

How Augustine Used the Trinity: Functionalism and the Development of Doctrine

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At various stages in the development of doctrine there emerges something new that produces a change of course and direction. Such pivotal events in doctrinal development capture the imagination and become exciting turning points in the narrative of theology. For the doctrine of the Trinity, one thinks of Athanasius, Nicea, the Cappadocians, and Constantinople as obvious examples. One more obvious example is Augustine. This essay explores why Augustine represents such a pivotal change of course in the doctrinal development of the Trinity, and I suggest a revision of the common narrative.

First of all I should note that there are other calls for revision as well, and the revisions are diverse. In the recent past, Augustine fell out of Trinitarian favor in the retrieval of so-called Eastern emphases.¹ Such anti-Augustinian trends essentially radicalized the standard account, exemplified by De Regnon's narrative that "Western trinitarian theology begins with . . . divine unity . . . while eastern trinitarian

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¹ In Europe, Jürgen Moltmann and John Zizioulas represent different yet seminal positions, each dependent upon an argument that requires discounting the West in order to lionize the East. Theologians at King's College, London, during the 1980s and 1990s promoted an anti-Western (anti-Augustinian) formulation of the Trinity that called for a sweeping retrieval of the Cappadocian contribution. Interestingly, their view of the Cappadocians was often coupled with that of the medieval theologian, Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173), and his distinctive "social Trinity." Typically left out is the degree to which Richard of St. Victor was, in fact, Augustinian. In America, the important work of Robert Jenson reflected the same trend, though even Jenson has now mitigated his earlier participation in the mood. Also in America, the general inclinations of feminist theology reflected this same Anti-Augustinian mood, evidenced in relation to the Trinity, most specifically in the work of the late Catherine Mowry LaCugna.

theology begins with divine diversity. . . .² I do not intend to engage that debate despite its importance. I do acknowledge a small but growing cadre of thinkers who are calling for another rereading of the history of Trinitarian theology.³ Scholars as diverse as Michel Barnes, Lewis Ayres, John Milbank, Carol Harrison, Basil Studer, Edmund Hill, Sarah Coakley, Mark McIntosh, and Rowan Williams⁴ question this narrative, especially with regard to such pivotal figures as the Cappadocian Fathers and St. Augustine.

My proposal offers rather another kind of revision, and makes another kind of value judgment. I propose a developmental model that amends the standard account⁵ to take into fuller consideration what I

² Michel René Barnes, "Rereading Augustine on the Trinity," *The Trinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 152. Theodore de Regnon (1831-1893) wrote the classic eight-volume study *La métaphysique des causes d'après Saint Thomas et Albert le Grand* (Paris: Sortais, 1886). Barnes makes a convincing argument that Augustine has been mistreated under this narrative, founded by De Regnon. See M. R. Barnes, "The Use of Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995), 237-251; "De Regnon Reconsidered," *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995), 51-79. Also see, in support of Barnes, Lewis Ayres, "The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine's Trinitarian Theology," *Augustine and His Critics*, eds. R. Dodaro and G. Lawless (London: Routledge, 2000), 51.

³ See the small but significant bibliography in Lewis Ayres, "The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine's Trinitarian Theology," *Augustine and His Critics*, 71, 3n. As well, all of the essays in *Augustine and His Critics* are, to various degrees, interested in a retrieval of Augustine from the modern narrative. Though my argument was constructed prior to reading this collection, the papers there offer weighty support.

⁴ Especially interesting is the way in which Williams stresses *discontinuity* with Descartes, which completes the reversal of De Regnon's narrative (or rather the corollary of it that stresses Augustine's discontinuity with the Cappadocians and continuity with Descartes). See Rowan Williams, "The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the *De Trinitate*," *Collectanea Augustiniana. Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, eds. J. T. Lienhard, E. C. Muller, and R. J. Teske (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 121-134. For specific examples of this reversal favoring Augustine, see the work cited by Michel Barnes and Lewis Ayres. John Milbank's entire project of "Radical Orthodoxy" claims Augustine as patron; for example, *The Word Made Strange* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997). In patristic studies, see Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993); and Sarah Coakley, "'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion" in *The Trinity*, eds. S. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For a retrieval that moves in the direction of mystical theology, see Mark McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998) and *Mysteries of Faith* (Cambridge, Mass: Cowley, 2000).

⁵ I use "standard account" as a general term to acknowledge a kind of consensus. I use it both in relation to narratives about particular events in Trinitarian history and about doctrinal development itself.

shall call the “post-formal functionalization” of doctrine, and its reverberations throughout the structure and content of theology. In simpler terms, I want to bring to our attention the way in which doctrine develops and then gets used in theology. In particular, the essay aims at learning how the doctrine of the Trinity was used by Augustine immediately following its formalization in the late fourth century.

A Brief History of Trinitarian Development

To make my proposal, it will be useful to recount a very brief history of Trinitarian development. I only have time to give, at best, a dictionary-entry definition of the narrative. But I hope it will serve to remind us of exactly what was achieved in the dialectical process towards formalization, and the concern for ecclesial unity that attended and even fueled that process.

From the monotheism and high Christology of the biblical witness, especially the Pauline and Johannine interest in the unity between Father, Son, and Spirit, the economic theologians⁶ developed a way of speaking about the three activities of the one God, initiating the language of “Triad” or “Trinity” for God’s involvement with the world. Dissatisfaction with Arius led a new wave of thinking about the unity and nature of God, especially in the relationship between the Father and the Son. The conclusion that the Father and Son shared the same substance was reached at Nicea under the ecclesial leadership of Athanasius and the political sway of Emperor Constantine. This Nicene concern for God’s unity was extended to the Holy Spirit at Constantinople, where the nature of God was decided in radically unifying relational terms. The Conciliar creed, now called the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed, brought the Christian doctrine of God as Trinity to its formal completion.

In the ante-Nicene movement Bernard Lonergan saw two general developments in the learning of the church: (1) the development of Trinitarian and Christological doctrine; and (2) development of the

⁶ “Economic” from the Greek *oikonomia*, meaning the management of the “household.” The “economic theologians” refer to those pre-Nicene theologians, such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, who had conceived of God in terms of his threefold ways with the world (the management of his household), without speculating upon the nature of God in Godself (the “immanent” Trinity).

very notion of dogma.⁷ The apostles themselves held “dogmas,” though not the sort worked out through careful systematic reflection, but rather “rough and ready” dogmas developed in the service of mission and witness. Doctrinal development issued forth in conflict⁸ during the first century and set in motion a process that would gain increasing momentum throughout the second and third centuries, finally reaching a kind of conclusion in the fourth century.

Much of the dialectic was consumed by Christological concerns, represented by theo-political parties, that is, between the Arian Anomians and Homoians, the “Semi-Arian” Homoi-ousions and the Nicene Homo-ousions.⁹ This dialectic was moving inexorably toward a solution at Nicea. For Lonergan, Nicea was an achievement that, in effect, gave a profound theological answer to the divisive Trinitarian question.¹⁰ He writes, Nicea “laid the foundation on which, of its own accord, as it were, the whole systematization of Catholic theology would arise.”¹¹ Lonergan’s point, crucial for our narrative, is to notice the formalization achieved at Nicea.¹²

⁷ Bernard Lonergan, *The Way to Nicea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology*, trans. C. O’Donovan (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976).

⁸ As John Henry Newman once noted, “no doctrine is defined till it is violated,” *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Garden City: Doubleday/Image, 1845, 1960), I.2.4. This basic insight shows us what makes doctrinal development in this period especially dialectical. The dialectic moves towards “definition” which is regulative in character as it makes rules to protect previously “undifferentiated” beliefs. See “How Augustine Used the Trinity,” pp. 135–140 of this paper.

⁹ “Semi-Arian” is probably unbalanced since most *Homoiousions* were really closer to Athanasius than Arius. It is probably fair to understand the *Homoiousions* generally as Neo-Nicene (rather than Semi-Arian). However, there is some cause to think of the *Homoiousion* party as split on this very matter, so that both descriptions are appropriate, depending upon emphases. See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 249. See David Anderson, “Introduction” to St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997).

¹⁰ Lonergan, *Way to Nicea*, 136. Lonergan states that while the Nicene dogma was inevitable, it was also entirely new. He writes that it “marks a transition from things as related to us, to things as they are in themselves, from the relational concepts of God . . . to an ontological conception of the divine substance itself,” 136. Further still, Lonergan states, it marks a transition (as the gospels themselves do) from the particular to the universal, and from “a whole range of problems to a basic solution to those problems.” Thus the entire process is seen as a movement “from naïve realism, beyond Platonism, to dogmatic realism and in the direction of critical realism,” 137.

¹¹ Lonergan, *Way to Nicea*, 137.

¹² Lonergan was unable to complete his projected work on the Trinity, the result being that his narrative is also somewhat incomplete.

It should be clear that some of the problems Nicea tried to solve persisted. But it should also be clear that the Cappadocians saw themselves in this Nicene tradition of orthodoxy, concerned as much for the unity of God as the confession of Father, Son, and Spirit. They recognized that Nicea was not able to appreciate fully the divinity of the Holy Spirit and thus had an incomplete expression of God's Trinity. Their epoch-making solution was that the terms *hypostasis* and *ousia* could no longer be used interchangeably. They allowed the formula, "one *ousia* and three *hypostaseis*"¹³ because they contend that three *hypostaseis* can mutually indwell in the one *ousia* of God.¹⁴ This had the result of solving Subordinationist and Sabellian tendencies alike, offering a genuine and formal expression to the doctrine of the Trinity.

It is important to notice that all of these developments occurred in response to regulative needs. That is to say, Trinitarian doctrine was moving towards formalization because it quite simply needed rules. These developments were primarily about how the church was going to think properly and worship God, and on that basis, it had a gate-keeping function. Conciliar creeds listed all anathemas at creeds' end because doctrine has this regulative function; it decides not only what is doctrinally acceptable and unacceptable, but also who is acceptable and unacceptable. My contention is that the doctrine of the Trinity developed (partly) through the regulative needs of the church (the need for theological rules which ensure Christian unity), but that with Augustine, a different kind of development began to occur.

*What Augustine Learned from the Learning of the Church*¹⁵

Augustine understood himself as heir to the Nicene tradition, and from a very early stage showed signs that he had learned that tradition

¹³ But see J. T. Lienhard, S.J., "*Ousia and Hypostasis: The Cappadocian Settlement and the Theology of 'One Hypostasis,'*" in *The Trinity*, eds. S. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 100. Lienhard notes that the formula, in fact, rarely occurred, though Gregory of Nazianzus, in *Oration on the Great Athanasius*, wrote: "We, in an orthodox sense, say one *ousia* and three *hypostaseis*, for the one denotes the nature of the Godhead, the other the properties of the three."

¹⁴ For a general account of the Cappadocian achievement, see William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as the Mystery of Salvation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982).

¹⁵ I adapt this phrase from Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 132, where he helps us to think about doctrinal development in a

well. By the year 389, some eight years after Constantinople, and three years after his own conversion, Augustine takes it as "a fundamental axiom of Trinitarian theology the doctrine that the three persons work inseparably."¹⁶ Catechized under Ambrose, Augustine learned the great lesson of Nicene theology: just as the activity of the three are one, so is their nature one.¹⁷

However, Augustine had not passively received the tradition, but was an active student of its twists and turns. The first eight books of *De Trinitate* (alone written over seventeen years: 399-416) show us that he thought critically about the tradition, and read widely. Most interesting is the way in which Augustine sees the tension between the early economic theologians (*De Trinitate*, I-IV) and the so-called "metaphysical" ones of the fourth-century controversies over Arianism and Nicea (*De Trinitate*, V-VII). It may be overstating it to find Augustine's genius primarily in his brilliant synthesis of the economic and metaphysical Trinitarians, as this synthesis was also a concern of most Pro- and Neo-Nicene theologians.

Augustine learned a great deal from the Cappadocian Fathers' interpretation of Nicea. And his own interpretation of Nicea reflects some of their principal concerns. Based on the classic work of Chevalier, we know that Augustine had read the Greek Trinitarian theology of Gregory of Nazianzen, Didymus the Blind, Basil the Great, and

pedagogical way. He writes, "The impatience of some modern Anglo-Saxon theologians with the dogmatic tradition sometimes seems in part an impatience with debate, conflict, ambivalence, polysemy, paradox. And this is at heart an impatience with learning, and with *learning about our learning*." Emphasis mine.

¹⁶ Lewis Ayres, "The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine's Trinitarian Theology," 55. Ayres cites Letter 11.2, "For, according to the Catholic faith, the Trinity is proposed to our belief and believed—and even understood by a few saints and holy persons—as so inseparable that whatever action is performed at the same time by the Father and by the Son and by the Holy Spirit . . . the Son does not do anything which the Father and the Holy Spirit do not also do." Neglected in my essay is the thorough way in which Augustine appropriates Scripture. I merely note the interesting opinion of James J. O'Donnell, "Augustine's Idea of God" in *Recent Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, IV, ed. Everett Ferguson (London: Garland, 1999), 19-30. The eminent Augustinian scholar comments on the limits of scholarly discourse on Augustine and the need to see all of his thought as a powerful conversation with the biblical witness. O'Donnell ventures to guess that every thought in Augustine that we moderns find embarrassing, Augustine probably found in Scripture, and most likely in Paul.

¹⁷ Lewis Ayres, "Fundamental Grammar," 56. Karl Rahner deserves credit for making this axiom central again in twentieth-century Trinitarian theology.

Epiphanius of Salamis.¹⁸ He was clearly aware of the problems they had faced, both linguistic and metaphysical, and his own ideas reflect a development upon some of their most important insights. As well, Augustine learned much of what he knew about the Eunomian Arians from the Cappadocians, and he deals with them in the same way.¹⁹ One of the most important things he learned from the Cappadocians concerned the notion of relationship. Edmund Hill makes note of two such specific places where Augustine encountered the Cappadocian interest in relationship.²⁰ First, Augustine learned from Gregory of Nazianzen who wrote before him, "The name Father is not one of substance (*ousia*) or activity (*energia*), but relationship (*schesis*)" (*Orationes* 29, XVI). Gregory writes that the distinctions of mutual relationships have themselves given rise to their names (*Orationes* 33, IX). And one of the lesser Cappadocian Fathers, Didymus the Blind, whom Augustine read in Jerome's translation, taught that "the divine hypostases are manifested in mutual relationship" (*De Trinitate* I, xi). In the same note, Hill goes so far as to suppose that Augustine improved upon and better implemented the Cappadocian notion, to the degree that Augustine "may be said to have introduced it [relationship] into theological language."

Rather than stressing discontinuity between Augustine and the Cappadocians, I see continuity in their mutual (Nicene) concern for

¹⁸ Irenée Chevalier, *S. Augustin et la pensée grecque: Les Relations trinitaires* (Fribourg en Suisse: Librairie de l'Université, 1940). See M. R. Barnes, "Rereading the Trinity," 152, 11n, who defends the conclusions of this outdated work; W. J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God*, 56-57, who notes that Augustine reworked his analogies in light of reading the Cappadocians (ca. 413), probably through Gregory of Nazianzus and Didymus the Blind, and possibly through Basil the Great and Epiphanius of Salamis. Also see Edmund Hill, "Translator's Introduction," Saint Augustine, *The Trinity*, 38. All of this does some damage to the charge that Augustine is unappreciative of the Greek perspective. I should also add the opinion of Edmund Hill, who makes note that it is likely that Augustine's ignorance of the Greek language has been overstated based on Augustine's own self-effacing comments. The ambiguity of the evidence hardly justifies assuming that he was not able to read Greek at all. His frequent engagement with biblical Greek should be some indication that while he may have not found "pleasure" in reading Greek, it was certainly a language he had frequently to take issue with in his work as a bishop.

¹⁹ Edmund Hill, "Translator's Introduction" to Saint Augustine, *The Trinity* (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), 49. The great retrieval of Augustine in recent years owes much to the New City Press edition, skillfully translated and annotated by Edmund Hill.

²⁰ Hill, "Translator's Introduction," 57, 6n.

the relations in the unity of God.²¹ Augustine modified Greek (Cappadocian) terms inappropriate to a Latin audience, but preserved their basic insights and continued—some would even say improved upon—their relational principles grounded in the notion of *perichoresis* (the mutual indwelling of persons constituting a single communal being).

Here I might just insert an opinion better left for another occasion: I think both the Neo-Nicene *monopatristism* of the Cappadocians and the Pro-Nicene *filioque* of Augustine represent similar concerns, and I hazard only to guess that differences have been exaggerated. Both positions seek to express the perichoretic unity of Persons in God's Trinity, and both expressions, it seems to me, are inadequate.

From the economic theologians Augustine learned that it was a mistake to distinguish the persons by their function and stayed true to the doctrine of inseparable operations. From the Arian controversy he learned that it was a mistake to distinguish the persons by their attributes. And from the Greeks he learned that the distinction of persons must reside in terms of communal relationship,²² and here he found

²¹ See Sarah Coakley, "'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion" in *The Trinity*, 123-144. Coakley writes convincingly that Gregory of Nyssa has been mistreated as an advocate of "Social" Trinitarianism. Gregory, Coakley writes, does not begin an argument for the Trinity from threeness, as in the "three men" analogy, but is "more interested in underscoring the unity of the divine *will* in the Trinity," 129. In fact, Coakley's assessment of Gregory of Nyssa is such that she believes Gregory is better understood in the so-called tradition of Western Trinitarianism (stressing unity) than so-called Eastern Trinitarianism (stressing threeness), 137. Even some Orthodox sources now subvert the misleading East-West divide during this period. For example, see Andrew Louth, "Unity and Diversity in the Church of the Fourth Century," *Recent Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, IV, ed. Everett Ferguson (London: Garland, 1999), 1-18.

²² *The Trinity*, Books V, VI and esp. VII. I find it difficult to see Augustine as somehow non-communal in his conception of God's being when the very terms he uses speak of the Spirit as the *communio* of the Father and the Son. Instead of placing the unifying emphasis exclusively in the Father, Augustine makes it the communion of the Father and the Son. Rather than neglecting the Spirit, of which Augustine is sometimes accused, it seems that he is better understood as placing a unifying emphasis on the Spirit. In doing so, he achieves the same *perichoretic* intention that the Cappadocians sought, and also diminishes the problem of the *fons divinitatis* (though he still finds Father as the source of divine simplicity) that led so subtly towards Subordinationism. John Zizioulas's *Being as Communion* could as easily be the title for a book about an Augustinian Trinity as it is about the Cappadocians. For Augustine learned, from the Cappadocians especially, the importance of real relations. (Augustine is concerned to say "for the terms of any predication of relationship must have

the key to the problem of all Nicene theologians before the Cappadocians. And so there is some truth in crediting Augustine for his brilliant synthesis of the Nicene tradition (Pro and Neo), though that credit should be shared with the Cappadocians themselves. Yet I still maintain that his originality lies elsewhere.

How Augustine Used the Trinity

Before showing exactly how I think Augustine used the Trinity, it will be useful to recall the pattern of development that was narrated throughout the course of the discussion so far. The basic dialectical thrust of development seems to form a pattern of learning in which “undifferentiated beliefs” are violated in some way, resulting in conflict. These conflicts give rise to study and dialogue leading to a synthesis of “differentiated convictions” stronger than the “undifferentiated beliefs” because better understood, following the *initium fidei*, “believe in order to understand.”²³ “Differentiated convictions” became data for further ecclesial conflicts and the call for ecclesial unity led to formalization. This process of formalization was initiated from the earliest stage of conflicting beliefs, but found articulation at Nicea and Constantinople.

The formalization of the doctrine of the Trinity, in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed, gave tacit form to what would emerge as the structure of Christian theology. At this critical juncture, after for-

reference to each other” *The Trinity*, VII, 1.2. The relations really subsist in the one “being” or *substantia* or *ousia* of God without remainder.) I will not comment on either *monopatristism* or *filioque*, except to say that I think both present problems and are inadequate to express the radical co-inherence of the Three in the One—and also to say that I think both Augustine and the Cappadocians were seeking to express this very same co-inherent unity. The doctrine of inseparable operations can be thus understood as a way of insuring that the only kind of distinctions we make in God are the communal relations themselves. In any case, the charge that Augustine finds a prior essence in God is a profound misunderstanding. Mary Clark writes, “There is no evidence in *De Trinitate* that Augustine asserted divine unity to be prior to the Trinity, nor Trinity to unity,” in “*De Trinitate*,” *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, eds. E. Stump, N. Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 91. It is now common to recognize this fact, buried for a time in Anti-Augustinian rhetoric.

²³ As nothing more than an aside, see Paul Ricouer, *Time and Narrative*, trans. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984-8), but esp. vol. 1, 52-53. The models of Preconfiguration-Configuration-Refiguration, Understanding-Explanation-Understanding, and Mimesis (1)-Mimesis (2)-Mimesis (3), invite an interesting dialogue with the view of doctrinal development presented here.

malization was essentially complete, I perceive a new development. Returning to my basic thesis, I contend that Augustine has ventured to employ the already formalized doctrine for purposes other than previously conceived. Augustine is the first to use the Trinity to perform functions in theology other than regulative.²⁴ I will show only one or two of the ways in which Augustine marks this post-formal shift to the functionalization of doctrine.

As Lewis Ayres has recently shown, by the time Augustine began *De Trinitate* in 399, his views on the tradition were largely in place, having received the teaching of the Pro- and Neo-Nicene Fathers.²⁵ He reworked his analogies around 413 after further reading in the Cappadocian Fathers,²⁶ but this amounted only to a refinement of a basic formulation already in place. *De Trinitate* was a study developed over a period of twenty years, and nearly left incomplete.²⁷ It was experimental and Augustine gave it the luxury of decades to attend to it. And while certainly brilliant in his synthesis, Augustine did not exercise himself in *De Trinitate* to reformulate the Trinity, but to use the already formalized (already learned) doctrine of the Trinity in creative and exploratory ways.

Commentators have frequently paid attention to the distinction Augustine makes between the terms *frui* ("enjoyment") and *uti*

²⁴ The notion of "function" I am using is somewhat akin to the dictionary definition that attaches the word to "usage" and sees such "uses" and "functions" contributing "to the development or maintenance of a larger whole." It is also akin, then, to the philosophy of design called "functionalism." As in architectural "functionalism," where it is held that "form should be adapted to use" both in material and structure, my argument shows that this has happened naturally, that is to say, organically, during the course of doctrinal development. But more generally, and more pervasively, the notion of "function" has been shaped by the American Pragmatists whose central idea (similar to Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin) was that ideas were tools to be used.

²⁵ See the excellent essay by Lewis Ayres, "Fundamental Grammar," which clearly shows how firmly Augustine's view of the Trinity was set before beginning *De Trinitate*, and so supports the thesis made here concerning his use of the doctrine.

²⁶ See note 15 above.

²⁷ The story of the near miscarriage of the work is well-documented. Apparently a group of admirers had pressed for the publication of the book around the completion of Book XII. It is not clear, but their motive could have been profit-driven, as Augustine's writings were sold at great price throughout the ancient world. The admirers stole the incomplete manuscript, causing Augustine extreme grief at the thought that people would read his incomplete treatise, so important was it to read the work in its entirety. This story should also stand as a cautionary tale to those who insist on reading only parts of *De Trinitate* and thus misunderstand the whole magnificent thrust of his exploratory argument.

("use"²⁸). And the distinction is vital to my proposal. *Frui*, or "enjoyment," is "the attitude we entertain towards things we value for themselves."²⁹ *Uti*, or "use," is "the attitude we entertain towards things we value for the sake of something else."³⁰ The mirror-image way in which Augustine shaped *De Trinitate* has a curious likeness to the way he viewed history.³¹ But more important for our purposes now is the way in which the first half clearly has in mind *frui* in relation to the Trinity, just as the second half ventures to regard the Trinity in terms of *uti*. The inter-relation between *frui* and *uti* in Augustine should also suggest something of the way in which the immanent and the economic are interrelated in his thought. This gives us a significant basis upon which to argue that the Trinity is being put to use for the sake of something else.

The Trinity is used to function on a variety of levels, hermeneutic, systematic, and salvific, of which I will mainly treat the salvific (or in

²⁸ Though *usus* is the normal word for "use," *util-* or *utilitas* have the added meaning of "used for some advantage or profit." The distinction may have come to mind through the word *ususfructus* (often applied in legal discourse), which does indeed hold both concepts together and is synonymous also with *usus* and involved using something for some beneficial purpose. The preference for *uti* is difficult to navigate, as it usually has an explanatory sense, and would have the connective connotation, the way we may think of phrases such as "in order that," or "so that," or "namely that." Augustine, in any case, clearly means something like "use" when he implies the *uti-frui* relationship, and for the sake of simplicity I will define it as such. The validation for this ultimately resides in the way Augustine uses the terms, which R. A. Markus has shown with great clarity. See 29n, 30n.

²⁹ R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 67. See E. Teselle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London: Burnes & Oates, 1970), 130.

³⁰ Markus, *Saeculum*, directs us to Augustine, *De diversis questionibus* LXXXIII. Pl. 40, 30. But better still see *The Trinity*, VI.11, where Augustine reflects on Hilary, *De Trinitate*, 2.1 and his employment of "use," *usus*, which he relates to "love, delight, felicity or blessedness." Again, use is always use for a particular aim. This deepens the way in which Augustine understands the relation between *frui* and *uti* in a way reminiscent of the interdependency of the immanent and economic Trinity. The second half of *De Trinitate* is filled with references to *uti*, see esp. Book X, 17-19. See TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, 130.

³¹ R. A. Markus, *Saeculum*, is the authority on Augustine's view of history, which changes over the course of his life. Consistent, though, is the way in which Augustine uses "salvation history," with Jesus Christ at the center, as a *lens* through which he sees the world. I have not seen other commentators speculate as much, but it seems entirely plausible that *De Trinitate* was itself shaped in accord with this "hinged" pattern of history (Jesus Christ being the hinge).

Du Roy's terms, "the anagogical").³² I treat it foremost because it so clearly represents the way Augustine made this distinctive turn (*via inventionis*) to functionality. Put differently, the turn towards functionalization is a shift in learning (from the *regulative* to the *redemptive*). Augustine is using the Trinity in the analogies to draw the reader through a process of spiritual conversion in which the journey inward may invite the journey upward. The conversion itself is the point, so that the believer may be drawn out of himself and into a *relationship* of remembering God, understanding God, and loving God.³³

The most recent translator of *De Trinitate*, Edmund Hill, notes that "Augustine is proposing the quest for, or the exploration of, the mystery of the Trinity as a complete program for the Christian spiritual life, a program of conversion and renewal and discovery of self in God and God in self."³⁴ Understood this way, we can see how Augustine uses the Trinity as both the epistemological starting point and the eschatological goal. In terms of *frui* and *uti*, this means that Augustine's epistemological starting point is God's Trinity enjoyed (*in frui*), and that the use of God's Trinity (*in uti*) is intended to return us to the eschatological goal of God's Trinity more deeply enjoyed (*in frui*). For the Triune God is not just the goal (*frui*) but also the way (*uti*).

Augustine took the *imago dei* in us very seriously. He was impressed by such texts as Ephesians 5:1, "Be therefore imitators of God," and Colossians 3:10, where the believer is "being renewed for the recognition of God according to the image."³⁵ At the end of Book VII, we find Augustine preparing his readers to "activate in [themselves] the image of the divine trinity."³⁶ Believing thus will help the

³² The classic view of Olivier du Roy found three Trinitarian uses, though he did not call them uses: ontological (all finite being), analogical (within the inner life), and anagogical (contemplative movement toward God). These correlate to the three uses I suggest. See Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, 117, 25n for a summary. See Olivier du Roy, *L'Intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin: Genèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1966). The most recent work by Mary T. Clark supports a threefold purpose, and emphasizes Augustine's interest in salvation and spiritual growth. See Mary T. Clark, "De Trinitate," 91.

³³ Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIV, esp. chapter 4. See Paul Fiddes, who writes that the psychological analogy is "not merely of memory, understanding, and will, but of our mind remembering God, understanding God and loving God," *The Promised End*, 266.

³⁴ Edmund Hill, "Translator's Introduction," Saint Augustine, *The Trinity*, 19.

³⁵ *The Trinity*, VII.12.

³⁶ Translator's note in the heading to Ch. 4, *The Trinity*, VII.

reader to understand through experience, and participation in the very life of God (learning and using doctrine in this way leads to the enjoyment of God). The analogies which follow from Book VII are all intended to serve this goal.

Our memory, understanding, and will are not really seen as an image of the Trinity. What Augustine is trying to draw the reader into is "the supreme act of contemplative wisdom" that transforms the image of God by a process of introspection that leads to Self-Transcendence and communion with the Other. In this way we can understand the movement from Book X where the inner self is remembering itself, understanding itself, and willing itself to Book XIV where the inner self is remembering God, understanding God, and willing or loving God.

Instead of seeing the analogies as these admirable but naive attempts to grasp God's Trinity, we really must understand the analogies as tools that perform upon the reader a process of spiritual conversion.³⁷ The Trinity is used in the analogies to draw us inward in order that we might be drawn upward, slowly seeing ourselves inextricably related to God (a spiritual method, incidentally, also used by Bonaventure in the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*). In any case, Augustine tells us in Book XV how miserably the analogies fail to represent the Holy Trinity. And it makes a great deal more sense to see this writer of *Confessions* interested in using the Trinity to draw the reader into communion with God.

For Augustine, "all [theology] is for the sake of the soul."³⁸ So in moving beyond the formal stage of development, it was natural for Augustine to employ the doctrine to serve salvific ends. He used the Trinity, mimetically, for the purposes of spiritual transformation, modeling for the believer the kenotic and perichoretic way of relating to one another. As Mary Clark has recently observed, Augustine's "Trini-

³⁷ For a contemporary example of theology working in a similar way, see *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church*, eds. James Buckley and David Yeago (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001).

³⁸ See Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, 123. TeSelle finds Augustine's philosophy of religion exemplified in Augustine's phrase, "all religion is for the sake of the soul," from *De utilitate credendi* (or *The Usefulness of Believing*), 7, 14. There is no space to treat it here, but the very title should indicate that *The Usefulness of Believing* supports the direction of the present thesis. As well, TeSelle, 128, notes that Augustine is interested in assessing the various *functions* of belief in *Responses to Various Questions*, 48.

tarian spirituality is a continual rhythm of receiving love and giving love.”³⁹ The Trinity is no longer simply an object for regulative discourse, but the Trinity also functions as exemplar,⁴⁰ as teacher, as our Lord and our God inviting us to participate in a particular way of life.

I have argued that the use of the Trinity is fundamental to Augustinian spirituality, and this functionalization of the Trinity was one of the several ways in which Augustine advanced the doctrine beyond the formal stage of development. That there are other ways in which the Trinity functions to serve other ends in Augustine is clear. I have only endeavored to point out one of the ways in which he used the Trinity, and suggested that his move to use the doctrine signals an advance in the narrative of doctrinal development. The way Augustine used the Trinity offers us a guide and a standard by which we may judge present attempts to use doctrine generally or the Trinity specifically.

Epilogue: Using Doctrine and Enjoying the Triune God

In sum, I have made a historical argument for a contemporary reality. Theologians are increasingly taken with the Pragmatist view that doctrines are tools to be used. In a recent book S. Mark Heim,⁴¹ building on the work of Gavin D’Costa,⁴² uses the doctrine of the Trinity in his construction of a new and interesting theory about religious pluralism. Some have used the Trinity as an antidote to atheism.⁴³ Walter Moberly suggests we might use the Trinity as a “rule” for the theological interpretation of Scripture.⁴⁴ Others, such as Paul Fiddes⁴⁵ or

³⁹ Mary Clark, “De Trinitate,” *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, 99.

⁴⁰ Augustine is using the Trinity as the paradigm for understanding all reality. To borrow somewhat from Thomas Kuhn, Augustine uses the Trinity both as an *exemplar* and as *rule*. See *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd Edition (London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1-18. As well, the pedagogical nature of the Kuhnian paradigm may offer some helpful insights into the way Augustine used the Trinity to teach his flock the way of wisdom.

⁴¹ *The Depths of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001).

⁴² *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2000).

⁴³ Michael Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

⁴⁴ R. W. L. Moberly, *The Bible, Theology and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 232-237.

⁴⁵ *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 2000).

Ellen Charry,⁴⁶ talk about the “pastoral function” of the Trinity. In fact, the vast majority of scholarship being done on the Trinity somehow seeks to put the Trinity to “work.”

This presupposition—that doctrine should be “functionalized” or used—has been subtly appropriated throughout many levels of discourse. Often the shift to the functionalist approach has gone unnoticed. This essay recorded how this instinct to use doctrine began in the late fourth and early fifth century with Augustine. It is a genuine development of doctrine, and perhaps it is only now being understood that doctrine does get used in a variety of ways, and the Trinity seems especially prone to functionalization in recent theology.⁴⁷ But Augustine’s question about the relation between *use* and *enjoyment* endures as a challenge.

The enduring challenge of Augustine is to ask theologians if their use of doctrines leads to first-order reflection on God. The incredible flowering of Trinitarian theology of recent years has frequently been a “functionalist” flowering. The Trinity seems suddenly “useful.” This is a rather shocking turn of events after people like Kant and Schleiermacher convinced us that the doctrine was useless, “practically irrelevant.” This remarkable turn is actually a return to Augustine. If he leads our functionalist tendencies, we might also follow the bishop to find deeper, more *fruitful* ways of talking about our God: ways in which we (theologians) come to know and enjoy, and not merely use, the strong Name of the Holy Trinity.

⁴⁶ *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁴⁷ Thinking back on our reference to Jürgen Moltmann at the beginning of this essay, we might note how the instigation for the “Social Trinitarian” movement was itself a functionalization of doctrine. Moltmann used the (social) Trinity to support his political theology in *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).

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