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• The Doctrine of the Trinity in Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*
• *La Doctrine de la Trinité dans* la Cité de Dieu
• *Die Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit in Augustinus* De Civitate De

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SUMMARY

It is one of the more curious features of Augustine's writings that his *magnum opus* on the City of God should contain so few references to the Trinity, when in several other places, including letters to private individuals, he expounded the subject at some length. It is all the more surprising when we remember that he was still working on the *De trinitate* when he began to write the *De civitate Dei*. However, although references to the Trinity in *De civitate Dei* are few, the evidence suggests that they were written at a time when Augustine had broken off work on the *De trinitate*, and that the thought which they contain may contribute to our understanding of the last three books of that more specialised work.

Augustine refers to the Trinity in *De civitate Dei* X, 23–24a; XI, 10 and XI, 24–29. It is the last of these passages which is the most important, because in it Augustine expounds his understanding of the image of God in man as the image of the Trinity, a theme which had already occupied him in *De trinitate* and which would form much of the substance of the last section of that treatise. He also discusses, in somewhat broader terms, the relationship of the Trinity to the created order in general.

Rejecting classical Neoplatonism, Augustine nevertheless uses Platonic categories when he defines God as the Simple and the Good. By a tortuous line of argument, he concludes that the Holy Spirit combines the goodness, as well as the holiness of the other two Persons, so that the goodness of God is a trinitarian concept. Given that this goodness is reflected in creation, we must conclude that the created order reflects the Trinity as well as the unity of God.

When expounding the link between God and man, Augustine does not focus on the mind, as did the Neoplatonists, but on being. Man is inferior to God in that his being is only relative, whereas God's is absolute, but man differs from other created beings in that he is aware of his being and loves it. No-one, says Augustine, would voluntarily surrender his being or his intellect, because his love for these is too great. Being, intellect and love create a trinity in man, which it is possible to understand and control. It is when a man acts unconsciously that he is led into sin, and the trinitarian image is abused.

Because of the way in which he links the Trinity to creation, Augustine comes closer in the *De civitate Dei* to what later generations would call a natural theology that he does in the *De trinitate*. At times his argumentation is also more profound than in the more detailed work, and so it is not surprising that these passages of the *De civitate Dei* exercised a disproportionate influence on the developing natural theology of later generations.

RÉSUMÉ

C'est une des caractéristiques les plus curieuses des écrits de s. Augustin que son *magnum opus* sur la Cité de Dieu contienne si peu de références à la Trinité, alors qu'ailleurs, même dans des lettres adressées à de simples particuliers, il expose le sujet dans toute son ampleur. On s'en étonne d'autant plus qu'on se souvient qu'il travaillait encore à *la Trinité* lorsqu'il a commencé à écrire *la Cité de Dieu*. Néanmoins, bien que les références à la Trinité soient peu nombreuses, des indices suggèrent qu'elles furent écrites à un moment où s. Augustin avait interrompu son travail sur *la Trinité*, et que la pensée qu'elles contiennent peut nous aider à mieux comprendre les trois derniers livres de cet ouvrage plus spécialisé.

S. Augustin fait référence à la Trinité dans *la Cité de Dieu* X.23–24a, XI,10 et XI,24–29. C'est le dernier de ces passages qui est le plus important,

car s. Augustin y expose sa compréhension de l'image de Dieu en l'homme comme l'image de la Trinité, thème qui l'avait déjà occupé dans *la Trinité* et qui devait dominer la dernière section de ce traité. Il débat aussi, en élargissant quelque peu, de la relation de la Trinité à l'ordre de la création en général.

Rejetant le néoplatonisme classique, s. Augustin utilise pourtant les catégories platoniciennes quand il définit Dieu comme le Simple et le Bon. Par une succession sinueuse d'arguments, il conclut que le Saint-Esprit réunit la bonté, aussi bien que la sainteté, des deux autres Personnes, de telle sorte que la bonté de Dieu est un concept trinitaire. Etant donné que cette bonté se reflète dans la création, nous devons conclure que l'ordre créé reflète la trinité aussi bien que l'unité de Dieu.

Lorsqu'il expose le lien entre Dieu et l'homme, s. Augustin ne se concentre pas sur la pensée, comme le faisaient les néoplatoniciens, mais sur l'être. L'infériorité de l'homme par rapport à Dieu est absolue; mais l'homme diffère des autres créatures par la conscience qu'il a de son être, et l'amour qu'il a pour lui. Personne, dit s. Augustin, ne renoncerait volontairement à son être ou à son intelligence, parce que l'amour qu'on leur porte est trop grand. L'être, l'intelligence et l'amour créent une trinité en l'homme qu'il est possible de comprendre et de contrôler. C'est quand un homme agit inconsciemment qu'il est conduit dans le péché, et que l'image trinitaire est altérée.

En raison de la façon dont il relie la Trinité à la création, s. Augustin est plus proche dans *la Cité de Dieu* que dans *la Trinité* de ce que la postérité appellera la théologie naturelle. Son argumentation, parfois, se montre plus profonde que dans l'ouvrage plus détaillé: il n'est donc pas surprenant que ces passages de *la Cité de Dieu* aient exercé une influence disproportionnée sur le développement ultérieur de la théologie naturelle.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Einer der weniger verständlichen Punkte in Augustinus' Schriften besteht darin, daß er in seinem Hauptwerk über die Stadt Gottes sich so wenig mit der Dreieinigkeit befaßt, während er an verschiedenen anderen Stellen wie auch in seiner Privatkorrespondenz dieses Thema sehr ausführlich behandelt. Dies überrascht umso mehr, wenn man berücksichtigt, daß er zu Beginn seines Schreibens von De Civitate Dei noch dabei war, an De Trinitate zu arbeiten. Obwohl Augustinus sich in De Civitate Dei selten auf die Dreieinigkeit bezieht, spricht doch einiges dafür, daß diese Stellen zu einem Zeitpunkt entstanden, da Augustinus seine Arbeit an De Trinitate abgebrochen hatte. Deshalb kann der darin entwickelte Gedanke dabei helfen, unser Verständnis der drei letzten Bücher von jenem spezialisierten Werk zu vertiefen.

Augustinus bezieht sich auf die Dreieinigkeit in De Civitate Dei X,23–24a; XI,10 und XI, 24–29. Die zuletzt genannte Stelle ist am wichtigsten, weil Augustinus darin sein Verständnis des Bildes Gottes im Menschen als Ebenbild der Dreieinigkeit entfaltet. Dieses Thema hatte ihn schon in De Trinitate beschäftigt und sollte später ein wesentlicher Teil des letzten Abschnittes dieser Abhandlung werden. Er setzt sich des weiteren in einem breiteren Zusammenhang mit der Beziehung der Dreieinigkeit zur Schöpfungsordnung im allgemeinen auseinander.

Obwohl er dem klassischen Neoplatonismus zwar ablehnend gegenüberstand, macht Augustinus von platonischen Kategorien Gebrauch, wenn er Gott als das Einfältige und das Gute definiert. Mit Hilfe einer verschlungenen Argumentation kommt er zu der Schlußfolgerung, daß im Heiligen Geist sowohl die Güte als auch die Heiligkeit der beiden anderen Personen vereinigt sind. Damit wäre die Güte Gottes ein trinitarisches Konzept. Aus der Annahme, daß sich diese Güte in der Schöpfung widerspiegelt, muß man folgern, daß die Schöpfungsordnung sowohl die Dreieinigkeit als auch die Einheit Gottes widerspiegelt.

Im Gegensatz zu den Neoplatonisten setzt Augustinus bei seiner Darlegung der Beziehung zwischen Gott und Mensch den Schwerpunkt nicht auf den Verstand, sondern auf das Sein. Dadurch, daß das Sein des Menschen nur relativ sein kann und Gottes Sein absolut ist, ist der Mensch Gott untergeordnet. Jedoch unterscheidet sich der Mensch von den anderen Geschöpfen dadurch, daß er sich seines Seins bewußt ist und sein Sein liebt. Kein Mensch würde sein Sein oder seinen Verstand freiwillig preisgeben, behauptet Augustinus, da er diese zu sehr liebt. Das Sein, der Verstand und die Liebe schaffen eine Dreieinigkeit in einem Menschen, die man verstehen und beherrschen kann. Indem ein Mensch unbewußt handelt, wird er zur Sünde geführt und das trinitarische Ebenbild mißbraucht.

Durch die Art und Weise, wie er die Dreieinigkeit mit der Schöpfung in Verbindung bringt, kommt Augustinus in De Civitate Dei einer in einer

späteren Generation so genannten Natur-
theologie näher als in De Trinitate. Manchmal ist
seine Argumentation tiefergehender als im
detaillierten Werk, und deshalb überrascht

es nicht, daß diese Teile von De Civitate Dei
einen unangemessenen Einfluß auf die sich
entwickelnde Naturtheologie späterer Gen-
erationen ausübte.

INTRODUCTION

It is one of the more curious features of
Augustine's writings that his *magnum
opus* on the City of God should contain so
little on the Trinity, when in several other
places, notably in letters to private in-
dividuals, he expounded the subject at some
length. It is all the more surprising when we
remember that he was still working on *De
trinitate* when he began to write *De civitate
Dei*, and that the most original parts of the
former work were almost certainly being
thought out and written whilst he was en-
gaged on the latter. That the two works
should betray hardly any obvious relation-
ship is a tribute to Augustine's ability to
work out different, highly complex problems
at the same time.

When Augustine began *De civitate Dei*, he
had already been at work on *De trinitate* for
twelve years or more. Unfortunately we
have no way of knowing how far he pro-
gressed on the latter, nor even how seriously
he was working on it. He refers to it in
correspondence on at least four occasions
between 410 and 415, each time stating
that the work was still incomplete.[1] In a
letter which he wrote to bishop Aurelius of
Carthage and attached to the completed
work as a kind of preface, Augustine tells us
that he was moved to complete his task at
least partly because a portion of *De trinitate*
was circulating in a pirated edition, which
did not adequately express his thought on
the subject.[2]

We do not know when this pirated edition
made its appearance, though the absence of
any reference to it in his earlier correspon-
dence has led most scholars to conclude that
it must have been sometime after 415. The
portions which were circulated comprise
Books I–V and part of Book XII, but we have
no way of knowing whether this was all that
had appeared by 415. It is at least possible

that Books VI–XI had been written by then
as well, though for some reason they had
managed to escape the piracy. For want of
clearer evidence, we should not assume that
these books can be dated after 415, the year
in which Augustine completed Book X of *De
civitate Dei*, which is the first book of that
work to tackle the question of the Trinity.

The real chronological difficulty comes
later, when we must decide when it was that
Augustine resumed *De trinitate*. In Book
XIII, 9 of that treatise he quotes from *De
civitate Dei* XII, 20, which leaves us with a
date of 417 or later. We are not here
concerned with the date of the completion of
De trinitate, which most scholars believe was
either 419 or 420,[3] but only with the question
of whether *De civitate Dei's* main sections on
the Trinity (XI, 10; 24–29) can be said to
have been written between the composition
of Books XII and XIII, in which case they
may shed interesting light on the argument
of the last three books of *De trinitate*. Since
these books contain the fruit of Augustine's
mature and highly original reflection, it is
not without interest to know whether the
passages in *De civitate Dei* XI can be said to
contribute to our understanding of the de-
velopment of his thought.

The three passages of *De civitate Dei*
which touch on the Trinity may be listed as
follows. First, there is a section in Book X,
23–24a, in which the main topic of discussion
is the Neoplatonic theory of spiritual puri-
fication. Augustine introduces the Christian
Trinity by way of contrast, but he does not
discuss the doctrine at any length.

The second passage is found in Book XI,
10, where Augustine expounds his under-
standing of the nature and attributes of God
in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity. He
is chiefly concerned to affirm the complete
equality of the Three, and to distinguish
them from any description of the One in
God. The subject matter here corresponds to

De trinitate V, on which it obviously draws to some extent.

The third passage is the longest and most controversial. It takes up six chapters of Book XI, (24–29), and deals with the relationship between the Trinity and the created order. Augustine examines the three-fold pattern which was a commonplace in philosophical speculation (25), though here it is no longer tied to neoplatonism. He explains his understanding of the image of God in man as an image of the Trinity, and draws out the implications for our own self-knowledge. It is this theme which had occupied him in *De trinitate* VIII–XII, and which he took up again, *ibid.* XIII–XV.

The originality of this theme is that Augustine seeks to demonstrate that all human self-awareness is threefold, and reveals the fact that the God in whose image he is created is a Trinity. Philosophical speculation provides a witness to this truth, but it can never be more than a partial and inadequate substitute for the theology revealed in the Christian Scriptures. For Augustine, anthropology, and more especially psychology, is a discipline which, rightly understood, will lead mankind to seek a trinitarian God as his creator, and thus confirm him in the truth of the Christian faith.

ATTITUDE TO NEOPLATONIC TRINITARIANISM

We may begin our study of the Trinity in *De civitate Dei* by asking how Augustine handled his philosophical inheritance. He has been called a Christian Platonist who sought to modify Neoplatonic doctrine so that it might accord with the revelation in Scripture.[4] This judgment may be somewhat extreme, but it is well-known that he was strongly influenced by the thought of Porphyry, and to a lesser extent, by that of Plotinus as well. It is therefore not altogether surprising that his first reference to the Trinity in *De civitate Dei* should appear in connection with a discrepancy between the two great Neoplatonists, though to what effect remains to be considered.

In X, 23 Augustine starts with Porphyry, whom he treats as his main source through-

out. He says that Porphyry believed that spiritual purgation could not come by way of any religious rite, but only through contemplation of the principles (*archae*), of which there were three. Augustine knew that for Porphyry these three principles were equal to one another in so far as they stood on the same plane in the celestial hierarchy. He identifies two of the principles as the Father and the Son respectively, stating that Porphyry actually names the latter as Intellect or Mind. The third principle stands[6] between the other two and is identified by Augustine with the Holy Spirit, though not without some hesitation.

Augustine realised that the Neoplatonic equivalent of the Holy Spirit was the Soul-substance, which Plotinus had relegated to third place, below the other two principles. He was somewhat surprised that Porphyry should have located his third principle *between* and not below the other two, but although he recognises that this brings Porphyry closer to his own conception of the Holy Spirit, he is careful to point out that Porphyry himself would not have understood it that way, and indeed could not have equated his third principle with the Soul-substance at all.

Augustine goes on to add (X, 24) that the threeness inherent in God cannot be expressed by using the word 'principle'. To Augustine, use of this word would have implied tritheism, and he insists that there is only one principle in God, by which the human soul might be purified. He acknowledges the full divinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit individually, and explicitly rejects Sabellianism, but he says nothing about them as divine hypostases. He implies that they are perceived in relation to one another, the Father being Father of the Son and the Son Son of the Father, and the Holy Spirit the Spirit of both. At the same time he avoids using the term *person*, which perhaps might have been equated by some with the Neoplatonic use of *principle*.[5]

The significance of this can be measured against the fact that Augustine's contemporary, Cyril of Alexandria, did not hesitate to describe the Neoplatonic principles as *hypostases*,[6] the same term which the Greeks used to describe the persons of the Trinity,

somewhat to Augustine's bewilderment.[7] Whatever importance Augustine gave to the Persons of the Godhead, it is remarkable that he nowhere allowed them to be understood in the objective sense implied by *principle*, or even by *hypostasis*. On the contrary, it is clear that he has held to his earlier statement in *De trinitate* V, 5, that it is by *relation* (*relatio, schesis*) that the Persons maintain their existence and identity.

Augustine knew that there was a link between Neoplatonism and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, but his argument that the former was merely an inadequate perception of the latter is not just special pleading. Far from trying to Christianise Porphyry, or justify his own supposed borrowing from him, Augustine not only accuses Porphyry of spiritual blindness (which need not surprise us) but attacked him on the fundamental point of his whole philosophy. Moreover, it seems, as we have already suggested, that he avoided even the term *person*, which might mistakenly have been equated with *principle*. Augustine's trinitarianism is consciously grounded in the concrete reality of the three Persons, not in an abstract concept of *person*, a point which is faithfully reproduced in that most Augustinian document, the *Quicunque Vult*,[8] and which is too often forgotten by those who think his doctrine of the Trinity is too abstract

THE SIMPLE TRINITY

In Book XI, 10 Augustine expounds his understanding of the Trinity as one God. His key idea is that the Trinity must be thought of as simple, in that its being is identical with its attributes. It is inconceivable, says Augustine, that any person of the Trinity should be capable of change at the level of attribute, since all Three are God, and in God being and attributes are one.

In saying this Augustine is repeating the teaching which he had developed at some length in *De trinitate* V. Yet although the main line of his argument is familiar enough, its precise details differ from the *De trinitate* in a way which suggests that this thought had matured in the direction of greater

systematization by the time he came to write *De civitate Dei* XI.

He begins by identifying God with the Good, an obvious equation for a Christian Platonist and one already familiar from *De trinitate* VIII, 3. But where the earlier work discusses the point in general terms, *De civitate Dei* XI, 10 makes explicit the link between the goodness of God and the Trinity, something which is found only once in passing in *De trinitate*,[9] but which would become and remain a basic axiom in his thought.[10] Augustine understands the Good to be a description of the divine nature, of which there is only one. At the same time it is the Good, and not the Persons of the Trinity, which is the agent of creation, generation, and (by implication) procession.

As far as creation is concerned, the Good has communicated his goodness to it, but not his simplicity. Such a statement is of course most un-Platonic, partly because it allows for creation *ex nihilo*, and partly because it conceives of the existence of goodness apart from simplicity. It can be harmonized with the principle enunciated by the Cappadocian Fathers that the works of the Trinity outside itself are undivided (*opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*), though this is not made clear in the text. What stands out is the moral link between God and his creation which presupposes an ethical analogy between them in spite of their difference of being.

What is even more astonishing is that the productive activity of the simple Good operates in two distinct modes. In creation, it produces things which are both like and unlike itself. But in generation it reproduces itself, so that the Begotten is every bit as simple and good, in the absolute sense, as the Begetter. By this simple device Augustine has not only upheld the distinction between creation and generation which had eluded the Arians,[11] but more important still, he has united the Trinity and the creation on a common foundation, which was the moral nature of God. One may detect a Cappadocian influence in the apparent identification of the simple Good with the Father, (who in Cappadocian theology was the *hypostasis* of the divine nature), but this is far from certain. What cannot be

denied is that Augustine had discovered a principle which was to guide him in his further exploration of the nature of man and the created order.

Augustine says almost nothing about the origin of the Third person of the Trinity, except to make the point that he is the Holy Spirit of both the Father and the Son, a statement which he repeats almost every time he mentions the Persons by name.[12] In *De trinitate* Augustine pays considerable attention to the names of the Three, and mentions that the Spirit is called both Love and the Gift of God. These designations do not reappear in *De civitate Dei*, but two others do. The first is the more obvious. The Spirit is called 'Holy' as a kind of proper name (NI, 10) not because he is holy in a way the Father and the Son are not, but because he is the holiness of both the other Persons, in substantial and consubstantial form (XI, 24).

Augustine brings this point out in the course of a somewhat different discussion, concerning the goodness of God. At first he is not certain whether the Holy spirit can be called the goodness of the other two Persons, and regards such an idea as a rather daring supposition (*temeraria sententia*). He is quite clear that this can be said of the divine holiness however, and it momentarily appears as if he has hit on the importance of distinguishing God's holiness from his goodness, especially if the latter is to be applied to created things, as in XI, 10.

Unfortunately he fails to pursue this line and lapses into an identification of the two concepts which leads him on to a further conclusion, unwarranted by the argument but full of momentous consequences. His precise words are:

> *Sed si nihil est aliud bonitas divina quam sanctitas, profecto et intelligentia rationis est, non praesumptionis audacia, ut in operibus Dei secreto quodam loquendi modo, quo nostra exerceatur intentio, eadem nobis insinuata intellegatur trinitas, unamquamque creaturam quis fecerit, per quid fecerit, propter quid fecerit.[13]*

The scope of the argument here is truly breathtaking. In a few lines, almost without thinking, Augustine has drawn the following conclusions:

> a. the Holy Spirit combines the holiness of the other two Persons.
> b. the holiness of God may be equated with his goodness.
> c. therefore the Holy Spirit is also the goodness of the other two Persons.
> d. therefore the goodness of God must be understood at the level of the Three as well as at the level of the One.
> e. the goodness of God is reflected in creation (*cf.* XI, 10).
> f. therefore the Trinity is reflected in the created order.

Augustine's theory of causality is rooted in the divine goodness, which as the above scheme makes plain, means that the Spirit created the universe and in it revealed the whole Trinity in Unity. Yet so bold a hypothesis (*temeraria sententia!*) would hardly have been conceivable without the identification of goodness with holiness, an identification which Augustine himself hesitates to make. Had he thought about it in connection with his statements in XI, 10, he might have realised that he was confusing the personal attribute of a member of the Trinity with a natural attribute of the Godhead. This confusion, which he perceived only dimly and never took seriously, is undoubtedly one of the reasons why it is sometimes alleged that Augustine's trinitarianism, like that of the West which followed him, has a marked Sabellian tendency.[14]

Against this it must be remembered that Augustine knew that the Persons were more than modes of, or within the divine being. Not only did he expressly reject Sabellianism (XI, 10; 24), but he also established the objectivity of the Persons in terms of subsistence. The use of the verb *subsistere* has some precedent in *De trinitate* VII, 4, but in *De civitate Dei* XI, 10 he takes this one step farther and produces the noun *subsistentia* to describe the *hypostasis* of the Persons. This word was soon to oust the unsatisfactory *substantia* in this meaning, and it became a commonplace of medieval theology. It is therefore important to point out that whilst Augustine is responsible both for the term

relation and for the term *subsistence* in his description of the Persons, he never identifies the two in the manner of the 'subsistent relations' of Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics.

It is certainly true that such an equation is there for the making, and that Augustine's remarks on relation in *De trinitate* V, 5, lead us to suppose that it had in his mind an objective quality different from that of *substantia*, but which might reasonably be expressed as *subsistentia*. Nevertheless, Augustine does not himself do this, and the fact that he is free to describe the Holy Spirit as a *substantia* (XI, 24), by which he means *hypostasis* and not *ousia*, shows that he had not worked the distinction out in his own mind.[15]

THE IMAGE OF THE TRINITY

The main section of *De civitate Dei* devoted to the Trinity is XI, 24–29, and it deals chiefly with the image of the Trinity in the created order. Augustine follows traditional Christian teaching by claiming that the Father was the principal agent of creation. The means by which he created was speech; hence Augustine's somewhat forced insistence that the Word (i.e. the Son) was his instrument. This he could have demonstrated from the New Testament, but he does not do so. Then he says that 'God saw that it was good', a statement which he claims is sufficient to explain both the cause and effect of creation. God created in order to express his goodness; the goodness which resulted demonstrated that there was a correspondence with the goodness which caused it to be created. This goodness, we are now told, is the Holy Spirit in whom the Trinity is revealed.

From there Augustine goes on to explain (XI, 25) why philosophy is obliged to think according to a tripartite pattern. He recognizes that this has been expressed in different ways, and indeed philosophical triads were so common in antiquity that it is remarkable that Augustine was able to isolate the underlying structural principle which illustrates his point. He takes the divisions of physics (nature), logic (reason) and ethics (use), and claims that they reflect

the necessary triadic pattern of Ultimate Good. Physics represents what is in itself, logic the understanding of what is, and ethics the application of what is. In God all three inevitably turn on himself, since he is by nature self-sufficient. God is therefore perfectly self-aware and perfectly self-loving, since Augustine assumes that ethics will always manifest itself as love. What is true of God would also be true of man, were it not for the fact that man is self-sufficient by nature. Because our nature comes from God, it follows for Augustine that our reason must be instructed by him and our love directed toward him. Only in this way can the true purpose of mankind be maintained.

Having established this point, Augustine turns to the image of God in man, which he sees as the image of the Trinity (XI, 26). He had already developed this theme in *De trinitate* VIII ff., despite the fact that Christian tradition had generally regarded the image of God in man as the image of Christ, in line with the New Testament.[16] Augustine knows that the image is inadequate because it is not of the same substance as God (in sharp contrast to the Platonists, who regarded the soul as a portion of the divine substance). In *De trinitate* he focussed his attention on man's capacity for love (VIII–IX) and on his mind (X–XIV). Both these themes, and especially the latter are developed at considerable length. In *De civitate Dei* they are referred to, but here his starting point is different, indeed more fundamental.

Augustine does not begin with the mind or with love, but with *being*. Man resembles God in that he *is*. In the context of Platonism this can only mean that man's nature shares something of the divine, since only God can properly be said to *be* in the absolute sense. Furthermore, we are aware of our being, and love both it and the knowledge of it. This knowledge and love do not come from outside ourselves but from within; they are the expression of an inner conviction so strong that no proof is needed to verify it. Augustine knows that this argument for the image of the Trinity in man is profounder than any he has hitherto employed. He expresses this awareness by allowing for the possibility of error at the philosophical level. Even a

mistake in reasoning, he argues, will not destroy the fundamental reality of human *being*. The mind and love, which he had previously used to demonstrate a trinity in unity, have now themselves become components of a deeper trinity, rooted in ontology.

The profoundity of Augustine's discovery is explored by him in his consideration of the attitude towards life found in even the most wretched men, and in animals (XI, 27). Faced with the prospect of annihilation every creature, however miserable, will instinctively prefer to go on living even if his misery were to endure in eternity. In the same way no-one would willingly sacrifice his intellect, however burdened or troubled it might be, if the alternative were merely to be a blissful madness. The lower creation does not possess intellect, but in practice it obeys the same principle by virtue of instinct.

The really interesting question, and the one which occupies Augustine at greatest length, is whether we can distance ourselves from the love we have for our being and knowledge of it, in order to be able to treat this love objectively and thereby consciously love it as well. Augustine answers this question in the affirmative by referring us to the good. A good man is not one who acts in an arbitrary or unconscious manner; it is part of his make-up that he should consciously love the Good in and for itself. It is possible, says Augustine, to exercise love unconsciously, and thereby to turn away from the Good. But the man who loves rightly will be aware of the self-love in him and love that as well. For it is the way in which we love which determines the direction our souls will take in the cosmic order. Wrong love will pull the soul down like gravity; right love will lift it up high towards reunion with its Creator.

CONCLUSION

Augustine concludes his treatment with a restatement of the trinitarian being of God as eternity which is true, truth which is eternal and love which is eternal and true. The first two Persons reflect each other, whilst the third reflects both the first two. The pattern, which is standard for Augustinian trinitarianism, has had the most momentous consequences for Western theology. For Augustine, when all is said and done, the Trinity is best understood in the Person of the Holy Spirit who brings into conscious awareness a unity of the divine being which otherwise might tend to separate out into distinct and even opposing principles. At the same time, this unifying principle of goodness, holiness and love has an objectivity equal to that of the other Persons, and this point must also be stressed. The accusation of Sabellianism, for all its superficial attractiveness, simply will not stick.

In *De civitate Dei* Augustine gives us a succinct picture of his trinitarian thought in relation to his wider philosophy. He rejects Neoplatonism, which undoubtedly had influenced him to some degree, though not as much as is often thought, as his willingness to strike a different path at crucial points makes clear. He begins with a recognizably Cappadocian picture of the Trinity, in which the Father is their personification (= hypostatisation) of the divine Essence, only to move away from this in favour of an altogether new emphasis on the Holy Spirit. It is this more than anything else which makes it impossible to regard him as crypto-Sabellian, though it must be admitted that his understanding of the Spirit's place within the Godhead is open to question. His tendency to make the personification of a series of abstract virtues is one which he resists elsewhere, notably in *De trinitate*, where only very late and with great caution does he venture to equate the Holy Spirit with Love (XV, 17). Yet in spite of this caution in his major work on the Trinity, it is a tendency which appealed to later generations and which in the Middle Ages became quite characteristic of Augustinianism.

The other point which was also to have great influence was the way in which he was prepared to base his speculations about the Trinity on an underlying concept of the Good, which applied to the creation as well as to the creator. This connection was to provide later generations with a basis for developing a full-blown natural theology, often along lines of which Augustine himself would almost certainly have disapproved. Yet his followers could appeal to *De civitate Dei* for justification, and then read this

notion back into *De trinitate*, where Augustine himself had been much more cautious on the whole. Even so, the relationship between the two works, which we discussed in the introduction to this paper, is such as to legitimise this kind of proceeding. For if there is little in *De civitate Dei* which cannot also be found in *De trinitate* (often at much greater length), it is also true that in *De civitate Dei* Augustine develops the philosophical and theological foundations for his other work in a way which is clearer and more profound than anything in *De trinitate*. At the superficial level there is little enough to connect the two works, but at the level of fundamental conception it can be seen that Augustine reveals his deepest motives in *De civitate Dei*, and that these provide an adequate and accurate guide to the arguments which he develops at greater length in *De trinitate*, both in its earlier and in its later sections.

1 *Cf. Ep.* 120, 143, 162, 169. These date from 410, 412, 414 and 415 respectively.
2 *Ep.* 174.
3 But *cf.* A. M. La Bonnardière, *Recherches de chronologie augustinienne*, Paris, 1965, p. 69.
4 Thus *e.g.* J. P. Sheldon-Williams, in A. H. Armstrong ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1967, p. 425.

5 A point obscured in the Knowles-Bettenson translation, which introduces the word *person* here.
6 Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Iul.* 8, 6, 2.
7 *Cf. De trin.* V, 8, 10.
8 The *Quicunque Vult* says that 'there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost' but as the succeeding lines make clear, it is the objective reality of the Three which is expressed in the term Person, not the category of Person which has been imposed on the Three.
9 *De trin.* V, 11.
10 *Cf. e.g.* the same clear equation in his *Enchiridion*, 10.
11 Whom he had attacked in *De trin.* V, 3.
12 The *Filioque* is characteristic of Augustinian trinitarianism, but it cannot be attributed to the Neoplatonism of Porphyry, despite resemblances. Rather its origins lie deep in the roots of the Latin Church, v. P. Smulders, *Esprit Saint chez les Pères Latins*, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* IV, 2, pp. 1272–9; T. Camelot, *La tradition latine sur la procession du Saint-Esprit 'a Filio' ou 'ab utroque'*, in *Russie et Chrétienté*, 1950, 3–4, pp. 179–92.
13 XI, 24. In the Knowles-Bettenson translation: 'Now if the divine goodness is identical with the divine holiness, it is evidently not a rash presumption but a reasonable inference to find a hint of the Trinity in the description of God's created works, expressed somewhat enigmatically, so as to exercise our speculations. This hint we may find when we ask the questions, who? how? and why?'
14 *Cf. e.g.* V. Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, London, 1974, pp. 71–96.
15 In the Knowles-Bettenson translation, *substantia* is rendered as 'subsistent being – a substance', which both contains and explains the ambiguity. *Cf.* also XI, 29, where each Person is called a substance (*singulas ... personas unam esse substantiam*).
16 *Cf.* D. Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, London, 1973, pp. 40–60.