6. AUGUSTINE

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Augustine: a brief survey of his life

Augustine, the most prominent 'Latin' or 'Western' church father, sowed the seeds of virtually the entire Western theological edifice that has been built from his day forward. Gregory the Great once described his own work as a 'despicable little trickle', but could speak of the 'deep torrents' of the work of Augustine and Ambrose.[1] And Henry Chadwick is surely right when he speaks of Augustine as 'the greatest figure of Christian Antiquity'.[2]

Augustine was born in the small town of Thagaste in northern Africa on 13 November 354 (present day Souk-Ahras, in Algeria). African by birth and Roman by culture,[3] Augustine's parents had a decisive influence upon him. His father, Patricius, although a man of modest means, was eager to provide for his son's education. Augustine's mother, Monica, has become the paradigmatic concerned mother, praying earnestly for her son's salvation during his years

1. As quoted in R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 11.
2. Henry Chadwick, in his foreword to Serge Lancel, *St Augustine*, tr. Antonia Nevill (London: SCM, 2002), p. 14.
3. This phrase is taken from ch. 1 of Lancel, *St Augustine*.

of spiritual wandering and profligacy. However, some have pointed out that she also had grand ambitions for her son.

Augustine received his first formal (roughly 'grammar' school) education in Madauros (near Thagaste). After a year of idleness in Thagaste (369–70) he moved to Carthage for further study (370–373). During this year he read Cicero's *Hortensius*, which inspired Augustine to love wisdom and pursue it. But it was also during his time in Carthage that Augustine 'joined' the Manichean sect, and spent some nine years wrestling with their claims.[4] Augustine's wrestling with Manicheism will be dealt with more fully below, but briefly (and perhaps too simply), Manicheism was a dualistic and Gnostic system of belief. Spirit and Matter, Good and Evil, Light and Dark – all once separate from one another – had been combined due to the machinations of the Prince of Darkness, who had tried to invade the kingdom of Light. The human state was one where physicality (Material) and immateriality (Spirit) were joined, and physicality/materiality were seen as explicitly evil. Through a secret *gnōsis* (knowledge) the initiate could become aware – over time – of his true state or being. God was at work to rescue or liberate the Light embedded in Darkness.[5]

During his time at Carthage Augustine took a mistress, with whom he remained from 372 to 385. Together they had a son, Adeodatus ('given by God'), born in 372. After spending a year in Rome (383–4), Augustine went to Milan as a teacher of rhetoric and met Ambrose, the bishop of Milan. Ambrose's teaching and preaching influenced Augustine greatly. Besides the bishop there was an influential intellectual circle of friends (including Flavius Manlius Theodorus) in Milan who exercised a significant influence on Augustine. It is also in Milan that Augustine was exposed to the *Libri platonicorum* (the books of the Platonists). Most likely mainly writings of Plotinus, Augustine wrote that he was 'on fire' reading these books, and that – similar to the reading of *Hortensius* – reading these books further inspired him in his quest for the truth.[6] In 385, while in Milan, Monica arranged a more 'suitable' marriage for Augustine, one which would be more conducive to a successful career. Augustine was compelled to send his mistress away – back to North Africa, certainly a painful decision. Adeodatus stayed with Augustine, and the marriage planned by Monica did not take place. In fact, Augustine never married.

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4. 'Join' because in 373 Augustine became a 'hearer', someone who associated with the Manicheans and listened to their teachings but was not fully bound to the group.
5. Manicheism had its own cosmogony, one that sought to incorporate all other explanations of reality. For a helpful summary see Lancel, *St Augustine*, pp. 31–36.
6. *The Happy Life* 1.4 and *Against the Sceptics* 2.5. Cf. Lancel, *St Augustine*, p. 84.

Augustine's conversion is perhaps the most famous in history. Having wrestled with the truth claims of the Christian faith, and with his own desires (as I recount below in some detail), Augustine was walking in a garden in Milan in August of 386. He heard a voice from a nearby house ('of a boy or girl I do know not') calling *tolle lege, tolle lege* (take read, take read; see in more detail below). Finding a Bible, Augustine turned to Romans 13 and read, 'Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts' (Rom. 13:13–15). As he recounts in *Confessions*, 'I neither wished nor needed to read further. At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled.'[7]

Following his conversion Augustine resigned his post as professor of rhetoric, and with his mother, brother (Navigus) and some friends decided to 'retreat' to Cassiciacum (a small town outside Milan) during the autumn of 386. During that time he and his compatriots engaged in discussion and debate, and three key works came out of that period (*Against the Sceptics*, *The Happy Life* and *On Order*). Twenty-first-century readers might see this as an academic seminar led at someone's house by a very intelligent friend or relative – Augustine!

Returning to Milan in early 387 Augustine was baptized by Ambrose (April 387). His life had changed radically during his two or so years in Milan, and Augustine determined to return to Africa. Thus, in summer or early autumn of 387, Augustine and his family and friends left Milan to go to Africa. Monica died en route in Ostia, where the party had stopped for a while.

For a variety of reasons Augustine and his fellow-travellers returned to Rome (instead of going to Africa), and by then it was the autumn of 387. Here Augustine wrote such anti-Manichean polemics as *Morals of the Catholic Church* and *Morals of the Manicheans*. He also wrote *The Greatness of the Soul* and (parts of) his *On Free Will* during this stay in Rome. By the autumn of 388 it was time to return to Africa, and Augustine and his son, Adeodatus, did so.

During this time in Africa Augustine wrote such works as *On True Religion* and *The Teacher*. He was 'forced' in 391 to become a priest of Hippo (he was not yet the bishop, for Valerius would remain in that position until 395/396, when Augustine was ordained as bishop of Hippo). While visiting Hippo (in North Africa, some forty miles north of Thagaste) in order to exhort a friend to the monastic life, Valerius told the congregation he needed assistance. The people immediately ordained the unwilling Augustine as bishop.

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7. *Confessions* 8.29. All quotations from *Confessions* are from Henry Chadwick's translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

He was somewhat overcome with all that being a bishop entailed. He also probably mourned that his ongoing hope of living in a monastic/study community would not – at least for the present – come to pass. During his years as bishop he engaged in a number of key theological and ecclesiastical struggles, most of which are 'chronicled' in his vast literary output: the Donatist controversy, the lengthy conflict with Pelagianism, lingering Manicheism and his monumental *The City of God*, in which he 'responds' to certain arguments linking the sack of Rome in 410 to the empire's acceptance and adoption of Christianity (see below).[8] Since much of the rest of this chapter summarizes Augustine's key theological insights, I will deal later with such issues as Donatism, Pelagianism, Manicheism and his response in *The City of God* to pagans.

As Serge Lancel has written, 'Augustine was not an "egghead" theologian, poring over texts.'[9] However, while he certainly did 'pore over texts', he was not a cloistered scholar. Rather, much of Augustine's time was spent refereeing squabbles, managing different personalities in his realm and navigating the world of ecclesiastical skirmishes – some of great importance and others of lesser importance. Nonetheless, as one spends more and more time with Augustine the pastor one sees clearly that his pastoral ministry was always theologically driven, and that his ministry was animated by theological concerns.

Augustine engaged in pastoral ministry and theological writing – much of it polemical – until the end of his days. His last major theological skirmish was related to Pelagianism, this time in response to Julian of Eclanum. Julian was erudite and hostile to Augustine, and the conflict lasted the last twelve years of Augustine's life.[10]Augustine spent the rest of his days in Hippo serving as bishop, and his writings were voluminous and wide-ranging. He lived to be seventy-six years of age, dying in 430. He had certain psalms copied and hung on the walls in the room where he lay dying. According to Possidus, Augustine 'wept freely and constantly' as he read the sacred words.[11] Augustine died without a will, for, as Possidius notes, except for his books (left

8. I have put 'responds' in quotes because whereas in his writings against the Manicheans, the Donatists and Pelagians he was countering specific persons and arguments, *The City of God* appears to have been directed towards a more loose collection of arguments by generally unspecified persons.
9. Lancel, *St Augustine*, p. 440.
10. Lancel refers to Julian as 'this hotheaded youngster who could have been his son' (*St Augustine*, p. 418).
11. Possidus, *The Life of Saint Augustine*, tr. Herbert T. Weiskotten, Christian Roman Empire Series, vol. 6 (Merchantville, NJ: Evolution, 2008), p. 57.

for the church at Hippo) Augustine had no possessions.[12] Let us now turn to a more detailed look at the thought of this greatest church father of the West.

The theology and theologizing of Augustine

God

How should we talk about God?

Augustine is aware that one must be humble and careful when speaking about God.[13] Indeed, as Augustine continues:

> In any case, when we think about God the trinity we are aware that our thoughts are quite inadequate to their object, and incapable of grasping him as he is; even by men of the calibre of the apostle Paul he can only be seen, as it says, *like a puzzling reflection in a mirror* (1 Cor. 13:12).[14]

And ultimately one must begin one's thinking and speaking about God in prayer, in hope that one will speak rightly and truthfully about God.[15]

Augustine wants to approach God correctly: 'there is no effrontery in burning to know, out of faithful piety, the divine and inexpressible truth that is above us, provided the mind is fired by the grace of our creator and savior, and not inflated by arrogant confidence in its own powers.'[16]

Language used at the human level cannot simply be simplistically applied to God:

> God does not repent as a human being does, but as God. So too, he is not angry as a human being is or merciful as a human being is or jealous as a human being is, but

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12. Ibid.
13. At a few points – mainly here on Augustine's doctrine of God – I have reworked material from my dissertation, now published as *Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine: The Theology of Colin Gunton in Light of Augustine* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010).
14. *Trinity* 5.1. All quotations from *The Trinity* are from *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 11, ed. John E. Rotelle, OSA, tr. Edmund Hill, OP (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1992).
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.

> does all things as God. God's repentance does not follow upon a mistake, and the wrath of God does not include the agitation of a mind in turmoil.[17]

The triune God

Augustine was thoroughly trinitarian, for he accepted the doctrine of God as Trinity on the basis of Scripture and tradition:

> The purpose of all the Catholic commentators I have been able to read on the divine books of both testaments, who have written before me on the trinity which God is, has been to teach that according to the scriptures Father and Son and Holy Spirit in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity; and therefore there are not three gods but one God; although indeed the Father has begotten the Son, and therefore he who is the Father is not the Son; and the Son is begotten by the Father, and therefore he who is the Son is not the Father; and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but only the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, himself coequal to the Father and the Son, and belonging to the threefold unity.[18]

Augustine realizes that the quest for adequate construals and conceptions of God is fraught with difficulty, and the analogies Augustine would soon be discussing should be seen against such trepidation and reticence.[19]

For Augustine, when we *truly* speak of God we have to use substance words. Why? Because whereas *we* (humans) sometimes possess certain characteristics and sometimes do not (I am sometimes kind and sometimes not), God possesses all of who he is all the time:

> The chief point then that we must maintain is that whatever that supreme and divine majesty is called with reference to itself is said substance-wise; whatever it is called with reference to another is said not substance – but relationship-wise; and that such is the force of the expression 'of the same substance' in Father and Son and Holy Spirit, that whatever is said with reference to self about each of them is to be taken as adding up in all three to a singular and not to a plural.[20]

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17. *Answer to an Enemy of the Law and the Prophets* 40. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 1.18, introduction, tr. and notes Roland Teske, SJ, ed. John E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1995).
18. *Trinity* 1.2.7.
19. Cf. *On Christian Doctrine* 1.5. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 1.11, introduction, tr. and notes Edmund Hill, OP, ed. John E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1996).
20. Ibid. 5.9.

Augustine's central point here is that Father and Son can in some sense be different without being of different substance. To demonstrate this, Augustine is labouring to show that 'Father' and 'Son', though different words, do not denote different substances. Why? Because the words/titles denote different *relationships* without denoting different substances.

Augustine proceeds to speak of the Holy Spirit, and it is clear that 'making sense' of the Holy Spirit is a bit more difficult.[21] To speak of 'father' and 'son' as terms of relation seems rather normal, but to speak of 'Holy Spirit' as a relationship term seems a bit awkward. The Father is the Father of the Son, and the Son is the Son of the Father. But, while the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit of the Father, the Father is not the 'Father' of the Holy Spirit. Augustine struggles with the proper name for, and place of, the Holy Spirit virtually to the end of *The Trinity*.

Augustine, though, happily affirms the co-equality and full deity of the three persons:

> we have demonstrated as briefly as we could the equality of the triad and its one identical substance. So whatever may be the solution of this question, which we have put off for more searching examination, there is nothing now to prevent us from acknowledging the supreme equality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[22]

The external works of the Trinity are undivided

Augustine and the tradition that follows him are credited with the Latin maxim *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* (the external works of the Trinity are undivided). That is, all three persons of the Godhead are involved in all that God does 'outside' himself – in relation to the world in terms of creation, redemption and governance/providence:

> For the Catholic faith teaches and believes that this Trinity is so inseparable – and a few holy and blessed men also understand this – that whatever this Trinity does must be thought to be done at the same time by the Father and by the Son and by the Holy Spirit. The Father does not do anything that the Son and the Holy Spirit do not do, nor does the Son do anything that the Father and the Holy Spirit do not do, nor does the Holy Spirit do anything that the Father and the Son do not do.[23]

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21. Ibid. 5.13.
22. Ibid. 6.10.
23. *Letter 11* (Augustine to Nebridius) 2. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 2.1, tr. and notes Roland Teske, SJ, ed. John E. Rotelle,

Augustine affirmed the simplicity of God and the idea that all apparent accidental predicates are actually either substantive or relative predicates. Thus nothing in God 'changes' or is complex, but there are nonetheless things that can be said of God, without being said according to substance (*substantialiter*). Thus when we speak of 'Father' and 'Son', we are speaking in terms of relation, or what can be called 'relative predications'. Edmund Hill summarizes Augustine as follows: 'God is one in respect of substantive predications, yet three in virtue of certain relative predications which, following the scriptural revelation, we make of him.'[24]

If one does not want to say three 'substances', and Augustine does not, perhaps it is best to say three 'persons'. What Augustine writes related to this may sound a bit startling:

> So the only reason, it seems, why we do not call these three together one person, as we call them one being and one God, but say three persons while we never say three Gods or three beings, is that we want to keep at least one word for signifying what we mean by trinity, so that we are not simply reduced to silence when we are asked three what, after we have confessed that there are three.[25]

Simplicity and immutability

Historically, when Christian theologians have spoken of divine 'simplicity', they have essentially meant that God is not a compound being. That is, God is not a bunch of different 'things' brought together to make one 'thing'. Augustine can write about God, 'There is, accordingly, a good which is alone simple, and therefore alone unchangeable, and this is God. By this Good have all others been created, but not simple, and therefore not unchangeable.'[26] Augustine goes on to define simplicity:

> And this Trinity is one God; and none the less simple because a Trinity. For we do not say that the nature of the good is simple, because the Father alone possesses it, or the Son alone, or the Holy Ghost alone; nor do we say, with the Sabellian heretics, that it is only nominally a Trinity, and has no real distinction of persons; but we say it is simple, because

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OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2001). Cf. *Handbook on Faith, Hope and Love* 12.38: 'the operations of the Trinity are inseparable' (*opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*).

24. Edmund Hill, *The Mystery of the Trinity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985), p. 100.
25. *Trinity* 7.11.
26. *City of God* 11.10. All quotations from *The City of God* are from the translation by Marcus Dods (New York: Modern Library, 1950).

> it is what it has, with the exception of the relation of the persons to one another.[27]

Augustine clearly affirms immutability. He speaks of 'the unchangeable substance of God'.[28] Indeed, 'there is no unchangeable good but the one, true, blessed God; that the things which He made are indeed good because from Him, yet mutable because made not out of Him, but out of nothing'.[29] Likewise, 'For since God is the supreme existence, that is to say, supremely is, and is therefore unchangeable, the things that He made He empowered to be, but not to be supremely like Himself.'[30]

Augustine deals with God's wrath or anger and relates it to God's immutability:

> The anger of God is not a disturbing emotion of His mind, but a judgment by which punishment is inflicted upon sin. His thought and reconsideration also are the unchangeable reason which changes things; for He does not, like man, repent of anything He has done, because in all matters His decision is as inflexible as His prescience is certain.[31]

God and time

Augustine repeatedly and consistently teaches that God is eternal and is Lord over time. Indeed, time is a created reality: 'For, though Himself eternal, and without beginning, yet He caused time to have a beginning; and man, whom He had not previously made, He made in time, not from a new and sudden resolution, but by His unchangeable and eternal design.'[32] Indeed, 'God always has been, and that man, whom He had never made before, He willed to make in time, and this without changing His design and will.'[33]

In *Confessions* Augustine takes up the question 'What was God doing before He created the world?' His answer:

> Before God made heaven and earth, he was not doing anything; for if he was doing or making something, what else would he be doing but creating? And no creature was made before any creature was made. I wish I could know everything that I desire to

27. Ibid.
28. Ibid. 11.2.
29. Ibid. 12.1.
30. Ibid. 12.2.
31. Ibid. 15.25.
32. Ibid. 12.14.
33. Ibid.

> know to my own profit with the same certainty with which I know that.[34]

And ultimately for Augustine time itself is a creation of God: 'There was therefore never any time when you had not made anything, because you made time itself.'[35]

God and knowledge

For Augustine, God certainly knows all things. When Augustine quotes from Genesis, 'And God saw that it was good,' he then writes, 'For certainly God did not in the actual achievement of the work first learn that it was good, but, on the contrary, nothing would have been made had it not been first known by Him.'[36]

For God does not know like we know:

> For not in our fashion does He look forward to what is future, nor at what is present, nor back upon what is past; but in a manner quite different and far and profoundly remote from our way of thinking. For He does not pass from this to that by transition of thought, but beholds all things with absolute unchangeableness; so that of those things which emerge in time, the future, indeed, are not yet, and the present are now, and the past no longer are; but all of these are by Him comprehended in His stable and eternal presence.[37]

Augustine, of course, does not see God as being 'in' time. And thus God knows things differently from the way we know things. Augustine writes that it would be a mighty miracle if a mind were to know all things in the way a human mind knows. But God's knowledge of all things is even greater, since God *does* know all things but does *not* know like we humans know:

> But far be it from us to suppose that you, the creator of the universe, creator of souls and bodies, know all things future and past in this fashion! Perish the thought! . . . Nothing can happen to you in your unchangeable eternity, you who are truly the eternal creator of all minds. As you knew heaven and earth in the beginning, without the slightest modification in your knowledge, so too you made heaven and earth in the beginning without any distension in your activity.[38]

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34. Ibid.
35. *Confessions* 14.17.
36. *City of God* 11.21.
37. Ibid.
38. *Confessions* 31.41.

Creation

The goodness of creation

Given his Manichean background – where creation is *not* ultimately and intrinsically good – Augustine was intent on affirming the goodness of creation. At one point he writes, 'We know, therefore, that we should attribute to the creator, not defects, but natures, but one who wants to resist Mani must say where the defects come from.'[39] In short, if one is to 'resist Mani' – that is, if one is to resist the notion that defects or evil can be attributed to the created order itself – one must provide a coherent account of 'defects' or evil within a Christian construal of reality. And this construal must affirm the existence of an eternal and completely good God who is the creator of all things, and where creation is likewise *completely* good.

Augustine can write of the created order, 'with respect to their own nature . . . the creatures are glorifying to their Artificer'.[40] Augustine can also say, 'All natures, then, inasmuch as they are, and have therefore a rank and species of their own, and a kind of internal harmony, are certainly good. And when they are in the places assigned to them by the order of their nature, they preserve such being as they have received.'[41]

Augustine, in wanting to affirm that God truly is the creator of all, makes recourse to a notion of 'seminal seeds'. Augustine's argument is that, when God created the world, he both created actual 'stuff' – animals, vegetation and so on. But God also created these 'seminal seeds' by which (later in time) 'new' things would come forth. Thus, at some point *after* the original creation, we really do see 'new' creatures, 'new' vegetable life and so on. But when animals reproduce, or when the seeds of a plant lead to the existence of a new plant, there is no *autonomous* creating going on. Rather, God is still the *ultimate* creator, because within humans, and within other living things there exists these 'seminal seeds' *created by God*, and only through these seminal seeds does new life come into being. [42]

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39. *Against Julian, an Unfinished Book* 4.123. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 1.25, introduction, tr. and notes Roland J. Teske, SJ, ed. John E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1999).
40. *City of God* 12.4.
41. Ibid. 12.5.
42. *Trinity* 3.13. Augustine speaks of *rationes seminales* or *causales* in his work *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis* 5, 6.

Creation and time

Augustine's teaching that 'time' began with creation has generally prevailed among Christians. Augustine argues that 'the world was made, not in time, but simultaneously with time'.[43] Indeed, 'Since then, God, in whose eternity is no change at all, is the Creator and Ordainer of time, I do not see how He can be said to have created the world after spaces of time had elapsed, unless it be said that prior to the world there was some creature by whose movement time could pass.'[44] Augustine can write, 'For, though Himself eternal, and without beginning, yet He caused time to have a beginning . . .'[45] Indeed, 'But if they say that the thoughts of men are idle when they conceive infinite places, since there is no place beside the world, we reply that, by the same showing, it is vain to conceive of the past times of God's rest, since there is no time before the world.'[46]

Creation and the goodness and will of God

God knows beforehand that what he is going to create is going to be good. Augustine writes, 'certainly God did not in the actual achievement of the work first learn that it was good, but, on the contrary, nothing would have been made had it not been first known by Him'.[47] That is, God creates out of his goodness. This point is most clearly illustrated from Augustine's chapter on creation in *Confessions* (Book 13). Augustine writes, 'Your creation has its being from the fullness of your goodness.'[48]

Evil as a privation of the good

For Augustine, evil is ultimately a privation of the good, or a *privatio boni*. He writes in one of his anti-Pelagian writings:

> Those things which we call evil are either the defects of good things, which cannot exist anywhere by themselves outside of good things, or they are the punishments of sins, which arise from the beauty of justice. Even the defects bear witness to the goodness of the natures. For what is evil by reason of its defect is good by reason of its nature. A defect is against nature, because it harms a nature, and it would not harm

43. *City of God* 11.6.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid. 12.14.
46. Ibid. 11.5.
47. Ibid. 11.21.
48. *Confessions* 13.2.2.

> it if it did not lessen its goodness. Therefore, evil is only a privation of good. Thus it never exists except in some good thing, which is not supremely good, for something supremely good, such as God, lasts without corruption or change. Still, evil exists only in something good, because it does harm only by diminishing what is good.[49]

Augustine also writes, 'For evil has no positive nature; but the loss of good has received the name "evil."'[50]

Providence

That God sovereignly rules over all of the created order is manifestly clear in Augustine's writings. He writes, 'that God can never be believed to have left the kingdoms of men, their dominations and servitudes, outside of the laws of His providence'.[51] To deny such providence is indeed foolish: 'For he who denies that all things, which either angels or men can give us, are in the hand of the one Almighty, is a madman.'[52] And God's providence is exhaustive: 'You see, dearly beloved, there is nothing that escapes providence.'[53]

Augustine can even argue that God has sovereignly arranged the various trees – including the wild olive trees and the natural olive trees – to serve as a reminder of how Christians have been brought, or engrafted into, the people of God:

> Divine providence has carefully provided certain trees which visibly exemplify these invisible realities which are incredible for those without faith, but are nonetheless true. After all, why should we not believe that this was the reason why he arranged it so that a wild olive tree is born of a domesticated one? Ought we not to believe that in something created for human use the creator provided and arranged what might serve as an example of the human race?[54]

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49. *Answer to an Enemy of the Law and the Prophets* 1.5.7.
50. *City of God* 11.9.
51. Ibid. 5.11.
52. Ibid. 10.14.
53. *Sermon 8, On the Plagues of Egypt and the Ten Commandments of the Law*. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 3.1, introduction Michele Pellegrino, tr. and notes Edmund Hill, OP, ed. John E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1998).
54. *Marriage and Desire* 19.21. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 1.24, introduction, tr. and notes Roland J. Teske, SJ, ed. John E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1998).

For Augustine, one must not only affirm God's providence in terms of God's rule over the (non-human) order of nature,[55] but Christians must affirm that God rules over the lives of people as well. Augustine writes:

> Given all this, given too that in everything that goes on in the earth what goes on among human beings takes pride of place, just as human beings themselves do, it is surely the last word in absurdity to deny in great matters that divine provision and forethought which we admire in small ones – unless of course we are to understand that the one who takes so much trouble in making and decreeing the definite number of totally insignificant hairs leaves the lives of men and women free from any judgment![56]

God's providence over evil

Augustine teaches that God is sovereign over all things, including evil and sin. Augustine makes a distinction between God's *creating* and *ruling*:

> But God, as He is the supremely good Creator of good natures, so is He of evil wills the most just Ruler; so that, while they make an ill use of good natures, He makes a good use even of evil wills. Accordingly, He caused the devil (good by God's creation, wicked by his own will) to be cast down from his high position, and to become the mockery of His angels – that is, He caused his temptations to benefit those whom he wishes to injure by them.[57]

Augustine writes:

> It is amazing and yet true that little ones are kindled with intense and hopeful enthusiasm to live upright lives, by the negative example of sinners. As part of the

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55. Of course, Augustine does affirm that God's providential rule extends to all things. He mentions God's providential rule over animals in his *Exposition of Psalm 145* 13 (as well as Ps. 148). In *Exposition of the Psalms 121–150*, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 3.20, tr. and notes Maria Boulding, OSB, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2004). In his *Exposition of Psalm 148* Augustine (commenting on v. 8) writes, 'everything happens on earth by God's providence'.
56. *Sermon on God's Providence*, Sermons 3/11. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 3.2, editorial consultant F. Dolbeau, tr. Edmund Hill, OP (Brooklyn, NY: New City, 1997).
57. *City of God* 11.17.

> same mystery it happens that even heresies are allowed to exist, not because heretics themselves intend it so but because divine providence brings this result from their sins. It is providence which both makes and orders the light, but does no more than order the darkness.[58]

Notice the distinction: (1) providence *makes and orders* the light, but (2) providence 'no more than' *orders* the darkness.

Man

Man as created

Each person is a created being, even if (obviously) each person is brought into being by the union of mother and father: 'For even parents cannot make a human being; rather, God makes one by means of the parents.'[59] Augustine is forthright in speaking of Divine Providence in the creation of new people, even if sin is at times involved in the conception of a new person:

> I do not deny that 'the hand of divine providence is present in the genital organs of sinners.' After all, it reaches from one end to another and arranges all things with might and gentleness, and nothing defiled touches it. For this reason it does what it wants with the unclean and infected, while itself remaining clean and uninfected.[60]

Augustine affirms that God created the first man, and that man was meant to be 'a mean between the angelic and bestial'.[61] The first man was created and placed in the garden, given all he needed, and was called to obey. Augustine writes that if man

> remained in subjection to his Creator as his rightful Lord, and piously kept His commandments, he should pass into the company of the angels, and obtain, without the intervention of death, a blessed and endless immortality; but if he offended the Lord his God by a proud and disobedient use of his free will, he should become

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58. *Exposition of Psalm 9* 20. In *Exposition of the Psalms 121–150*, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 3.20, introduction Michael Fiedrowicz, tr. and notes Maria Boulding, OSB, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2004).
59. *Answer to Julian* 3.18.34. In *The Works of Saint Augustine*, vol. 1.24.
60. Ibid.
61. *City of God* 12.21.

> subject to death, and live as the beasts do – the slave of appetite, and doomed to eternal punishment after death.[62]

Adam, grace and the garden

Although it would be developed in the later Protestant tradition (particularly in the Reformed wing), Augustine clearly teaches that if Adam had obeyed God in the garden, he would have brought himself and his posterity into a condition of eternal blessedness. Augustine writes that God 'had so made them, that if they discharged the obligations of obedience, an angelic immortality and a blessed eternity might ensue, without the intervention of death; but if they disobeyed, death should be visited on them with just sentence . . .'[63]

Augustine summarizes what is entailed in Adam's sin:

> the first men were indeed so created, that if they had not sinned, they would not have experienced any kind of death; but that, having become sinners, they were so punished with death, that whatsoever sprang from their stock should also be punished with the same death. For nothing else could be born of them than that which they themselves had been.[64]

Augustine speaks specifically of 'merit' in terms of Adam's disobedience. God 'created man with such a nature that the members of the race should not have died, had not the two first (of whom the one was created out of nothing, and the other out of him) merited this by their disobedience . . .'[65]

Man as fallen

Augustine is rightly and properly viewed as that theologian who gave structure and depth to the doctrine of original sin. We come into the world already 'in Adam', and are caught up in Adam's transgression. Augustine's first mention of 'original sin' is found in his first anti-Pelagian writing, *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins*: 'they [the Pelagians] refuse to believe that in the case of little children original sin is removed by baptism, since they maintain that there is no sin at all in

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62. Ibid.
63. Ibid. 13.1.
64. Ibid. 13.3.
65. Ibid. 14.1.

newborns'.[66] The immediate concern Augustine addresses is whether post-Adam people experience the 'death' of Romans 5:12 due simply to (1) imitation (the Pelagian view) or by (2) propagation (Augustine's view). Augustine does not deny that fallen man does indeed imitate Adam. But Augustine argues that we are 'in' Adam because we inherit our sinful nature and so *of course* imitate him. We do not participate in Adam's transgression primarily due simply to 'imitation'. As Augustine writes, 'Of course, all those who through disobedience transgress God's commandment imitate Adam. But it is one thing for him to be an example for those who sin by their will; it is something else for him to be the origin of those born with sin.'[67] Indeed, 'One man, Adam, has filled the whole wide world with his progeny. The human race, as if it were a single individual, is lying like a great big sick patient from the furthest east as far as the extreme west, and in need of a cure.'[68] Augustine could refer to all of the fallen human race as a 'mass of the damned' (*massa damnata*).[69]

Augustine distinguishes between (1) being sinful in the sense of being in Adam and caught up in Adam's transgression, the notion of 'original sin', which Augustine calls *peccator originaliter* (original sin), and (2) being sinful in the sense of committing sins in our own space and time in history, which Augustine calls our 'actual sins', *peccator actualiter* (actual sin). Indeed, Augustine is explicit: 'Original sins, however, are the sins of others because there is in them no choice of our own will, and yet they are, nonetheless, also found to be our sins because of the infection contracted from our origin.'[70] But the distinction between sin *originaliter* and *actualiter* should not lead us to diminish the importance of the notion that all people are bound up in Adam's transgression. As Augustine notes, 'it is certainly clear that personal sins of each person by which they alone sinned are distinct from this one in which all have

66. *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* 9. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 1.23, introduction, tr. and notes Roland J. Teske, SJ, ed. John E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1997).
67. Ibid. 10.
68. *Sermon 374, Sermon of Saint Augustine Preached on the Epiphany* 16. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 3.10, introduction Michele Pellegrino, tr. and notes Edmund Hill, OP, ed. John E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1998).
69. *To Simplicianus* 2.16. In *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, ed. John H. S. Burleigh, in *The Library of Christian Classics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006).
70. *Against Julian, an Unfinished Book* 3.57.

sinned, when all were that one man', but nonetheless, 'from the one man all are born destined for a condemnation, from which only the grace of Christ sets them free'.[71]

God the cause of evil?

For Augustine, sin and evil come into the world through the act of human and angelic willing. God is certainly not the cause of evil, and indeed God created *all* things good. So what is the cause of evil? In the context of speaking about angels, Augustine argues that there is certainly no *efficient* cause of evil. And neither can we say that there evil is *eternal*, for that would bring into doubt the goodness and sovereignty of God:

> If the further question be asked, What was the efficient cause of their evil will? There is none. For what is it which makes the will bad, when it is the will itself which makes the action bad? And consequently the bad will is the cause of the bad action, but nothing is the efficient cause of the bad will.[72]

So the angels fell away because they willed to, and to seek a 'cause' outside the angels' wills is to invite serious error. Why do some angels fall while others do not? They turned from God to themselves.[73] A little later Augustine writes:

> There is, then, no natural efficient cause, or, if I may be allowed the expression, no essential cause, of the evil will, since itself is the origin of evil in mutable spirits, by which the good of their nature is diminished and corrupted; and the will is made evil by nothing else than defection from God – a defection of which the cause, too, is certainly deficient.[74]

Augustine and the grace of God

Augustine is properly called the 'Doctor of Grace'.[75] If contemporary Christians want to understand various contemporary debates and discussions about the doctrine of grace, they must understand Augustine, and particularly

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71. *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* 13.
72. *City of God* 12.6.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid. 12.9.
75. N. R. Needham's book *The Triumph of Grace: Augustine's Writings on Salvation* (London: Grace, 2000) is an extremely valuable resource.

his theology as it was hammered out in the 'debates' with Pelagius.[76] Pelagius heard a snippet from *Confessions* that concerned him greatly:

> My entire hope is exclusively in your very great mercy. *Grant what you command, and command what you will.* You require continence. A certain writer has said (Wisd. 8:21); 'As I knew that no one can be continent except God grant it, and this very thing is part of wisdom, to know whose gift this is.' By continence we are collected together and brought to the unity from which we disintegrated into multiplicity. He loves you less who together with you loves something which he does not love for your sake. O love, you ever burn and are never extinguished. O charity, my God, set me on fire. *You command continence; grant what you command, and command what you will.*[77]

Pelagius heard language like 'Grant what you command, and command what you will' and was seriously alarmed. Augustine seemed to be saying that the ability to obey God must somehow come from God. Pelagius (and fellow Pelagians) would criticize Augustine's position in print, leading to an astonishing literary output on Augustine's part.

To understand something of Augustine as the 'Doctor of Grace', we now turn to his story of his own struggle with sin, his resistance to trusting in Christ, and his eventual conversion – all recounted in *Confessions*.

Augustine the recipient of grace

Augustine resists the gospel

Augustine at first claims to have had intellectual problems with the Christian faith (the apparent unsophisticated nature of the Old Testament, the problem

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76. In *The Deeds of Pelagius* (11.23) (in *The Works of St Augustine*, vol. 1.23) Augustine lists the key tenets of Pelagianism as culled from the Pelagian Caelestius, condemned at the Council of Carthage. They are (1) 'Adam was created mortal so that he would die whether he sinned or did not sin.' (2) 'The sin of Adam harmed him alone and not the human race.' (3) 'The law leads to the kingdom just as the gospel does.' (4) 'Before the coming of Christ there were human beings without sin.' (5) 'Newly born infants are in the same state in which Adam was before his transgression.' (6) 'The whole human race does not die through the death or transgression of Adam, nor does the whole human race rise through the resurrection of Christ.'
77. *Confessions* 10.29.40; emphasis mine.

of evil and so on). But the problem for Augustine was deeper – a matter of the will, desire and affections:

> But now I was not in vanity of that kind. I had climbed beyond it, and by the witness of all creation I had found you our Creator and your Word who is God beside you and with you is one God, by whom you created all things (John 1:1–3). . . . And now I had discovered the good pearl. To buy it I had to sell all that I had; and I hesitated (Matt. 13:46).[78]

Augustine was caught between two sets of competing desires:

> I sighed after such [Christian] freedom, but was bound not by an iron imposed by anyone else but by the iron of my own choice. The enemy had a grip on my will and so made a chain for me to hold me a prisoner. The consequence of a distorted will is passion. By servitude to passion, habit is formed, and habit to which there is no resistance becomes necessity. . . . So my two wills, one old, the other new, one carnal, the other spiritual, were in conflict with one another, and their discord robbed my soul of all concentration.[79]

Augustine compares his bondage to sin, his lethargy to sleep:

> The burden of the world weighed me down with a sweet drowsiness such as commonly occurs during sleep. The thoughts with which I meditated about you were like the efforts of those who would like to get up but are overcome by deep sleep and sink back again. . . . Though at every point you showed that what you were saying was true, yet I, convinced by that truth, had no answer to give you except merely slow and sleepy words: 'At once'–'But presently'–'Just a little longer, please'. But 'At once, at once' never came to the point of decision, and 'Just a little longer, please' went on and on for a long while.[80]

Grant me chastity, but not yet

Augustine begins to hear of the Christian faith of others (Ponticianus and Antony), and wishes to break from his sinful desires. He writes about his struggle:

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78. Ibid. 7.1.2.
79. Ibid. 8.5.10.
80. Ibid. 8.5.12.

> But I was an unhappy young man, wretched as at the beginning of my adolescence when I prayed you for chastity and said: 'Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet.' I was afraid you might hear my prayer quickly, and that you might too rapidly heal me of the disease of lust which I preferred to satisfy rather than suppress.[81]

The truthfulness of Christianity no longer the issue

As he nears his conversion, Augustine continues to reiterate his dilemma: the problem is no longer the truthfulness of Christianity; the problem is his will, desires and affections:

> The arguments [against Christianity] were exhausted, and all had been refuted. The only thing left to it was a mute trembling, and as if it were facing death it was terrified of being restrained from the treadmill of habit by which it suffered 'sickness unto death' (John 11:4).[82]

A battle of two wills

Augustine was clearly locked in a battle of will, as he describes repeatedly in *Confessions*:

> In my own case, as I deliberated about serving my Lord God (Jer. 30:9) which I had long been disposed to do, the self which willed to serve was identical with the self which was unwilling. It was I. I was neither wholly willing nor wholly unwilling. So I was in conflict with myself and was dissociated from myself. The dissociation came about against my will.[83]

Take read, take read

Finally, after recounting his struggle over a number of pages, Augustine recounts his conversion in the garden in Milan:

> From a hidden depth a profound self-examination had dredged up a heap of all my misery and set it 'in the sight of my heart' (Ps. 18:15). That precipitated a vast storm bearing a massive downpour of tears. . . . I threw myself down somehow under a certain fig tree, and let my tears flow freely. . . . As I was saying this and weeping in the bitter agony of my heart, suddenly I heard a voice from the nearby house chanting as if it might be a boy or a girl (I do not know which), saying and repeating

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81. Ibid. 8.7.16–17.
82. Ibid. 8.7.18.
83. Ibid. 8.10.22

> over and over again 'Pick up and read, pick up and read.' At once my countenance changed, and I began to think intently whether there might be some sort of children's game . . . . I checked the flood of tears and stood up. I interpreted it solely as a divine command to me to open the book and read the first chapter . . . . I seized it [the Bible], opened it and in silence read the first passage on which my eyes lit: 'Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lust' (Rom. 13:13–14). I neither wished nor needed to read further. At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled.[84]

Augustine the doctor of grace

With Augustine's conversion story in the background we are better prepared to grasp his understanding of grace.

The fallen will, and what it means to be free

Augustine views the freedom of pre-fall and post-fall Adam (and his descendents) very differently. For Augustine, fallen man makes no movement towards God apart from God's grace: 'we must fiercely and strongly oppose those who think that the power of the human will can by itself, without the help of God, either attain righteousness or make progress in tending toward it'.[85] 'Freedom' while we are unregenerate is ultimately only freedom to sin: 'For free choice is capable only of sinning, if the way of truth remains hidden.'[86]

It is with man's 'first freedom' (using his *will*) that he actually destroyed his own will. Augustine writes:

> For those who may not fully understand then, those words of the Apostle would seem to eliminate free will. But how can he eliminate it, when he says, 'the will is present'? It is certain, indeed, that the will itself is within our power; but powerlessness to accomplish good is the result of the fault due to original sin.[87]

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84. Ibid. 8.12.28–29.
85. *The Spirit and the Letter* 4.
86. Ibid. 5.
87. *To Simplicianus* 1, First Question, 1. All quotations of *To Simplicianus* are from *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, Library of Christian Classics, selected and tr. John H. S. Burleigh (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox, 1979).

When Augustine tries to articulate the plight of the unregenerate person, he often speaks in terms of the sinner's *desires*:

> The price of deadly pleasure includes the sweetness which deceives, and gives delight in doing contrary to the law, which is all the more pleasant the less it is lawful. No one can enjoy that sweetness as the price of his condition without being compelled to serve lust as a chattel-slave. He who knows that an act is prohibited and rightly prohibited, and yet does it, knows that he is the slave of an overmastering desire.[88]

Election, predestination and the grace of God in initiating salvation

Augustine cautioned that election is extremely difficult to ponder, and that it is a mystery. In one letter he writes:

> But if there is something less clear about the gift of free choice and grace and its outcome, or about the secret depth of God's judgment and about his providence and his secret dispensation regarding various human beings, let no one be disturbed, if he does not understand. Let us believe that the Lord is just and that there is no injustice in him, and let us save for the next life what we do not understand in this life.[89]

In his *Reconsiderations* of his *To Simplicianus* Augustine writes concerning Romans 9:10–29, 'I have tried hard to maintain the free choice of the human will, but the grace of God prevailed.'[90]

Augustine can write clearly of divine election at numerous points. For example, in *The City of God* he writes:

> Now, therefore, with regard to those to whom God did not purpose to give eternal life with His holy angels in His own celestial city, to the society of which that true piety which does not render the service of religion, which the Greeks call *latreia*, to any save the true God conducts, if He had also withheld from them the terrestrial glory of that most excellent empire, a reward would not have been rendered to their good arts – that is, their virtues – by which they sought to attain so great glory.[91]

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88. Ibid. 7.
89. *A Letter of Bishop Evodius to Abbot Valentine*. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 1.26, introduction, tr. and notes Roland J. Teske, SJ, ed. John E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1997).
90. *Reconsiderations* 2.1.
91. *City of God* 5.15.

In his *To Simplicianus* Augustine, in taking up Romans 9:10–29, wrestles with the situations of Jacob and Esau, respectively. Why did Jacob believe and Esau did not? Augustine circles around the question for some time. Finally he turns to Philippians 2:12–13: 'Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure' (ESV). Augustine concludes, 'There he clearly shows that the good will itself is wrought in us by the working of God.'[92] Getting to the heart of things, Augustine writes, 'For the effectiveness of God's mercy cannot be in the power of man to frustrate, if he will have none of it. If God wills to have mercy on men, he can call them in a way that is suited to them, so that they will be moved to understand and to follow.'[93]

Indeed, 'He calls the man on whom he has mercy in the way he knows will suit him, so that he will not refuse the call.'[94] Augustine writes elsewhere about Philippians 2:12–13:

> the true interpretation of the saying, 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,' is that the whole work belongs to God, who *both* makes the will of man righteous and thus prepares it for assistance, and assists it when it is prepared. For the man's righteousness of will precedes many of God's gifts, but not all; and it must itself be included among those which it does not precede.[95]

Augustine argues that there is no injustice in allowing rebellious humanity to remain in their sin, and there is not injustice if God chooses to have mercy on some:

> Sinful humanity must pay a debt of punishment to the supreme divine justice. Whether that debt is exacted or remitted there is no unrighteousness. It would be a mark of pride if the debtors claimed to decide to whom the debt should be remitted and from whom it should be exacted; just as those who were hired to work in the vineyard were unjustly indignant when as much was given to the others as was duly paid to themselves (Matt. 20:11 ff.).[96]

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92. *To Simplicianus* 2.12.
93. Ibid. 2.13.
94. Ibid.
95. *Handbook on Faith, Hope and Love* 31.
96. *To Simplicianus* 2.16.

As Augustine continues, note that he – at least here – frames the issue of God's not showing mercy to some more in terms of simply passing over them than in 'driving' such people to sin:

> So the apostle represses the impudent questioner. 'O man, who art thou that repliest against God?' A man so speaks back to God when he is displeased that God finds fault with sinners, as if God compelled any man to sin when he simply does not bestow his justifying mercy on some sinners, and for that reason is said to harden some sinners; not because he drives them to sin but because he does not have mercy upon them.[97]

Augustine and justification

It is right and proper for evangelicals to note the difference between Augustine and the Protestant Reformers in their respective doctrines of justification.[98] It is standard to point out that Augustine would construe justification in the sense of 'make righteous' (Latin: *justifico*, 'I justify, or make righteous') rather than the evangelical understanding of 'to declare' or 'to reckon' righteous (from the Greek term in the New Testament, *dikaioō*). The difficulty here is that Augustine was not embroiled in the Catholic–Protestant debates and should not be interpreted in the light of that distance from such debates. Interestingly, he can at times speak of justification as having a punctiliar type of meaning – which is an understanding with which most evangelicals would resonate. Thus he can write, 'For sins alone produce the separation between human beings and God, and they are removed by the grace of him through whom we are reconciled, when he makes the sinner righteous (Rom 4:5).'[99] Interestingly, here Augustine is dealing with baptism, and so not only does Augustine affirm baptismal regeneration, but justification can be said to occur at the point of baptism – which denotes something like a punctiliar understanding of justification.

Similarly, in *To Simplicianus* Augustine seems to speak of justification in a more past-tense, punctiliar sense:

> So no one does good works in order that he may receive grace, but because he *has received* grace. How can a man live justly who *has* not *been justified*? How can he live

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97. Ibid.
98. Among other works, see David F. Wright, 'Justification in Augustine', in Bruce L. McCormack, *Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic; Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2006).
99. *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* 25.

> holily who *has* not *been sanctified*? Or, indeed, how can a man live at all who *has* not been *vivified*? Grace justifies so that he who is justified may live justly.[100]

Notice how receiving grace, justification and sanctification all appear to be past tense and punctiliar. While Augustine is certainly not a Protestant, his punctiliar emphases when speaking of things like receiving grace, justification and sanctification, resonate with later Protestant concerns.

The Christian life and perseverance

Augustine gives great emphasis to the grace of God in initiating our salvation, helping Christians to grow in grace, and in preserving his people. He writes, 'the grace of God both for beginning and for persevering up to the end is not given according to our merits, but is given according to his most hidden and at the same time most just, most wise, and most beneficent will'.[101]

Whereas before conversion people do not *want* – ultimately – to believe, in a similar way *after* conversion we obey God because we *want* to. Augustine writes:

> We, on the other hand, say that the human will is helped to achieve righteousness in this way: Besides the fact that human beings are created with free choice of the will and besides the teaching by which they are commanded how they ought to live, they receive the Holy Spirit so that there arises in their minds a delight in and a love for that highest and immutable good that is God.[102]

He continues, 'unless we find delight in it and love it, we do not act, do not begin, do not live good lives. But so that we may love it, the love of God is poured out in our hearts, not by free choice which comes from ourselves, but by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:5).'[103] We *want* to do godly things, for God has transformed our *desires*. Augustine writes in his *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*, 'For the good begins to be desired when it begins to become sweet.'[104]

Christians persevere because they *want* to persevere, even if – for Augustine – *all* they can ultimately do is persevere:

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100. *To Simplicianus* 1, Second Question, 3; emphases mine.
101. *The Gift of Perseverance* 13, 33.
102. *On the Spirit and Letter* 5.
103. Ibid.
104. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 21. In *The Works of Saint Augustine*, vol. 1.24.

> Now in the case of the saints who are predestined to the kingdom of God by the grace of God, the assistance of perseverance which is given is not that [granted to the first man], but that kind which brings the gift of actual perseverance. It is not just that they cannot persevere without this gift; once they have received this gift, they can do nothing except persevere.[105]

The Christian's future

Augustine wants to point out that the blessedness of the Christian in his future state is a greater blessedness than that blessedness experienced by pre-fall Adam:

> Accordingly, so far as present comfort goes, the first man in Paradise was more blessed than any just man in this insecure state; but as regards the hope of future good, every man who not merely supposes, but certainly knows that he shall eternally enjoy the most high God in the company of angels, and beyond the reach of ill – this man, no matter what bodily torments afflict him, is more blessed than was he who, even in that great felicity of Paradise, was uncertain of his fate.[106]

Augustine at numerous points speaks of man's ultimate end. While in *The Trinity* Augustine speaks in terms of the vision of God as man's ultimate end, at other points he emphasizes the Christian's future peace. In *The City of God* Augustine writes, 'But this is true virtue, when it refers all the advantages it makes a good use of, and all that it does in making good use of good and evil things, and itself also, to that end in which we shall enjoy the best and greatest peace possible.'[107]

Augustine, the incarnation and the cross of Christ

The incarnation

Augustine intentionally and forthrightly affirms a Chalcedonian, two-natures Christology, and self-consciously seeks to resist the Arian error (of denying the full deity of Christ). He affirms the full deity and humanity of Christ, and the centrality of his death for sinners:

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105. *On Admonition and Grace* 12.34. In *The Works of Saint Augustine*, vol. 1.26.
106. *City of God* 11.12.
107. Ibid. 19.10.

> But if, as is much more probable and credible, it must needs be that all men, so long as they are mortal, are not also miserable, we must seek an intermediate who is not only man, but also God, that by the interposition of His blessed mortality, He may bring men out of their moral misery to a blessed immortality. In this intermediate two things are requisite, that He become mortal, and that He do not continue mortal. He did become mortal, not rendering the divinity of the Word infirm, but assuming the infirmity of flesh. Neither did He continue mortal in the flesh, but raised it from the dead; for it is the very fruit of His mediation that those, for sake of whose redemption He became the Mediator, should not abide eternally in bodily death.[108]

Augustine clearly affirms the sinlessness of Jesus: 'For we were men, but were not righteous; whereas in His incarnation there was a human nature, but it was righteous, and not sinful.'[109] The Word took on a full humanity: 'For, to prevent us from seeking one purgation for the part which Porphyry calls intellectual, and another for the part he calls spiritual, and another for the body itself, our most mighty and truthful Purifier and Saviour assumed the whole human nature.'[110]

In his incarnation the Word remains unchangeable, and Augustine links this with God's grace and our salvation: 'but the incarnation of the unchangeable Son of God, whereby we are saved, and are enabled to reach the things we believe, or in part understand, this is what you refuse to recognize'.[111] Indeed:

> The grace of God could not have been more graciously commended to us than thus, that the only Son of God, remaining unchangeable in Himself, should assume humanity, and should give us the hope of His love by means of the mediation of a human nature, through which we, from the condition of men, might come to Him, who was so far off – the immortal from the mortal; the unchangeable from the changeable; the just from the unjust; the blessed from the wretched.[112]

The atoning work of Christ

Augustine speaks about the atonement in a number of ways. The sacrifice of Christ is offered to the Father: 'The true sacrifice is owed to the one true

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108. Ibid. 9.15.
109. Ibid. 10.24.
110. Ibid. 10.32.
111. Ibid. 10.29.
112. Ibid.

God.'[113] Augustine mentions the death of Christ in terms of expiation: 'For he was able to expiate sins by dying, because He both died, and not for sin of His own.'[114] Interestingly, also like Anselm, Augustine speaks of the atoning work of Christ redeeming 'a people so numerous, that He thus fills up and repairs the blank made by the fallen angels, and thus that beloved and heavenly city is not defrauded of the full number of its citizens, but perhaps may even rejoice in a still more overflowing population' (although Augustine does not linger long here).[115]

For Augustine, Jesus is both the one who sacrifices and the sacrifice itself:

> Thus He is both the Priest who offers and the Sacrifice offered. And He designed that there should be a daily sign of this in the sacrifice of the Church, which, being His body, learns to offer herself through Him. Of this true Sacrifice the ancient sacrifices of the saints were the various and numerous signs; and it was thus variously figured, just as one thing is dignified by a variety of words, that there may be less weariness when we speak of it much. To this supreme and true sacrifice all false sacrifices have given place.[116]

Augustine argues that it is not the flesh which (by itself) purifies, but the Word who has taken on flesh: 'The flesh, therefore, does not by its own virtue purify, but by virtue of the Word by which it was assumed, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us".'[117]

The atonement is not *either* substitutionary *or* a 'victory'. Rather, Augustine can link penal substitution to the defeat of the devil. Our relation to the devil (in terms of the devil's power over us) is a *penal* reality:

> I mean now to speak of the blessings which God has conferred or still confers upon our nature, vitiated and condemned as it is. For in condemning it He did not withdraw all that He had given it, else it had been annihilated; neither did He, in penally subjecting it to the devil, remove it beyond His own power.

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113. *Sermon 374, Sermon of Saint Augustine Preached on Epiphany* 16. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 2.10, introduction, tr. and notes Edmund Hill, OP, ed. John E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1995).
114. *City of God* 10.24.
115. Ibid. 20.1.
116. Ibid. 10.20.
117. Ibid. 10.24.

Augustine is often considered a representative of the 'Christus Victor' approach. However, Augustine sees the victory over the devil fundamentally in terms of *justice*. That is, the devil's influence over people, and the *reason* the devil has such influence, is fundamentally a *justice* issue, and hence the devil must be defeated in terms of justice: 'So it pleased God to deliver man from the devil's authority by beating him at the justice game, not the power game, so that men too might imitate Christ by seeking to beat the devil at the justice game, not the power game.'[118] For Augustine, payment appears to fit under the rubric of justice. Augustine asks, 'What then is the justice that overpowered the devil?' His answer: 'The justice of Jesus Christ – what else?'[119]

Augustine, the church and the sacraments

The nature of the church

Augustine speaks of a 'heavenly church' and a 'pilgrim church'. The 'heavenly church' consists of all the redeemed in heaven, as well as angels, while the 'pilgrim church' consists of the redeemed on earth, those 'wandering on earth'.[120]

Augustine's 'Catholic' doctrine of the church can be seen when he speaks of the forgiveness of sins: 'Indeed, outside the Church they [actual sins] are not forgiven, for it is the Church that has received the Holy Spirit as her own as a pledge without which no sins are forgiven in such a way that those to whom they are forgiven receive eternal life.'[121]

Augustine speaks of the church as 'the rational part of creation which belongs to the free city of Jerusalem'. He goes on:

> Here the whole Church should be understood to be meant, not only the part that is on pilgrimage on earth, praising the name of the Lord from the rising of the sun to its setting and singing a new song after its old captivity, but also that part which has remained with God in heaven ever since its foundation and has never suffered any fall into evil.[122]

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118. *Trinity* 13.17. Cf. Henri Blocher, '*Agnus Victor*: The Atonement as Victory and Vicarious Punishment', in John G. Stackhouse, Jr (ed.), *What Does it Mean to Be Saved? Broadening Evangelical Horizons on Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), pp. 67–91.
119. *Trinity* 13.18.
120. *Handbook on Faith, Hope and Love* 17.61.
121. Ibid. 17.65.
122. Ibid. 15.56.

The Christian church is, for Augustine, a pilgrim community travelling to the City of God. But it is at the same time the presence of Christ in this world:

> The universal Church, then, which is now found on the pilgrimage of mortality, awaits at the end of the world what has already been revealed in the body of Christ, who is the firstborn from the dead, because his body, of which he is the head, is also none other than the Church.[123]

Sacraments

Augustine laid the groundwork for later medieval developments (and beyond) of a theology of the sacraments. It is difficult to summarize his understanding of the sacraments briefly. Nonetheless, he writes, 'A sacrifice, therefore, is the visible sacrament or sacred sign of an invisible sacrifice.'[124] The eternal destiny of Christians is for them one day to see God face to face (1 Cor. 13:12), and Augustine's understanding of sacraments must be seen in the light of that face-to-face vision. The sacraments are means by which we are drawn *through* visible and earthly things *to* invisible things (God).[125]

For Augustine, all of creation in some sense testifies to its creator, but only some things should properly be called 'sacraments':

> Thus with the freedom of Christians we use the rest of creation, the winds, the sea, the earth, birds, fishes, animals, trees, and human beings in many ways for speaking, but for the celebration of the sacraments we use only a very few, such as water, wheat, wine, and oil. In the servitude, however, of the old people they were commanded to celebrate many sacraments that are handed on to us only to be understood.[126]

Interestingly, Augustine can have a broad understanding of 'sacrifice': 'Thus a true sacrifice is every work which is done that we may be united to God in holy fellowship, and which has a reference to that supreme good and end in which alone we can be truly blessed.'[127]

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123. *Letter 55* 2.3. In *The Works of Saint Augustine*, vol. 2.1.
124. *City of God* 10.5.
125. *Letter 55* 5.8.
126. Ibid. 7.13.
127. *City of God* 10.6.

Baptism

Augustine is clear in teaching that baptism removes sin. And Augustine argues that infants who die without baptism are therefore lost. Augustine can use related illustrations to speak of God's sovereign grace: a believer's child who dies apart from baptism is lost, while the child of most wicked unbelievers is by God's grace saved:

> And yet the providence of God, for whom the hairs of our head are numbered and without whose will not even a sparrow falls to the earth, is not subject to fate, nor is it impeded by chance events or defiled by any injustice. Yet his providence does not take care of all the infants of his own children so that they may be reborn for the heavenly kingdom but does take care of the infants of some unbelievers. This infant, born of believing parents and welcomed with the joy of parents, suffocated by the sleepiness of its mother or nurse, becomes a stranger to and is excluded from the faith of his parents; that infant is born of wicked adultery, exposed by the cruel fear of its mother, taken up by the merciful goodness of strangers, baptized out of their Christian concern, and becomes a member and partaker of the eternal kingdom.[128]

Augustine is clear that baptism is necessary to take away original sin.[129] He argues strenuously that since Christians bring their infants to be baptized, this shows that these adults do in fact know at some level that even infants are sinful. And since this sinfulness is not due to the sinful actions or behavior of infants, such infants must in fact be subject to original sin. As Augustine writes:

> if they are not held by any bond of sinfulness stemming from their origin, how did Christ, who died for the sinners, die for these infants who obviously have done nothing sinful in their own lives? If they are not afflicted by the disease of original sin, why do those caring for them bring them out of a holy fear to Christ the physician, that is, to receive the sacrament of eternal salvation?[130]

The challenge of Donatism

The Donatists had argued that the ministry of those church leaders (*e.g.* pastors or bishops) who had been 'traitors' during times of persecution (they

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128. *Letter 194* (to Sixtus) 32. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 2.3, tr. and notes Roland Teske, SJ, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2004).
129. *Handbook on Faith, Hope and Love* 64.
130. *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins* 23.

had 'handed over' copies of the Scriptures when told to by the authorities) was not valid. Thus, if a 'traitor' had baptized someone, the baptized person had to be rebaptized, for the extreme moral failure (being a 'traitor') in effect nullified the efficacy of the pastor's/bishop's ministry (here, baptizing).[131] While the Donatists argued for a 'pure' church, Augustine argued for a 'mixed church' in the here now, and he utitilized the parable of the wheat and tares to illustrate that God will separate believer and unbeliever at some future date. It can be argued that, for Augustine, only believers in Christ can truly be considered part of the church, but there is little benefit in making hard and fast judgments in the present on who is truly a member of the body of Christ and who is not.

In response to Donatism, Augustine argues that the efficacy of the sacraments does not in fact depend on the moral or spiritual state of the priest, because the *real* or *ultimate* minister ministering the sacrament is Christ himself, who ministers *through* the 'lower' or earthly minister. Augustine writes that the person 'whom the drunkard baptized, those whom a murderer baptized, those whom an adulterer baptized, if it were the baptism of Christ, Christ baptized'.[132] Augustine continues, 'Jesus still baptizes; and as long as we must be baptized, Jesus baptizes. Let a man approach confidently to a lesser minister; for he has a superior teacher.'[133]

The Lord's Supper

There is some debate as to whether Augustine held to what would become a fully 'Roman Catholic' position at some point later in church history.[134] Pamela Jackson notes that Augustine speaks of three different realms as being 'sacraments': (1) rites (both Old Testament rites and New Testament realities like baptism and the Lord's Supper); (2) symbolic figures (*e.g.* the Red Sea as a 'type' of God's rescuing his people); (3) mysteries (*e.g.* the Trinity or resurrection). And since Augustine saw Scripture as a divine collection of various 'signs',

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131. Lancel, *Augustine*, pp. 164–165.

132. *Tractates on the Gospel of John 1–10* tr. John W. Rettig, vol. 78 in *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 5.18.

133. *Tractates on the Gospel of John 11–27*, in *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 79. Emmanuel J. Cutrone's 'Sacraments', in Allan D. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 741–746, is helpful in outlining Augustine on the sacraments.

134. See Cutrone, 'Sacraments'.

signs that point to God, the 'signs' of Scripture could virtually be viewed as sacraments.[135]

Perhaps one of the most famous places where Augustine speaks of the Lord's Supper is in *The City of God* 10.6. Speaking of the sacrifice of Christ, he writes, 'Thus a true sacrifice is every work which is done that we may be united to God in holy fellowship, and which has a reference to that supreme good and end in which alone we can be truly blessed.'[136] Thus, for Augustine, when we act as we ought, and act in such a way as to glorify God, that is a 'sacrifice'.[137] Augustine writes about the 'sacrifices' we as Christians offer:

> true sacrifices are works of mercy to ourselves or others, done with a reference to God, and since works of mercy have no other object than the relief of distress or the conferring of happiness, and since there is no happiness apart from that good of which it is said, 'It is good for me to be very near to God,' it follows that the whole redeemed city, that is to say, the congregation or community of the saints, is offered to God as our sacrifice through the great High Priest, who offered Himself to God in His passion for us, that we might be members of this glorious head, according to the form of a servant.[138]

Augustine in this section is speaking of sacrifice, and of how all we do that is directed towards God is a kind of sacrifice. Then Augustine writes, 'And this also is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar.' He has just quoted Romans 12:3–6, on how Christians are the body of Christ. Thus, when Augustine writes that '*this* is the sacrifice', he seems to have in mind the church existing as the body of Christ. Augustine goes on to write that the 'sacrament of the altar' is likewise a sacrifice, for in this sacrament (the Lord's Supper), 'she herself [the church] is offered in the offering she makes to God'.[139] A Roman Catholic interpreter may see the seeds (even the explication of) a Roman Catholic understanding of the 'real presence' of Christ in the Lord's Supper. A Protestant might look at this passage and conclude, (1) all that we do – if done for God – can be, or is, a 'sacrament'; and (2) in the Lord's Supper the Christian church herself

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135. Cf. *On Christian Doctrine*, *Responses to Januarius* 54.
136. *City of God* 10.6.
137. Ibid.
138. Ibid.
139. Ibid.

is offered to God. To the extent that one emphasizes Augustine's notion that all things done for God are sacraments, one will be less likely to see Augustine as 'catholic'. To the extent that one emphasizes that the church's self-sacrifice in the sacrament of the altar is also a sacrifice where Christ is really present – and is sacrificed again – one would see Augustine as more 'catholic'.

Augustine and the Bible

The nature and authority of Scripture

Augustine speaks of the divine origin, inspiration and authority of Scripture. In *The City of God* he writes of Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures:

> This Mediator, having spoken what He judged sufficient, first by the prophets, then by His own lips, and afterwards by the apostles, has besides produced the Scripture which is called canonical, which has paramount authority, and to which we yield assent in all matters of which we ought not to be ignorant, and yet cannot know of ourselves.[140]

In the same letter Augustine writes, 'I most firmly believe that none of their authors erred in writing anything.'[141] Indeed, 'with regard to their writings [the writings of the prophets and the apostles] it is wicked to doubt that they are free from all error'.[142]

The authority of Scripture and the nature of the church

Perhaps one of Augustine's most famous statements on how he came to believe Scripture is as follows: 'For my part, I should not believe the gospel except as moved by the authority of the Catholic Church.'[143] While it might be tempting to some to take this passage as sure-fire support for some sort of two-source view of divine authority, or as a 'proof text' of sorts for papal

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140. Ibid. 11.2.
141. *Letter 82* (Augustine to Jerome) 3, 1.3. In *The Works of Saint Augustine:*, vol. 2.1.
142. Ibid. 1.3.
143. *Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental* 5.6, tr. Richard Stothert. In Philip Schaff (ed.), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* [*NPNF*] (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1887), vol. 4.

infallibility, other passages from Augustine mitigate against such a move. Augustine ultimately looks to the Scriptures as his ultimate authority, giving evidence (at the risk of being anachronistic) of a version of *sola scriptura*. He writes, 'I owe this complete obedience only to the canonical scriptures, and by it I follow them alone in such a way that I have no doubt that their authors erred in them in absolutely no way and wrote nothing in them in order to deceive.'[144] Likewise Augustine speaks of the 'lofty supremacy' and authority of Scripture:

> there is a distinct boundary line separating all productions subsequent to apostolic times from the authoritative canonical books of the Old and New Testaments. The authority of these books has come down to us from the apostles through the successions of bishops and the extension of the Church, and, from a position of lofty supremacy, claims the submission of every faithful and pious mind.[145]

The unity of Holy Scripture

Augustine writes of the unity of Scripture: 'the words they hated to see ascribed to God in the Old Testament were righteous enough to be found in the New, and those they praised and celebrated in the New Testament were also to be found in the Old'.[146] Similarly,

> (Among the people who had received the Old Testament) there were so many signs and such preparation for the New Testament that we can find in the Gospel and the apostles' preaching no precept, no promise, however difficult and divine they may be, that is missing from those ancient books.[147]

In affirming the unity of the Bible Augustine writes, 'in the Old Testament the New is concealed, and in the New the Old is revealed'.[148]

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144. *Letter 82* (Augustine to Jerome) 3.24. In *The Works of Saint Augustine*:, vol. 2.1.
145. *Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental* 5, *NPNF*, vol. 4.
146. *Against Adimantus* 4. *Against Adimantus* is one of Augustine's anti-Manichaean works that has not yet been translated into English. I am relying at this point on the translation from Lancel, *St Augustine*, p. 272.
147. Ibid. 3.4.
148. *The First Catechetical Instruction* 4.8, tr. Joseph Christopher, *Ancient Christian Writers* (New York: Newman, 1978).

The interpretation of Scripture

Readers of Scripture are attempting 'to discover the thoughts and will of the authors it was written by, and through them to discover the will of God, which we believe directed what such human writers had to say'.[149]

God has *intentionally* made Scripture difficult to understand, so that we must *work* at understanding Scripture:

> This [the difficulty of understanding and interpreting Scripture] is all due, I have no doubt at all, to divine providence, in order to break in pride with hard labor, and to save the intelligence from boredom, since it readily forms a low opinion of things that are too easy to work out.[150]

Augustine also writes about his former efforts to approach Scripture from an unbelieving heart. This cannot be the case if one is to understand Scripture:

> if you have no qualms about believing, there's nothing you need be ashamed of. I am speaking to you as one who was myself caught out once upon a time, when as a lad I wanted to tackle the divine scriptures with the techniques of clever disputation before bringing to them the spirit of earnest inquiry. In this way I was shutting the door of my Lord against myself by my misplaced attitude; I should have been knocking at it for it to be opened, but instead I was adding my weight to keep it shut. I was presuming to seek in my pride what can only be found by humility.[151]

Augustine and the possibility of knowledge

Augustine and St Anselm (1033–1109) are properly viewed as advocates of 'faith seeking understanding'. For Augustine 'faith seeking understanding' is first and foremost a term which describes how we know God. We have *faith* in Christ, believing that we will one day see God face-to-face and have a fuller *understanding* of him. That is, 'faith seeking understanding' has a type of historical-redemptive undertone: we have *faith* as we walk in this temporal/earthly realm, believing that we will in the future *understand* more and more the God

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149. *On Christian Doctrine* 2.6.7.

150. Ibid.

151. *Sermon 51* 6. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 3.111, tr. Edmund Hill, OP, ed. John E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1990).

in whom we have placed our trust. Thus, Augustine can write: 'understanding refers to everlasting sight, while faith in temporal things as a kind of cradle is, so to say, nourishing little ones on milk; now, however, we are walking by faith and not by sight (2 Cor 5:7), but unless we walk by faith, we shall never be able to reach the sight which does not pass away but endures, when with our understanding purified we cleave to Truth.'[152] This – like virtually all shorthand summaries of theological insights and convictions – is prone to misunderstanding. One thing 'faith seeking understanding' does *not* mean is that there is some sort of hostility between faith and understanding. Also, it is not the case that 'faith' here can simply be first and foremost a non-cognitive (or non-thinking) reality. Rather, Augustine can write that 'believing' is actually *always* preceded by 'thinking':

> everything which is believed should be believed after thought has preceded; although even belief itself is nothing else than to think with assent. For it is not every one who thinks that believes, since many think in order that they may not believe; but everybody who believes, thinks – both thinks in believing, and believes in thinking.[153]

For Augustine, the state of our hearts affects our ability to truly *know* or *see* something. Hence, because of disordered loves, some people do not always see the beauty in creation: 'Yet by love of created things they are subdued by them, and being thus made subject become incapable of exercising judgment.' Through a type of disordered love, certain people are 'subdued' by the rest of the created order. 'Moreover, created things do not answer those who question them if power to judge is lost.'[154]

Interestingly, Augustine, while affirming 'faith seeking understanding', nonetheless affirms a high place for reason. There are two ways to know things: (1) authority and (2) reason. However, while authority is first *temporally*, reason is first in order of *reality* (in the sense of being of most importance). We may enter into the truths of Christianity by *authority*, but 'after one has entered, then without any hesitation he begins to follow the precepts of the perfect life'. For *reason*, 'now strong and capable after the cradle of authority' allows us actually to understand what *reason itself* is.[155]

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152. *On Christian Doctrine* 2.17.
153. *Predestination of the Saints* 5. In Vernon J. Bourke, *The Essential Augustine*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1974), p. 22.
154. *Confessions* 10.6.10.
155. *On Order* 2.9.26 (from Bourke, *Essential Augustine*, p. 26).

Augustine and divine illumination

For Augustine, it is God who illuminates the human mind in every act of knowing. He writes:

> the intellectual mind is so formed in its nature as to see those things which by the disposition of the Creator are subjoined to things intelligible in a natural order, by a sort of incorporeal light of a unique kind; as the eye of the flesh sees things adjacent to itself in this bodily light, of which light it is made to be receptive, and adapted to it.[156]

Augustine argues that we *learn* nothing from signs; rather, we learn from the 'inner Teacher' – Christ. Augustine writes that when Christ is teaching someone, this person is 'taught not by my words but by the things themselves made manifest within when God discloses them'.[157] That is, God (Christ in the person) must 'enlighten' or 'illuminate' the person, allowing them to learn. People have an 'inner light of Truth', which results in illumination and rejoicing.[158] To determine 'whether truths have been stated', students look 'upon the inner Truth'.[159] Indeed, the ultimate goal of teaching is 'to be inwardly turned toward Him'.[160]

Augustine writes:

> Regarding, however, all those things which we understand, it is not a speaker who utters sounds exteriorly whom we consult, but it is truth that presides within, over the mind itself. . . . And He who is consulted, He who is said to 'dwell in the inner man,' He it is who teaches – Christ – that is, 'the unchangeable Power of God and everlasting Wisdom.'[161]

For Augustine, the human person 'is taught not by my words, but by the realities themselves made manifest to him by God revealing them to his inner self'.[162] Thus it is *Christ himself* who teaches us, who illuminates the human mind.

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156. *Trinity* 12.15.24.
157. Ibid. 12.40.38–39.
158. Ibid. 12.40.31–33.
159. Ibid. 14.45.5–10.
160. Ibid. 15.46.24–27.
161. *Teacher* 11.38. All quotations of *The Teacher* are from *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox, 1979). The seminal work on Augustine's doctrine of illumination is still Ronald H. Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1969).
162. *Teacher* 12.40.

Augustine, education and the liberal arts

Augustine is a wealth of insight on the nature of liberal arts, and on learning more generally. He is quite clear that one can find truth in non-Christian sources:

> while the heathen certainly have counterfeit and superstitious fictions in all their teachings, and the heavy burdens of entirely unnecessary labor, which everyone of us must abominate and shun as we go forth from the company of the heathen under the leadership of Christ, their teachings also contain liberal disciplines which are more suited to the service of the truth, as well as a number of most useful ethical principles, and some true things are to be found among them about worshiping only the one God.[163]

Augustine famously writes, 'all good and true Christians should understand that truth, wherever they may find it, belongs to their Lord'.[164] Augustine uses the exodus and how the Israelites 'plundered the Egyptians' as a metaphor to portray the Christian use of the liberal arts.[165]

Augustine registers his concern regarding the liberal arts when he writes of the potential danger of pride for those engaged in study (and pagans in particular in view), when he speaks of those people encamped on the 'mountain of pride'.[166] And at least at times Augustine could register a certain caution regarding the liberal arts.[167]

Augustine on words and signs

Augustine is the first Christian thinker to give sustained attention to the nature of words and signs.[168] In Book 1 of *On Christian Doctrine* Augustine explicitly

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163. *On Christian Doctrine* 2.40.60.
164. Ibid. 18.28.
165. Ibid. 2.60.
166. *Sermon* 198 (Dolbeau 26) 59, in *Works of St Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 3.11, tr. Edmund Hill, OP, ed. Francoise Dolbeau, ed. John Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1997).
167. *Letter 101* 2.
168. David Lyle Jeffrey notes, 'For Augustine even a theory of signs is therefore ultimately based on considerations of intention and the ordering of value.' That is, Augustine's theory of signs is rooted in his ethical views, which are part of Augustine's larger Christian vision. See David Lyle Jeffrey, *People of the Book: Christian Identity and Literary Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 83.

correlates 'words' and the Incarnate 'Word'.[169] In Book 2 of *On Christian Doctrine* he defines 'sign': 'a sign, after all, is a thing, which besides the impression it conveys to the senses, also has the effect of making something else come to mind'.[170] Augustine offers a philosophy of signs that grounds our words in *the* Incarnate Word, and directs our signs (words) to the ultimate thing – God – giving our language an eschatological focus and meaning. Words, language and signs for Augustine are inherently tied to the nature and purposes of God. We can plunder from Augustine his formulation of a doctrine of words, language and signs in explicitly Christian and theological terms.

Augustine and the nature of civil authority

The emergence of civil government

Augustine argues that civil government is not necessarily sinful, but its *need* emerges due to sin. God's intention was not that man should rule over man, but that man should simply rule over the rest of the created order:

> He did not intend that His rational creature, who was made in His image, should have dominion over anything but the irrational creation – not man over man, but man over the beasts. And hence the righteous men in primitive times were made shepherds of cattle rather than kings of men, so intending thus to teach us what the relative position of the creatures is, and what the desert of sin.[171]

The authority and nature of the government of the earthly city

Augustine distinguishes between the peace of the earthly city and the peace of the heavenly city. When he does so, he is using 'earthly city' in the sense of the authorities and structures of this temporal realm. Thus he writes, 'The earthly city, which does not live by faith, seeks an earthly peace, and the end it proposes, in the well-ordered concord of civic obedience and rule, is the combination of men's wills to attain the things which are helpful to this life.'[172] The heavenly city is different: 'The heavenly city, or rather the part of it which sojourns on earth and lives by faith, makes use of this peace only because it must, until this mortal condition which necessitates it shall pass away.'[173] And while the

169. *On Christian Doctrine* 1.13.
170. Ibid. 2.1.1.
171. *City of God* 19.15.
172. Ibid. 19.17.
173. Ibid.

heavenly city is sojourning amidst the earthly city, the citizens of the heavenly city are fine to obey the laws of the earthly city (within proper limits):

> Consequently, so long as it lives like a captive and a stranger in the earthly city, though it has already received the promise of redemption, and the gift of the Spirit as the earnest of it, it makes no scruple to obey the laws of the earthly city, whereby the things necessary for the maintenance of this mortal life are administered; and thus, as this life is common to both cities, so there is a harmony between them in regard to what belongs to it.[174]

Interestingly, Augustine also compares the civil government to a band of robbers.[175]

Just war

Augustine did not write a treatise per se on 'just war', and his thoughts must be culled from his various works. For Augustine, war arises due to sin, even if there are times where it is 'just' to engage in war. He is critical of those who think of war in a flippant way, and do not realize its horrors. His hypothetical interlocutor says that the wise man will wage just wars. Augustine does not deny this, but expresses concern about not grasping the misery of war:

> But, say they, the wise man will wage just wars. As if he would not all the rather lament the necessity of just wars, if he remembers that he is a man; for if they were not just he would not wage them, and would therefore be delivered from all wars. For it is the wrong-doing of the opposing party which compels the wise man to wage just wars; and this wrong-doing, even though it gave rise to no war, would still be a matter of grief to man because it is man's wrongdoing. Let every one, then, who thinks with pain on all these great evils, so horrible, so ruthless, acknowledge that this is misery. And if any one either endures or thinks of them without mental pain, this is a more miserable plight still, for he thinks himself happy because he has lost human feeling.[176]

Augustine apparently uses the term 'just war' only once, where he writes, 'just wars are usually defined as those that avenge injuries'.[177] Ultimately, for

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174. *City of God* 19.17.
175. Ibid. 4.4.
176. Ibid. 19.7.
177. *Questions on the Heptateuch* 6.10. *Questions on the Heptateuch* has not been translated or published in English. This quotation is from Frederick H. Russell, 'War',

Augustine war is undertaken to preserve peace:

> Your will ought to aim at peace; only necessity requires war in order that God may set us free from necessity and preserve us in peace. For we do not seek peace in order to stir up war, but we wage war in order to acquire peace. Be, therefore, a peacemaker even in war in order that by conquering you might bring to the benefit of peace those whom you fight.[178]

Referencing Matthew 5:39, 'Do not resist one who is evil' (ESV), Augustine argues that we should not delight in vengeance.[179] A Christian – including a solider or governmental ruler – is to *love* his enemies, even in times of war, and seek the best interests of those enemies: 'if this earthly state keeps the Christian commandments, even wars will not be waged without goodwill in order more easily to take into account the interests of the conquered with a view to a society made peaceful with piety and justice'.[180] Even in war the Christian ruler must keep in mind the interests of the 'conquered'.

War is not always wrong, for Jesus (Luke 3:14) counsels the soldier who approaches him how to live while remaining a soldier (not that it is necessary to resign from the military). However, Christian soldiers should be of a certain type – those who honour and love Christ.[181] War can be morally acceptable and even appropriate, although it can be conducted only by proper authorities, and not by individual Christians.[182] And even in war Christians are – ultimately – to love their enemies and seek what is best for them. Indeed, war is to be conducted with a recognition that it is always a sign and reminder of the reality of living in a fallen and sinful world.

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in Allan D. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 875–876. Cf. Russell's *The Just War in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 3rd series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

178. *Letter 189* 6. In *The Works of Saint Augustine*, vol. 2.3.
179. *Letter 47* 5. In *The Works of Saint Augustine*, vol. 2.1.
180. *Letter 138* 2.14. In *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 2.2, tr. and notes Roland Teske, SJ, ed. Boniface Ramsey, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2003).
181. Ibid. 2.15.
182. *Letter 47* 5.

Augustine, history and the two cities

Problems with the pagans

The City of God is clearly Augustine's *magnum opus*. He wrote *The City of God* from 413 to 427. In 410 Alaric and the Visigoths had successfully invaded Rome, and it seemed the great city was no longer impenetrable.[183] But why was Rome susceptible to defeat? Augustine wrote *The City of God* – in part – to counteract certain people who wanted to blame Rome's adoption of the Christian faith for the city's susceptibility:

> The glorious city of God is my theme in this work . . . . I have undertaken its defence against those who prefer their own gods to the Founder of this city – a city surpassingly glorious, whether we view it as it still lives by faith in this fleeting course of time, and sojourns as a stranger in the midst of the ungodly, or as it shall dwell in the fixed stability of its eternal seat, which it now with patience waits for, expecting until 'righteousness shall return unto judgment,' and it obtain, by virtue of its excellence, final victory and perfect peace.[184]

How could someone who saw all people as fellow image-bearers and saw fellow-Christians as spiritual 'brothers' or 'sisters' give meaningful allegiance to their own particular and earthly city? How could someone who believed his *true* citizenship was to be found in some *heavenly* city be able to be a good citizen in *this* city?[185] Augustine writes that he has 'things to say in confutation of those who refer the disasters of the Roman republic to our religion, because it prohibits the offering of sacrifices to the gods':

> For this end I must recount all, or as many as may seem sufficient, of the disasters which befell that city and its subject provinces, before these sacrifices were prohibited; for all these disasters they would doubtless have attributed to us, if at that time our religion had shed its light upon them, and had prohibited their sacrifices. I must then go on to show what social well-being the true God, in whose hand are all kingdoms, vouchsafed to grant to them that their empire might increase. I must show why He did so, and how their false gods, instead of at all aiding them, greatly

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183. However, Rome was not 'conquered' by the Visigoths, who withdrew after three days.

184. *City of God* 1.pref.

185. See Ernest Fortin, '*Civitate Dei, De*', in Fitzgerald, *Augustine Through the Ages*, p. 197.

> injured them by guile and deceit. And, lastly, I must meet those who, when on this point convinced by irrefragable proofs, endeavour to maintain that they worship the gods, not hoping for the present advantages of this like, but for those which are to be enjoyed after death.[186]

Augustine spends Books 1–10 laying out his critique of various pagan arguments against Christianity. Then in Books 11–22 he outlines 'the origin, history, and deserved ends of the two cities'.[187]

Augustine's arguments against the pagans are manifold. Rome suffered many attacks and evils before Christianity was the dominant religion. Rome has never been able to achieve justice, even *before* Christianity emerged. The Roman gods have a long and sordid track record of capriciousness, pettiness and immorality.[188] In many ways Christianity has been *good* for the city of Rome. Thus Augustine asserts that when barbarians attacked Rome, many Romans survived because they took refuge in Christian churches, which – Augustine argues – the barbarians refused to attack.[189] Augustine also argues that the only reason *any* city – including Rome – achieves any success or stability of happiness is due to the providential workings of God.[190] Augustine writes:

> we do not attribute the power of giving kingdoms and empires to any save to the true God, who gives happiness in the kingdom of heaven to the pious alone, but gives kingly power on earth both to the pious and the impious, as it may please Him, whose good pleasure is always just.[191]

Augustine summarizes his overarching purpose for *The City of God* as follows:

> In truth, these two cities are entangled together in this world, and intermixed until the last judgment effect their separation. I now proceed to speak, as God shall help me, of the rise, progress, and end of these two cities; and what I write, I will write for the glory of the city of God, that, being placed in comparison with the other, it may shine with a brighter luster.[192]

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186. *City of God* 1.36.
187. Ibid. 10.32.
188. These arguments are found in Books 2 and 3 of *The City of God.*
189. Ibid. 1.1.
190. Ibid. 4.2.
191. Ibid. 5.21.
192. Ibid. 1.35.

Two cities, two loves

In Book 11 of *The City of God* Augustine begins to trace out 'the origin, history, and destinies of the two cities, the earthly and the heavenly'.[193] Augustine of course finds the imagery for the 'city of God' from Scripture itself. He makes recourse to Psalms 87:3 and 48:1, among others. In the opening section of Book 11, Augustine writes these summative words about the two cities:

> I will endeavor to treat of the origin, and progress, and deserved destinies of the two cities (the earthly and the heavenly, to wit), which, as we said, are in this present world commingled, and as it were entangled together. And, first, I will explain how the foundations of these two cities were originally laid, in the difference that arose among the angels.[194]

What are the two 'cities'? The definitions can shift a bit throughout *The City of God*, as well as throughout Augustine's other writings. At times the 'earthly city' denotes the typical affairs of this temporal realm: politics, for example.[195] At other times, the 'heavenly city' can represent Christians, while 'earthly city' often means something like the lost, unsaved or reprobate.[196]

The two cities are intermingled in the present:

> During the present age these two cities are mingled together, but they will be separated at the end. They are in conflict with each other, one fighting on behalf of iniquity, the other for justice; one for what is worthless, the other for truth. This mixing together in the present age sometimes brings it about that certain persons who belong to the city of Babylon are in charge of affairs that concern Jerusalem, or, again, that some who belong to Jerusalem administer the business of Babylon.

The two cities have their origin – ultimately – in Adam himself. For at first there would only have been the city of God, and no earthly city – for the earthly city truly comes into being only with sin.[197]

At the heart of the two cities are two loves. At the very end of Book 14 of *The City of God* Augustine gives perhaps the clearest summary of how the two cities are most centrally rooted in two loves: either (1) love of self or (2) love of God:

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193. Ibid. 11.argument.
194. Ibid. 11.1.
195. This is the meaning in *Commentary on Psalm 61* 8.
196. *City of God* 14.1.
197. Ibid. 12.27.

> Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former [the love of self], in a word, glories in itself, the latter [the love of God] in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, 'Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.' In the one, the princes and the nations it subdues are ruled by love of ruling; in the other, the princes and the subjects serve one another in love, the latter obeying, while the former take thought for all. The one delights in its own strength, represented in the persons of its rulers; the other says to its God, 'I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength.'[198]

All of history can be understood in terms of the origin, growth and end of these two cities: 'For this whole time or world-age, in which the dying give place and those who are born succeed, is the career of these two cities concerning which we treat.'[199]

Ultimately, the true founder of the earthly city is Cain, who founds the earthly city in slaying his brother.[200] And there are thus two lines – one proceeding from Cain (the earthly city) and the other from Seth (the heavenly city), and these two lines constitute the two cities.[201] Adam is then the father of these 'two lines, proceeding from two fathers, Cain and Seth, and in those sons of theirs whom it behoved to register, the tokens of these two cities began to appear more distinctly'.[202]

The 'two cities', then, can be understood as one way of simply tracing out the history of redemption. Instead of thinking of 'history' (in an almost 'neutral' or 'secular' sense), and thinking of God's actions in history as a supplement to or part of that, it is probably better to think of all of history as encompassed within the more fundamental story of the history of redemption – which Augustine traces out in terms of the two cities.

The end of the city of God

Augustine teaches that the end of the city of God is eternal blessedness. He spends a large portion of Book 22 (the last book) of *The City of God* dealing with this state of blessedness. Key to this final state is of course the resurrection. In

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198. Ibid. 14.28.
199. Ibid. 15.1.
200. Ibid. 15.5–8.
201. Ibid. 15.8.
202. Ibid. 15.17.

the resurrection, all of the inhabitants of the city of God will be raised up and transformed without deformity, in perfect proportion. Indeed, 'all that is wrong is corrected, and all that is defective supplied from the resources the Creator wots of, and all that is excessive removed without destroying the integrity of the substance'. In short, there is continuity between our pre-resurrection and post-resurrection body (really the same body), but there is also discontinuity, in that there is a transformation and perfecting of the body.[203] This transformation of the body – due to the power of God – will even include bodies or body parts that have disintegrated (or for example that have been cremated).[204]

All through Augustine's thought he emphasizes the centrality of our desires (whether for good or bad), and returns to this at the end of *The City of God*. Our ultimate desire is for God, so it is fitting that God of course will be radically present in the future heavenly city: 'He shall be the end of our desires who shall be seen without end, loved without cloy, praised without weariness.'[205]

In this future state it is most certainly the case that free will is *not* lacking. Rather, 'It will, on the contrary, be all the more truly free, because set free from delight in sinning to take unfailing delight in not sinning.'[206] Hence, while the first man – Adam before the Fall – had *posse non peccare* (the ability *not* to sin) and *posse peccare* (the ability *to* sin), in our future and heavenly state we will be *non posse peccare* (not able to sin). As Augustine argues, being unable to sin does not mean one is not free. Indeed, 'Are we to say that God Himself is not free because He cannot sin?' 'Free will' indeed will be a reality in heaven: 'In that city, then, there shall be free will, one in all the citizens, and indivisible in each, delivered from all ill, filled with all good, enjoying indefeasibly the delights of eternal joys, oblivious of sins, oblivious of sufferings, and yet not so oblivious of its deliverance as to be ungrateful to its Deliverer.'[207]

Appropriating Augustine

It is hard to overstate Augustine's importance in the development of the Christian theological tradition. He is claimed as a patriarch by both Catholics and Protestants, and understandably so. When one speaks of someone being

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203. Ibid. 22.19.
204. Ibid. 22.20.
205. Ibid. 22.29.
206. Ibid. 22.30.
207. Ibid.

an 'Arminian', 'Lutheran' or 'Calvinist' and so on, certain key doctrinal convictions and theological commitments come to mind. It is somewhat different when one speaks of an 'Augustinian'. Augustine's influence is so significant and broad that 'Augustinian' can almost seem to be shorthand for being a traditional Christian. In this evaluative section we will ask how evangelicals might appropriate the thought of Augustine. Why does Augustine matter? Why should evangelicals read him?

Approaching God

There are a number of things we could say about Augustine's approach to God. We noted earlier in the chapter that in *The Trinity* Augustine argues that in order one day to see God face to face one must be changed by the atoning work of Christ. Thus, while the Christian will one day see God, and know fully and be fully known (1 Cor. 13:12), the only way to arrive at this face-to-face vision is by being cleansed by the atoning work of Christ. Such a gospel-centred understanding of knowing God should resonate with all evangelicals as they think about the nature of theology and of our future destiny (when we will see God face to face). It is appropriate to see in Augustine a type of theological forerunner to Luther's *theologia crucis* (theology of the cross) and Calvin's teaching that Christians should be reticent about probing into the essence of God, and should rather be satisfied in knowing God through what he does in sending the Son and the Spirit. Calvin warned about avoiding the 'foolish speculation of the schoolmen',[208] for he feared such 'schoolmen' (certain medieval theologians or thinkers) were irreverently and inappropriately approaching God. That is, Augustine's gospel-centred understanding of approaching God seems to stand in the same theological line of thinking as that seen in the later Reformers, and can and should be appropriated by evangelicals as we think about what it means to approach God.

The nature of knowledge

Augustine wrestled at length with the nature of knowledge, and this interest stretches back to one of his earliest works, *Against the Academics*. Augustine fleshed out an understanding of the nature of knowledge that can be very fruitful for the contemporary Christian. He believed that in every act of human knowing, God is illuminating the human mind. This is briefly but

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208. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.4.5, 3.24.3, 3.25.6, 10, 11.

explicitly dealt with in *The Teacher*. It is important to grasp the radical nature of what Augustine is saying. For Augustine, *every time we know or acquire knowledge, Christ is the Teacher who is illuminating the mind and allowing such knowledge to take place*. Thus *every* act of knowing is one that takes place due to God's goodness towards us. As contemporary Christians wrestle with the question of the possibility of knowledge, Augustine is worthy of serious attention. His insight seems fundamentally right and biblical, in that God is Lord of all things, and when this lordship is applied to the question of knowledge, Augustine is led to construe the reality of knowledge in a radically God-centred (and in particular, a radically Christ-centred) way. Modern and so-called postmodern people are (at times) told by the larger and dominant culture that knowledge (of the natural or supernatural orders) is impossible, or that claims of knowledge are ultimately simply results of the 'will to power'. Augustine provides a Christ-centred understanding of the nature of knowledge, both of the natural and of the supernatural order. Besides his understanding of divine illumination, Augustine can also provide wisdom in the way he links our ability to know to the state of our hearts or wills. As discussed above, Augustine believes that our disordered loves (our sin) often keeps us from truly 'seeing' things – that is, our sin keeps us from grasping the nature of reality. As Christians think through the nature of knowing and learning, it is important to realize that the life of the mind must be seen as a subset of the life of discipleship. That is, learning is a fundamentally spiritual reality that can never be sequestered from the nature of our wills and hearts, and from the reality of our sin.

What Augustine argues for, which is sorely missing in our contemporary context, is a construal of the life of the mind in which our intellectual life is bound up with our ultimate loves. Whereas modernity has often seemed to construe the life of the mind as a 'neutral' endeavour, Augustine rightly links to the state of our loves our ability to interpret, understand and 'see' things. Along these lines, as Stephen Williams has noted, Pascal criticized Montaigne, not because Montaigne lacked certain intellectual powers, but because Montaigne was simply not open to hearing and knowing the truth. That is, Montaigne was *indifferent* to eternal matters, and this indifference – in Augustinian terms – kept Montaigne from *seeing* what was really *there*.[209] Thus for Pascal – in this sense thoroughly Augustinian – moral degradation would keep one from knowing the truth. As Pascal writes, 'Our inability to know the truth is the consequence

209. Stephen N. Williams, *Revelation and Reconciliation: A Window on Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 21 (referencing Pascal, *Pensées*, §427).

of our corruption, our moral decay.'[210] Fools really *do* hate knowledge (Prov. 1:22).

The Trinity

Augustine was crucial in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. Although there is no room to argue the point in detail here, I suspect it is unhelpful to drive too big a wedge between the Eastern church fathers and Augustine – and then turn to the East as the locus of theological right thinking. Augustine's maxim *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* (the external works of the Trinity are undivided) is still worth mining and, where it has been lost, worth recovering. Augustine believed in the Trinity because of Scripture and tradition. He also believed that one day he would see the trinitarian God. But what would this God be like? In working through his understanding of the Trinity, Augustine forged an understanding of the centrality of love. Love was at the heart of the Godhead, and hence love must be central as we try to understand who the Trinity is. By emphasizing love at the centre of the Godhead Augustine was led to think of God fundamentally in *relational* terms.[211] Augustine thus bequeaths to the Western theological tradition the tendency to explore what it means to say 'God is love', and the Western church continues to benefit from this trajectory and influence to the present day.

Additionally, in Augustine's *The Trinity* we find what I think are helpful insights as to how to think and talk about God. For example, Augustine contends that ultimately all words about God are 'substance-words', and therefore it is *not* simply the case that 'God is loving', but that ultimately 'God *is* his love'. The benefit for contemporary evangelicals (and, I think, for any traditional Christian) is that biblical language about God, while not giving us *exhaustive* knowledge, nonetheless gives us *real* knowledge. The Christian who goes to the Scriptures and reads in 1 John 4:8, 'God is love', can trust that in such a passage the Christian reader is getting insight into who God *really* is, and who God *fundamentally* is – and that unlike other competing deities (whether past or present), God is *always* what the Scriptures say he is. Here (1 John 4:8), God is *fundamentally* and *always* 'love'.

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210. Quoted in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, tr. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968), 1.83.

211. Cf. my *Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine* (see n. 13 above). A condensed version of my argument can be found in my 'The Protomodern Augustine? Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9.3 (June 2007), pp. 328–341.

The reality of sin

While not inventing the doctrine of original sin, it is certainly Augustine who developed and fleshed it out – and the influence of the fundamental structure of his thought on this issue continues to be felt today. However, does Augustine's understanding prevail in the contemporary church? While he 'won' the arguments in the formal sense during his day, it is an open question as to whether the contemporary evangelical church is 'Augustinian' in its doctrine of sin. For those of us on the whole sympathetic to Augustine at this point, it seems that he is simply working within fundamentally Pauline thinking here. That is, Augustine was working within a commitment to the Adam–Christ parallel so fundamental to Paul's thought. Both the Reformed and Lutheran branches of the Reformation are fundamentally Augustinian in their doctrine of sin.

It can be argued that Christians (evangelical or otherwise) will never truly grasp the reality of grace until they have some sense of the reality of sin. And Augustine is extremely helpful here. What young man cannot relate – at a fundamentally existential level – to Augustine's struggles as portrayed in *Confessions*? Augustine can remind evangelicals that the doctrines of free grace and justification by faith alone will never be as joyously and rightly understood until Christians have some sort of grasp of the nature of their own sin, and hence the radical nature of God's grace in rescuing us from our plight.

The two cities

Augustine's *The City of God* is certainly one of the most significant works in the Western canon, and it is virtually impossible to summarize its significance in a few sentences. The notion of 'two cities' has proved to be a pregnant metaphor that has provided grist for many Christian thinkers. In the Protestant world, Lutherans have tended to move in the direction of 'two kingdoms' – and have often been criticized for severing too radically the ability of Christian principles to influence statecraft. The Reformed have tended to affirm 'two cities', but see both as subject to the same God – and there is great diversity within Reformed thinking on this score.

As Christians have wrestled with the way in which the church is to exist within, and relate to, the broader and dominant culture, Augustine is a necessary conversation partner, and attention to *The City of God* always repays careful reading. There is something to be said for the power of an image – here the two cities – to provoke thought, and Augustine's *magnum opus* has proven to be the place (after Scripture) where one generally begins in thinking through the ways in which Christians and the Christian church are to live within, reach out to and confront the broader culture.

In a little different direction, the notion of the 'history of redemption' is a staple of Reformed theology, and owes at least some inspiration to Augustine's notion of the 'two cities'. His understanding of the historical flow of redemption is felt today in numerous ways, and it is significant. Indeed, the current fascination with 'whole-Bible' theology or 'Biblical Theology' is fundamentally 'Augustinian', in that the current 'whole-Bible' or 'Biblical Theology' movement moves in the same theological trajectory as Augustine does.

The centrality of grace in the Christian life

Often when people reference Augustine on grace, the context is the initiation of salvation – whether in terms of election or in terms of conversion. These are extremely important issues, and Augustine is very helpful in those areas. But I suspect there is another component of his understanding of grace that is equally important. Augustine speaks about the way God's grace works in the midst of the Christian life and in drawing us on to obedience in our Christian life. And this is where I suspect he might be of particular help to evangelicals.

I come into contact with many students who have some understanding that God saves by grace, and that their salvation rests on the grace of God. But – to put it simply – they have a notion of how grace *gets* them 'in', but little understanding of how God's grace *keeps* them 'in'. That is, grace is often seen as that which gets the salvific process started. But then there is not much of a theological framework for how we continue to walk, obey and persevere by grace.

Augustine speaks repeatedly of how God's grace changes and transforms us, and how his grace so shapes our desires that we *want* to obey and do the right thing. If evangelicals are to keep from falling into various forms of legalism, it will probably be because they have discovered something like Augustine's understanding of how a gracious God saves us – where God's grace is fundamental to the beginning, the continuing and the completing of our salvation. That is, God continues to transform our *desires* and *affections* so that we actually *desire* what we *ought* to desire, and we *want* to do those things which *ought* to be done.

Conclusion

At one level all of Western theology has been – in a sense – a long series of footnotes to Augustine. He bequeathed to the church deep reflection on how to talk and think about God, how language works when speaking about

God, and on the nature of the triune God. Augustine's understanding of the knowing process is a rich mine of resources as Christians wade through the challenges of modern and so-called postmodern thought forms, which are so often sceptical about the possibility of knowledge – whether of God or of the created order. Augustine's *The Trinity* (at times an ignored text when people are summarizing his significance) is still a treasure of insight, and worthy of sustained attention. Augustine wrestled with what this trinitarian God is going to be like, whom Christians will one day see. His insights as to how one must affirm one God in three divine persons – where the three are understood in terms of relationship and love – is seminal. The tradition that followed Augustine continued to wrestle with the reality and implications of his belief that God is fundamentally love. Augustine's doctrine of man as sinner – and hence in need of radical grace – is central to understanding Scripture, and every evangelical must still come to terms with his view of original sin. Augustine's perception of the 'two cities' has informed Christian thinking on the nature of politics, culture and many similar issues. Finally, Augustine is rightfully considered to be the Doctor of Grace, for it is in Augustine's understanding of grace that he has perhaps made his greatest mark on the church. The grace of God, set upon us from all eternity, that moves us to trust in and believe God, that transforms our hearts, that efficaciously moves us to obey God as we travel as pilgrims on our way to the city of God, and that so moves in us that we persevere to the end – this is a grace worth believing and promulgating in the world today. For these and many other reasons, Augustine is worthy of our attention, and can help evangelicals as we strive to understand and serve the God of Scripture.

Bibliography

Primary sources in Latin

There are several ways to access Augustine's writings in the language in which he wrote (Latin):

CETEDOC Library of Christian Latin Texts (CLCLT). This is the most recent attempt to provide digital access to Christian Latin texts.

Corpus Augustinianum Gissense a Cornelio Mayer editum (Basel: Schwabe, 1995). This is perhaps the finest digital collection of Augustine's works in Latin, comparable to the CLCLT.

Corpus Christianorum: Series latina (Turnhout: Brepels, 1953–). This series of Latin texts, originally available in printed form, is now available digitally as well.

Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum (Vienna: Tempsky, 1865–). An older collection of Christian Latin texts, also available digitally.

Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1912–). A number of Augustine's works are featured in this series, which features Latin and English on opposite pages.

Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: Cerf, 1844–64). For many years this was the main way to access Christian Latin texts. It is now available digitally as the Patrologia latina Database.

Primary sources in English

A number of collections and series contain the writings of Augustine in English, but none contains *all* of his writings in English:

Ancient Christian Writers, ed. J. Quasten and J. C. Plumpe (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1946–). A series of classic Christian texts in English translation with helpful introductory essays and explanatory footnotes.

Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Their edition of *The City of God*, tr. R. W. Dyson, was published in 1998.

Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press). This series, ed. R. J. Deferrari, contains a number of Augustine's works.

Library of Christian Classics (Louisville: Westminster John Knox). This series contains English translations of various Christian writers from across the span of Christian history. It contains volumes with a selection of Augustine's writings.

Oxford Library of the Fathers (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans). This series, ed. Marcus Dods, contains a number of works by Augustine.

A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994 repr.). This collection contains many of Augustine's writings and, while not exhaustive, is still helpful. The translation is dated, but has served English readers for many years.

Self-standing volumes. There are a number of self-standing or independent translations of Augustine's works that readers may want to obtain. For example, there are translations of *The City of God* (Henry Bettenson [London: Penguin, 2003]; and Marcus Dods [New York: Modern Library, 1950]). Similarly, Henry Chadwick's translation of *Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) is excellent.

Works of Saint Augustine (Brooklyn, NY: New City). New City has engaged in an ambitious effort to translate all of Augustine's writings into English, currently under the editorship of Boniface Ramsey. (Also available digitally.)

Where in Augustine might a reader start?

Confessions (either the New City ed. [Brooklyn, NY: 1991] by Maria Boulding, or the Henry Chadwick translation). *The City of God* is a treasure that cannot be mined enough

(Bettenson or Dods are both good; see above). If a reader wants a shorter introduction to the 'big picture' of Augustine's thought, I would recommend *The Augustine Catechism: The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, tr. Bruce Harbert (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1999).

Here is a list of some seminal works of Augustine that might serve as a good summary of his thought. I have used the common English titles, with Latin titles in parentheses (and where there is some disagreement I have used the English titles from the tables in Allan D. Fitzgerald [ed.], *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999]):

Against Two Letters of the Pelagians (*Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum*)
On Christian Doctrine (*De doctrina christiana*)
The City of God (*De civitate Dei*)
Confessions (*Confessiones*)
On the Gift of Perseverance (*De dono perseverantiae*)
A Handbook on Faith, Hope and Love (*Enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide spe et caritate*)
On the Spirit and Letter (*De spiritu et littera*)
To Simplicianus (*Ad simplicianum*)
The Trinity (De Trinitate)

Where the novice student might start

There is a growing list of writings on Augustine. One might start with the following:

Brown, Peter, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, rev. ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 2000). This is probably still the classic volume on Augustine.

Chadwick, Henry, *A Very Short Introduction to Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). A helpful slim volume (sometimes what is most helpful!) by a senior scholar.

Fitzgerald, Allan D., *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). For the person who wants to get to know the thought of Augustine, it would be hard to improve upon the essays in this volume. Excellent bibliographies.

Knowles, Andrew, and Pachomios Penkett, *Augustine and His World*, IVP Histories (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004). A wonderful introduction to Augustine, featuring a nice layout with beautiful artwork.

Litfin, Bryan, 'Augustine', in *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), pp. 213–237. A helpful introduction to Augustine.

Needham, N. R., *The Triumph of Grace: Augustine's Writings on Salvation* (London: Grace, 2000). Needham has provided readers with a true treasure, a collection of Augustine's writings on sin, grace and salvation.

Additional key studies and resources

This list is by nature impartial and incomplete, but I hope it will point interested readers to some of the key works on Augustine. Besides the studies below, interested readers should be aware of the main Augustine scholarly journal, *Augustinian Studies*.

Bernardino, Angelo D., and Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*. Vol. 4: *The Golden Age of Latin Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1991). This series, while somewhat dated, is still an excellent place for the student to start who wants to get a sense of the issues and history of scholarship related to Augustine.

Arnold, D. W. H., and P. Bright (eds.), *'De doctrina Christiana': A Classic of Western Culture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995). A helpful companion to *On Christian Doctrine*.

Ayres, Lewis, *Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). This forthcoming volume promises to become a standard in the field.

Bonner, G., 'Augustine as Biblical Scholar', in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1, ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 541–563. A helpful summary of Augustine's approach to and appropriation of the Bible.

—, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, rev. ed. (Norwich: Canterbury, 1986). A classic work on the thought of Augustine.

Burnaby, John, *Amor Dei: A Study in the Religion of St. Augustine* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938). A classic study on Augustine, with attention to the centrality of love.

Chadwick, Henry, *Augustine: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). This is an overview of Augustine by a prominent Augustine scholar.

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It is also worth drawing attention to James J. O'Donnell's web page, which is a helpful holding place for many things Augustinian: <http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine>, accessed 4 Dec. 2009.