himself, by reading, discover what that error is, and how great its impiety.” Further, overstated the bishop: “Go your way, and God bless you, for it is not possible that the son of these [Monica’s] tears should perish.”³⁸

From the years 375–383, Augustine was employed as a teacher of rhetoric in Tagaste (375) and Carthage (376–383). He then moved to Rome for one year to continue his teaching career. There he encountered the philosophy of the New Academy: skepticism. Skeptics maintain that one can never come to a knowledge of the truth. Even though initially enamored with this philosophy, Augustine never fully embraced it. Several years later (386), in his *Against the Academics*, he exposed its rational inconsistency.

For example, in his writings Augustine pointed out that the unchangeable laws of logic and of specific mathematical formulae (e.g., that $7 \times 3 = 10$) are sufficient to undermine the skeptical notion that knowledge is not attainable. Further, he wrote that even to say that one

31. Cited in Gordon H. Clark, “Augustine of Hippo,” *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, edited by E. H. Palmer (Wilmington: National Foundation for Christian Education, 1964) I:489.

32. *Confessions* 2.2.

33. Augustine, *On Free Will* 1.2.4.

34. W. A. Hoffecker, “Manichaeism,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 683–684.

35. *Confessions* 5.10.

36. *Confessions* 5.10.

37. Battenhouse, “The Life of St. Augustine,” *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 23–25.

38. *Confessions* 3.12. Ambrose’s statement is a misrepresentation of Scripture. A person’s tears do not save anyone. Many parents have suffered the spiritual loss of sons and daughters after having shed many tears and having offered up numerous prayers to God for the salvation of their children. Scripture is clear in teaching that we are to pray for the lost (1 Timothy 2:1–4). But God is absolutely sovereign in salvation (Ephesians 1:3–14). Says Paul: “He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens” (Romans 9:18).

doubts something asserts some form of knowledge. If one did not have knowledge about a subject, how could he doubt someone else's beliefs? Then too, said Augustine, skepticism is self-contradictory, for it asserts that nothing can be known. But if nothing can be known, we cannot know that we know nothing.³⁹

Augustine's famous *dubito ergo sum* ("I doubt, therefore, I am") statement comes from this controversy with the Academics. To doubt, said Augustine, necessitates a doubter. Even if one doubts that he exists, he is still doubting, and therefore, existing in order to doubt. So some knowledge, it would appear, is surely necessary. Gordon Clark maintained that Augustine used this argument in an *ad hominem* ("to the man") fashion, "to force the admission of at least one case of intellectual intuition," with regard to the skeptic. With this admission, the skeptic can be shown to be in error in his belief that nothing can be known. Augustine's use of the *dubito* argument, therefore, is not to be considered as a rational "proof" for the existence of God. Rather, it is merely part of a *reductio ad absurdum* methodology of apologetics, which seeks to show the futility of false systems of thought.⁴⁰

Finally, in 384, Augustine came to Milan, as a teacher of rhetoric. Here he came under the teaching and preaching ministry of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who played a key role in Augustine's conversion. Ambrose explained the Scriptures to his young pupil Augustine (who was fourteen years his junior) in a way he had never had them explained to him before. Augustine later wrote that at first (as a rhetorician), he was impressed by "how skillfully he [Ambrose] spoke"; but gradually he was more impressed by "how truly he spoke."⁴¹ "And to Milan I came," said Augustine, "unto Ambrose the bishop ... Your [God's] devout servant.... To him was I unknowingly led by You, that by him I might knowingly be led to You."⁴²

39. Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey* (1957; Unicoi, Tennessee: The Trinity Foundation, 2000) 177–181; Norman L. Geisler and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980) 93–94.

40. Clark, *Thales to Dewey*, 178–179. Twelve centuries later, René Descartes repeated this argument with his version of the *cogito ergo sum* ("I think, therefore, I exist"). But he made this proposition the premise (i.e., his starting point) from which all truth is to be derived. Herein was Descartes' fallacy.

41. *Confessions* 5.14.

42. *Confessions* 5.13.

43. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 15.2.

44. Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought*, Vol. 1 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990) 96–97.

45. Augustine, *Letters* 143.7.

46. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 422.

Ambrose showed Augustine that he had been reading the Old Testament with far too narrow a literalism. The Bible does not teach what the Manichean heretics maintain. The God of Scripture is not to be thought of in corporeal terms. "God is Spirit" (John 4:24), and "a spirit does not have flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39). Moreover, said Ambrose, even though the Bible does bear witness to the sinful acts of men, such as polygamy and sexual promiscuity, it does not condone those acts; rather, it condemns them.

Ambrose also taught Augustine that God does not call us to faith without reason; neither does He endorse reason without faith. Rather, in biblical theism, God calls on us to reason by means of faith (i.e., Scripture). To reason properly, one must have an axiomatic starting point, upon which all is based. And in the Christian worldview, the axiom is that the Bible is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God. Hence, the authority of Scripture, as the starting point, precedes reason; it supplements reason; but it does not supplant reason. Augustine later wrote: "Faith seeks, understanding finds: wherefore the prophet says: 'Unless you believe, you shall not understand.'"⁴³

This Bible citation, from the *Septuagint* (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) version of Isaiah 7:14, is the verse upon which Augustine founded his well known dictum: *credo ut intelligam*, "I believe in order that I might understand." One must be able to reason to understand the teaching of Scripture. Christianity is not a blind faith, it is a rational faith.⁴⁴ In explaining the relationship between faith (revelation) and reason (logic) Augustine wrote:

For if reason be found contradicting the authority of divine Scriptures, it only deceives by a semblance of truth, however acute it be, for its deductions cannot in that case be true. On the other hand, if, against the most manifest and reliable testimony of reason, anything be set up claiming to have the authority of the Holy Scriptures, he who does this does it through a misapprehension of what he has read, and is setting up against the truth not the real meaning of Scripture, which he has failed to discover, but an opinion of his own; he alleges not what he has found in the Scriptures, but what he has found in himself as their interpreter.⁴⁵

And so for Augustine, said Warfield, "faith and reason are never conceived as antagonists, contradictories, but always as co-adjutants, cooperating to a common end."⁴⁶ But faith in Scripture is that upon which all is based. Once converted, Augustine, who trusted fully in

the Bible as the infallible, inerrant Word of God, naturally believed everything it taught.⁴⁷

In Milan, the still unconverted Augustine also encountered Neoplatonism, through the earlier writings of Plotinus. Here, as he evaluated the teachings of the Neoplatonists alongside of Scripture, Augustine came to a much greater understanding of the transcendence of God. God is not limited by space and time. Augustine was learning more about the spiritual world.

It was also in Milan where Augustine came to grips with his problem concerning evil. If, according to the Scriptures, God, who is omnipotent and omnibenevolent, has eternally decreed all that ever comes to pass, and if He sovereignly and providentially controls all things in His created universe, how can evil exist in the world unless God is the author of it? How do we justify the actions of God in the midst of evil? This is the question of “theodicy.” The word “theodicy” is derived from two Greek words (*theos* “God” and *dike* “justice”), and it has to do with the justification of the goodness and righteousness of God in light of the evil in the world.⁴⁸

First, through his study of Neoplatonism (which he never fully adopted), Augustine found an answer to the Manichaean doctrine of dualism.⁴⁹ Since God has created all things good (Genesis 1:31), evil cannot have an independent existence. Evil is the absence of good (*privatio boni*), just as darkness is the absence of light. Evil, then, is parasitic; it cannot exist apart from good; it corrupts good things; it is a distortion of that which is good.

This being the case, said Augustine, God is not the efficient cause (*causa efficiens*) of evil. Rather, evil resulted as a deficient cause (*causa deficiens*) in the creature man. Evil, being the absence of good, even in the foreordained plan of God, is the result of man’s turning away from the good commands of God for a lesser good: the will of the creature, man. Herein is the essence of evil. It is man, contended Augustine, not God, who is the author of evil.⁵⁰

Augustine, who is often misunderstood at this point, was not denying that evil is a powerful force in the world. Neither was he denying that God is the sovereign first cause of all things. He would have agreed with the teaching of the later *Westminster Confession of Faith* (5:4),⁵¹ that “the almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extends itself even to the first Fall [of Adam], and all other sins of angels and men.” But God, as the sovereign first cause, as the *Confession* (5:4) goes on to say, uses second causes, such

as the sinful desires of men, to bring about His sovereign decrees, so “as the sinfulness thereof proceeds only from the creature, and not from God, who being most holy and righteous, neither is, nor can be, the author or approver of sin.”

Hence, said Augustine, only second causes sin. And the second cause in the case of Adam was his choosing a lesser good (the selfish love of the creature), rather than the highest good (the will of God). And to choose the lesser good over the will of God was the essence of sin. The source of evil lay within the created will itself. Thus, it was a selfish love (“a perversion of the will” of man), rather than love for God, that brought about the Fall.⁵² “There is no need then,” wrote Augustine, “in the matter of our sins and faults, to do our Creator the injustice of laying the blame on the nature of the flesh which is good, in its own kind and on its own level. But it is not good to forsake the good Creator and live by the standard of a created good.”⁵³

Augustine was now struggling over the numerous matters before him. There were, so to speak, two children wrestling in the womb⁵⁴ of his mind: Christianity and paganism. At this time, Monica made arrangements for a proper marriage for her son: the daughter of a Christian family in Milan. Augustine’s mistress of fifteen years, recognized that she was holding back Augustine from what he was obliged to do, and returned to Africa, leaving Augustine and their son behind. She left Augustine because she loved him. And he deeply

47. Augustine, *Of True Religion* 24, 36; *City of God* 11.3–4; Ronald H. Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1969) 24ff.

48. The best book the present writer has ever read on the theodicy issue is Gordon H. Clark’s *God and Evil: The Problem Solved* (1961; Unicoi, Tennessee: The Trinity Foundation, 2004). See also W. Gary Crampton, “A Biblical Theodicy,” *The Trinity Review* (Trinity Foundation, January 1999).

49. In actuality, the philosophic system of dualism is self-referentially absurd. If there were two co-eternal and co-equal deities, we could never say that one was good and one evil. Without a superior standard to determine what is good and evil, the terms good and evil cannot be posited to anything. But if there is such a superior standard (i.e., something above the two deities), then there is no dualism.

50. Augustine, *City of God* 11.9; 13.3; 14.3; *On the Morals of the Manichaeans* 5.7; Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989) 25–26.

51. All references to the Westminster Standards, comprised of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, are from the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow, Scotland: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994). The English has been modernized.

52. *Confessions* 7.16.

53. *City of God* 14.5.

54. See *Genesis* 25:19–26.

loved her. He wrote: “My mistress being torn from my side as an impediment to my marriage, my heart, which cleaved to her, was racked, and wounded, and bleeding. And she went back to Africa, making a vow unto You [God] never to know another man, leaving with me my natural son by her.”⁵⁵

As the girl Monica had chosen for her son to marry was only twelve years old at the time, Augustine would have to wait two years for the marriage to be consummated. This was more than the sensuous young man could bear. Unable to be without a female companion, he took up residence with another concubine. During this time, while he was wrestling with his enslavement to his own passions, Augustine came in contact with the teachings of a somewhat obscure Egyptian monk by the name of Antony. The thing that so impressed Augustine about this monk was that he, while lacking the genius of the North African, was able to control his passions, that which the erudite Augustine could not do.⁵⁶

Augustine recognized his helpless state. He was a prisoner to his own lusts. And one day, as he meditated in a garden and cried out to God to help him in his despair, he heard the voice of a young child, chanting *tolle lege* (“take up and read”). Augustine interpreted this to mean “take up and read the Bible.” When he opened the Scriptures, the first passage he saw was Romans 13:13–14: “Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.”

“No further would I read,” said Augustine, “nor did I need; for instantly, as the sentence ended—by a light, as it were, of security infused my heart—all gloom of doubt vanished away.”⁵⁷ God had regenerated his servant, and Augustine had responded to the call; he was a converted man; he was a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Giving praise to God for his conversion, Augustine wrote: “O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving.” “Now,” he continued, “was my soul free from the

gnawing cares of seeking and getting, and of wallowing and exciting the itch of lust.... You [are] my brightness, my riches, and my health, the Lord my God.”⁵⁸ The year was 386; Augustine was thirty-two years old.

After resigning his post as a teacher of rhetoric, Augustine went into a short period of reclusion in Cassiciacum. He studied the Scriptures, conversed at length with Adeodatus, with Monica, and with some of his friends. He also began to write. Among other writings of this period, he authored *Against the Academics* (a refutation of skepticism), *On the Happy Life* (a treatise on true happiness as found only in the triune God of Scripture), and *Soliloquies* (a dialogue between Augustine and his Reason). As Warfield pointed out, in the years that follow we see a great advancement in the theological acumen of Augustine. There is a gradual purging of the pagan influences, as well as a purgation of semi-Pelagian (“Arminian”) thought. Progressively, Augustine moved toward a “Calvinistic” understanding of the Scriptures (as best expressed in the Westminster Standards). But even in these early writings, we are presented with one who is “already a deeply devout and truly Christian thinker.”⁵⁹ Along with his converted son, Augustine was baptized on Easter 387, by bishop Ambrose.⁶⁰

Augustine and Monica were on their way back to Africa when she took ill and died in Ostia, Rome. She was fifty-six years old. Just days earlier, the two of them had engaged in a very rewarding time of Christian fellowship, a fellowship which they had never before had with one another. Augustine described it as follows: “There we talked together, she and I alone, in deep joy.... And while we were thus talking of His [God’s] Wisdom and panting for it, with all the effort of our heart we did for one instant attain to touch it; then, sighing and leaving the first fruits of our spirit bound to it, we returned to the sound of our own tongue, in which words must have a beginning and an end.”⁶¹ Monica had expressed her utter delight at her son’s new found faith. Augustine preached at his mother’s funeral service in Ostia.

Augustine spent a brief period of time in Rome, where he again encountered the Manichees. He wrote two books in defense of Christianity, as well as a refutation of Manichaeism: *On the Morals of the Manichees* and *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*.⁶²

In 388, Augustine and his son returned to Tagaste. He, like John Calvin after him, intended to remain a lay scholar recluse. Augustine established a semi-monastic community on his family estate. There the North African embarked on a three year period of seclusion, where he continued to study the Scriptures, write books and

55. *Confessions* 6.15.

56. *Confessions* 8.6.

57. *Confessions* 8.12.

58. *Confessions* 9.1.

59. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 369–381, 369.

60. It is significant that the Roman Catholic Church (as per its belief in baptismal regeneration) sees this date as the time of Augustine’s conversion, rather than the earlier date in 386.

61. *Confessions* 9.10; cited in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 129.

62. “Catholic” here meaning “universal,” not Roman Catholic.

letters, and discourse with others regarding the necessity and reasonableness of Christianity. Adeodatus died during this time at the age of sixteen.

In 391, Augustine traveled to Hippo Regius, a predominantly Donatist town. There, as he attended the Catholic church, he was recognized by the bishop Valerius. Valerius, who due to his age was not able to handle all of the necessary church duties, and who knew that his speaking skills were not comparable to those of Augustine, and who understood that his Catholic church needed a strong voice against the Donatists, invited the parishioners to search for a priest to serve within the parish. Augustine was chosen and ordained as presbyter of Hippo. There he preached, carried out other presbyter functions, founded a monastery near the church, and continued his writing ministry.

In 395 Augustine was promoted to coadjutor bishop of the see in Hippo.⁶³ Within a year Valerius died, and Augustine became the sole bishop. As the rules of the African church strictly forbade the removal of bishops (except in extreme disciplinary cases), Augustine remained the bishop of Hippo for the rest of his life (albeit in 426 he appointed Heraclitus to be his successor). During this time, Augustine encountered the heretical teaching of the Donatists and the Pelagians, against which he wrote at length (e.g., *On the Correction of the Donatists*, *On the Merits and Remission of Sins*, and *On Grace and Free Will*). Tiny Hippo was made famous as the great Augustine became the leading Christian theologian and philosopher of the Western Church.

Among the other major works that he completed during the remaining thirty-four years of his life, Augustine wrote: *Confessions* (397–400), *On Baptism* (400), *On Christian Doctrine* (397–426), *On the Trinity* (397–420), *Enchiridion* (421), *City of God* (413–426), and *Retractions* (426–428). He also wrote numerous *Letters*, *Sermons*, and *Discourses on Psalms*.

Near the end of Augustine's life, the Arian Goths (European barbarians) surrounded the city of Hippo. Destruction was imminent, and Augustine's life was endangered. He was advised to flee to another city. Concerned for honoring God even in his death, however, Augustine refused to do so. He had been the bishop of Hippo since 396, and he would not leave his flock behind in this time of peril. During the time of his final illness, Augustine asked that he be allowed to remain alone in his room. Except for the need of doctors and daily food, he desired no visitors. Augustine wanted to be alone with God, in study, prayer, and meditation. He requested in particular that the penitential Psalms of David be hung on the walls of his room. His desire

was to pass through the portals of heaven with these Psalms on his lips, embracing the promises as his own. How well he understood the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. He died August 28, 430.⁶⁴

As Roger Hazelton pointed out, Saint Augustine viewed life as a journey of the soul to the final state: life in the presence of God. This was the ultimate *visio Dei*: the beatific vision. The Christian's life is a pilgrimage, said the bishop of Hippo; he is always on the march. To know God is to love him wholeheartedly, and so to love Him is to seek Him with all of one's heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). Augustine was truly a "God intoxicated" man. He was a man consumed with a zeal for the glory of God and the furtherance of His kingdom. Not only did he set the course of Christian thinking for all generations to follow, but "he likewise marked the channels of Christian devotion, from his time to our own. His stamp upon the prayer-ways of the Christian West ... has been no less deep and enduring than his monumental theological influence."⁶⁵

Augustine spoke of the necessity of maintaining a strong devotional life, consisting of Bible study and prayer. He recognized the need of an individual's "knowing the truth in the inward parts" prior to his "living by that truth." Prayer is a means by which the truth is "fused to the soul." "In order to our obtaining the true blessed life, He who is Himself the True Blessed Life [Christ] has taught us to pray."⁶⁶ Like Paul, Augustine's theology always led to doxology.⁶⁷

But also like Paul, the North African bishop taught that the love of God, fueled by a strong devotional life, must work itself out in Christian living. Thus, it can be said of Augustine that not only did he have a strong Christian devotional life, but his whole life was characterized by Christian devotion. One's love for God, he taught, results in love for the things of His kingdom. "The whole life of a good Christian," he wrote, "is a holy desire." Or, to say it another way, suggested John Piper, Augustine maintained that "the key to Christian living is a thirst and a hunger for God."⁶⁸ This,

63. A "see" is an area which is under the authority of a bishop or other church official.

64. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 419–433; Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 41–42.

65. Roger Hazelton, "The Devotional Life," *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 398–414, 398.

66. *Letters* 130.8.15.

67. Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*; Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 64–69.

68. Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 62–63.

taught the North African bishop, was what the Lord spoke to in His summary of the whole law in Matthew 22:37–40.⁶⁹

AUGUSTINE THE PASTOR

Joseph Bernardin wrote:

Augustine's pre-eminent influence as a theologian and doctor of the church has been felt in each age since and has overshadowed his greatness as a pastor, the influence of which was experienced chiefly during his lifetime. The remarkable fact, however, is that in spite of the time taken up by his literary work in defining the theory of the life within the church, he himself actively practiced what he taught. He is as fine an example of the true great pastor of souls as is to be found in the course of Christian history. Because he loved God with his whole being, with his heart and hands as well as with his head [mind], he loved and served his fellow men. He knew his sheep and was known of them.⁷⁰

Bernardin's comments are apropos. Augustine had a true heart for Christ's church. He continually worked for its peace, prosperity, and purity. Nigel Lee summarized the North African bishop's ideal for the church: "In fundamentals—unity! In non-essentials—diversity! In all things—charity!"⁷¹

As noted earlier, after his conversion, Augustine

sought to live the life of a scholarly recluse. But in God's providence, that was not to be. And when he was ordained as a priest of the Catholic church, it is said that he wept over the magnitude of the responsibility that he was assuming. He served for some thirty-five years, referring to his office of bishop as an office of labor, not of honor.⁷²

As bishop, Augustine sat on church courts, hearing disputes and administering biblical judgments. He had an ongoing ministry to the poor, the orphans, the persecuted, the bereaved, the prisoners, i.e., those who were needy. His calling required him to travel throughout the region of Hippo, with its five established churches. In each of them he would be called upon to preach, to administer the sacraments, to administer marriage ceremonies, to bury the dead, and so forth. Augustine's was a busy and trying ministry.⁷³ Throughout his ministry, however, Augustine remained an ardent student of the Scriptures. He was equally fervent in prayer for himself, his work, and the advancement of God's kingdom. He particularly focused on the importance of the Lord's prayer.⁷⁴

When Augustine spoke of the "sacraments" (from the Latin *sacramentum*), he did so predominately with regard to the two Protestant sacraments: baptism and the Lord's supper.⁷⁵ To Augustine, the sacraments are visible signs of an invisible grace. He considered them as essential, as a means of grace, for spiritual growth and nourishment. "Spiritually understood," he wrote, "it [a sacrament] will quicken. Although it is needful that this be visibly celebrated, yet it must be spiritually understood."⁷⁶ And again, he said: "The importance of these sacraments cannot be overstated, and only scoffers will treat them lightly. For if piety requires them, it must be impiety to neglect them."⁷⁷

When it comes to Baptism, Augustine taught that it was to be administered to both Christians and their children.⁷⁸ However, he (wrongly) held to a modified form of baptismal regeneration. He believed that grace is conveyed to the recipient in the sacrament, even in the case of children. Baptism, he taught, removes the guilt of original sin, and it also removes all sins committed prior to the receiving of the ordinance.⁷⁹ Even here, however, Augustine did not teach that the "work performed" is conveyed by the element (water), but by the Holy Spirit. And he maintained that the recipient is always responsible to receive the grace offered by faith. In this sense, baptism is necessary for salvation.⁸⁰

Sadly, Augustine also held to several other false doctrines—doctrines which the Roman Catholic Church practices: meritorious alms giving, penance, purgatory,

69. Augustine, *On The Gospel of John* 17.6.

70. Joseph B. Bernardin, "St. Augustine as Pastor," *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 85–86.

71. F. Nigel Lee, *John Calvin: True Presbyterian* (Wavell Heights: Jesus Lives Series, 1981) 10–11.

72. *City of God* 19.19.

73. Bernardin, "St. Augustine as Pastor," *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 57ff.

74. Augustine, *On the Psalms* 86.1–2; *Sermons* 6–9. For more on Augustine's view of prayer, see Thomas A. Hand, *Augustine on Prayer* (New York: Catholic Books Publishing Company, 1986).

75. Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1937) 242–243. Berkhof noted that Peter of Lombard (1095–1160) was the first to name the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church: baptism, the Lord's supper, marriage, confirmation, penance, ordination, and extreme unction. Sadly, Augustine did use the word "sacrament" rather loosely, sometimes applying it to more "rites" than baptism and the Lord's supper.

76. *On the Psalms* 99.8.

77. Augustine, *Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon* 19.11.

78. *Letters* 98.1–3.

79. *Enchiridion* 42–43, 66; *Letters* 98.1–10.

80. Peter Toon, *Born Again: A Biblical and Theological Study of Regeneration* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987) 81–83.

prayers for the dead, and the distinction between mortal and venial sins.⁸¹ Such teaching cannot rationally be excused. Yet, at the same time, it must be remembered that Augustine lived in the earliest days of (post-apostolic) Christianity. He (along with the early church fathers) was in the process of working out the proper dogma of the Christian faith.

When it comes to the Lord's Supper, Augustine properly considered it to be essential to the growth of the Christian. It was to be administered at least weekly, and it was for both believers and their baptized children (paedo-communion).⁸² But he did not adhere to the later Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation.⁸³ As Berkhof wrote: "While he [Augustine] did speak of the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ, he distinguished between the sign and the thing signified, and did not believe in a change of substance."⁸⁴

Augustine was also a masterful apologete. His *City of God* is a monument to the defense of the Christian faith. In this book, the Christian worldview is brilliantly set forth and fortified by one of the greatest thinkers that God ever gave to His church. More will be said on this below.

The pastor's primary role, taught Augustine, is that of the proclamation of the Word of God. Philip Schaff wrote: "Augustine was an indefatigable preacher. He considered regular preaching an indispensable part of the duty of bishop."⁸⁵ The man who "ministers to a people," he wrote, does so "in the divine sacraments and Word."⁸⁶ "We are ministers of the Word, not ours, but God's."⁸⁷ According to the North African bishop, by means of the preaching of the Word of God, the pastor feeds his flock on the bread of life.⁸⁸ Thus, the pastor serves his Lord by bringing the good news of Christ to his people. Echoing Isaiah 52:7 and Romans 10:15 ("How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things"), Augustine claimed that "preachers are the Lord's feet."⁸⁹

Numerous of Augustine's sermons have been preserved through the centuries. In addition to his series *On the Psalms*, *On the Gospel of John*, and *On the Epistle of John*, there are nearly 400 other extant sermons from practically every part of the Bible. And although there were times when Augustine had an overly fanciful tendency to use an allegorical method of interpretation of Scripture,⁹⁰ it is obvious from his *Retractions* that the later, more spiritually mature Augustine, somewhat altered that approach to biblical exegesis.⁹¹

Although Augustine's view of the church is flawed by elements of Roman Catholicism, he did hold to the

four church attributes, as confessed by the framers of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (AD 381): "[We believe] in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church."⁹² He defined the church as "the holy assembly of all the faithful who are saved," and as the "faithful who are elect and justified."⁹³

And even though he did maintain, with Cyprian before him, that "outside the church there is no salvation,"⁹⁴ at the same time, as van Bavel clarified, Augustine did affirm "that there is salvation for Job, for the sibyl, for the good thief, for unbaptized martyrs, for Cornelius, for catechumens dying before having received baptism, for Catholics who are excommunicated."⁹⁵ Perhaps it is more correct to say that Augustine taught, as did the later *Westminster Confession of Faith* (25:2), that "there is no ordinary [under normal circumstances] possibility of salvation" outside of the visible church, when we consider the whole of the doctrine of salvation: sanctification as well as

81. *Enchiridion* 46, 64, 67–69, 72, 75, 110.

82. *Sermons* 174.7. [Ed. For more information see, Matthew Winzer, "The True History of Paedo-Communion," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 3 (2007) 27–36].

83. The Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation maintains that at the Lord's Supper, when properly administered by a priest, the bread is actually changed into the body of Christ, and the wine is actually changed into the blood of Christ. There is a "change of substance"—thus, "transubstantiation." The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (29:6) correctly teaches: "That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by consecration of a priest, or by any other way, is repugnant, not only to Scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason; overthrows the nature of the sacrament, and has been, and is the cause of manifold superstitions; yea, of gross idolatries."

84. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939, 1941) 645.

85. Philip Schaff, "Preface," *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, VII:iii.

86. *Letters* 21.3.

87. *Sermons* 114.1.

88. See George Lawless, "Preaching," *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, 675–677.

89. *Sermons* 99.13.

90. R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1977) 54–55; John Calvin and the Reformers critiqued this type of biblical interpretation, and opted for the *sensus literalis* ("literal sense") method. See John Calvin, *Commentaries*, Vols. I–II (Grand Rapids: Baker House, 1981), *Commentary* on 2 Corinthians 3:6.

91. *Retractions* 1.9, 1.17.1; 2.50.

92. Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 229.

93. Cited in Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998) 838.

94. Augustine, *On Baptism* 4.17.24.

95. Tarsicius J. van Bavel, "Church," *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, 170.

justification.⁹⁶ This seems to be the studied opinion of B.B. Warfield, who wrote:

Augustine's doctrine of the church is a fascinating subject on which it is difficult to touch without being carried beyond the requirements of our present purpose. Perhaps enough has already been said to indicate sufficiently for the end in view the place which the church holds in Augustine's doctrine of authority. In the sin-bred weakness of humanity, the church mediates between the divine revelation deposited in the Holy Scriptures and the darkened mind of man; and thus becomes a pedagogue to lead men to the truth. It is in the church that the truth is known; and this not merely in the sense that it is in the hands of the church that the Scriptures are found, those Scriptures in which the whole truth of God is indefectibly deposited; but also in the sense that it is in the church alone that the mysteries of the faith, revealed in the Scriptures, are comprehended: that it is only in the participation of the graces found in her that men may hope to attain to the vision which is the possession solely of saints. The true knowledge of God belongs to the fellowship of His people, and out of it cannot be attained.⁹⁷

AUGUSTINE'S THREE MAJOR OPPONENTS

During his years of ministry, Augustine faced three major opponents: the Manichees, the Donatists, and the Pelagians. "In his [Augustine's] own life experience," commented Clyde Manschreck, "he encountered all the problems of the early church."⁹⁸

In his polemics against these heretical movements, we see Augustine the theologian, philosopher, and apologete at his finest. As Warfield has pointed out, one can easily recognize the maturation of Augustine's thought in his writings. Progressively, his work is purged of the pagan influence.⁹⁹ According to Naville: "Beyond doubt, when

we study in their chronological succession the works of [Augustine], we perceive the role of Scripture gradually to increase. The author, we feel, has immersed himself in the study of Scripture. He has acquired a knowledge of it, of ever-increasing depth. His very style becomes modified under its influence."¹⁰⁰ Further, as Reuter explained: "It was not the idea of the church as the institute of grace that was dominant in his [Augustine's] later years, but that of predestinating grace"; "the doctrine of predestinating grace was the fundamental principle of his religious consciousness."¹⁰¹

ANTI-MANICHAEAN WRITINGS

As already noted, Manichaeism was the belief system adopted by the young Augustine. We have also seen that after nine years of being held in bondage to this gnostic heresy, he rejected it. After his conversion, Augustine targeted the Manichees as his first opponents. He did so by exposing their errant view of ultimate dualism, by undermining their fallacious method of higher criticism, by demonstrating biblically that God is not the author of evil, and by substantiating the reasonableness of faith, all of which have been discussed above.

In his striving against the gnostic dualism of the Manichees, Augustine also developed his biblical view of "the one and the many." Through the centuries, "the one and the many" issue has surely been one of the most perplexing problems in philosophy. How can there be so many diverse things in the world, while there also appears to be a basic unity? Amidst much complexity, how is there still simplicity? Which is the basic fact of life, unity or plurality, the one or the many? If the answer to this latter question is "the one," then unity must have priority over plurality. If, on the other hand, the answer is "the many," then the individual and particulars have priority. If "the one" is ultimate, then the particulars are degraded. If "the many" is ultimate, then the reverse is true.¹⁰²

Augustine found the solution to this alleged problem in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. God is "one" in essence, yet three ("many") distinct persons. He is the eternal "One and Many." The many particular things of this world have their archetypes in the mind of God. Augustine called these archetypes the "eternal reasons." God's eternal reasons are the architectural plans from which He created the world. The world, which is the temporal "one and many," is patterned after the divine propositions in the mind of God. Therefore, there is unity among diversity.¹⁰³

Augustine went on to teach that Jesus Christ, the

96. This was the view expressed by the present writer's systematic theology professor C. Gregg Singer in his *Systematic Theology Lectures* (Salisbury, North Carolina: Atlanta School of Biblical Studies, 1983).

97. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 472.

98. Clyde L. Manschreck, *A History of Christianity* (Englewood Cliff, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 81.

99. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 369–383.

100. Cited in Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 375–376.

101. Cited in Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 382–383.

102. See Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many* (Fairfax: Thoburn, 1978) 2n.

103. *On the Trinity* 6.6–9; *Confessions* 7.15–21; Rushdoony, *The One and the Many*, 16. See also Richard E. Bacon, "Two Essays," a

eternal *Logos* of God, is the one who gives us a coherence between the infinite and the finite, the Creator and the creation. In other words, it is Christ who reveals the solution to the one and the many problem. Apart from a proper understanding of *Logos* theology (i.e., Christ as the eternal Word who came to reveal the truth of God to man), there is no real solution.¹⁰⁴

The anti-Manichaean writings of Augustine include: *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, *On the Morals of the Manichaeans*, *On Two Souls*, *Against the Manichaeans*, *Acts or Disputation Against Fortunatus the Manichaean*, *Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental*, *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean*, and *Concerning the Nature of Good*, *Against the Manichaeans*. In the virtual “profusion of his anti-Manichaean writings,” stated Coyle, Augustine, in a scholarly fashion, thoroughly and completely debunked the system of Manichaean thought. And “he remains the most authoritative of all those in antiquity who wrote against Manichaeism.”¹⁰⁵

ANTI-DONATIST WRITINGS

Donatism was a counter-church movement (named for Donatus, bishop of Carthage from 313–347) that began in North Africa in the early fourth century. The Roman emperor Diocletian had been persecuting the church.¹⁰⁶ As a part of the persecution, Christian bishops were not only required to denounce their faith (or suffer death), but as proof that they had done so they were obliged to surrender their copies of the Scriptures. Those bishops who did so were referred to as the *traditores*.¹⁰⁷

Sadly, there were a number of bishops who yielded to the demands of Diocletian. When the persecution subsided, however, many of these same bishops returned to their former positions as if nothing had changed. The Donatists strongly protested. No *traditores*, they maintained, should be allowed to serve in Christ’s church. Further, the sacraments that had been performed by these *traditores* were declared invalid. Re-baptism would be necessary. Likewise, if any *traditores* were to return to the church, they would also have to be re-baptized and re-ordained. The Donatists, in their zeal for church purity, had confused the invisible and the visible church. According to them, all of the “tares” must be rooted up in the present age.¹⁰⁸ “The Donatists had claimed, against the Catholics,” wrote Brown, “that, as the church was a unique source of holiness, so no sinner could have a part in it.”¹⁰⁹ These Donatists were so rigorous, said Roberts, that they “insisted that every church member must be a certified, fully sanctified, saint.”¹¹⁰

The Catholic church (not Roman Catholic), on the other hand, allowed all genuinely repentant bishops back into the church without re-baptism or re-ordination. The Catholic church also claimed that the sacraments previously administered by these bishops were valid. The “efficacy of the sacrament,” taught this church, in accordance with the later *Westminster Confession of Faith* (27:3), does not “depend upon the piety or intention of him that does administer it; but upon the work of the Spirit, and the Word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.” Therefore, re-baptism of those baptized by these former *traditores* was unnecessary. In effect, two denominations had formed. Neither group would accept the sacraments of the other. The church was split. Violence and bloodshed were not uncommon.¹¹¹

Augustine became involved in this schism in the late fourth century (c. 395). He was a Catholic bishop in the predominantly Donatist community of Hippo. He took up the cause of the Catholics against the “schismatic” Donatists, fully supporting and even expanding upon the aforementioned positions. The holiness of the church, argued Augustine, is not in the members of the church, but in Christ their Head. Augustine claimed that the Donatists must repent of their errant beliefs and join the Catholic church. He went so far as to aver that salvation rests in the Catholic church alone. The teachings and the sacraments administered by these errant bishops were to be considered invalid apart from the Catholic church. Embarrassingly, Augustine even justified the use of Roman civil power to “compel them to come in” (a misuse of Christ’s words as found in Luke 14:23).¹¹²

review of *Lord God of Truth*, by Gordon H. Clark, and *Concerning the Teacher*, by Aurelius Augustine (Hobbs, New Mexico: The Trinity Foundation, 1994), in *The Blue Banner* (March & April, 1995) 13–15.
104. See Ronald H. Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), chapters 6 and 8.

105. J. Kevin Coyle, “Anti-Manichaean Works,” *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, 39.

106. Diocletian (245–313) was emperor or co-emperor from 284–313. His most severe persecution of Christians was from 303–305.

107. V. L. Walter, “Donatism,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 329–330.

108. Robert A. Markus, “Donatus, Donatism,” *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, 284–287.

109. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 213.

110. Frank C. Roberts, *To All Generations* (Grand Rapids: Bible Way, 1981) 63.

111. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987 [1910]) III:360ff.

112. *Letters* 93; 185; Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*,

But the bishop of Hippo's main argument came from Jesus' parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43).¹¹³ Augustine avowed that the church should be kept as pure as possible, even to the point of church discipline where necessary. But, he said, the church of this age would always be a *corpus permixtum*, i.e., a "mixed body" of believers and unbelievers. Excessive discipline, taught Augustine, might root out the wheat as well as the tares.¹¹⁴ He wrote: "Concerning the mixed church.... The church declares itself to be at the present both [a mixture of believers and non-believers]; and this because the good fish and the bad are for the time mixed up in one net."¹¹⁵

Augustine here distinguished between the invisible and the visible church, a teaching later formulated by the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (25:1–2) as follows: the invisible church "consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the Head [of the church]"; the visible church, on the other hand, "consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children." Due to Augustine's rigorous labors, the Catholic church won the day.

Augustine's anti-Donatist writings include: *On Baptism, Against the Donatists, Answer to Letters of Petilian, Bishop of Circa, and The Correction of the Donatists*.

ANTI-PELAGIAN WRITINGS

Whereas in his anti-Donatist writings we find elements of Augustine's Roman Catholic leanings, it is in his anti-Pelagian works that we find his strong Protestantism. "Augustine's most influential legacy to Protestantism," wrote David Wright, "was his anti-Pelagian corpus (411–430)."¹¹⁶ R. C. Sproul is of the same opinion. He commented that "the Reformation witnessed the ultimate triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over the legacy of the Pelagian view of man."¹¹⁷ Herein we are confronted with Augustine's pre-Reformation doctrine of grace: salvation by grace alone (*sola gratia*)

through faith alone (*sola fide*), in Christ alone (*solus Christus*).¹¹⁸

In the latter part of the fourth century (c. 380), a British monk by the name of Pelagius became concerned about the moral laxity of the Christian church. Salvation by grace through faith alone, he mused, could only lead to a lack of concern for holiness. Too, he reckoned, if God has commanded man to obey His law, then man must have the ability to comply. Man must possess, said Pelagius, a free will—a will in which man has not only the freedom, but also the ability to obey God. Man can will, he taught, not to sin. And "nothing," stated John Piper, "shocked Pelagius more than the stark declaration of omnipotent grace in Augustine's prayer, 'Command what You will, and give what You command.'"¹¹⁹

Pelagius set out to find the revered bishop of Hippo, purposing to confront him with this matter. But in his travels throughout the Mediterranean world, he never found Augustine. In a negative fashion, however, Pelagius did leave his mark on the Christian church. "Pelagianism" is that belief system which denies the doctrine of original sin. Reformed theology, as exemplified by Augustine, teaches that when God created man (Adam), He appointed him as the federal or covenantal head of the entire human race, and entered into a "covenant of works" with him. In the words of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (7:2): "The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him [as the federal head of all humanity] to his posterity, upon perfect and personal obedience."

As we read in Romans 5, however, Adam disobeyed God. And as he was the federal head of all mankind, his sin was imputed to the entirety of humanity. As stated in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Q. 16): "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression." All men, therefore, as a result of the Fall, are judicially guilty. Adam's sin has been imputed to all.

Further, the Bible teaches that man now finds himself in an ethical state of "total depravity." As explained by the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (6:2, 4): man is now "dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body ... whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." Further, says the *Confession* (9:3): "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural man, being altogether

III:363–365; Roberts, *To All Generations*, 63; Wright, "Augustine," *New Dictionary of Theology*, 59.

113. *On Baptism* 4.9.14; *City of God* 20.9.

114. *City of God* 20.9; Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, III: 369–370.

115. *On Christian Doctrine* 3.32.45.

116. Wright, "Augustine," *New Dictionary of Theology*, 59.

117. R. C. Sproul, "Augustine and Pelagius," *Tabletalk*, edited by R. C. Sproul, Jr. (Orlando: June, 1996) 11.

118. *Enchiridion* 30.

119. Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 19; Augustine's renowned prayer is found in *Confessions* 10.29.

averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”

Pelagius disagreed. The British monk taught that Adam was created by God in a state of neutrality; he was neither holy nor sinful. He was endowed with a free and undetermined will, that had the capacity to do good and/or evil. Further, said Pelagius, Adam’s disobedience did not affect anyone but himself. Every man born into this world is in the same situation that Adam was in the Garden of Eden. Everyone is free from both guilt and pollution of sin. Man, therefore, can choose not to sin; sin is a choice that man makes. Man remains innocent and perfectible; he does not sin because he is a sinner, he is a sinner because he sins. Adam, said Pelagius, was merely a “bad example” for the rest of humanity. Simply stated, Pelagianism teaches a doctrine of salvation by works.¹²⁰

Augustine defended the Christian faith against the Pelagian heresy. He upheld the doctrines of Adam’s federal headship and original sin. All mankind is judicially guilty due to Adam’s Fall. All persons are conceived in a state of “total depravity,” incapable of doing anything that pleases God.¹²¹ Whereas Adam in the Garden possessed both a free moral agency and the ability to choose good (righteousness), post-fall man has lost the latter. Man in his present condition still has the freedom of choice, but he has lost the ability to choose good. Man is not morally neutral.¹²²

These things being so, if man is going to be saved, it must be by the monergistic work of the triune God. And salvation is rooted in the eternal decree of God. The first Person of the Trinity, God the Father, predestines some to eternal life and others to eternal condemnation. Here again, Augustine was in agreement with the later *Westminster Confession of Faith* (3:3): “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.”¹²³ Moreover, said Augustine, in both election and reprobation, God is glorified and just:

That owing to one man all pass into condemnation who are born in Adam unless they are born again in Christ, even as He [God the Father] has appointed them to be regenerated, before they die in the body, whom He predestined to everlasting life, as the merciful bestower of grace; while to those whom He has predestinated to eternal death, He is also the most righteous awarder of punishment.¹²⁴

Further, God’s election is as certain as God is true:

Those, then, are elected . . . who are called according to [God’s] purpose, who are also predestinated and fore-known. If anyone of these perishes, God is mistaken; but none of them perishes, because God is not mistaken. If anyone of these perishes, God is overcome by human sin; but none of them perishes, because God is overcome by nothing.¹²⁵

This assures us, Augustine went on to say, that the number of the elect “is so certain that one can neither be added to them or taken from them.”¹²⁶

Augustine taught that the second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, took upon Himself a human nature,¹²⁷ lived a sinless life in perfect obedience to the commandments of God,¹²⁸ and died an atoning death in behalf of all that the Father had elected unto eternal life.¹²⁹ Herein Jesus Christ merited the salvation of God’s people.¹³⁰

And, according to Augustine, the third Person of the Trinity, God the Spirit, is that member of the Godhead who applies that salvation predestined by the Father and merited by the Son. The Holy Spirit regenerates elect sinners,¹³¹ and produces faith in them so that they are enabled to believe in Christ.¹³² The Spirit is also that

120. Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 132–133; Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, III:783–815; Roberts, *To All Generations*, 64; David F. Wright, “Pelagianism,” *New Dictionary of Theology*, 499–501.

121. *Enchiridion* 26–27, 50; Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrine*, 134–135.

122. Augustine, *On Original Sin*; *Enchiridion* 30, 106; *Letters* 143.6; *City of God* 15.21; Gordon H. Clark, *The Biblical Doctrine of Man* (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1984) 62–77.

123. Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, *On the Soul and Its Origin* 4.16; *On the Gospel of John* 48.4. Augustine taught that the number of those predestined unto eternal life is equal to the number of the fallen angels (*Enchiridion* 29). In other words, in the words of Norman Geisler, “the predestined fill up the ranks of fallen angels”; see Norman L. Geisler, editor, *What Augustine Says* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982) 127.

124. Augustine, *On the Soul and Its Origin* 4.16.

125. Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace* 14.

126. *On Rebuke and Grace* 39. Unhappily, Augustine did teach that a person once regenerated and converted can lose that salvation. The redeeming feature of this seemingly inconsistent belief, however, is that he also taught that the elect will never die in an unregenerate state. See Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 136–137.

127. *City of God* 17.16; *Enchiridion* 34.

128. Augustine, *On Man’s Perfection in Righteousness* 21.

129. *On Nature and Grace* 48.

130. *Enchiridion* 33, 41; *On the Gospel of John* 12.11; 41.6.

131. *Enchiridion* 49.

132. Augustine, *On Forgiveness of Sins, and Baptism*, 2.52.

member of the Godhead who seals the believer, assuring him of his permanent status as a child of God: “For when we come to Him [Christ], we come to the Father also because through an equal an equal is known; and the Holy Spirit binds, and as it were seals us, so that we are able to rest permanently in the supreme and unchangeable God.”¹³³

As Berkhof wrote, to Augustine, the Holy Spirit, “is necessary, not merely for the purpose of supplying a deficiency, but for the complete renewal of the inner disposition of man, so that he is brought into spiritual conformity to the law.”¹³⁴ Saving faith, then, according to the bishop of Hippo, is a gift of God (Ephesians 2: 8–9). It is not something within the power of man. The will to believe is God-given. Thus, taught the North African, it is by grace alone, through faith alone, that man is able to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. As stated by W.G.T. Shedd, in Augustinianism, “grace is imparted to sinful man, not because he believes, but in order that he may believe; for faith itself is the gift of God.”¹³⁵

Furthermore, as properly maintained by John Piper: “What follows from Augustine’s view of grace as the giving of a sovereign joy that triumphs over lawless pleasures is that the entire Christian life is seen as a relentless quest for the fullest joy in God.... In other words, the key to Christian living is a thirst and a hunger for God.”¹³⁶

Augustine himself said it this way: “The soul of men shall hope under the shadow of Your wings; they shall be made drunk with the fullness of Your house; and of the torrents of Your pleasures You will give them to drink; for in You is the Fountain of Life, and in Your Light shall we see the light.”¹³⁷ And again:

Not with uncertain, but with assured consciousness do I love You, O Lord. You have stricken my heart with Your Word, and I loved You.... But what is it that I love in loving You? Not corporeal beauty, nor the splendor of time, nor the radiance of the light, so pleasant to our eyes, nor the sweet melodies of songs of all kinds, nor the fragrant smell of flowers, and ointments, and spices, not manna and honey, not limbs pleasant to the

embrace of the flesh. I love not these things when I love my God; and yet I love a certain kind of light, and sound, and fragrance, and food, and embrace in loving my God, who is the light, sound, fragrance, food, and embrace of my inner man—where that light shines unto my soul which no place can contain, where that sounds which time snatches not away, where there is a fragrance which no breeze disperses, where there is a food which no eating can diminish, and where that clings which no satiety can sunder. This is what I love when I love my God.¹³⁸

Pelagianism was condemned by the church at the Synod of Carthage (416) and the Council of Ephesus (431). But the heresy later returned, causing many to fall away from the Christian faith. Indeed, Pelagianism is still around today in the guise of modernist theology.

It is worthy of note that another heresy arose, as early as the fifth century, in the teaching of Cassian of Marseilles, which is known as semi-Pelagianism. Later it was called Arminianism, after one of its chief propagators: James Arminius (1560–1609).¹³⁹ This system of thought, which is every bit as dangerous as Pelagianism, is “in between” Augustinianism and Pelagianism. But the stress is still on the Pelagian side, where man has the ability to come to God; hence it is called semi-Pelagianism, rather than semi-Augustinianism. Semi-Pelagianism is the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as much of alleged evangelical theology today.

As Berkhof averred, semi-Pelagianism gives place “to both divine grace and human will as co-ordinate factors in the [spiritual] renewal of man.” It affirms human corruption due to the Fall, but regards “the nature of man as weakened or diseased rather than as fatally injured by the Fall. Fallen human nature retains an element of freedom, in virtue of which it can co-operate with divine grace.” This means that regeneration becomes “the joint product of both factors, but it really is man and not God that begins the work.”¹⁴⁰ In semi-Pelagianism, faith precedes regeneration, whereas in Augustinianism (i.e., Calvinism), regeneration precedes faith.

Augustine’s biblical view of the Fall, and the monergistic, gracious work of God in the salvation of the elect, countermands semi-Pelagianism as well as Pelagianism. Semi-Pelagianism was condemned by the church at the Council of Orange (529).

Augustine’s anti-Pelagian writings contain some important theological Latin phrases which, having been coined by the North African bishop, and Calvinistic

133. *On Christian Doctrine* 1.34.

134. Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 135.

135. Cited in Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 135.

136. Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 62–63.

137. Cited in Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 63.

138. *Confessions* 10.6.

139. G. A. Chan, “Five Points,” *The Trinity Review*, edited by John W. Robbins (Trinity Foundation, February, 2001).

140. Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 138.

in import, are still found in the writings of Reformed theologians today. These phrases have to do with the four spiritual “states” of man:¹⁴¹

Man as originally created was:

- 1) *Posse peccare*: with possibility of sin.
- 2) *Posse non peccare*: with possibility not to sin.
- 3) *Liberum arbitrium*: with freedom of the will.
- 4) *Libertas*: with ability to choose good (righteousness).
- 5) *Posse non mori*: with the possibility not to die.

Since the Fall man is:

- 1) *Posse peccare*.
- 2) *Liberum arbitrium*.
- 3) *Non posse non peccare*: not possible not to sin.
- 4) *Non posse non mori*: not possible not to die.

Redeemed man prior to the final state is:

- 1) *Posse peccare*.
- 2) *Posse non peccare*.
- 3) *Non posse non mori*.
- 4) *Liberum arbitrium*.
- 5) *Libertas*.

Redeemed man in glory is:

- 1) *Non posse peccare*.
- 2) *Liberum arbitrium*.
- 3) *Libertas*.
- 4) *Non posse mori*: not possible to die.

Augustine’s anti-Pelagian writings include: *On the Merits and Remission of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants, On the Spirit and the Letter, On Nature and Grace, On Man’s Perfection in Righteousness, On the Proceedings of Pelagius, On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin, On Marriage and Concupiscence, On the Soul and Its Origin, Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, On Grace and Free Will, On Rebuke and Grace, On the Predestination of the Saints, and On the Gift of Perseverance.*

AUGUSTINE’S CITY OF GOD

When scholars discuss the major works of Augustine (some of which have been noted above), there are two that stand out: *Confessions* and *City of God*. As we have seen, in his *Confessions*, Augustine gave us somewhat of a spiritual biography of the first thirty-three years of his life. In his *City of God*, on the other hand, we have both a defense of the Christian world and life view, and a Christian philosophy of history. In 410, after some 900 years of virtual impenetrable security, Rome was sacked

by the Arian Goths. This event shook the ancient world. Rome was not invulnerable. Upon hearing this, Saint Jerome, the translator of the *Latin Vulgate*, wrote: “If Rome can perish, what can be safe.”¹⁴²

Many living in that day blamed Christianity for Rome’s fall. Augustine came to the defense of the Christian cause. He took up his pen and began his twenty-two book tome: *City of God* (the title of which came from Psalm 46:4). It is said that Charlemagne, who enjoyed having serious books read to him at dinner time, enjoyed *City of God* above all others. Some historians have noted that he might have seen in this book an inspiration for the Christian empire which he hoped to build in the eighth and ninth centuries.¹⁴³

The first ten books of *City of God* were written as an apologetic treatise. They analyze Rome and Roman paganism (as well as some other false philosophical systems), which threatened to overwhelm the Christian faith in the fifth century. In these chapters, commented Roberts, Augustine explained that Rome fell, as do all pagan empires, due to God’s sovereign judgment on moral corruption: “The idea of an ‘eternal Rome’ was an idolatrous myth. Empires are showcases of human pride, filled with the seeds of self-destruction. Rome was no exception. Its crumbling was not Christianity’s fault.”¹⁴⁴

The remaining twelve books set forth a philosophy of history, clearly demonstrating that since the Fall of man in Genesis 3, there have been two cities or kingdoms in this world: the city of God and the city of man. These two kingdoms exist side by side in the world, and are continually involved in spiritual warfare with one another. These “two cities,” wrote Augustine, “have been formed by two loves: the earthly city by the love of self ... the heavenly by the love of God ... the former glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. ... The one city consists of those who wish to live after the flesh, the other of those who wish to live after the Spirit.”¹⁴⁵

Moreover, since the time of Cain (a member of the city of man), who killed his brother Abel (a member of the city of God), the world has persecuted the church. This will be the case until the second advent of Christ. At this time, God’s children (those who belong to the

141. For more on this, see Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), under the appropriate Latin phrases.

142. Cited in Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 41.

143. Edward R. Hardy, Jr., “The City of God,” *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 257.

144. Roberts, *To All Generations*, 65.

145. *City of God* 14.28.

city of God) will be fully vindicated. And those who belong to the city of man will receive their everlasting punishment.

City of God points out that history is linear, not circular. The biblical teaching that Christ died “once” for the sins of His people assures us that God has a plan which is presently in the process of being carried out in space-time history. Only the Christian view of history gives us hope. Secular, circular philosophies, with their inbred concept of meaningless repetition, taught Augustine, lead only to despair. Augustine’s “optimistic Amillennialism”¹⁴⁶ is apparent throughout the book. The kingdom of God, which is presently in the millennial age, is progressively and inexorably moving toward its final eternal rest in the kingdom of glory.

Regarding Augustine’s philosophy of history, Warfield wrote:

The church is therefore set over against the world as the new kingdom of God in which sinful man finds restoration and in its gradual growth we observe the human race attaining its originally destined end. The time is to come when the kingdom of God shall overspread the earth, and when that time comes, the abnormalities having been cured, the normal knowledge of God will assert itself throughout the redeemed race of man.¹⁴⁷

Augustine’s love for the triune God of Scripture is evident in all of his writings. In his *On Christian Doctrine*, for example, he commented that “every man is to be loved as a man for God’s sake; but God is to be loved for His own sake. And if God is to be loved more than any man, each man ought to love God more than himself.”¹⁴⁸ But perhaps no place is the North African’s zeal for the glory of God and the expansion of His kingdom more evident than in the final paragraph of *City of God*:

146. The term “Amillennialism” is used somewhat anachronistically here, because “Amillennialism” did not begin to be used as a separate eschatological term until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even though the essential teaching of Amillennialism has existed for centuries. See Keith A. Mathison, *Postmillennialism: An Eschatology of Hope* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1999) 29–30, 252.

147. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 477.

148. *On Christian Doctrine* 27.

149. *City of God* 22.30.

150. For a more detailed study of this, see Gordon H. Clark, *The Works of Gordon Haddon Clark*, Volume 4 (Unicoi, Tennessee: The Trinity Foundation, 2004); W. Gary Crampton, *The Scripturalism of Gordon H. Clark* (The Trinity Foundation, 1999) 17–29.

And now, as I think, I have discharged my debt, with the completion, by God’s help, of this huge work. It may be too much for some, too little for others. Of both these groups I ask forgiveness. But of those for whom it is just enough I make this request: that they do not thank me, but join with me in rendering thanks to God. Amen. Amen.¹⁴⁹

AUGUSTINE ON KNOWLEDGE

In the history of philosophy, there have been three major non-Christian theories of knowledge: (pure) rationalism, empiricism, and irrationalism.¹⁵⁰ All three were prevalent in Augustine’s day.

First, in pure rationalism, reason, apart from revelation or sensory experience, provides the prime, or only, source of truth. The senses are considered untrustworthy, and our *apriori* knowledge (the knowledge we have before any observation or experience) must be applied to our experience in order for our experience to be made intelligible. In a Christian epistemology (theory of knowledge), as taught by Augustine, knowledge comes through reason (logic), as one studies the revealed propositions of Scripture, understands them, and draws implications from them. In pure rationalism, on the other hand, knowledge comes from reason alone. Unaided human reason becomes the standard by which all beliefs are judged. Even revelation must be judged by reason. Hence, pure rationalism has the mistaken notion that man, apart from revelation, is able to come to a knowledge of at least some things, including God.

There are several errors in the rationalist system. First, as rationalists admit, men can and do err in their reasoning. Formal errors in logic provide just one example. Second, there is the problem of a starting point. Where does one start in pure rationalism? Plato, René Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz, and Baruch Spinoza were all classic rationalists; yet, they all had different starting points, different axioms. Clearly, rationalists do not agree on a starting point, an axiom on which their system is to be based.

Third, pure rationalism cannot determine if the world is controlled by an omnipotent, good God, or by an omnipotent demon. And fourth, in pure rationalism, it is difficult to avoid solipsism, which is the belief that the self is all that exists or is capable of being known. Without a divine, universal mind in which all persons and objects participate (such as in Christian theism), it is not possible for the individual to escape his own mind.

Second, empiricism maintains that all knowledge originates in the senses. According to the empiricist, ordinary experience from our physical senses produces knowledge. In empiricism, the scientific method of investigation is stressed. Science, of course, is based on observation, and repetitive and supposedly independent observation is emphasized. The idea being that with repetitive observation, knowledge and certainty are increased.

In a consistent empirical epistemology, the mind is considered to be a *tabula rasa* (“blank tablet”) at birth. It has no innate structure, form, or ideas. Therefore, all knowledge must come through the senses.

While rationalists proceed by deduction, empiricists use both deductive and inductive reasoning. One collects his experiences and observations, and draws inferences and conclusions from them. This empirical knowledge is *aposteriori*; that is, it comes after or through experience. One must be able to smell, taste, feel, hear, or see something in order to “know” it. Once something is experienced (or “sensed”), then the mind, which is a blank tablet prior to experience, somehow remembers, imagines, combines, transposes, categorizes, and formulates the sensory experience into knowledge.

The philosophical problems with empiricism are so numerous that only some of them will be exposed here. First, all inductive arguments are formal logical fallacies. In inductive study, each argument begins with particular premises and ends with a universal conclusion. The difficulty is that it is not possible to collect enough experiences on any subject to reach a universal conclusion. Simply because the system depends on the collection of experiences for its conclusion, it can never be certain that some new experience or observation will not change its previous conclusions. Thus, it can never be absolutely conclusive. For example, one may observe 1000 crows and find them all to be black. But when crow number 1001 turns out to be an albino, the previous conclusion about crows being black must be revised.

Second, the senses can and frequently (perhaps always) do deceive us. No one can ever have the same experience twice. The ancient philosopher Heraclitus pointed this out in his well known dictum: “No one ever stands in the same river twice.” Finite things continually change, even as the water in a river continues to flow. In such a system, verification, that is, the inferring of a conclusion by good and necessary consequence, is not possible. In fact, the basic axiom of empiricism—that theories, ideas, and propositions must be either

verified or falsified by sense observation—cannot itself be verified or falsified by sense observation. Thus, empiricism rests on a self-contradictory, and therefore false, starting point.

Third, as we have seen, empiricists maintain that all men are born with a blank mind. But this is not possible. A consciousness which is conscious of nothing is a contradiction in terms. Here too empiricism is self-contradictory.¹⁵¹

Fourth, the truths of mathematics cannot be derived from the senses; the laws of logic cannot be abstracted or obtained from sensory information; nor can the senses give us ideas such as “equal,” “parallel,” or “justification.” These are never found in sense experience. No two things we experience are ever perfectly equal, parallel, or just. Rather, these are abstractions that have nothing at all to do with our senses.

These categorical difficulties with empiricism are insuperable. Empiricism cannot tell us how the senses alone give us conceptions. If the “knower” is not already equipped with conceptual elements or ideas (i.e., innate knowledge), how can he ever conceptualize the object sensed? Whereas rationalism, with its concept of universal ideas, gives us an explanation for categories and similarities, empiricism has no explanation for them. Without these, rational discourse is not possible.¹⁵²

Fifth, as with pure rationalism, solipsism is inescapable in an empiricist epistemology. One’s sensations are just that: one’s sensations. No one else can experience them. But if this is the case, one cannot be certain that there is an external world. Any evidence that might be offered is just subjective experience.

Finally, in ethics, even if we were to assume that empiricism (at best) could tell us what *is*, it can never tell us what *ought to be*. “Ought-ness” can never be derived from “is-ness.” Empirical observation can never give us moral principles. Only divinely revealed propositions can give us moral principles. Even in the Garden of Eden, before the Fall, man was dependent on propositional revelation from God for knowledge. By observation alone, he could not have determined his duty before God. After the Fall, the problem is worsened by sin and corruption.

Third, irrationalism is a form of skepticism. It is anti-rational and anti-intellectual. Actual truth, say the skeptics, can never be attained. Rational attempts to explain the world leave us in despair. Reality cannot

151. John W. Robbins, “An Introduction to Gordon H. Clark,” Part 1, *The Trinity Review* (Trinity Foundation, July, 1993) 4.

152. Augustine, *On the Teacher* 11.36–38; 12.39–40.

be communicated propositionally; it must be grasped subjectively. Logic must be curbed, say the skeptics, and truth must be found or “encountered” in paradox and contradiction.

The problem with irrationalism is that when one divorces logic from epistemology, he is left with nothing. If the law of contradiction¹⁵³ is invalid, then all propositional statements are invalid. Even words such as “God” and “Satan” mean the same thing. Rational discourse is impossible. Neither God nor the world can be known. Further, as seen above, skepticism is self-contradictory, and therefore, erroneous, for it asserts with certainty that nothing can be known for certain.

Augustinian Epistemology

If we are to avoid the fallacies of pure rationalism, the pitfalls of empiricism, and the skepticism of irrationalism, said Augustine, we need another source of truth. We need propositional revelation from God, who is truth itself.¹⁵⁴ As Gordon Clark wrote, in Christian theism, as taught by Augustine, “there is a source of knowledge not admitted by the Greek philosophers, namely, revelation. God not only creates the world, but He also speaks and communicates information to men.”¹⁵⁵

According to Augustine, God has revealed Himself to man in both general and special revelation, which are in harmony. The former is general in audience (all mankind) and limited in content. Special revelation, on the other hand, which is now found only in the Bible, is more restricted in audience (those who read the Bible), and much more detailed in content. Due to its limited nature, general revelation must always be interpreted in light of special revelation.¹⁵⁶ This was true before the Fall of man (Genesis 3), but even more so afterward, because the universe (including man) is now in a state of abnormality (Genesis 3:14–19; Romans 8:19–25). Thus, knowledge of God and His creation can be derived only from Scripture. Further, saving knowledge of

Jesus Christ is found only in special revelation.¹⁵⁷ The Bible alone, then, is the standard by which all is to be judged. It has supreme authority over all things.¹⁵⁸ Here Augustine was in agreement with the later *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:1):

Although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishing and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which makes the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God’s revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.

Augustine averred that God has implanted in each man an innate knowledge of Himself (Calvin’s *sensus deitatis*¹⁵⁹), which is propositional and ineradicable. This is due to the fact that men are created in the image of God. According to Augustine, it is this knowledge that lies at the root of all of man’s knowledge of God, and leaves him without excuse.

At the same time, said Augustine, because there is the *apriori* awareness of God in all men, the creator God is perceived by man in His creation. When man interacts with God’s creation, which demonstrates His “goodness, wisdom, and power,” man, as God’s image bearer, is forced, in some sense, to “think God.” Creation itself does not mediate knowledge to man (as in the epistemology of Thomas Aquinas), for the visible universe sets forth no propositions. Rather, it stimulates the mind of man to intellectual intuition (or recollection), who as a rational being is already in possession of *apriori*, propositional information about God and His creation. This *apriori* knowledge is immediately impressed upon man’s consciousness. The mind is then able to properly perceive the glory of God as revealed in creation.¹⁶⁰

Warfield explained Augustine’s theory as follows:

In a word, the soul is caparisoned [richly equipped] for the perception and understanding of the sensible world [creation] only by prior perception and understanding of the intelligible world [the mind with its

153. The law of contradiction (or non-contradiction) states that A (which could be any proposition or object) cannot be both B and non-B at the same time and in the same sense.

154. Augustine, *On the Gospel of John* 2.6–7.

155. Clark, *Thales to Dewey*, 154–155.

156. Augustine, *Soliloquies* 1.13.23; *Enchiridion* 4–5; *Confessions* 7.10.

157. *On the Gospel of John* 2.6–8; *On Christian Doctrine* 1.12.

158. *City of God* 11.1, 3; *Letters* 82.1.2–3.

159. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vols. I & II, edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) I:31.

160. Clark, “Augustine of Hippo,” *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, I:486–488.

innate ideas]. That is to say, the soul brings over from the intelligible world the forms of thought under which alone the sensible world can be received by it into a mental embrace.¹⁶¹

According to Augustine, the knowledge that man has of God and His creation is not derived by empirical or a rationalistic means. Neither is it in any sense mediated knowledge. Rather, Augustine maintained that all knowledge is immediate, revelational, and propositional. It is the “inward teacher,” Jesus Christ, the divine *Logos*, not the senses in one’s interaction with creation, who teaches man. This is true even with the printed pages of the Bible. All speech or communication is a matter of words, and words (even those found in Holy Scripture) are signs, in that they signify something. When signs are used, the recipient, in order to understand, must already interiorly know that which is signified. Apart from this interior knowledge, signs would be without meaning.¹⁶²

In the words of Gordon Clark:

Augustine solves the problem by insisting that knowledge comes first and the use of signs comes afterward. The pupil must already know the meaning before the teacher’s words can help him. He has this knowledge because of the truth within. When the teacher gives a lesson in geometry, the pupil looks within his own mind, consults the truth there, and judges the teacher’s assertions. The pupil already has the truth and sees the Ideas because Christ the *Logos* is the Light that enlightens every man.¹⁶³

Saint Augustine taught that God created men in His image with rational minds. And the minds of men use the same laws of thought as does God. The principles of reason (logic) and knowledge are innately given by God to mankind through the *Logos*. Thus, when men know the truth, they know what is in the mind of God. They do not merely have a representation of the truth. Hence, Augustine denied the correspondence theory of truth, which teaches that man only has a representation of the truth, and not the truth itself. Augustine held to the coherence theory of truth, which maintains that what man has is the real truth: the same truth that exists in the mind of God.¹⁶⁴

Since all knowledge is propositional, and since the senses in interacting with creation produce no propositions, said the North African bishop, knowledge cannot originate, be conveyed by, or be derived from sensation. Rather, as seen, the senses stimulate the mind of man

to intellectual intuition, to recollect the God-given innate propositional ideas that man already possesses. In illustrating the Augustinian view, Gordon Clark used the example of a piece of paper on which is written a message in invisible ink. The paper (and by illustration, the mind) might appear blank, but in actuality it is not. When the heat of experience is applied to the mind (as when heat is applied to the paper), the message becomes visible.¹⁶⁵

Saint Augustine’s theory of knowledge had its roots in the *Logos* doctrine, which maintains that Jesus Christ is the cosmological *Logos* (John 1:1–3), the epistemological *Logos* (John 1:9, 14), and the soteriological *Logos* (John 1:4, 12–13; 14:6). He is the Creator of the world, the source of all human knowledge, and the giver of salvation. As to the epistemological *Logos*, which is the focus of the present study, Christ is “the true light which enlightens every man coming into the world” (John 1:9). Apart from the direct activity of the divine *Logos* (the “inward teacher”) on the mind of man, knowledge would not be possible.¹⁶⁶

Another way of explaining this is that Augustine, as a Christian idealist, maintained that the sum total of all truth (i.e., true propositions) exists in the mind of God. There is nothing that exists outside of God’s mind. Augustine referred to these true propositions as the “eternal reasons.” If man, then, is going to know the truth, he must come to know the eternal propositions (“eternal reasons”) in the mind of God. Some of these eternal propositions are implanted in man from conception by God. And when man interacts with creation, or reads the words of Scripture, the divine *Logos*, illuminates the mind so that the propositions come to consciousness, as the invisible ink appears.¹⁶⁷

Augustinian Apologetics

Saint Augustine rejected the natural theology of evidentialist apologetics. Natural theology advocates, such as

161. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 394.

162. *On the Teacher* 11.36–38; 12:39–40.

163. Clark, “Augustine of Hippo,” *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, I:488.

164. Clark, *Thales to Dewey*, 181–184; Wayne J. Hankey, “Ratio, Reason, Rationalism,” *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, 696–702; Augustine, *On the Trinity* 9.6–7; *Soliloquies* 1.6.12.

165. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation*, 142–143.

166. Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man*, 66–69; Augustine, *On the Gospel of John* 2.6–7.

167. *Soliloquies* 2.7–8; Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge*, 134; Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man*, 79–84.

Thomas Aquinas, maintain that not only is there a true general revelation which God gives to mankind, but also that it is possible for man to express true knowledge of God from this general revelation alone (i.e., without the aid of special revelation). Augustine was not an evidentialist. Rather than beginning with creation and arguing to Scripture and the triune God of Scripture, he began with Scripture.

John Mourant wrote:

To say as Augustine does that the universe proclaims the existence of God as its Creator is not a formal argument but rather an explication of what has already been achieved by faith. It must not be overlooked that the *crede ut intelligas* ["believe in order that you might understand"] pervaded the whole ontology and epistemology of Augustine. Hence, rather than a belief in God following inferentially from the evidence of nature, the evidence of God in nature becomes apparent and a source of wonder and conviction to the individual who first possesses faith.¹⁶⁸

Every system of epistemology must have a starting point, which is axiomatic; it cannot be proved; it is indemonstrable. For Augustine, the axiomatic starting point is the Word of God, which is self-authenticating and self-evident; it contains its evidence within itself. The North African's well known dictum *credo ut intelligam* ("I believe in order that I might understand") bears this out. In the vernacular of today, this is referred to as "biblical presuppositionalism."¹⁶⁹ Augustine's apologetical method, then, said Robert Reymond, presupposes "the primacy of special revelation as providing the ground for the total theological enterprise."¹⁷⁰

Saint Augustine did not deny the usefulness of evidence. Rather, he believed that there are numerous

evidences that manifest the Bible to be the infallible, inerrant Word of God. He wrote, for example: "Consider moreover the style in which the sacred Scripture is composed.... The plain truths which it contains it declares in the artless language of familiar friendship to the hearts of both of the unlearned and of the learned." Perhaps the greatest evidence that the Bible is the Word of God, said Augustine, is recognizable in the fulfillment of prophecy: "For what are clearer proofs than those things which we now see to have been foretold and fulfilled."¹⁷¹ But the evidences do not "prove" the Scriptures to be true. Augustine would have roundly endorsed the statement of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:4–5) that:

The authority of Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to an high and reverend esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it does abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and the divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

There are, said Augustine, as does the *Confession*, numerous evidences that the Bible is indeed the infallible, inerrant Word of God. But apart from the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, these evidences are inconclusive. How then are the evidences useful? They are useful in an *ad hominem* fashion, to reveal the internal inconsistencies, and thus the error of, non-Christian systems. Standing on the transcendental *pou sto* ("place to stand")¹⁷² of biblical revelation, the Christian is able to use the evidences apagogically, "to answer the fool as his folly deserves, lest he be wise in his own eyes" (Proverbs 26:5).¹⁷³

After showing the internal incoherence of the non-Christian worldviews, Augustine would present the truth of the Word of God to the non-believer. He would

168. Mourant, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, 11.

169. *Letters* 137.4; 143.7; *City of God* 8.10; 11.3.

170. Robert L. Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976) 8–9.

171. Cited in Geisler, *What Augustine Says*, 27–28.

172. Archimedes, a Greek mathematician, while working with a simple lever, said "give me a place where I may stand [*pou sto*] and I will move the world." What Archimedes was saying is that to move the world he would need a base for his lever's fulcrum which is outside of the world. In this sense, the Bible is the Christian's transcendental *pou sto*. It is God's Word from outside of the world which gives us "the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life" (*Westminster Confession of Faith* [1:6]). See Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998) 111.

173. *On the Trinity* 5.1; 7.6; Robert Crouse, "Knowledge," *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, 486–488.

demonstrate the logical consistency of the Scriptures, and how the Christian system gives us a coherent understanding of the world in which we live. This approach is not to be seen as a proof for Christianity, but a refutation of the non-Christian worldview.

This apagogic methodology, taught Augustine, consisting in a series of *reductiones ad absurdum*, is the best method available to a biblical apologete. The reason is that even though there is metaphysical common ground between believers and non-believers, in that both are created in the image of God, there is no common epistemological ground. The *ad hominem* apagogic arguments are to be used against the non-believer, who is a covenant breaker and already in possession of the innate idea of the God against whom he is rebelling. The arguments are to be used in a fashion that will attempt to make him epistemologically self-conscious (and thus God conscious) of his covenant breaking rebellion. This is Augustinian apologetics.¹⁷⁴

As Ronald Nash pointed out, the North African bishop sometimes used “the argument from the nature of truth” to reveal the internal consistency of Christianity. Truth, he insisted, must exist. That is to say, skepticism is false. Even to deny the existence of truth (that is, to say that it is “true” that there is no truth) is to assert that truth does and necessarily exists. Furthermore, truth is immutable. That which changes, by definition, cannot be true. To deny the eternity of truth (that is, to say that it is “true” that truth is not eternal or that it will someday perish) is to affirm, by denying, its eternity. And since truth can exist only in the form of propositions, it must be mental. But seeing that the mind of man is not eternal and immutable, there must be a mind superior to the mind of man that is eternal and immutable. This, argued Augustine, is the God of Scripture.¹⁷⁵

Saint Augustine believed that there is a philosophical distinction which is made between “knowledge” and “opinion.” There is a difference between that which we “know” and that which we “opine.” Knowledge is not only possessing ideas or thoughts; it is possessing true ideas or thoughts. Knowledge is knowledge of the truth. It is justified belief. Only the Word of God gives us such knowledge.

Opinions, on the other hand, may be true or false. Natural science, archaeology, history (with the exception of biblical history), are all opinions. In these disciplines one does not deal with facts. Here there is no justified true belief. To opine something is not to know it, even though the opinion may be true. Only the Word of God—that which “is expressly set down in Scripture,

or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture,”¹⁷⁶ yields “knowledge.”¹⁷⁷

AUGUSTINE ON SCRIPTURE

After his conversion, Augustine devoted his life to the study and exposition of Scripture. He was an early advocate of the (later) Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*, in that he believed, as taught by the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:6), that “the whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.” The many writings of the North African bishop attest to this fact. He described the Bible as “Holy Scripture,” “Sacred Scripture,” divine revelation,” the “oracles of God,” “divine Scripture,” the “words of God,” “God’s Word,” the “divine oracles,” and “infallible Scripture.”¹⁷⁸

We have already seen that, according to Augustine, God has revealed Himself to mankind by means of general and special revelation, which are in harmony. The former, however, must always be interpreted by means of the latter. It is in special revelation alone that God speaks to His people in verbal, propositional revelation. Moreover, although general revelation is sufficient to reveal God as Creator, leaving all men without excuse, special revelation is necessary for a sound and saving knowledge of God.¹⁷⁹ Only Holy Scripture points fallen man to Christ. The law of God convicts man of sin, so that man may hear the voice of Christ in the gospel.¹⁸⁰

The Canon of Scripture

Orthodox Christianity maintains, with the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:1), that:

Therefore, it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church

174. Clark, *Three Types of Religious Philosophy*, 139–142.

175. Ronald H. Nash, “Gordon Clark’s Theory of Knowledge,” *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark*, edited by Ronald H. Nash (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968) 157–161.

176. *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:6).

177. *On the Teacher* 11–12.

178. Cited in Geisler, *What Augustine Says*, 33.

179. *Confessions* 8.1; *On the Trinity* 14.15.

180. *On Nature and Grace* 13; *Confessions* 7.18–21.

against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which makes the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.

Saint Augustine was in full agreement with this doctrine of progressive revelation. There was a continuously enlarging body of special revelation from the time of Adam in the Garden of Eden to the time of the apostles. In Eden, God revealed Himself to Adam in propositional revelation, and He continued to do so little by little over the centuries of time, until the close of the canon of Scripture. And throughout the entirety of the progress of revelation, the revelation is infallible and inerrant at every stage.¹⁸¹

Augustine, along with the later Reformers, taught that the church did not create nor determine the canon of Scripture. Rather, the church recognized those writings which were qualitatively the Word of God from the time of their writing, and quantitatively included them in the canon. The church endorsed and received that which was already Scripture.¹⁸² In fact, in several of his works, Augustine listed some of the principles by which the church evaluated the canonicity of the books under study: Were they written by a prophet or an apostle? Were they in accord with the balance of Scripture? And were they accepted by the church from the earliest days of Christianity?¹⁸³

Furthermore, said Augustine, the fact that the canon is now closed means that the partial means of revelation (e.g., tongues, prophecy) which the Lord utilized as "those former ways ... [of] His revealing His will unto His people ... [were] now ceased."¹⁸⁴ He wrote: "In the earliest time [believers] once spoke with tongues ... but it passed away ... the witness of the presence of the Holy Ghost is not now given through these miracles

... these things [miraculous Word gifts] do not take place now."¹⁸⁵

Augustine taught that the closed canon consisted of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments alone. The Roman Catholic Church disagrees with this assessment, maintaining that Augustine agreed with Rome that seven books of the *Apocrypha* were also canonical. Joseph Lienhard, for example, stated that Augustine's Old Testament "canon is identical with the canon of the forty-six books promulgated by the Council of Trent."¹⁸⁶

It is in fact true that the early Augustine did give some credence to the *Apocrypha* as a part of the canon, due to his high regard for the *Septuagint* (which includes the *Apocrypha*), but this was only true in a secondary sense. That is, he always approached the *Apocrypha* with less reverence than he did the Old Testament books themselves. And even though, in his *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine listed 73 books (46 Old Testament and 27 New Testament books) as belonging together in the canon,¹⁸⁷ it is also true that his contemporary, Jerome, included the apocryphal writings in the *Vulgate*, while rejecting them as a part of the canon.¹⁸⁸ Further, elsewhere Augustine clearly denied that the books of the *Apocrypha* were of the same status as the other 39 Old Testament books. "However," he wrote, "the writings not included in the Jewish canon [the 39 Old Testament books] do not carry as much weight as the canonical books when put forward as evidence against opposition."¹⁸⁹ And later, in his *Retractions*, he apparently moved further away from his earlier high opinion of the *Apocrypha*, rejecting some of his prior thoughts.¹⁹⁰ W. G. T. Shedd correctly wrote: "Augustine adopts the Protestant, and opposes the Papal theory of tradition [and the *Apocrypha*] and authority."¹⁹¹ Likely it is the case that the North African bishop believed the *Apocrypha* (at best) to be deuterocanonical.

Inspiration

The Bible claims to be given by "inspiration" of God. All Scripture is God-breathed truth (2 Timothy 3:16). The Holy Spirit enabled the prophets and apostles to record God's revelation in a trustworthy manner. These men were "moved along" by the Spirit as they wrote, so that the final product was nothing other than God's inerrant revelation (2 Peter 1:20–21).

With this orthodox view of Scripture, Augustine was in perfect accord. He wrote, for example, that the Bible is the "venerable writing of Your [God's] Spirit." The Scriptures are "the oracles of the Holy Ghost."¹⁹² Too,

181. *City of God* 18.38.

182. Augustine, *Reply to Faustus the Manichean* 11.5.

183. *Reply to Faustus the Manichean* 11.5; *City of God* 18.38,41.

184. *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:1).

185. Cited in Francis Nigel Lee, *Pentecostalism: New Outpouring or Ancient Heresy?* (Rowlett: Commonwealth Publishing, 1986) 47.

186. Joseph T. Lienhard, "Canon of Sacred Scripture," *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, 121.

187. *On Christian Doctrine* 2.8.

188. D. H. Wallace, "Apocrypha, Old Testament," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 66–67.

189. *City of God* 17.20.

190. *Retractions* 1.30; 2.4; see also Geisler, *What Augustine Says*, 44–48.

191. Cited in Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 465.

192. *Confessions* 7.21; 12.15.

he described the Bible as “divine truth,” “divine Scripture,” and “Holy Scripture” which was written “under the inspiration of God,” by the “Holy Spirit.”¹⁹³

Moreover, the Bible is not merely (as in neo-orthodoxy) a witness to the only true revelation of God, Jesus Christ, said Augustine. The Scriptures themselves are the “words of God.”¹⁹⁴ The Bible is “God’s Scripture”; it is “God’s Word.”¹⁹⁵

Saint Augustine maintained that the Bible teaches propositional truth. Propositions are logical, understandable combinations of words, which objectively teach something. They are the meaning of indicative sentences. Propositions are either true or false. What makes a proposition true is that God thinks it to be true. The truth of Scripture, then, does not lie subjectively in the mind of the interpreter. Neither are the words secretly symbolic, merely intimating some higher truth. Rather, the truth of Scripture lies in the logical organization of the words themselves, which are in the form of propositional statements.¹⁹⁶

Thus, according to Augustine, the Bible does not contain logical paradoxes. And it is just because God reveals Himself to us in logical propositions that Scripture is understandable. In each proposition, there is a univocal point where that which God speaks is understood by man. Albeit there are quantitative differences in the level of God’s understanding and man’s understanding, there must always be a qualitative point of contact. Augustine wrote that “by His [God’s] mouth we may understand His Word.”¹⁹⁷

Infallibility and Inerrancy

According to Augustine, the fact that the Bible is God-breathed assures us that it is both infallible and inerrant. The former word is a stronger word than the latter. Whereas inerrancy speaks to the verity that the Bible does not err, infallibility means that it cannot err. The Bible does not err, because it cannot err; God is its author.¹⁹⁸ In a letter to Jerome, Augustine wrote:

For I confess to your charity that I have learned to yield this respect and honor only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error. And if in these writings I am perplexed by anything which appears to me opposed to truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either the manuscript is faulty, or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I myself have failed to understand it. As to all other writings, in reading them, however great the

superiority of the authors to myself in sanctity and learning, I do not accept their teaching as true on the mere ground of the opinion being held by them; but only because they have succeeded in convincing my judgment of its truth either by means of these canonical writings themselves, or by arguments addressed to my reason.¹⁹⁹

In numerous of his *Letters*, Augustine made it clear that it is not possible for the Bible to contain error. He stated that “no writer of the divine books could in any part of his work honorably and piously utter a falsehood.” It is not conceivable that “anything false [be] found in the sacred books ... if you once admit ... [just] one false statement ... there will not be left a single sentence of those books which, if appearing to any one difficult in practice or hard to believe, may not by the same fatal rule be explained away.” This is true with regard to historical and scientific, as well as “religious” matters.²⁰⁰

Further, taught the North African bishop, due to the logical consistency of the Word of God, it is not possible that one author be found contradicting another.²⁰¹ He wrote: “Those who allege contradictions in the Bible examine only those testimonies of Scripture which support their peculiar view, regardless of the full and perfect meaning of such passages as exhibit the opposite side of the truth.”²⁰²

Augustine agreed with the later Reformers and Puritan divines that the claims with regard to biblical inerrancy apply only to the original manuscripts (the *autographa*); it does not hold true of the copies (the *apographa*). Any errors found in the *apographa* are due to either copyist or translator error. Said the bishop, only with regard to “the canonical books of Scripture ... [and] these alone,” do I assert “that the authors were completely free from error.”²⁰³ Yet, Augustine would certainly have agreed with the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:8) that the Scriptures have, by God’s “singular

193. *City of God* 8.2; 9.5; 15.8.

194. *City of God* 10.1.

195. *On the Psalms* 147.10.

196. Augustine, *Harmony of the Gospels* 2.28,66; *Enchiridion* 1,4; *On the Psalms* 119.12; Gordon H. Clark, *God’s Hammer* (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1995) 34.

197. *On the Psalms* 119.12.

198. *City of God* 11.6.

199. *Letters* 82.1.3.

200. *Letters* 40.4.7; 28.3.3; 102.31, 33.

201. *Letters* 40.4.5–6; *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean* 11.6.

202. Cited in Geisler, *What Augustine Says*, 38.

203. *Letters* 82.1.3.

care and providence, [been] kept pure in all ages, [and] are therefore authentic.”²⁰⁴

Authority and All Sufficiency

The Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, as so well set forth by the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1:6), contends that the Bible is fully authoritative over every area of life, and is all sufficient to equip man to perform “every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17):

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

This was undeniably the position espoused by Saint Augustine. Holy Scripture, he said, is “placed on the highest (even the heavenly) pinnacle of authority.” And it should be read “without questioning the trustworthiness of its statements.” It is “to the canonical Scriptures alone,” said he, “that I am bound to yield such implicit subjection as to follow their teaching, without admitting the slightest suspicion that in them any mistake or any statement intended to mislead could find a place.”²⁰⁵ Further, he wrote:

But who can fail to be aware that the sacred canon of Scripture, both of the Old and New Testaments, is confined within its own limits, and that it stands so absolutely in a superior position to all later letters of the bishops, that about it we can hold no manner of doubt or disputation whether what is confessedly contained in it is right and true; but all the letters of the bishops which have been written, or are being written, since the closing of the canon, are liable to be refuted if there be anything contained in them which strays from the truth [of Scripture].²⁰⁶

As stated by Warfield, “with Augustine the idea of authority coalesces with that of revelation, the idea of revelation with that of apostolicity, and the idea of apostolicity with that of Scripture. . . . In a word, Augustine defends the absolute authority of every word of Scripture and insists that to treat any word of it as unauthoritative is to endanger the whole.”²⁰⁷

The supreme authority and all sufficiency of Scripture is rooted and grounded in the fact that the author of Scripture is Jesus Christ. In his *City of God* we read:

This Mediator [Jesus Christ] spoke in former times through the prophets and later through His own mouth, and after that through the apostles, telling man all that He decided was enough [sufficient] for man. He also instituted the Scriptures, those which we call canonical. These are the writings of outstanding authority in which we put our trust concerning those things which we need to know for our good.²⁰⁸

The Bible, wrote Augustine, as the revelation of the most high God, “exercises sovereign authority over the literature of all mankind.” “Divine authority” is given to the “fixed and final canon of sacred literature,” because in the Scripture it is God speaking to us.²⁰⁹

The Law of God

As with Calvin and the Puritans after him, Augustine did not see a sharp dichotomy between the Old and the New Testaments. The whole of Scripture, he taught, is the infallible, inerrant Word of God. No part of the Bible contradicts any other part. They are in error, said Augustine, who think “that the two testaments in the Old and New books are contrary to each other.”²¹⁰ To the bishop of Hippo, the Old Testament is “but a concealed form of the New,” and the New Testament is “but the revelation of the Old.”²¹¹

Then too, Saint Augustine did not greatly separate the law and the gospel, though he carefully distinguished between them. Law without gospel is nothing more than a dead letter, but there is no gospel without the law to reveal one’s need for the grace of God in Christ. The law convicts man of his sin and need for a savior, so that he may hear the voice of God in the gospel.²¹²

Augustine averred that the New Covenant in no way did away with the laws of the Old Covenant. In his writings he implied that the civil magistrate was bound to uphold the just Old Testament laws of God in the New Testament era.²¹³ This being so, it would seem that Augustine was in agreement with the *Westminster*

204. *Letters* 82.1.2; 143.2; *Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon* 11.5.

205. *Letters* 82.2.5; 82.3.24.

206. *On Baptism* 2.3–4.

207. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 430, 432.

208. *City of God* 11.3.

209. *City of God* 11.1; 18.41.

210. Augustine, *Sermons on New Testament Lessons* 32.8.

211. *City of God* 16.26.

212. *On Nature and Grace* 16; *Confessions* 7.18; *Enchiridion* 118.

213. See Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Nutley, New Jersey: The Craig Press, 1977) 50, 389; see Augustine, *City of God* 9.4.

Confession (19:4–5), that the moral law, consisting of the Ten Commandments and the general equity of the civil law which God gave to Israel, is continually binding on all men and nations. The law for the Christian, is a pattern of life by which to live.²¹⁴

AUGUSTINE ON GOD

When we come to the study of God, as Charles Spurgeon wrote, we are involved in the highest science:

There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can comprehend and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go on our way with the thought, "Behold I am wise." But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the ... solemn exclamation, "I am but of yesterday and know nothing"... But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it.... Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continuing investigation of the great subject of the Deity.²¹⁵

Augustine would be in full agreement with this statement. In dealing with the study of God, he stated, "in no other subject is error more dangerous, or inquiry more laborious, or the discovery of truth more profitable."²¹⁶ The doctrine of God ("theology proper") is central to Christian theism, simply because it is central to the Scriptures which reveal Him. As the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Q. 1) teaches, "man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."

First, Saint Augustine would have us know that God is incomprehensible; that is, man the creature, can never plumb the depths of the knowledge of God.²¹⁷ Yet, as Augustine pointed out, God is knowable through His Word. Moreover, due to the fact that before one can truly know himself, or the world in general, there must first be a knowledge of God, God is the object best known to man. That is to say, God is known both better, and before, oneself or anything else.²¹⁸

Theologians normally study the doctrine of God under two headings: His being (who He is) and His works (what He does). Throughout his numerous writings, we find that Augustine deals with this doctrine in a similar fashion.

The Being of God

According to Augustine, God is that Being who possesses all perfections. He is the "supreme" God, who "supremely is."²¹⁹ Augustine concurred with how the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Q. 4) defines God as "a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." In one place alone, his (non-exhaustive) list of divine attributes included: "eternal, immortal, incorruptible, unchangeable, living, wise, powerful, beautiful, righteous, good, blessed, Spirit."²²⁰ For Augustine, like the Westminster divines, the attributes of God constitute the definition of God; God is His attributes.²²¹ And although Augustine nowhere went into a lengthy discussion of the attributes of God, he spoke about God's perfections throughout his writings.²²²

Infinity: God is pure, personal, non-corporeal Spirit.²²³ He is "the Author of this whole universe, who is not only above all material things, as immaterial, but also, as incorruptible ... [is] above all souls."²²⁴

God's attribute of infinity assures us that He is not limited by, or in any way conditioned by space or time. When we refer to God's infinity with regard to space, we speak of His omnipresence: "Behold, He is everywhere," taught Augustine. He is even present in hell "to punish" the non-believer.²²⁵ This great God, said the bishop, is "present everywhere in His totality, free from all spatial confinement ... filling heaven and earth with His ubiquitous [omnipresent] power which is independent of anything in the natural order."²²⁶

When we refer to God's infinity with regard to time, we speak of His eternity. According to Augustine, the world was not created from all eternity.²²⁷ God created the world with time (*cum tempore*), not in time (*in*

214. Augustine, *To Simplicianus; Enchiridion* 118–119.

215. Charles H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990) I:1.

216. *On the Trinity* 1.3.5.

217. *On the Trinity* 1.3.6; Cyril C. Richardson, "The Enigma of the Trinity," *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 235–256.

218. *On the Gospel of John* 38.10; *Confessions* 7.10.

219. *City of God* 12.2.

220. *On the Trinity* 15.5.8.

221. Gordon H. Clark, *The Trinity* (Jefferson, Maryland: The Trinity Foundation, 1985) 76–77.

222. Lewis Ayres and Michel R. Barnes, "God," *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, 384–390.

223. *City of God* 8.6; 11.4.

224. *City of God* 8.10.

225. *On the Psalms* 139.8.

226. *City of God* 7.30.

227. *City of God* 11.4–5.

tempore). Before God created the universe, “there was not time.” Time came into existence with the creation of the world.²²⁸ When once asked the question “What was God doing *before* He made heaven and earth?” Augustine answered by asserting that there was no *before*, before God created heaven and earth. When we use the word “before” we are making a reference to time. But “before the times created by God, times were not.”²²⁹

Then too, as seen, God’s infinity assures us that He is non-spatial. Space also was created by God. Thus, when asked why God created the universe “here” rather than “there,” Augustine responded that before creation there was no “here” or “there.” There was no space. There was only God.²³⁰

God’s attribute of eternity also teaches us that He does not have a succession of ideas. God does not think sequentially. He does not learn new facts. He knows all things from all eternity. Yet, although God does not have a succession of ideas, He does have an idea of succession. He is conscious of successive duration.²³¹

Aseity: God is independent and self-existent. He is un-derived and absolute. He is completely self-sufficient. He exists “from Himself” (*a se*). The triune God of the Bible, said Augustine, “is the one true God . . . there is no being whatsoever but God Himself or what comes from Him.” He alone is “supremely and equally and unchangeably good.”²³² All other things are created and dependent, but God is the great I AM THAT I AM.²³³

228. *City of God* 11.6; 11.13; 12.26.

229. *Confessions* 11.12–13.

230. William C. Christian, “The Creation of the World,” *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 328ff.

231. *City of God* 11.21,31.

232. *Enchiridion* 9–10.

233. *Confessions* 7.10.

234. *City of God* 11.10.

235. *Enchiridion* 10.

236. *City of God* 12.2.

237. *Confessions* 12.15; *On the Trinity* 8.2.1.

238. *On the Letter and the Spirit* 51.

239. *City of God* 11.10.

240. Clark, *The Trinity*, 46–54; Geisler, *What Augustine Says*, 54–55.

241. *Confessions* 1.3–4; 2.6.

242. Augustine, *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church* 8.13.

243. Augustine, *Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans* 31.

244. *Sermons on New Testament Lessons* 63.2.

245. *On the Psalms* 136.8.

246. *City of God* 11.21.

247. *City of God* 5.10.

248. *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean* 26.5.

249. *Confessions* 4.9.

250. *On the Gospel of John* 69.3.

251. *Enchiridion* 31.

252. *On the Psalms* 91.18–20.

Immutable: God cannot change. All of His attributes are eternally the same. Said Augustine, there “is one sole Good [God],” and He alone is “unchangeable.” The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all “changeless.”²³⁴ They are “supremely and equally and unchangeably good.”²³⁵

The God of Scripture, taught the bishop, is the great I AM, the one supreme being, “and He is therefore immutable.”²³⁶ Too, the fact that He is unchangeable truth itself, assures us that His eternal decrees can never change.²³⁷ This does not mean that God is static. Rather, Scripture represents God as being dynamic. He enters into relationships with His creatures.²³⁸

Simplicity: God is indivisible, claimed Augustine. He is one in essence. He is a perfectly integrated whole.²³⁹ There is one true and living God, who exists in three eternal Persons. According to Augustine, in the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, there is no confusion of the Persons, nor is there a division of the one essence. And each of the Persons is fully divine.²⁴⁰

Holiness: Augustine taught that God is distinct from all of His creation. He is transcendently “set apart” from all other things. God alone is “high above all.”²⁴¹ God’s attribute of holiness also speaks to His moral perfection. He is ethically holy; He cannot err; He is without sin. Being perfectly just and righteous, God is the “perfect good.”²⁴² Further, God’s attribute of holiness, said Augustine, means that He must judge sin, and that He will do so with perfect justice.²⁴³ God “is the fountain of justice.”²⁴⁴

Omniscience: God knows all true propositions. He perfectly knows Himself and all things actual and possible.²⁴⁵ And His knowledge of all things is all-comprehensive: past, present, and future. Wrote Augustine: “God comprehends all these [things] in a stable and eternal present.”²⁴⁶

Omnipotent: God is all powerful. He is sovereign over all of His creation, and is able to do all things which are consistent with His attributes. At the same time, God can never deny Himself.²⁴⁷ Augustine taught that “true omnipotence belongs to Him [God] who truly exists, and who alone is the source of all existence, both spiritual and corporeal.”²⁴⁸

Truth: The God of Scripture is a God of truth. He is the only true God who reveals Himself as truth itself.²⁴⁹ Thus, He can be depended upon. He is utterly reliable.²⁵⁰

Love: God is love. His love manifests itself in His unmerited favor (grace), which is graciously bestowed upon the elect.²⁵¹ God reveals His love through His mercy, patience, and goodness.²⁵²

The Trinity

Augustine's *On the Trinity*, written over a lengthy period (c. 399–419), can be divided into two distinct parts. The first part defines the Trinity (and faith in the Trinity) from a biblical standpoint, examining numerous Scripture passages. The second part is more speculative, in which a series of analogies are used to help explain the “enigma of the Trinity.”²⁵³ This doctrine is, said Augustine, while absolutely basic to Christianity, “a hard and obscure subject.”²⁵⁴ In *On the Trinity* we have what Cyril Richardson considered to be “one of his [Augustine's] foremost works, and indeed as one of the ablest presentations of the doctrine [of the Trinity] in Christian literature.”²⁵⁵ And in the words of Charles Ryrie, it is in Augustine's *On the Trinity* that the “statement of the Trinity in the Western church reached a final formulation.”²⁵⁶

As seen, for Augustine, the axiomatic starting point of Christian theism is the Word of God. The Bible is to be considered as fully authoritative. Thus, our study of the Trinity must be based upon Scripture. In the Bible Augustine found, in full agreement with the Councils of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381), that there was one true God who exists in three eternal Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three Persons are fully and equally divine. With Augustine, there is no concept of modalism or subordinationism in the Trinity.²⁵⁷ The unity of God's essence and the Trinity of Persons are equally stressed. They are in perfect harmony.²⁵⁸

In the doctrine of the ontological (i.e., His essential nature) Trinity, taught Augustine, we see that God is one in essence, and yet He is three in Persons. Further, there is no confusion of the Persons nor divisions in the essence of God.²⁵⁹ He wrote:

Therefore let us with steadfast piety believe in one God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; let us at the same time believe that the Son is not (the Person) who is the Father, and the Father is not (the Person) who is the Son, and neither the Father nor the Son is (the Person) who is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son. Let it not be supposed that in this Trinity there is any separation in respect of time or place, but that these three are equal and co-eternal, and absolutely of one nature: and that the creatures have been made, not some by the Father, and some by the Son, and some by the Holy Spirit, but that each and all have been made or are now being created subsist in the Trinity as their Creator; and that no one is saved by the Father without the Son and the Holy Spirit, or by the Son without the

Father and the Holy Spirit, or by the Holy Spirit without the Father and the Son—but by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the only one, true, and truly immortal (that is absolutely unchangeable) God.²⁶⁰

Whereas Augustine taught that there is complete equality within the ontological Trinity, he did properly recognize an order of economy, or administration, within the Godhead. Here there is a form of subordinationism. There are biblical passages that speak of the Father sending the Son into the world to accomplish His redemptive work (John 17:3). And there are other passages that state that the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit (John 15:26). Likewise, Jesus Christ Himself said “the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). But these verses do not teach that there is a subordination within the ontological Trinity. Rather, they teach that there is an economic or administrative order that exists within the Trinity. Each member of the Godhead has particular functions to perform in the accomplishment of the eternal, divine decrees. In this sense, said Augustine, and in this sense only is God the Father greater than the Son, and the Father and the Son are greater than the Holy Spirit; not in their essential nature, but in their administrative function.²⁶¹ Along this line, Augustine wrote: “Wherefore, although in all things the divine Persons act perfectly in common, and without

253. See Richardson, “The Enigma of the Trinity,” *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 235–256; Rowan Williams, “On the Trinity,” *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, 845–851.

254. *On the Trinity* 1.3.6.

255. Richardson, “The Enigma of the Trinity,” *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 235.

256. Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986) 58.

257. Modalism, or Sabellianism, is that false doctrine that teaches that God is one in essence and one in Person. There are not three Persons, there are merely three ways of referring to the same Person. Sometimes the Bible calls this one God Father (e.g., when it is referring to creation), sometimes He is referred to as Son (e.g., when it speaks of redemption), and sometimes He is referred to as Holy Spirit (e.g., when it speaks of regeneration and sanctification). The Son and the Spirit are called “modes” of God; hence the name “modalism.” Modalism adheres to the “oneness” of God to the exclusion of the “threeness.” The false doctrine of subordinationism, on the other hand, maintains that there is one God: the Father. The Son and the Spirit, as Persons, are lesser deities, if divine at all. The Son and the Spirit are not eternal; thus, they are subordinate to the Father.

258. *On the Trinity* 1.4.7; 1.12.25; Clark, *The Trinity*, 46–54.

259. *City of God* 8.6; 11.10; 11.28; Geisler, *What Augustine Says*, 54–55.

260. *Letters* 169.2.5.

261. *On the Trinity* 1.8.16; 2.2.4; 2.5.9; Richardson, “The Enigma of the Trinity,” *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, 846.

possibility of separation, nevertheless their operations behoved to be exhibited in such a way as to be distinguished from each other.”²⁶²

It should also be noted here that Augustine, as with Calvin after him, did not use the term “eternal begottenness,” when referring to the Son, in the way some theologians have used it throughout church history. Some have held that this terminology has reference to the Son’s receiving His divine nature from the Father.²⁶³ This was not Augustine’s view. According to the North African bishop, the Son’s deity is in no way derived. He, like the Father and the Spirit, is *autotheos*: God Himself. The term “eternal begottenness,” then, in Augustine’s thought, has to do with the eternal relationship that the Father has with the Son. The eternal Father has always been the Father of an eternal Son. He wrote: “Therefore, ever Father without beginning, ever Son without beginning. And how, you will say, was He begotten, if He has no beginning? Of eternal, co-eternal. At no time was the Father; and the Son not, and yet Son of Father was begotten.”²⁶⁴

Christology

As we have already studied, according to Augustine, the second Person of the triune Godhead is fully divine. He is, in the words of the *Shorter Catechism* (Q. 6), “the same in substance, equal in power and glory” with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He has eternally existed with the other two members of the Trinity.²⁶⁵ Even after the incarnation, Jesus Christ, as the only begotten Son of

the Father, wrote Augustine, “remains unchangeably co-eternal with You [the Father].”²⁶⁶ This being so, the Son of God did not lay aside any divine attributes when He took upon Himself a human nature. The *Kenosis* doctrine of modernist theologians cannot be traced to Saint Augustine.²⁶⁷

Moreover, stated Augustine:

They who have said that our Lord Jesus Christ is not God, or not very God, or not with the Father, the One and only God, or not truly immortal because changeable, are proved wrong by the most plain and unanimous voice of divine testimonies.²⁶⁸

Yet, this same eternal second Person of the triune Godhead, in the fullness of time, maintained Augustine, in agreement with the words of the *Shorter Catechism* (Q. 22), “became man, by taking to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.”²⁶⁹ Thus, according to Augustine, the human nature of Christ is as fully human as the divine nature is fully divine. He wrote:

Wherefore, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is both God and man. He is God before all ages; man in our time. He is God because He is the Word of God.... But He is man because in His own Person there were joined to the Word a rational soul and a body.... As the Word He is equal to the Father; as man He is less.²⁷⁰

It was necessary, claimed Augustine, for Christ to take upon Himself this human nature for the salvation of His elect people. Only in this way could He become the Mediator between God and man.²⁷¹ He wrote:

For the cure of this condition [sinfulness] we need a Mediator, since there can be no direct meeting between the immortal purity on high and the mortal and unclean things below.... We need a Mediator linked with us in our lowliness by reason of the mortal human nature of His body, and yet able to render us truly divine assistance for our purification and liberation, through the immortal justice of His Spirit in virtue of which He has remained in His dwelling on high—not by spatial remoteness from us, but by His unique resemblance to God.... This Mediator is, as the Holy Scripture proclaims, “the Mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus.” In respect of His divinity He is always equal to the Father, and by His humanity He became like us.²⁷²

262. *Letters* 11.4.

263. Robert Reymond, for example, contended that the language used in the Nicene Creed, which states that the Son was “begotten out of [ek] the being [ousias] of the Father,” is at least implicitly subordinationistic. It speaks to, or at least could speak to, the fact that the Son’s deity was derived from the Father. Such, however, is not the case. The Son is equally divine with the Father. See Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 324–330.

264. Augustine, *On the Creed* 8; see also *On the Trinity* 2.5.7–10; Geisler, *What Augustine Says*, 82.

265. *On the Trinity* 1.4; 2.5.

266. *Confessions* 7.9.

267. The heretical *Kenosis* doctrine, which had its beginning in the nineteenth century, teaches that at the time of the incarnation, Jesus Christ laid aside some or all of His divine attributes. If this were true, of course, which it is not, Christ, at the time of His incarnation, would have ceased being God. See W. Gary Crampton, *Christ the Mediator* (Rowlett: Blue Banner Ministries, 2000).

268. *On the Trinity* 1.6.

269. *City of God* 17.16; *Enchiridion* 34.

270. *Enchiridion* 35.

271. *On the Gospel of John* 41.5; 47.3.

272. *City of God* 9.17.

Theologians refer to the union of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ in the one Person as the hypostatic union. Regarding this union, Augustine would have agreed with the teaching of the later *Westminster Confession* (8:2):

The Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin: being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance. So that the two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one Person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which Person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.²⁷³

THE WORKS OF GOD

As we will see, the North African bishop would (basically) have affirmed the teaching of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism's* (Q. 7–9, 11) summary of the works of God:

The decrees of God are, His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.... God executes His decrees in the works of creation and providence.... The work of creation is, God's making all things of nothing, by the Word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good.... God's works of providence are, His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures, and all their actions.

The Decrees of God:

The Bible teaches, said the bishop of Hippo, that God has from all eternity foreordained all things that will ever come to pass. Nothing can change this sovereign decree.²⁷⁴ Included within God's sovereign decree is the predestination of all men to their final state.²⁷⁵ Some men, he wrote, God has "predestined to everlasting life," whereas others "He has predestined to everlasting death."²⁷⁶ Further, the number of both the elect and non-elect is so fixed that it cannot change.²⁷⁷ This is the biblical view of double predestination.

Moreover, as with the later *Westminster Confession of Faith* (3:5), Augustine maintained that God's predestination is not dependent on His "foresight of [man's] faith, or [man's] good works, or [man's] perseverance." Rather, it is completely based on the sovereign "good pleasure of His [God's] will."²⁷⁸ It is not God's intention to save all men. Only the elect will be saved.²⁷⁹

Louis Berkhof wrote that in his early writings, Saint Augustine was inclined toward the Arminian view that God's predestinating of the elect to glory was based on His foreknowledge of man's faith. But, "deeper reflection on the sovereign character of the good pleasure of God led him to see that predestination was in no way dependent on God's foreknowledge of human actions, but was rather the basis of divine foreknowledge."²⁸⁰

Furthermore, it is noted that the bishop of Hippo did not believe that there is any logical paradox found in the two biblical doctrines of God's sovereign decrees and man's responsibility. It is indeed the case that God has foreordained all things that will ever come to pass, and that nothing will change God's decrees. But it also true that God has foreordained the means by which all will be accomplished. God has predestinated that certain acts occur by the deliberate choices of specific individuals. And there is no logical paradox involved.²⁸¹

Creation:

William Christian stated:

Few other passages of Scripture intrigued Augustine as much as the first sentence of the book of Genesis. In the *Confessions*, in his treatises of Genesis, in the *City of God*, and elsewhere he dwells on it and recurs to it,

273. *Enchiridion* 34–40; Brian E. Daley, "Christology," *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, 164–169.

274. *City of God* 11.21; 22.2. Technically speaking, because God is eternal and immutable, there can only be one decree, which determines all things. But since this decree includes many particulars (i.e., there is a logical order involved), theologians generally refer to the divine "decrees" (plural).

275. *On the Gospel of John* 48.4; *On Baptism, Against the Donatists* 4.3.5.

276. *On the Soul and its Origin* 4.16.

277. *On Rebuke and Grace* 39.

278. *On the Predestination of the Saints* 37.

279. *Enchiridion* 97.103. Note is made here that Augustine, like John Calvin and the Westminster Assembly after him, did not hold to the errant belief that all children dying in infancy are saved. The saving grace of God is applicable only to elect infants (*Enchiridion* 95).

280. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 109.

281. Augustine, *Two Souls, Against the Manichaeans* 10.12–14; *Enchiridion* 27.

as though he felt he could not exhaust its suggestions and implications.²⁸²

In other words, the bishop of Hippo gave a great deal of attention to the doctrine of creation.

Augustine taught that God created all things which have ever been created, “both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible,” *ex nihilo*, i.e., out of no pre-existent material. Prior to creation, all that existed was the eternal, triune God.²⁸³ He wrote: “God made all things ... not of those things that already existed.... He spoke and they were made ... for there was not anything of which He should make them.” All things came “from Him” (as Creator), but they are not “of Him” (as in Pantheism).²⁸⁴

Man, said Augustine, was also created by God, *ex nihilo* (thus ruling out any form of a macro-evolutionary theory of creation), as the highest order of His creation. And all of God’s creative work, while mutable (because only God is immutable), was “good.” Moreover, taught Augustine, God did not create anything out of a necessity, but rather, for His own good purposes and glory.²⁸⁵ Even space and time were created “in the beginning.”

As to the creation “days” in Genesis 1, Augustine interpreted them in what one theologian called a “rather fanciful manner.” This comment has to do with the bishop’s proclivity to allegorize certain texts.²⁸⁶ On the one hand, it seems that Augustine did not hold to the solar day view of the creation days. Rather, he averred that God created all things in a moment of time, which is described over a period of “a mystic number of days.”²⁸⁷ On the other hand, it is possible to interpret Augustine to be saying that “in the beginning” (Genesis 1:1) in a moment of time, God created all of that substance from which He would fashion the world. Then over a period of “mystic days,” God describes for us this formation of the creation (Genesis 1:2–31). Certainly,

282. Christian, “The Creation of the World,” *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 315.

283. *Confessions* 12.7.

284. *Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans* 26–27.

285. *City of God* 14.11; 12.1; 11.22.

286. J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962) I:142.

287. *City of God* 11.33.

288. David W. Hall, *Holding Fast to Creation* (Oak Ridge, Tennessee: The Covenant Foundation, 2001) 50.

289. Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 111.

290. *On the Trinity* 3.4.9.

291. *On the Trinity* 3.9.16–17.

292. *On the Trinity* 3.3.6; 3.5.11.

293. *On the Trinity* 3.5.11.

however, Augustine did adhere to the biblical view of a young earth.²⁸⁸

Providence:

As noted above, the doctrine of providence maintains that the triune God of Scripture is absolutely sovereign over His creation. In the words of Berkhof, God “preserves all His creatures, is active in all that transpires in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end.”²⁸⁹ With this statement, Augustine would concur.

The African bishop would also have agreed with the teaching of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (5:2) that “although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God,” who is the immutable and infallible first cause of all things that ever come to pass, “yet, by the same providence, He orders them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes.” God, said Augustine, is “the first and highest cause of all corporeal appearances and motions.”²⁹⁰ Yet, God uses secondary or “proximate” causes, such as persons, angels, wind, rain, snow, and so forth, to bring His sovereign decrees to fulfillment.²⁹¹ God also works miracles, but here He uses “unusual” rather than “usual” means.²⁹²

In one place in his study of the doctrine of God, Augustine showed how both miracles and the “regular activities of nature” are nothing other than the works of God’s sovereign hand. In both cases, God is in full control:

Who draws up the sap through the root of the vine to the bunch of grapes, and makes the wine, except God; who while man plants and waters, Himself gives the increase? But when, at the command of the Lord, the water was turned into wine with an extraordinary quickness, the divine power was made manifest, by the confession even of the foolish. Who ordinarily clothes the trees with leaves and flowers except God? Yet, when the rod of Aaron the priest blossomed, the Godhead in some way conversed with doubting humanity.²⁹³

Augustine wrote that God is continually fashioning the world which He created:

As the Artificer [He is] governing what He has made.... But God, infused into the world, fashions it; being everywhere present He fashions and withdraws not Himself, nor does He, as it were, handle from without, the matter which He fashions. By the presence of His majesty He makes what He makes; His presence governs

what He made. Therefore was He in the world as the Maker of the world.²⁹⁴

Louis Berkhof noted that Augustine was *the* church father “who led the way in the development” of this high view of the doctrine of the providence of God. “Over against the doctrines of fate and chance, he stressed the fact that all things are preserved and governed by the sovereign, wise, and beneficent will of God.” Further, wrote Berkhof, Augustine “made no reservations in connection with the providence of God, but maintained the control of God over the good and the evil that is in the world alike.” Yet, at the same time, “by defending the reality of second causes, he safeguarded the holiness of God and upheld the responsibility of man.”²⁹⁵

Finally, Augustine, as with the Westminster divines after him, distinguished between ordinary, or general, and special providence. God grants certain blessings to all men (Matthew 5:44; Acts 14:17), and cares for all of His creation (Psalm 104). But God’s special providence is for the elect, in which He works all things together for their good (Romans 8:28). As stated in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (5:7): “As the providence of God does, in general, reach to all creatures; so after a most special manner, it takes care of His church, and disposes all things to the good thereof.”²⁹⁶

AUGUSTINE ON MAN

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (4:2) reads:

After God had made all other creatures, He created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it: and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change. Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures.

There are (at least) four things taught, either explicitly or implicitly, in this section of the *Confession*, all of which are basic to the anthropology of Saint Augustine:

One: Man, as the crowning act of God’s creation, was created, as a direct act of God, in His image (*imago Dei*), as a bipartite unity. Man is a “living soul,” comprised of a physical (body) element and a non-physical (soul or spirit) element.

Two: The image of God in man resides in the spiritual element.

Three: As a part of being God’s image bearer (in some form or fashion), man was given the dominion mandate.

Four: The image is two-fold; that is, there is a broader and narrower aspect to the image. The broader aspect of the image is intrinsic and cannot be lost. The narrower aspect, on the other hand, is losable, and was lost at the Fall.

Man as God’s Image Bearer

According to Augustine, man was created by God (*ex nihilo*), in His image,²⁹⁷ as the *summum bonum* of all creation. Indeed, wrote the bishop, God is “the Author of all created things,” all of which are good. And mankind “derives from the one true God of all goodness the nature with which we were created in His image.”²⁹⁸

Man, taught Augustine, as with all creation, was not created out of the very essence of God (as in Pantheism), nor out of some already existing material. But “God of whom are all things, through whom are all things, in whom are all things, had no need of any material which He had not made to assist Him in His omnipotence [in the creation].”²⁹⁹ There is no room for an evolutionary view of the origin of man in Augustine’s theology.³⁰⁰

294. *On the Gospel of John* 2.10.

295. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 165.

296. *City of God* 5.11–16; 22.1,30; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 432–434.

297. It is noteworthy that, unlike most Reformed and Protestant thinkers, Augustine distinguished between the words “image” (*tselem*) and “likeness” (*demuth*) in Genesis 1:26–27. He taught that man’s “likeness” has to do with his intellectual capacities, and the “image” has to do with man’s moral faculties. See Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 205. But even here, the Roman Catholic Church cannot claim the North African bishop as its own. Rome maintains that there is a distinction between “image” and “likeness” as well. But the Roman Church concludes that the “image” is that which belongs to man as created morally neutral, whereas the “likeness” is the “super added gift” (*donum superadditum*) of original righteousness which God gave to Adam in the Garden of Eden. At the time of the Fall, says Rome, man lost his original righteousness, but retained his moral neutrality. Thus, redeemed man, with the super added gift restored, it is alleged, can perform works of supererogation, i.e., works over and above what God requires. See Clark, *The Biblical Doctrine of Man*, 12–13. Augustine and the Roman Catholic Church, then, disagree over the alleged difference between “image” and “likeness.”

298. *City of God* 8.9–10.

299. Augustine, *Concerning the Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans* 26–27; see also *City of God* 14.11.

300. See Augustine, *On the Soul and Its Origin* 1.4; *Confessions* 1.1,7; 6.3.

Even while still in the womb, man is to be considered the image of God.³⁰¹ And man will still be this same image of his Maker in the final state, after the resurrection of the dead. This can be said of no other creature.³⁰²

Man's Constitutional Nature

According to Augustine, man is a composite being; he is dichotomous. Man is not merely a body, nor is he body, soul, and spirit.³⁰³ Rather, man consists of a physical element (body) and a non-physical element (soul or spirit³⁰⁴). He is “made up of soul and body ... for the body would not be man without the soul, nor again would the soul be man if there were not a body animated by it.”³⁰⁵ Of these two, the non-physical element is superior; it is immortal and “in command” of the physical.³⁰⁶ It is the soul of man which is the “chief good” of the body, not vice-versa.³⁰⁷ It is the non-physical element of man which goes to be with God in the intermediate state, not the body.³⁰⁸ The body is the instrument of the soul, by which the latter may “do good things.”³⁰⁹

Augustine, as with the majority of Christian theologians after him, stressed the “primacy of the intellect” of man. He wrote:

It is God who has given man his mind.... And thus the mind becomes capable of knowledge and learning, ready for the perception of truth, and able to love the good. This capacity enables the mind to absorb

wisdom, to acquire the virtues of prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice, to equip man for the struggle against error and all the evil propensities inherent in man's nature, so that he may overcome them because his heart is set only on that Supreme and Unchanging Good [God].³¹⁰

The fact that God Himself is pure Spirit assures us that man must be God's image bearer in a spiritual sense, said Augustine. The *imago Dei* rests in the soul, the mind, or inner man, not in the physical aspect. Man is a rational being. And this God-given ability to reason is principally that which distinguishes him from the beasts, and constitutes him as God's image bearer.³¹¹ This being the case, man, as a rational creature, is able to have a special kind of “spiritual” relationship with God; he can commune with God in a way that animals cannot.³¹² Even fallen man retains this aspect of the *imago Dei*. He is still a rational, religious being.³¹³

The superior nature of the non-physical aspect of man in no way demeans the physical aspect. God created all things “good,” including man's body.³¹⁴ And even though the body is mortal, nevertheless, the resurrected body, once again united with the soul, will live forever.³¹⁵ It is the whole man, both body and soul, that is to serve and glorify God.³¹⁶

Moreover, Augustine taught that as God's image bearer, man has been granted the investiture of exercising dominion over the creation, for God's glory. Man is God's vicegerent on earth. He is not to take dominion over his fellow man, but over the beasts: God “did not wish the rational being, made in His own image, to have dominion over any but the irrational creatures, not man over man, but man over beasts.”³¹⁷

The Origin of the Soul

As with most theologians, Saint Augustine spoke to the issue of the origin of the non-physical aspect of man. Throughout the history of the church, there have been three basic views:³¹⁸

Pre-existence: This theory asserts that all of the souls of all men existed in a previous state prior to the creation of the world. These souls are infused into every child at conception or birth. This view originated in Plato and Greek philosophy, and the false notion of the transmigration of souls (i.e., reincarnation). It was held by Origen in the early church, and in some form it is adopted by Hinduism and Mormonism. It has no biblical warrant.

Creationism: This theory, as held by John Calvin,³¹⁹

301. Augustine would hereby outlaw abortion as a violation of the teaching of God in Scripture.

302. *Enchiridion* 84–93.

303. The erroneous view that man is tripartite: body, soul, and spirit, is called trichotomy.

304. Augustine maintained, with the great majority of Christendom, that the Bible frequently uses the words “soul” and “spirit” synonymously.

305. *On the Morals of the Catholic Church* 4.

306. *City of God* 22.24; 6.3; *Letters* 143.5,7.

307. *On the Morals of the Catholic Church* 5.

308. *Enchiridion* 29.

309. *City of God* 10.6,30. This was also the view of John Calvin (*Institutes* 1:15:3) and Gordon Clark (*The Biblical Doctrine of Man*, 5–11).

310. *City of God* 22.24.

311. *On the Trinity* 14.8.11.

312. *On the Soul and Its Origin* 4.20; *On Christian Doctrine* 1.22.

313. *On the Spirit and the Letter* 48.

314. *City of God* 12.1.

315. *City of God* 13.2; *On Christian Doctrine* 1.24.

316. *City of God* 19.21.

317. *City of God* 19.15.

318. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 196–201.

319. Calvin, *Institutes* 1:15:5.

and the majority of Calvinists, maintains that God immediately creates a new soul for each individual, and implants it in the child at conception. The physical element of man is propagated by the parents, while the spiritual element is given directly by God.

Traducianism (Latin: *tradux*, “branch” or “shoot”): This theory, as taught by Reformed thinkers such as Gordon Clark,³²⁰ avers that both the physical and the non-physical aspect of mankind are propagated by the human parents. God does not create (*ex nihilo*) the souls of every human baby. The parents do so through the natural process of procreation.

Saint Augustine clearly ruled out the pre-existence theory. And even though at times it seems that he struggled over the other two positions,³²¹ it seems that he held to the theory of traducianism. This is the view he favors, for instance, in his *On the Soul and Its Origin*.³²² Further, in a letter written in 415, Augustine criticized Jerome for his creationist view.³²³

The Two-Fold Image

Reformed theology generally acknowledges that there is a two-fold image of God in man: the metaphysical (or natural) and the ethical.³²⁴ The former is broader in scope than the latter. Metaphysically speaking, man is a personal, rational, immortal, spiritual being. This aspect of the image was defaced by the Fall (Genesis 3), but not eradicated. Man did not stop being man subsequent to the Fall. He remains a rational, psychical-physical being. Thus, post-fall man, in this sense, is still the image bearer of God (Genesis 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9).

The ethical image, on the other hand, is more restricted. As stated by the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (4:2), man was created with true holiness, righteousness, and knowledge. Original righteousness was “originally” a part of the *imago Dei*. This more narrow, ethical image was eradicated at the Fall, leaving man in an ethical state of “total depravity.” As the *Confession* (6:2) teaches, man is now “utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil.” Whereas, both believers and non-believers continue to bear the *imago Dei* metaphysically, only believers have the ethical image restored, and this is accomplished through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ applied to the elect.³²⁵

Albeit Saint Augustine did not use the same language (i.e., metaphysical and ethical image), as later theologians have, when referring to the image of God in man, his teaching is the same. On the one hand, he

wrote that apart from God’s grace, man has completely lost the ability to seek God and His will.³²⁶ While on the other hand, he stated that the image of God in man is not eradicated altogether.³²⁷

Man in the Covenant of Works

As stated in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (7:1), the Bible teaches that:

The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures [men and angels] do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God’s part, which He has been pleased to express by way of covenant.

Further, as the Westminster divines go on to teach, the original covenant that God made with man was a “covenant of works” (Genesis 2:16–17). In this covenant, says the *Confession* (7:2), “life was promised to Adam; and in him [as the federal head of the entire human race] to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.”

As we are told in Romans 5, however, Adam disobeyed God. And as he was the federal or covenantal head of all mankind, his sin was imputed to the entirety of humanity. As stated in the *Shorter Catechism* (Q. 16): “The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.” And, as we have already seen, all men, as a result of the Fall, are judicially guilty. They are in a state of “total depravity,” unable to do anything that pleases God (Romans 3:9–18; 8:7–8). All mankind is conceived dead in sin, and in desperate need of a Savior.

As Berkhof pointed out, even though Saint Augustine did not use the same language utilized by the

320. Clark, *The Biblical Doctrine of Man*, 45–53.

321. Louis Berkhof, for example, stated that Augustine “found it rather hard to choose between the two [creationism and traducianism]” (*Systematic Theology*, 200).

322. Paul Lehmann, “The Anti-Pelagian Writings,” *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 233; see also Clark, *The Biblical Doctrine of Man*, 50. Traducianism is also supported in *City of God* 13.14.

323. *Letters* 166.3–9.

324. John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), II:40.

325. Calvin, *Institutes* I:15:4.

326. *Enchiridion* 30, 106.

327. *On the Spirit and the Letter* 48.

Westminster Standards, “all of the elements which later went into the construction of the doctrine of the covenant of works were already present” in his thoughts.³²⁸ For example, he spoke of the fact that “we all die in Adam.”³²⁹ Too, he said that “even in that one sin which by one man [Adam] entered into the world.”³³⁰ Augustine’s teaching, then, is very much in line with that of the later Westminster Standards. As a result of Adam’s first sin, all mankind is judicially guilty at conception. Adam’s sin has been imputed to the entirety of the human race.³³¹

The Imputation of Sin

From a biblical standpoint, the fact that there is a relationship between Adam’s sin and that of his posterity cannot be denied. Somehow Adam’s sin was imputed to the entirety of humanity. The question addressed by theologians through the ages is “how was sin imputed?” There are three major theories.³³²

The realist theory: This view maintains that the whole of the human race was seminally present in Adam in the Garden of Eden. He is the federal and natural (or realistic) head of the human race. All men are ontologically joined to him. Thus, when Adam sinned, the judicial guilt of his sin was immediately imputed to all of his progeny. Yet, as Adam is the natural head of humanity, the pollution of sin is naturally conveyed through procreation.³³³

The mediate imputation theory: This view avers, with realism, that the whole human race was in the loins of Adam in the Garden of Eden. But unlike realism, the mediate imputation theory teaches that the sin of Adam was not immediately imputed to all men. Rather, sin is mediated to all through the process of natural generation. Men are not guilty in Adam’s sin. They are guilty only because they are born corrupt.

The immediate imputation theory: This is the prevailing theory among Reformed theologians, even though

there are various nuances found within the immediate imputation camp.³³⁴ This view asserts that Adam is both the federal (or covenantal) and natural head of the human race. Adam covenantally represented the whole of humanity in Eden. Thus, when he transgressed God’s commandment, all sinned. His sin was immediately imputed to all men; and they are judicially guilty. However, as Adam is also the natural head of humanity, the polluted nature of man is inherited by means of natural generation.

Augustine taught the realist view. He wrote:

[B]ut human nature in him [Adam] was vitiated and altered . . . and he produced offspring in the same condition. . . . For we were all in that one man [Adam], seeing that we all were that one man who fell into sin. . . . We did not yet possess forms individually created and assigned to us for us to live in them as individuals; but there already existed the seminal nature from which we were to be begotten. And of course, when this was vitiated through sin, and bound with death’s fetters in its just condemnation, man could not be born of man in any other condition.³³⁵

According to Augustine, the doctrine of original sin teaches that Adam’s sin resulted in death: both physical and spiritual, not only for Adam, but for the whole human race. Judicial sin is universal due to the imputation of Adam’s sin. But having inherited a polluted nature, all men (including infants) actually and willfully sin. Original sin is one; actual sins are many. The Fall left man in an ethical state of total depravity. Man is both guilty and polluted. He loves to sin, and does so continually.³³⁶ He desperately needs a Savior.

Man in the Covenant of Grace

Albeit Augustine did not use the term “covenant of grace,” his writings clearly indicate that he would have endorsed the later teaching of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (7:3), on this subject:

Man by his Fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant [of works], the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.³³⁷

328. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 211.

329. *Confessions* 5.9.

330. *Enchiridion* 45.

331. *Letters* 143.6.

332. Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1907, 1985) 628; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 237–243.

333. Clark, *The Biblical Doctrine of Man*, 67–71.

334. John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam’s Sin* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1959) 64–70.

335. *City of God* 13.3, 14.

336. *City of God* 13.12–15.

337. See, for example, Augustine’s *On the Soul and Its Origin* 4.16.

And according to Augustine, this covenant was first revealed in Genesis 3:15, where we have the first gospel promise.³³⁸ Grace, in Augustine's theology, "is the gift of God to fallen man, which manifests itself in the forgiveness of sin, and in the renewal and sanctification of human nature."³³⁹

Soteriology

Soteriology is the study of the doctrine of salvation (from the Greek *soter*, "savior"). And according to Saint Augustine, the salvation of the elect is accomplished by the atoning work of the great High Priest, Jesus Christ, who merited redemption for all of God's elect. In His vicarious sacrifice, Christ propitiated the wrath of God the Father. The only-begotten Son was sacrificed "to wash away sin"; and in so doing, He brought about reconciliation between God and elect man.³⁴⁰

Jesus Christ, taught Augustine, is the federal or covenantal head of His people. They are in union with Him. He is their Redeemer—their Mediator.³⁴¹ The entirety of the elect's salvation, from its inception to the final state of glory, is dependent on their relationship with Christ.³⁴²

Although the work of salvation involves all three members of the Godhead, it is the Holy Spirit who applies this grace to the elect. According to Augustine, the Holy Spirit is the elect sinner's "source of love and faith in God." He is the one who "leads to salvation by faith," and even "produces faith" in the mind of the elect. The Spirit is He who "regenerates the believer," "seals the believer," "lifts [believers] up from the gates of death," and "shows [believers] God's love to man."³⁴³

The North African bishop maintained that God is absolutely sovereign in the matter of salvation. All is attributed to divine grace. Elect man is in a covenantal relationship with God, and a partaker of everlasting life because of God's efficacious work in his behalf. Man, said Augustine, is incapable of doing anything to merit his salvation:

We [must] understand that even those good works of ours, which are recompensed with eternal life, belong to the grace of God, because of what is said by the Lord Jesus: "Without Me you can do nothing"... It follows, then, dearly beloved, beyond all doubt, that as your good life is nothing else than God's grace, so also the eternal life is the grace of God; moreover it is given gratuitously to which it is given. But that to which it is given is solely and simply grace.³⁴⁴

The grace of God is recognizable, taught Augustine, throughout the entirety of man's Christian life. This occurs in several stages: prevenient grace, operative grace, and co-operative grace. In prevenient grace, it is the Holy Spirit of God working, by means of the law, to convict the elect sinner of his sin. In operative grace, it is the same Spirit, using the gospel message to draw the elect sinner efficaciously to Christ. And in co-operative grace, it is the Spirit working with the redeemed sinner in the life-long process of sanctification. Divine grace is necessary and operative in each stage. And it is simply because divine grace is present, that elect man, once having come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, will never lose his eternal reward. He will never die in an unregenerate state.³⁴⁵

Reformed theology maintains that there is a logical order involved in the process of salvation. This order, which is referred to as the *ordo salutis*, is taught in passages such as John 1:12–13; Romans 8:28–30; Ephesians 1:3–14 and 2:8–10. That is, salvation is not a one step event. One is not converted and immediately glorified. There is a process involved. There is a logical order in which God carries out the process of salvation, even though some of the parts of the process may be synchronous.³⁴⁶

As Louis Berkhof pointed out, even though the North African bishop nowhere fully developed this doctrine, it is nevertheless recognizable in his many writings. It was left to later theologians, such as John Calvin, to systematize the *ordo salutis*.³⁴⁷ According to Reformed theology in general, then, and Augustine in particular, the order of the application of redemption occurs as follows:³⁴⁸

External or universal call: This call is the offer of salvation in Jesus Christ, to all who hear the proclamation of the gospel. It is universal in that it is freely

338. *On the Psalms* 45:11; 49:6.

339. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 429.

340. *Enchiridion* 36, 50, 33, 41.

341. *City of God* 9:17.

342. *City of God* 13:23.

343. Cited in Geisler, *What Augustine Says*, 143–146.

344. Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will* 20.

345. Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 135–137. As previously noted in footnote 126, Augustine believed that regenerating grace could be lost. Yet, after this loss, it would be restored again, so as no elect person would ever die in an unregenerate state.

346. Calvin, *Commentary on Romans* 8:30.

347. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 459–549.

348. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapters 10–18, 32–33; John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955, 1980) 79–181.

extended to all who come under the preaching of the Word of God.

Effectual call: The universal call becomes effectual when the Holy Spirit applies it to the heart of the elect sinner.³⁴⁹

Regeneration: Although effectual calling and regeneration stand in the closest possible relationship, there is a difference between the two. Regeneration is the work of God the Spirit, wherein He prepares the heart of the elect sinner to respond to the call of God.³⁵⁰

Conversion: This is that gracious act of God, wherein He causes regenerate persons to respond to the effectual call. Conversion consists of two parts: repentance and faith. These two go hand in hand; they cannot rationally be separated. Repentance is a turning from sin; saving faith is a turning to Christ.³⁵¹ This is true of both Old and New Testament saints.³⁵²

Justification: This is that forensic act of God by which He declares converted sinners to be righteous, on the basis of the perfect righteousness of Christ alone. It involves the removal of the guilt of sin.³⁵³

Sanctification: This is the work of God in the life of the justified individual, causing him to more and more

die unto sin and live unto righteousness. It involves the removal of the pollution of sin.³⁵⁴

Perseverance: This doctrine teaches that those who have been truly justified, will, by God preserving grace, persevere to the end and be glorified. They will never be lost.³⁵⁵ Strangely, however, Augustine did not believe that a justified person could ever come to an assurance of his salvation.

Glorification: This is the final state of salvation, wherein the elect pass into the very presence of God at their death to enjoy everlasting bliss. This glory will be even further magnified at the resurrection on the last day.³⁵⁶

Finally, as studied above, Saint Augustine concisely summed up the doctrine of man, the effects of sin, and salvation, by teaching that the elect sinner passes through a series of four stages:³⁵⁷

Man as created: Adam was created holy, but changeable. He was upright, capable of sinning or not sinning.

Man the sinner: When Adam fell, he and all of his posterity lost the ability to serve God. Man did not lose his free moral agency, but he lost the God-given ability to choose righteousness. Man the sinner can only sin.

Man the saint: Redeemed man has the ability to choose righteousness and serve God restored to him by the meritorious work of Christ. He is still capable of sinning, but in his redeemed state he is also capable of pleasing God. Man the saint, saved by grace through faith alone, will likewise manifest good works in his life. That is, by the grace of God and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, he will seek to obey the commandments of God. These works, which are the fruit of saving faith, are works of necessity, not of merit.

Man glorified: Redeemed man, in the state of glory, is incapable of sinning. All that he does will be done for the glory of God.

Soli Deo Gloria. ■

349. *On the Spirit and the Letter* 56.

350. *Enchiridion* 49.

351. *Enchiridion* 31, 82.

352. Augustine, *On Patience* 18.

353. *Confessions* 13.49; *Enchiridion* 119. Louis Berkhof was of the opinion that Augustine somewhat confused justification and sanctification, a confusion which was later intensified by Thomas Aquinas and the Schoolmen. Berkhof maintained that Augustine did not seem to conceive of justification in a purely judicial sense. To him, God does not merely declare the sinner righteous, but He also infuses righteousness into the sinner, making him righteous by transforming his inner nature. In Protestant theology, justification is totally a legal act of declaring the guilty sinner righteous; whereas sanctification is the work of God in transforming the inner nature (*The History of Christian Doctrines*, 207). It is far from certain, however, that this is true of Augustine. John Gerstner taught that Augustine was fully orthodox in his belief in both justification and sanctification. That is, the North African bishop properly taught that justification leads to sanctification. God imputes righteousness in justification and then infuses grace in the process of sanctification. This was the Augustinian position which is in accord with Reformed orthodoxy. See John H. Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Powhatan, Virginia: Berea Publications; Orlando, Florida: Ligonier Ministries, 1991–1993) III:192. Ian Sellers is of the same opinion. He wrote that it was the movement of post-Augustinianism which “conflates the immediacy of the act of justification with the later process of sanctification” (cited in Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* [Powhatan, Virginia: Berea Publications; Orlando, Florida: Ligonier Ministries, 1991–1993] III:193).

354. *Confessions* 13.9.

355. *On Christian Doctrine* 1.34; *On Rebuke and Grace* 39.

356. *Enchiridion* 54, 91, 111.

357. See his *City of God* 5.9; 12.6; 14.11; 15.21; 22.30.