

*Memoria, Intellectus, Voluntas: the Augustinian Centre of Robert Crouse's
Scholarly Work¹*

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I. "I LOVED WISDOM AND SOUGHT HER OUT FROM MY YOUTH. I DESIRED TO MAKE HER MY SPOUSE, AND I WAS A LOVER OF HER BEAUTY", *LIBER SAPIENTIAE*²

Robert Crouse dedicated a long and richly productive scholarly life to western intellectual and artistic culture, covering the whole range from the beginnings of Greek and Jewish literature to contemporary philosophy, poetry and theology. By his preaching, teaching, and publishing, by his own work, and by what he nurtured in others, he laboured to rethink the western spiritual heritage and, thus, to rebuild it. For the rebuilding, his prescription was the transformation of minds, and his aim was enabling vision: purified, simple intuition or understanding, the loving *intellectus* which is the goal of faith. For him the requisite was the hard intellectual work of restoring the union of philosophy with theology. Though eminently effective practically in everything from music to gardening, university administration and pastoral care, the primary service of Robert's life to the university and the church was intellectual labour, understood Platonically in terms of recollection, not machinations wrought by synods and committees.

Robert wrote a memorial for his teacher, friend, fellow Nova Scotian, mediaevalist, and philosophical theologian, ultimately his ecclesiastical and theological opponent, Professor Eugene Rathbone Fairweather of Trinity College, Toronto. There was even more in common between them, including celibacy, the Anglican priesthood, Classical studies, theological doctorates from American universities, careers of university teaching, Anglo-Catholicism, and socialism; indeed, Eugene Fairweather also died at 80, ten years before Robert. However, because so much was common between them, Robert's obituary serves not only to mark the greatest difference between these two friends, but also what was fundamental to Robert Crouse.

He dated Eugene Fairweather's last "scholarly essay" in 1968; thirty-four years before his death and twenty years before his retirement from his professorial chair. Crucially, for Dr Crouse, that essay, like Fairweather's first published in 1952, was devoted to the exposition of Aquinas' existential act of being, a notion fathered on him by Étienne Gilson working across Queen's Park Circle from Trinity at St Michael's College.³ For Dr Crouse, all of Fairweather's work on the history of theology was coloured by "that 'existential' Thomist perspective."

¹ An abbreviated version of this paper was presented to the Academic Celebration of Professor Robert Darwin Crouse, Dalhousie Department of Classics, October 14th and 15th, 2011.

² Wisdom of Solomon, 8.2.

³ The obituary "In Memoriam: Eugene Rathbone Fairweather, 1920-2002," was published in the *Anglican Theological Review* 85 (2003): 3–5.

Gilson's mediaeval scholarship generally, which must be distinguished from its existentialist heart, is the framework for Fairweather's *A Scholastic Miscellany* of 1956 to which Robert contributed.⁴ In a review published in 1958, Robert raised hard questions about Gilson's existential Thomism.⁵ Despite much devastating historical and philosophical criticism,⁶ Robert judged that the notion continued to dominate Dr Fairweather's intellectual life, recording that his former teacher had intended to write an exposition of it in his retirement, but "the continual demands of synods, controversies, and committees prevented that undertaking."

Set against what they shared, Robert's own scholarly work presents a striking contrast to that of the Trinity Professor both in duration and character. Having started to publish in 1955, his intellectual work and publication spanned more than 50 years. His last scholarly writing, devoted to virtue in Dante's *Comedy*, appeared in 2009.⁷ This was the final of his twenty-seven papers for the annual Atlantic Theological Conference which he helped found. Through the Conference, and his other work, he steadfastly laboured to maintain and rebuild what he perceived his former teacher to be demolishing. Always for Robert the first, unavoidable, and continuing requisite was hard intellectual work restoring the union of philosophy with theology. I have treated his contribution to the Conference in a lecture for the thirty-first meeting held in June of this year.⁸ What he contributed was genuinely intellectual and scholarly and, allowing for the differences required by differences of audience, it forms a piece with his academic writing which I shall treat in this essay.

Most of the scholarly publications I shall treat were also delivered to conferences, for example, the International Patristics Conference or the International Medieval Conference. Importantly, these were dominantly studies of texts; here the foundations of Robert's teaching were laid. In them there was certainly nothing of the "method of correlation" which Robert diagnosed in Professor Fairweather, who had derived the approach from his doctoral supervisor,

⁴ See, for example, Eugene R. Fairweather (ed. and trans.), *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham* Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia and Toronto: Westminster Press, 1956), 29 & 41.

⁵ The review of Gilson's *The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas* (1956) was published in the *Canadian Journal of Theology* 4 (1958): 61-63.

⁶ See my *God in Himself, Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, Oxford Theological Monographs / Oxford Scholarly Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987/ 2000), 4-6 and "From Metaphysics to History, from Exodus to Neoplatonism, from Scholasticism to Pluralism: the fate of Gilsonian Thomism in English-speaking North America," *Dionysius* 16 (1998): 157-188; S. Schloesser, review of *The Malebranche Moment: Selections from the Letters of Étienne Gilson & Henri Gouhier (1920-1936)*, in *H-France Review* 10 (2010): 135-148.

⁷ Robert D. Crouse, "Response to Anthony Esolen," *Christian Psychology: The Formation of Souls*, Proceedings of the 28th Annual Atlantic Theological Conference, June 24th to 27th, 2008, edited Susan Harris & Daniel Wilband (Charlottetown: St Peter Publications, 2009), 115-131. For a bibliography by Walter Hannam, see *Divine Creation in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Thought: Essays Presented to the Rev'd Dr Robert D. Crouse*, edited by Michael Treschow, Willemien Otten and Walter Hannam, Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 441-445.

⁸ "Visio: the Method of Robert Crouse's Philosophical Theology," *Recognizing the Sacred in the Modern Secular*, included in this volume of *Dionysius*: 19-40.

Paul Tillich. This method limited theology's answers to the questions posed by contemporary culture, primarily manifest in philosophy. Robert's recollection aimed rather to escape the strictures on mind which the contemporary world imposed. Part of the discipline such freedom demanded was the refusal of tempting concoctions like existential Thomism. For Robert such notions offered an easy way of making a past philosophical position the solution to present metaphysical problems by understanding the past in terms of the present and forgetting the actual structures and sources of both. In consequence, there is no single philosophical colouring to his intellectual work, but there are a method, an overall programme, and a centre.

In my paper on his writing for the Atlantic Theological Conference, I identified the method as recollection in the Platonic tradition, which, by divine leading, moves from sense to intellect, truth, being, and God, as the first principle of thought and being. I located its first instance in *The Way of Being of Parmenides*. The programme is to reconstruct the unity of Hellenism and Christianity. The normative centre is Augustine. Astonishingly for lesser scholars like myself, the beauty and clarity of his sparse word perfect style, the authoritative certainty of his judgments, often the more acerbic because understated, and the programme are evident from the beginning.

II. GREEK BLENDED WITH HEBREW

While still a student, Robert started publishing with a review of the translation of a philosophical work, Jacques Maritain's *Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism* for *The Canadian Forum*, a journal of the left.⁹ The review began by quoting Maritain's reasons for permitting the publication of a work by then more than 40 years old. As well as a description of philosophical movements at the beginning of the 20th century, Maritain regarded it as "probably a fair-to-middling account of basic Thomistic philosophy." Robert commented sharply and immediately that "those who are looking for an account of basic Thomistic philosophy would be well-advised to look elsewhere", but allowed that the book was "interesting and useful" for the history of ideas. He went on to show both a very remarkable knowledge of the history of philosophy in the 19th and 20th centuries and a suspicion of judging philosophical questions on religious grounds. The wrong relation of these necessarily connected sides of knowledge, to whose proper inner penetration he would devote his life, was also part of the problem with Gilson.¹⁰

In this review, we see one of the essentials of Robert Crouse's programme of work; representing the unity of Hellenism and Christianity requires a critical knowledge of the whole history of philosophy. So, for example, in this review he considers the adequacy of the positions both of Bergson and of Maritain in relation

⁹ *The Canadian Forum* (1955): 208–9; the 1955 English translation was of the 2nd edition (1929) of *La philosophie bergsonienne: études critiques*, first published in 1913.

¹⁰ In his review of Gilson's *The Christian Philosophy* he notes the special meaning of "Christian philosophy" for Gilson.

to phenomenology, just as he will begin a discussion of Descartes published in 2007 by quoting Husserl.¹¹ Again, at the 1967 Toronto Congress on the “Theology of Renewal”, he inquired as to whether, in the present philosophical circumstances, Aquinas might have preferred Wittgenstein to Aristotle and what such a possible philosophical shift would mean for the authority of the Patristic formulae of Christianity.¹²

Equally, for Robert, exactly understanding and entering each distinct position and text in the history also required all the linguistic, historical and literary disciplines of Classical philology, including the principal languages of modern scholarship. His teachers, James Doull, Harry Wolfson, George H. Williams, and Eugene Fairweather, shared with him both the view that these were the necessities of theology and the actual acquisition of these requisites. Contemporary theologians who could equal them are few and far between.

Robert’s excerpt from the *Disputed Questions on Faith* by a 13th-century Master General of the Franciscans, Matthew of Aquasparta, for Fairweather’s *Scholastic Miscellany*, published the year after the Maritain review, brings us directly to the abiding question of Robert’s work, as well as to the Augustinian tradition on which he focused. He translated and annotated the question as to whether objects of faith can also be proved by reason. In a note he explains the complementarity of nature and grace in a way which he ascribes to both Matthew and Aquinas, despite important differences of mode. The principles of this complementarity will be Robert’s own throughout his teaching and will be discovered and made normative by him in every sphere from philosophy and theology to politics and art:

Man’s intellectual operations, as image (*imago*) [of God], are dependent upon divine illumination, but such operations must not be described as supernatural or miraculous...They are natural in the sense that the very nature (*ratio*) of the image requires that it receive divine illumination to perform its *proper* function: this is in accord with the nature of the creature. (Cf. the position of Aquinas: “Because man’s nature is dependent upon a higher nature, natural knowledge is not sufficient for its perfection, and some supernatural knowledge is necessary”.)¹³

I cannot move forward from the first decade of Robert’s work without a word about the article which came out of his Master of Theology thesis written under Fairweather at Trinity: “The Augustinian Background of St. Anselm’s

¹¹ Robert D. Crouse, “St Augustine and Descartes as Fathers of Modernity,” in Robertson, N., McQuat, G., Vinci, T., *Descartes and the Modern* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Scholars Publishing, 2007).

¹² See *Congrès sur la théologie du renouveau de l’Église – Congress on the Theology of Renewal of the Church, August 20 to 25, 1967. Discussions* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968), 27.

¹³ Robert D. Crouse, “Matthew of Aquasparta, *Disputed Questions on Faith*,” in Fairweather, *A Scholastic Miscellany*, 402–427 at note 106, p. 426.

Concept of *Justitia*.” In it, he defines St. Anselm’s concept of *Justitia* as “universal rectitude of order”¹⁴ and traces it back to not only to Augustine but also to the pagan Greeks and to the Hebrews, as well as to their ancient concordance. I cannot give his whole argument here, but a suggestion of its character will appear from its first words: “The Greek idea of justice (*dikē*) was initially a religious idea.”¹⁵

After outlining the form it takes in the Hellenic poets and philosophers, Robert goes on to assert that “For the Hebrews, the concept of the justice of God was central”, but this does not set the Scriptures in opposition to the Greek and Roman poets and philosophers, just the contrary. Crucially for him, when the “seventy-two elders” (to whom tradition attributes the Septuagint) translated the Hebrew term for justice, “they chose the Greek term *dikē* and its derivatives.”¹⁶ In consequence:

For all those who read these writings in Greek, the ideas associated with the Greek term would inevitably be blended with the Hebrew concept. Philo Judaeus, writing some centuries later from the same Alexandrian background, shows how effectively these ideas could be blended by a philosophically minded Jew. St. Paul, who was familiar with both the Hebrew and the Greek of the Scriptures, chose the same Greek word (*dikaisunē*) to express the justice of God, a central idea in his theology, both as an attribute of God, and as a quality in man caused by God.¹⁷

For Robert, the Church Fathers, building on the methods and doctrines of Philo, simply continued the blending of Hellenic and Hebrew which they found in Scripture and “accepted the full implications of both Biblical and philosophical usage.”¹⁸ One of these was that justice, as both justification and sanctification—to use the technical language of Christian theology—, was, for them and for Robert, simultaneously an attribute of God imputed to the just and also really possessed by them. He never varied either from this teaching or from its being an implication of the unity of revealed theology with philosophy.¹⁹

Robert’s publishing in the 1960s began with an essay on the hellenization of Christianity, that is on the criticism of Christianity as fatally infected by pagan Hellenism—the criticism is implied in the characterisation. In it he identified the origins and modern history of how the elements, which he, part of the Jewish and

¹⁴ Robert D. Crouse, “The Augustinian Background of St. Anselm’s Concept of *Justitia*,” *Canadian Journal of Theology* 4 (1958): 111–119 at 114.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 115.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ See my “*Visio*”: 19–40; see, for example, Robert D. Crouse, “Justification and Sanctification in the Thought of St Paul and St Augustine,” *Justification and Sanctification*, Papers delivered at the Twenty-Seventh Annual Atlantic Theological Conference, May 29th to June 1st, 2007, Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, New Brunswick, edited Susan Harris (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 2008), 1–10 at 9.

Christian Scriptures, the Christian Fathers, and the mediaeval doctors, had blended together, came to be set against each other. This opposition ultimately put Christianity at war with its own doctrinal, sacramental and institutional traditions and structures. He determined that “the possibility of systematic and critical discussion of this problem, and the use of the concept of hellenization as a fundamental theme in the explication of the history of dogma, depended on the circumstances of the Reformation.”²⁰ Prior to it such an

extensive criticism of theological tradition as the concept of hellenization implied seemed impossible....As in the case of biblical criticism, so too in the case of the history of dogma, the sacred character of Christian doctrine, hallowed by centuries of tradition, made such an enterprise seem impious.²¹

After tracing the impious enterprise from the 16th century through to Harnack and the 1950s, Robert concluded with words defending the unification he had discerned as requisite to Anselm’s Augustinian concept of *Justitia*. The statement also gives the most general principles of his scholarly programme and the structure he will discern in the divine forms, reasons, or words he would continue to study, as well as the texts he would explicate:

While schematizations of contrasts between Hebrew and Greek modes of thought and expression are useful, it is dangerous...to regard them as in any sense absolute....To say that Greek thought about God is static, for instance, is untrue; for the Greeks, God is full of active power. And it is similarly wrong to suppose that the Hebrews have no concept of the being of God. The real distinctions here, as elsewhere, are rather a matter of emphasis on different aspects of the same concept. Thus...Hebrew and Greek ways of thinking should be regarded as complementary rather than opposed. It is perhaps along such lines as these that there is now promise of some solution.... Perhaps it is no longer necessary to think of hellenization in terms of deterioration....[T]he hellenization of Christianity is implicit in the historicity of Christianity itself—in the enfleshment of revelation...²²

III. METAPHYSICS AND SACRA DOCTRINA: THE DOUBLE FORM OF THEOLOGY

After the essay on Hellenization, Robert began working out the unity of the complementary Hebrew and Greek ways in terms of the relation of the arts, which, as conceived by the ancients and mediaevals, included the various philosophical sciences, to theology, both as Sacred Scripture and as First Philosophy, in Honorius Augustodunensis. To him Robert devoted his Harvard doctoral

²⁰ Robert D. Crouse, “The Hellenization of Christianity: A Historiographical Study,” *Canadian Journal of Theology* 8 (1962): 22–33 at 22.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*: 33.

dissertation, and, until his death, he worked on a monograph on the *De Neocosmo* of Honorius. In a series of publications, he worked out this unity in the master of Honorius, Eriugena, and in Thomas Aquinas, in his teacher Albert the Great, and in their common master, Aristotle. In his first published essay on Honorius, “the Arts as *via ad patriam*”, “the path to our homeland”, Robert found the interdependent complementarity of philosophy and revealed theology which he sought to defend against post Reformation attacks:

Thus, in the view of Honorius, that tenfold philosophy which is comprehended in the programme of the arts is not only preparatory to the wisdom of the Scriptures, but is also, as a consideration of the species of the visible creation, one of two complementary aspects of that fulness of wisdom which is divine contemplation. As for Eriugena, so for Honorius, the authority of the Sacred Books and the reason of philosophy stand in no ultimate opposition, having a common source in the Divine *Logos*, who enlightens every man; they have also a common end and common good in the intellectual vision of God.²³

Importantly for aspects of his further work, Robert identified the source of this system with its very positive evaluation of the human philosophical quest, not in Augustine, but rather in the humanism of Eriugena and the Greek Fathers.²⁴ Evan King’s contribution to this volume will raise some questions about Robert’s views on what he calls “the subjective turn” in Meister Eckhart. Eckhart’s Augustinianism passes through Eriugena and Honorius, who contribute to giving it a Procline ground.

In his communication on Honorius to the Congrès international de philosophie médiévale published in 1969, Robert traced the diverse relations of theology to philosophy back to Aristotle, maintaining that, for him as well as for his Jewish and Christian disciples, the particular philosophical sciences are both subordinate to theology and also enter into it. He devotes two subsequent articles to this. They reflect work he had been doing in the seminar on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* he taught over several years with James Doull in which I was a student. Although they are small in length, they are essential to his theology as well as to his view of the history of philosophy. They are important for his subsequent work on Aristotle and Boethius, about which Eli Diamond and Michael Fournier write in this volume, and are at the heart of his judgments about the problems of Christian theology after the 13th century and to his devastating criticism of the Tractarians and Anglo-Catholicism in the 19th and 20th centuries.²⁵

²³ Robert D. Crouse, “Honorius Augustodunensis: The Arts as *via ad patriam*,” in Congrès international de philosophie médiévale, *Arts Libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge* (Montréal: Institut d’études médiévale/ Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1969), 531–539 at 538.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 534 and note 37, p. 538.

²⁵ Robert D. Crouse, “Deepened by the Study of the Fathers’: The Oxford Movement, Dr. Pusey and Patristic Scholarship,” *Dionysius* 7 (1983): 137–147; idem, “Devout Perusal: The Tractarian Revival of

In the Tractarian endeavour to revive Patristic theology and spirituality without the Hellenic metaphysics on which it depended, Robert located the roots of the intellectual problems which manifested themselves at the origins of the movement, and, by the second half of the 20th, had turned Anglo-Catholicism into a destructive force for Christian orthodoxy. He acknowledged that Eugene Fairweather, in succession to Eric Mascall, and using the same Gilsonian Thomist metaphysics of existential *esse*, had at least recognised the problem and tried to deal with its profound anti-intellectualism, but not successfully.²⁶

Robert showed how the particular philosophical sciences or arts are both propaedeutic to Wisdom (or First Philosophy, or theology, or the science of being as being, to give Aristotle's names for it) and are also part of the end they serve. He ultimately located this duality in an *aporia* in Book Lambda of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: the Divine self-thinking is present to the cosmos both as its leader and as the order of its parts.²⁷ Crucially, as Robert showed in Aristotle's followers like Aquinas and Albert, this mutual implication of opposed sides was carried forward not only to work out the relation of philosophy to its highest form, theology, but also to work out the relation between metaphysics and Sacred Scripture. In consequence, the question forming this *aporia* is crucial to considering the extent to which the natural (or physical) and supernatural (or metaphysical) difference is present in pagan philosophy outside its blending with Jewish and Christian revelation. Robert teaches that the nature – grace difference and interconnection falls within ancient pagan philosophy; for it the human rise to God depends on what is beyond human capacity.²⁸ The questions are about the extent of the overlap with Jewish and Christian understanding of the same matters. Robert's interpretations of the relation of Platonism and Scripture in Augustine, of Lady Philosophy in the *Consolatio* of Boethius, and of divine human friendship in Aristotle are parts of this discussion which did not cease within his own writings. Indeed, the Aristotelian *aporia* out of which it arises will not be dissolved by us. Let me summarize the results of his research on the formula "*philosophia ancilla theologiae*" in Aquinas, Albert and Aristotle.

Robert begins by noting something he learned from one of his two great teachers at Harvard, Harry Wolfson: the *locus classicus* of philosophy as handmaid of theology is in Philo, who used it to relate the arts and sciences to philosophy and philosophy to "the wisdom of biblical revelation."²⁹ Although this use was

Patristic Studies," E.A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica*, XVIII (Kalamazoo / Louvain: Cistercian / Peeters, 1990), 328–334.

²⁶ See my "Making Theology Practical: Thomas Aquinas and the Nineteenth Century Religious Revival," *Dionysius* 9 (1985): 85–127 and idem, "From Metaphysics to History."

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 537; the reference is to *Metaphysics* XII. 10.

²⁸ See my "Natural Theology in the Patristic Period," Chapter Three of the *Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, edited by Russell Re Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), in press.

²⁹ Robert D. Crouse, 'St. Thomas, St. Albert, Aristotle: *Philosophia Ancilla Theologiae*', *Atti del Congresso Internazionale Tommaso nel suo settimo centenario*, i (Naples: Edizioni Domenicane Italiane, 1975), 181–185 at 181.

taken over by the Christian schools in Alexandria, becoming a Patristic commonplace, Thomas and Albert get it directly and explicitly from the source. Aristotle's use of it thus remains important:

[H]e observes that the science of the end, or of the good must be principal, and that the other sciences, as “handmaids” (δούλας) may not contradict it but must serve and obey. This highest science, or wisdom, is theology—the divine science, θεία τῶν ἐπιστημῶν, which appropriately belongs to God alone, or at least to God principally.³⁰

Robert found “important to emphasize”, not only for the sake of getting the history right, but because it expressed his own conviction, that:

[F]or St. Thomas and St. Albert...the primary reference of the concept...[is]the relationship which obtains between the particular philosophical sciences and theology, whether theology takes the form of metaphysics, or the form which it has in sacred doctrine, deriving its principles from revelation. *Theologia* for these doctors, though double in form, is radically one; for it is in the first place that wisdom according to which God knows himself, and in that self-knowing knows all things. But, since, as Aristotle remarks, “the divine power cannot be jealous”, we are given to share in that divine science, not indeed as our possession, but *sicut aliquid ab eo mutuatum*.³¹

Robert signalled that the issue had become acute in the 13th century, primarily and immediately because the Christian doctors recognised “a genuine and coherent expression of divine science in the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle.”³²

In the other article devoted to this formula, Robert reminds us of an aspect of the common Hellenic heritage of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam which is of crucial importance for us today.

In the meeting, conflict, and mutual enrichment of cultures which characterized much of the history of Medieval thought and institutions, perhaps no question was more important for philosophy than that of defining its own role, that of scientific reason, in relation to traditions of divinely revealed, prophetic, knowledge. Inevitable difficulty lay in the fact that philosophy, in its Aristotelian form, presented itself as “divine science”, and could hardly confine itself to the limited scope of refining exegetical techniques in the interpretation of sacred scriptures. At its highest, metaphysical, level, it constituted a theology, rationally demonstrated,

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 182.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 183.

³² *Ibid.*

which might be compared with the sacred doctrine authoritatively delivered in the scriptures of the several religions. The relationship between these theologies, variously worked out by philosophers in each of the religious traditions, often in significant cultural interdependence, was, and continues to be, of the utmost importance for the religious and intellectual life of those communities.³³

IV. *RECURRENS IN TE UNUM*: AUGUSTINIAN PLATONISM

Augustine occupies the normative centre of Robert's thought and work. In his trinitarian theology, he finds the best answer to the problem of the One and the Many and the true structure of both the divine and the human minds. In Augustine's doctrine of the God-man, he finds the mediation of the inner and the outer, both for the cosmos and the human. In Augustine's Christian Platonism, he finds the right unity and difference between philosophy and revelation which later oppositions presuppose—even if, in his view, Augustine's treatment of Platonism is sometimes polemical.

With "*Recurrens in te unum: The Pattern of St. Augustine's Confessions*", published in 1976, we come to the first of a series of articles which are indispensable studies of Augustine's *Confessions* and *De Trinitate* and of Augustine's Platonism.³⁴ That the phrase from the *Confessions*³⁵ which forms the title of this article is deeply Plotinian—both in virtue of naming the First Principle as One and in virtue of regarding all else as emanations from it which come to the perfection of their being by returning to that Primal Unity—and that Robert says

³³Robert D. Crouse, "*Philosophia Ancilla Theologiae: Some texts from Aristotle's Metaphysica in the Interpretation of Albertus Magnus*," *Actas del V Congreso Internacional de Filosofía Medieval*, 2 vols (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1979) i, 657–661 at 657.

³⁴R.D. Crouse, "*Recurrens in te unum: The Pattern of St. Augustine's Confessions*," *Studia Patristica*, XIV, ed. E.A. Livingstone (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976), 389–392; idem, "*In multa defluximus: Confessions X*, 29–43, and St. Augustine's Theory of Personality", in H. Blumenthal and R. Markus, eds., *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in Honour of A.H. Armstrong* (London: Variorum, 1980), 180–85; idem, "*Semina Rationum: St. Augustine and Boethius*," *Dionysius* 4 (1980): 75–85; idem, "*St. Augustine's De Trinitate: Philosophical Method*", *Studia Patristica*, XVI,2 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag: 1985), 501–510; idem, "*In Aenigmate Trinitatis' (Confessions, XII,5,6): The Conversion of Philosophy in St. Augustine's Confessions*," *Dionysius* 11 (1987): 53–62; idem, "*Augustinian Platonism in Early Medieval Theology*," *Augustine, from Rhetor to Theologian*, J. McWilliams, ed. (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1992), 109–20; idem, review of John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (1994), in *Studies in Religion*, 25/2 (1996): 236–37 is critical; idem, "*Paucis mutatis verbis: St. Augustine's Platonism*," *Augustine and his critics*, ed. R.J. Dodaro and G.P. Lawless (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 37–50; "Knowledge," for *Saint Augustine through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 486–488; idem, "Augustine," in C. Murray, ed., *Key Writers in Art: Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 18–22.

³⁵*Confessiones*, 12.28.38.

nothing about this, is significant.³⁶ For him Augustine's relation to Platonism is beyond the notions of influence, borrowings, or use. He is not a Christian who employs Platonist tools, but rather, with Patristic theologians generally, he is part of the Platonic tradition who contributes to its development. Just as Christianity is inescapably Hellenic, Augustine's Christianity is Platonic and his Platonism Christian. No scholar asserted Augustine's Platonism more strongly, nor worked out its character more carefully.

His late article (published in 2000), which addressed this question most thoroughly, is entitled *Paucis mutatis verbis*, quoting Augustine's assertion in *De Vera Religione*³⁷ that only a few words and opinions separate Platonists and Christians. In it Robert returns to, and reiterates, his positions on Hellenization with which his published teaching began, and which provide a general programme for his work. Reading his writings from beginning to end as I have done in preparation for this paper, I am astonished by the immutability of most of his judgments and of his overall intellectual undertaking. There are, of course, many additions to his knowledge of primary texts and secondary literature—for example a great increase in his use of Italian scholarship after he began working in Rome—and a few additions to the *foci* of his work, especially his study of medieval art and architecture and of Dante. But rethinking the union of Hellenism and Christianity under the form of the mutual implication of metaphysics and sacred doctrine is the abiding purpose. What this required he seemed to know from the first.

Embracing the language of others, Robert understands the *Confessions* as an *itinerarium mentis in Deum*, a *peregrinatio animae*, or an “Odyssey of the Soul”, a journey he will treat repeatedly and constantly throughout his teaching in many forms: pagan, Jewish, and Christian, poetic, Scriptural, philosophical, and theological. Crucially, here, at the beginning of his essays on Augustine, Robert says he will not “attempt to distinguish his position from those of his many predecessors, both pagan and Christian...”³⁸ The pattern here, and, in his judgment, always for Augustine, and, as Robert will tell us elsewhere, also for Plato and for the Platonic tradition, is: 1) “a movement away from the multiplicity and temporality of worldly experience”, 2) “a turning inward” because the meaning of experience makes sense only as it is “judged and unified by the conscious self, in terms of principles of truth present to the soul, yet beyond its own mutability”, 3) the discovery of “the presence of eternal truth, transcending and illuminating as the necessary condition of understanding”, 4) “seeing directly [and thus union with] that eternal truth.”³⁹ The pattern is “succinctly stated” by Augustine as “ab exterioribus ad interiora, ab inferioribus ad superiora.”⁴⁰

³⁶ See my *Augustine and Philosophy*, ed. Phillip Cary, John Doody, and Kim Paffernroth, Augustine in Conversation: Tradition and Innovation, (Lanham/ Boulder/ New York/ Toronto/ Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books / Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 127–144.

³⁷ *De Vera Religione*, 4.7.

³⁸ Crouse, “*Recurrens*,” 390.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* quoting Augustine, *Enarr. In Ps.*, XCLV, 5.

Shortly thereafter, in an essay with another Plotinian formula also quoted from the *Confessions* as a title, “*In multa defluximus*”, Robert treats Augustine's theory of personality and does take up the question of sources and originality, with results some might find surprising. He joins A.H. Armstrong, the distinguished scholar of Neoplatonism and colleague in the Classics Department, who was being honoured by the volume in which the essay appears, in two attacks. One is on the notion that, in virtue of Christian revelation, Augustine made the philosophical discovery of the person and became the first modern man.⁴¹ The second attack is on the idea that God is a person. As to the second, Robert writes, that, for Augustine:

as for orthodox Christian thinkers generally, God is certainly not a “person”,...to say that God is “personal” in St. Augustine’s doctrine must rather mean that God is the substantial unity of three Persons (relations) in one divine activity.⁴²

In respect to the first, he is equally unambiguous. He writes that “Augustine is not the author of ‘the philosophical discovery of the person’; that discovery had its origins at least as far back as Plato’s concern with the problems of knowledge and love in the life of the soul.” He quotes with approval Hilary Armstrong’s judgment that “Socrates was perhaps the first man in Europe who had a clear and coherent conception of the soul as we understand it...”⁴³ However, there is something original with Augustine, and for Robert there is nothing of equal importance in any other theologian. It is:

the tri-personal unity of God, developed in Biblical interpretation...and in the developing tradition of Neoplatonism, which is the basis of his view of the *imago Dei* as the dynamic unity of *memoria*, *intellectus*, and *amor*.... [I]n the unity of the “personal” powers of memory, understanding and will, on the analogy of the tri-personal unity of God,... he finds the true life of the human individual...*Memoria*, the begetter of truth, finds its life only in relation to that truth as it is united with that truth in love. Only in the unity and equality of these powers does the soul possess its true life; and only in turning to God, above the mind, can it attain that unity and equality of powers.⁴⁴

This an almost complete statement of Robert’s abiding norm. Something more will be said about mediation and a great deal more about the relation of these doctrines to philosophical reasoning and to Platonism. Much of the latter

⁴¹ Crouse, “*In multa*,” 180,

⁴² *Ibid.*, 181–182.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 184 and note 11 quoting Armstrong’s *Introduction to Ancient Philosophy*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 182–183.

comes out in an article published in *Dionysius* in the same year (1980) in which the essay on personality appeared. But, before going on to it, I must note that, because of this norm, a weakness of Robert's thought will more and more appear. He finds it hard to understand why Platonism developed beyond Augustine, and to fully appreciate the Greek Patristic tradition which has so many affinities to Neoplatonism in the tradition of Iamblichus and Proclus. He struggles to give enough weight to that post Plotinian Neoplatonism *vis-à-vis* Augustine in Boethius, Eriugena, and their followers. His focus diminishes the importance of what entered Latin philosophy and theology through the translations of the Arabic, Peripatetic and Neoplatonic philosophers from the 12th century on, and has difficulty discerning a proper Christian development in the moves beyond the Augustinian norm in Aquinas and in the late mediaeval and Renaissance philosophy and theology of figures like Meister Eckhart, Ficino, and Cusanus.

"*Semina Rationum: St Augustine and Boethius*" is essential to understanding Robert on Augustine and Platonism, on their relation, on the nature of philosophical reason, and on its relation to sacred doctrine. It is a comparison of Augustine and Boethius. Robert contrasts them insofar as Boethius, and Christians of the 6th century and after (including Robert himself), have given up Augustine's polemical relation to Platonism. It also draws Boethius towards Augustine, insofar as he raises fruit from seeds of reason planted by the great Bishop of Hippo:

Gone are St. Augustine's misgivings about the Platonists: Boethius is ready to find a consensus of learned men, and to find it by way of the interpretation of Plato and Aristotle, the paragons of philosophical wisdom, the voice of universal reason.⁴⁵

This "ecumenical" Platonic theology, is, according to Robert, "very different, certainly, from the complexity of Proclus."⁴⁶ It was, instead, "closer, perhaps,...to the thinking of Ammonius and the School of Alexandria, where a simpler Platonism seems to have prevailed, and where Christians and pagans found themselves mainly in agreement."⁴⁷ From Robert's perspective, this "simpler" would keep Boethius from distancing himself too greatly from Augustine. Crucially, neither for Boethius, nor for Augustine, is there a "scholastic distinction between philosophy and theology, one the work of natural reason, the other the exegesis of divine *auctoritates*."⁴⁸ In the *Consolatio* of Boethius,

Lady Philosophy certainly includes theology: she lifts her head to pierce the very heavens, she has descended from above to aid her patient in exile, and

⁴⁵ Crouse, "*Semina*": 76-77.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: 80.

her object is to bring him to see his predicament from the standpoint of divine *intelligentia*.⁴⁹

Most importantly, both the *Consolation of Philosophy*, giving the Platonism common to Christians and pagans, and the *Theological Tractates*, concerning the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, proceed from faith:

Just as the argument of the *Consolatio* begins from true opinion (*vera sententia*) and proceeds from that *minima scintillula* to understanding, so the arguments of the *Tractates* move from the correct (i.e. “universal”) beliefs to logical explication.⁵⁰

Thus, in his *fides quaerens intellectum*, as in that of Eriugena and the other early scholastics, “faith is the preliminary form of a knowledge which the philosopher attempts to establish by necessary reasons.”⁵¹ The method of Boethius is “the logical explication of received (i.e. universal”) beliefs, and the explication is itself the demonstration, conjoining faith and reason.”⁵² In his last academic writings Robert will continue to argue that this conjuncture of faith and reason is not only genuine philosophy, but is necessary to philosophy. He will maintain this in opposition to James Doull, his teacher and colleague.

Platonism, as “the voice of universal reason”, which conjoins these, by its nature has the great Christian questions as its own. So, for example, Boethius:

can speak as simply as he does of the *summum bonum*, in the third book of the *Consolation*, only because he understands its unity in the form of trinitarian doctrine. The argument there is certainly Platonic, but that is not to say that the doctrine of the Trinity is alien to the consideration; rather that doctrine is for him the logically necessary explication of the unity of the hypostases.⁵³

Robert makes the same point in respect to considerations of mediation, participation, divinisation, creation and Incarnation. The unity of Platonism and Christianity in Boethius is, for Robert, the seeds of reasons sown by Augustine “come to fruition in a very different clime.”⁵⁴

Five years later, Robert took up again the questions of the philosophical consideration of the Trinity and of faith and reason in Augustine and Platonism in a paper for the International Patristics Conference on the philosophical method of Augustine’s *De Trinitate*. In it he begins by observing that many modern

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 81.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: 84.

interpreters would reject the possibility of such a consideration of a Patristic text. He counters this with same rejections of all the scholastic and modern distinctions and oppositions he made persistently from his first publications and which will continue into his last. Instead he recalls, and proposes to argue:

that in the ancient world theology was not a peculiarly Christian enterprise..., that all philosophy was in the end theology, inasmuch as it sought an understanding of that first principle of thought and being which might be referred to variously as the Good, or the One, or *ho theos*; and the other philosophical sciences were as handmaids to the highest science, or wisdom, in which they would seek their unity, coherence and certainty. Its itinerary was the movement from belief, through the discursive reason of *scientia*, to the unified intellectual grasp of principle in *sapientia*.⁵⁵

Robert went on to assert that all this was known to Augustine and explains why he compared the prologue of John's Gospel to the *libri platonici*. This witnessed to Augustine's discernment: "that the problem of unity and distinction in the Divine Principle was the fundamental problem of speculative theology, for pagans as for Christians."⁵⁶ However, Augustine was also convinced that philosophy needed a "thorough-going reform".

While philosophy has indeed possessed some intimation of the goal or *patria*, towards which it must ascend, its clear perception of that goal, and its safe *via* through trackless wastes can be afforded only by the Incarnate Word.⁵⁷

The new method of philosophy was a matter of a dialogue between "the illumining Word of God", spoken "*foris* in the speech, deeds and example of the Incarnate Lord, proclaimed in the Scriptures and the preaching of the Church, and the word of God *intus*, as the abiding *Principium* of human reflection."⁵⁸ It is surely intentional that the first "word" begins with a capital and the second in lower case.

When concluding the paper, Robert relates these to faith and understanding, making clear that, as he had indicated previously, they belong within the structure of all complete reasoning:

It is axiomatic that one cannot demonstrate a first principle by reference to anything prior to it; one can demonstrate it only by showing that it is necessarily presupposed by everything subsequent to it. St. Augustine's claim is that the self-conscious life of the mind presupposed as its centre

⁵⁵ Crouse, "St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*," 503.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 504.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 505.

and ground the illumination of a principle of absolute self-consciousness, in which *memoria*, *intellectus* and *voluntas* are perfectly united without confusion. The concept of that Trinitarian principle, declared *foris* in the revealed word, is authenticated *intus* as the mind on its inward journey discovers itself as image, presupposing that principle. And the conclusion is indubitable in the sense that a denial of the Principle would imply a denial of the actuality of the self as self-conscious *imago*. Thus, the concept of the Trinity grasped by faith is the starting-point and guide to an understanding of self-consciousness, while the understanding of self is, in turn, the continuing and ever more complete demonstration of that starting-point.⁵⁹

Two years later Robert pressed further the inner connection between Platonism and Christianity, and between the metaphysics and sacred doctrine, in a *Dionysius* article on the conversion of philosophy in Augustine's *Confessions*. He cannot abide connecting them externally:

Platonism belongs to Augustine's intellectual formation, not only at the time of his conversion, but throughout his life. In his conversion, his Platonism is not left behind, but is continually converted with him, in the ongoing conversion of his intellect and will....Augustine thinks Christianity Platonically, and Platonism in the light of Christian revelation; and in that thinking, Platonism is continuously developed and extended, and converted....⁶⁰

Such a view requires a conception of Platonism and of the history of philosophy as well as of Christian theology which surprises many. Robert explains why he refused to distinguish pagan and Christian when considering the structure of conversion in the *Confessions*:

Platonism, from Plato, and throughout its history, is never a "natural" philosophy, as distinguished from theology. It is always inevitably and emphatically theological, as it ascends the line from belief to understanding, as it interprets allegorically the oracles and dreams and visions of divinely possessed prophets, poets and philosophers: ever seeking understanding in the light of eternal reasons, ever aspiring towards a unitive knowledge of the supreme transcendent Good; ever seeking *homoiosis theou*—divine likeness. And Platonism is never without the thought of divine revelation, as opening a door to the understanding. That becomes most obvious, of course, in the later history of pagan Platonism...⁶¹

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 510.

⁶⁰ Crouse, "In Aenigmate": 54.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*: 56.

When Platonism is seen this way, “the long debates between pagan and Christian, and between orthodox and heretic within the Christian church, are all, in some measure, chapters in the history of Platonic thought.”⁶² Thus, for example, the Arian controversy is:

an issue concerning the subordination or equality of derivative divine hypostases. Pagan and Christian, orthodox and heretic, find different answers to that question; but the question itself is at the heart of Platonic philosophical theology, and the different answers will prescribe different directions in the development of that philosophy...In that symbiosis, Christian Platonism, as a distinctive form of philosophical theology, is forged: and the philosophy of Augustine is one form, or phase, of the development....It is, in fact, a revision, or conversion, of Platonic thought at its most central point—a conversion of incalculable importance in its implications for the later history of philosophy.⁶³

In the last part of this paper we shall look at a portion of Robert’s writing on those implications. Dr Robertson discusses these in his response to my paper published in this volume.

The implications come out earlier in Robert’s treatment of ancient Platonism, and we turn now to this as treated in a chapter, “Augustinian Platonism in Early Medieval Theology,” published in 1992. He gives an example of a difference between Plotinian and Augustinian Platonism:

For pagan Platonism, as Augustine clearly recognises, creation is creation in the Word. But while for them the Word (or “Nous”) must be somehow a subordinate, derivative principle of distinction, outside the absolute unity of the purely actual transcendent One (in a manner analogous to that of some forms of Arian Christology), for Augustine the Word is absolutely God.⁶⁴

His reduction here of “pagan Platonism” here to a feature of the Plotinian system is somewhat corrected by two subsequent moves in his argument. First, he finds what Eriugena derived from the Greek Fathers, and from the post-Plotinian and post-Augustinian Neoplatonism they developed and communicated, anticipated in passages of Augustine where he:

celebrates the unmitigated goodness, harmony, and beauty of the *universitas rerum*, the *res publica* of God. The cosmos becomes, on every

⁶² *Ibid.*: 57.

⁶³ *Ibid.*: 57 and 60.

⁶⁴ Crouse, “Augustinian Platonism,” 112.

level, the translucent mirror of divine goodness; it becomes, if one can be forgiven a somewhat anachronistic term, “theophanic”...⁶⁵

Second, and consistently with this anticipation of Dionysius, he finds Augustine, not opposed to but on the way to Proclus. For him Augustine assesses:

the intention, the essential tendency, the internal logic of its [Platonism’s] own development. That he was right in that assessment of its tendency is surely to some extent borne out in the developments of post-Plotinian Neoplatonism which in some ways parallel quite strikingly the thought of Augustine: for instance, in the development...of the doctrine of God as Being and cause of being, especially in the anonymous commentary on the *Parmenides*,... and in the treatment of the problem of evil, and the re-evaluation of matter as divinely created, in Proclus...⁶⁶

Of course, this might be put more strongly, so that Augustine is a halting, rather than a prescient, Proclus. Thus, the Divine Successor of Plato would clear up problems left in Augustine because of his too close following of Plotinus. Eriugena, recognising this need and possibility communicated through Dionysius and the Greek Fathers, would correct Augustine. This reading of the history of Platonism, pagan and Christian, would, however, push what Robert must concede in principle further than he actually went. Before passing to considering Robert’s treatment of the Greek Fathers, Eriugena, and his follower and crafty propagandist, Honorius Augustodunensis, we must terminate our consideration of the normative centre of Robert’s philosophical theology with his last essay on Augustine’s Platonism: “*Paucis Mutatis Verbis*,” “By changing a few words”.

Early in that chapter published in 2000, honouring a scholar of Augustine, Robert returned to what I designated his programmatic essay published almost 40 years earlier:

[the] assumption about Christianity and philosophy as alternatives is simply one aspect of a much more pervasive presupposition that has governed the history of Christian doctrine (both Catholic and Protestant) for several centuries: the thesis that Christianity has been distorted, or, at least, radically modified by various compromises with Hellenistic culture.⁶⁷

Once again, in this essay Robert sets about countering that assumption by masterfully marshalling his arguments, and sometimes expanding them in light of recent scholarship. An instance of the latter comes in respect to the general

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Crouse, “*Paucis*,” 38.

difference, if there is one, between pagan and Christian Platonism. Robert finds more support for a position he asserted earlier:

Giovanni Reale...observes that, while pagan Platonism after Plotinus moves in the direction of 'systematic complication', Christian Platonism moves in the opposite direction towards 'systematic simplification'. The systematic complication of Platonism was necessary precisely in relation to certain theological dilemmas about mediation. As John Dillon remarks, in regard to Iamblichus and the doctrine of the henads, 'All of his very complicated systematising of the Realm of the One...is prompted by the desire to bridge the great gap between a completely transcendent First Principle and everything subsequent to it.' [Robert remarks] However, by such a procedure the gap is never truly bridged, and the complication must be infinite. Theurgic mysteries must take over where theology fails: philosophy demands liturgical consummation.⁶⁸

Of course, Christians also assert the need for sacramental or theurgic mysteries because of the limits of theory for the human ascent to God. Perhaps the Greek Fathers are clearer about this than the Latins, but, as we have seen, Robert himself characterised Augustine's spiritual dialectic in terms of *foris* and *intus*. Further, whether this opposition between complication and simplification will carry the weight put on it here may depend upon which systems you examine and where in the system you turn your microscope. In any case, Robert goes on to characterise the Christian Platonic alternative in terms which reassert his Augustinian norm: "the formulation in which the antithesis between ontology and henology is transcended and God is understood as a unity of co-equal and co-eternal moments of being, knowing and willing, is an original and profoundly important revision of Platonic theology in Christian terms."⁶⁹ Whether those terms can survive the meeting with the Greek Fathers and Later Neoplatonism in Eriugena and post Anselmian Latin theology is a question which remains.

However, before turning to Robert's work on the Greek Christian side, I should close this section with the conclusion of *Paucis Mutatis Verbis*. There Robert quotes me on "recuperating" Dionysius and Aquinas "as moments in a continuous Neoplatonic tradition beginning with the pagans" and adds that "Augustine, also, must be understood within that 'continuous Neoplatonic tradition.'"⁷⁰ He then sets us a task: to work out the details of the profound

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 43. He quotes from my "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold and Postmodern Hot," *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, edited by Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones, *Studies in Christian Origins* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 139–184 at 139 and 173 and from my "Dionysian Hierarchy in St. Thomas Aquinas: Tradition and Transformation," in *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident, Actes du Colloque International Paris, 21-24*

Christian conversion of Platonic theology, “and thus to define precisely the character of that post-Nicene, post-Plotinian Augustinian Platonism and its historical significance.”⁷¹ That his particular contribution cannot be taken as the final word would not have surprised or disappointed him.

V. GREEK PATRISTIC AND PROCLEAN PLATONISMS AND THEIR MEETING WITH AUGUSTINE
Our necessary journey through Robert’s intellectual centre has been sufficiently detailed that I cannot lead you step by step through the long list of his remaining academic publications. So, for example, I shall say almost nothing about his work on Dante, except insofar as is required for my last topic, which Dr Neil Robertson also addresses, i.e. Robert’s treatment of modernity and especially of Augustine’s role in founding it. However, before coming to that, I must deal with another aspect of Robert’s work without which, as is now clear, we cannot understand his construction of the history of Platonism and Christian theology. I must sketch Robert’s work on Greek Patristic Platonism and later Neoplatonism, especially that of Proclus, and how they meet Augustine in the work of Boethius, of Eriugena, and of Honorius Augustodunensis.⁷²

septembre 1994, édités Ysabel de Andia, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 151 (Paris: Institut d’Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 405–438 at 436.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Robert D. Crouse, “Honorius Augustodunensis: Disciple of Anselm?” in H. Kohlenberger, ed., *Die Wirkungsgeschichte Anselms von Canterbury*, Bad Wimpfen, 1970 / *Analecta Anselmiana*, IV/I (Frankfurt/Main, 1975), 131–139; idem, “INTENTIO MOYSI: Bede, Augustine, Eriugena and Plato in the *Hexameron* of Honorius Augustodunensis,” *Dionysius* 2 (1978): 137–157; idem, “The Doctrine of Creation in Boethius: The *De Hebdomadibus* and the *Consolatio*,” in E. A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica*, XVII (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982), 417–421; idem, “Anselm of Canterbury and Medieval Augustinianisms,” *Toronto Journal of Theology*, 3 (1987): 60–68; idem, “A Twelfth Century Augustinian: Honorius Augustodunensis,” *Acti III, Congresso Internazionale su S. Agostino nel xvi Centenario delle Conversione, Roma, 15-20 settembre 1986*, *Studia Ephemerides ‘Augustinianum’* 26 (Augustinianum: Rome, 1987), 167–177; idem, “The Meaning of Creation in St. Augustine and Eriugena,” in E. A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica*, XXII (Kalamazoo / Louvain: Cistercian / Peeters, 1989), 229–234; idem, “*Hic Sensilis Mundus*: Calcidius and Eriugena in Honorius Augustodunensis,” in H.J. Westra, ed., *From Athens to Chartres. Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought. Studies in Honour of Édouard Jeuneau* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 283–288; idem, “Origen In The Philosophical Tradition of The Latin West: St. Augustine and John Scottus Eriugena,” in R. Daley, ed., *Origeniana Quinta: Papers of the 5th International Origen Congress, Boston College, 14-18 August 1989* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 565–569; idem, “What is Augustinian in Twelfth-Century Mysticism,” in F. van Fleteren, J. Schnaubelt, and J. Reino, eds, *Augustine, Mystic and Mystagogue* (New York: P. Lang, 1994), 401–414; idem, “*Primordiales Causae* in Eriugena’s Interpretation of Genesis: Sources and Significance,” in G. Van Riel, C. Steel, J. McEvoy, eds, *Iohannes Scottus Eriugena, The Bible and Hermeneutics* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 209–220; idem, *Summae auctoritatis magister: the influence of St. Ambrose in medieval theology*,” in Luigi F. Pizzolato and Marco Rizzi, eds, *Nec Timeo Mori. Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi ambrosiani nel XVI centenario della morte di sant’ Ambrogio* (Milan: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 1998), 463–471; idem, “Predestination, Human Freedom, and the Augustinian Theology of Hope in Eriugena’s *De Divina Praedestinatione*,” in James McEvoy and Michael Dunne, eds, *History and Eschatology in John Scottus Eriugena and his time. Proceedings of the Tenth International Conference of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies, Maynooth and*

Four matters continually occupied Robert. All of them belong to what I have identified as his programme and its suppositions. Overall he was determined to rethink the blending or unity of Hellenism and Judaism, of metaphysics and *sacra doctrina*, in Christianity. He began with two suppositions: Hellenic philosophy is fundamentally theology, and the connection of Hellenic philosophy and Judaism is so close that the Jewish Scripture includes Greek philosophy. Thus, he sets out to show how the questions and methods of philosophy in the Hellenic tradition and those of Christian theology are the same. From this arises a question: how are the histories of Hellenic Platonism, and of Christian Platonism, Greek and Latin, intermeshed? Another question arises from this one: what makes Christian Platonism distinctive? Finally, he was concerned about its norms.

In consequence, it was altogether appropriate that his last major published academic paper, an elegant piece of philology, “*HAEC IPSA VERBA DELECTANT: Boethius and the LIBER SAPIENTIAE*,” worked out, in painstaking detail, his early assertion that Jewish and Christian Holy Scripture contained Greek philosophy.⁷³ Here he showed this in respect to the prisoner and Lady Philosophy in the *Consolation* of Boethius. Robert demonstrated that descriptions of both could be found in the Latin Bible, sometimes with verbal identities, primarily in the Book of Wisdom, and in Job and the Psalms. These texts would have been intimately known by Boethius and the theologically literate among his Christian readers. None of this is intended by Robert to deny that Lady Philosophia belongs also, as he writes, to the Greek pagan tradition from Homer to Proclus.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, it is a perfect culmination of his scholarly writing that he should have concluded this essay with a Christological interpretation of the *Liber Sapientiae* by Augustine, observing, that in the old bishop’s understanding:

Thus, *sapientia*, Christologically understood, is both transcendent and immanent, both divine and human, both ancient and ever new, divine *medicus* and *medicamentum* for human ills. That is the understanding of *Sapientia* which informs Boethius’ portrait of Philosophy, and that is the ground of his great delight in her reference to the *Liber Sapientiae*: she speaks at last her native tongue, the language of divine revelation.⁷⁵

The identification Robert makes here between Christ, Wisdom, and Philosophia will remind us of some of his descriptions of the common theological enterprise in which pagans and Christians were engaged. The most extensive of

Dublin, August 16-20, 2002 (Leuven : University Press, 2002), 297–306; idem, “St. Augustine, Semi-Pelagianism and the *Consolation* of Boethius,” *Dionysius* 22 (2004): 95–110; idem, “*HAEC IPSA VERBA DELECTANT: Boethius and the LIBER SAPIENTIAE*,” in A. Campodonico, ed., *Verità nel tempo. Platonismo, Cristianesimo e contemporaneità. Studi in onore di Luca Obertello* (Genoa: Il Melangolo, 2004), 54–61.

⁷³ Crouse, “The Augustinian Background” as quoted above.

⁷⁴ Crouse, “*HAEC IPSA VERBA DELECTANT*,” 60.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

these is found in his last essay for *Dionysius*, “St. Augustine, Semi-Pelagianism and the *Consolation* of Boethius,” published in 2004. He argues there, as he had previously, that, despite the absence of anything specifically Christian, the *Consolation* is both the work of the same Christian who wrote the tractates and is a work of theology:

Theology concerns itself, *intellectualiter*, with the logical explication of questions concerning the divine being and divine knowledge, whether those questions arise from peculiarly Christian teaching (as in the three tractates directed against specific Christian heresies), or from “universal” (including Christian) tradition, as in the cases of the tractate, *Quomodo substantiae*, and the theological arguments of *De consolazione philosophiae*. ... For Boethius, as for the theological tradition, both pagan and Christian, which lies behind him ... theology is simply a part (and the highest part) of philosophy. There is, indeed, a distinction between *fides* and *intellectus*, but it is essentially the Augustinian distinction: philosophy gives the substance of religious doctrine, which stands firmly on its own basis of faith, its true intellectual form, so far as the *intuitus* of human reason can scale the height of divinity. ... And therefore theology proceeds, not by way of authorities, or arguments “sought outside itself,” but by way of its own proper logic and language: the logic and language of Platonic (and Aristotelian) theology. ... [I]t is entirely in accord with the methods of theology that Boethius does not cite *autoritates* from the Scriptures or the Fathers.⁷⁶

Robert goes on to note that the work has “practical, ethical, and religious dimensions” and that Lady Philosophy “refers to works by her students, Plato and Aristotle, quotes the ancient poets, and draws *exempla* from ancient history and mythology. But all her authors are ancient.”⁷⁷ Robert goes on to offer an explanation of the fact that all the quotations and examples are old:

The circumstance may be simply a reflection of the general neoplatonic penchant for ancient tradition, but it may also mean something more. The *De Consolatione* addresses an issue which belongs to the theological tradition universally (whether Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Epicurean, or Neoplatonic, whether pagan or Christian): that of providence (or predestination) and human freedom, and the authors and *exempla* she draws upon belong to the ancient and universal inheritance of wisdom ...⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Crouse, “St. Augustine, Semi-Pelagianism and the *Consolation* of Boethius,” *Dionysius* 22 (2004): 95–110 at 99.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*: 100.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Robert goes on to explain how pagan myths, as well as the theological method taken from pagan philosophy, can be used by a Christian theologian. His explanation here, almost twenty-five years later, coincides with that in “*Semina Rationum: St. Augustine and Boethius*”. There he was giving reasons for the shift, in the 6th century and beyond, away from the polemics of Augustine against pagan forms, now, in 2004, he makes clear that, for ancient Christians, Platonic myths and philosophy were inspired:

Plato is obviously her [Lady Philosophy’s] favourite author. His words are her own: she has put them into his mouth. That estimate of Plato, as inspired by divine wisdom, certainly coincides with the judgment of Proclus; but it is also a notion long familiar in Christian tradition, and Christian authors had long since made Platonic myths their own. All Lady Philosophy’s great *exempla* (e.g. Orpheus, Ulysses, Hercules, etc.) are certainly pagan; and yet, they are not simply pagan. Allegorically interpreted, they had long occupied an important place in Christian literature and iconography, in a tradition which found a certain culmination in the works of Boethius’ contemporary, Fulgentius the Mythographer.⁷⁹

Despite seeing them as aspects of a common theological tradition, Robert does think that there are differences at some points between pagan and Christian Platonic theologies and we must consider further how he thinks they differ and how they connect. Because these questions are allied with what he considers the norm of Christian Platonism, because we have exhibited it already, and because I think it determines for him a good deal in respect to the other two questions, I shall start with it.

For Robert, from his earliest writing on the subject (from which I have quoted earlier),⁸⁰ the ultimate difference of Christian Platonism and its norm is found in Augustine and, in the last analysis, in his divine Trinity understood through *memoria*, *intellectus*, and *voluntas*, which is simultaneously multiple and simple, and of human subjectivity as a derivative image of the same triad. Thus, in an essay on Eriugena published in 1996, he wrote that “it is the doctrine of God as Trinity which fundamentally distinguishes Christian Platonism from other forms of Platonic tradition”, and that this distinctively determines the question of creation, as well as other matters.⁸¹ He then went on:

The orthodox Christian position in this matter, worked out in the long struggle with Arianism, finds a definitive expression for Latin Christendom in the teaching of St Augustine. It is that doctrine of God (*inseparabilis distinctio, tamen distinctio, simplicitas*, which is also *multiplicitas*), which,

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Crouse, “*In multa*,” as quoted above.

⁸¹ Crouse, “*Primordiales Causae*,” 214.

as a resolution of the dilemmas of Neoplatonic theology (and not as a reversion to earlier forms of Platonism), constitutes the “systematic simplification” of Augustinian Platonism.⁸²

To support this judgment Robert must deny, or at least minimize, three differences within Platonism (between Plotinian and Procline, between Augustinian and Dionysian, and, more generally, between Greek Christian and Latin Christian). As a matter of fact, these are more and more united within Latin philosophical theology at least from the time of Boethius on. Robert puts his position thus:

For the interpretation of Eriugena, therefore (and perhaps for the understanding of the history of medieval thought more generally), it is important to move beyond the conventional paradigm of opposed Plotinian and Procline Platonisms, and consequently opposed Augustinian and Dionysian Platonisms.⁸³

By his account, these differences are subordinate to the one between pagan and Christian Platonisms. That difference reverts in turn to one we have encountered earlier in Robert’s writing, that is between the “systematic simplification” of Christian Platonism and “those theological difficulties which urge pagan Neoplatonism in the direction of an endless complexity.”⁸⁴ For him, Proclus represents that hopeless complexity.

In respect to the third difference, Robert did write about the Greek Christian Platonist theologians, but only in so far as they had an influence on Augustine and the Latins. Greek Christian philosophical theology began with heirs in Alexandria of Philo Judaeus, most influentially, Clement and Origen. Robert treated two much neglected questions in this area of study, the influence of Origen on the Latin West, and the role of Ambrose as mediator between the Latin and Greek Christian Platonisms, a mediation of which Eriugena gratefully availed himself.⁸⁵ Robert also looked at Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, all translated by Eriugena, and Basil (whom Eriugena may have translated, but who certainly influenced him). These giants of Greek Patristic Platonism modified the reception of Augustine, importantly determined the varieties of mediaeval Augustinianism which emerged, and, thus, either determined features of Latin Christianity as a whole, or at least some of the many directions it took. Because of Robert’s work on Honorius, the follower of Eriugena, who first made it an explicit project to conciliate the Greek and Latin Christian traditions, this was unavoidable. However, Robert’s focus was always on Latin

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁸⁵ See Crouse, “Origen In The Philosophical Tradition” and “*Summae auctoritatis magister.*”

Christianity, and it is to the history of its philosophical and mystical theology from Ambrose and Augustine to the 12th century that he largely devoted his explanations and characterizations. His writing does not treat Greek Patristic or Byzantine theology for its own sake.

In my view, the limitation of his focus and his unvarying norm created several serious problems. First, in order to preserve the Augustinian norm, what determines Boethius' thought beyond the development of seeds sown by Augustine is neglected. This comes out most strikingly in a matter Robert considered several times, providence and predestination, where the crucial formula—a thing is known according to the power of the knower—for solving the problem comes from “complex” Neoplatonism. There is a descent to Boethius in a line commencing in Porphyry, developed by Iamblichus and applied to providence, freewill and prayer by Proclus and Ammonius.⁸⁶ Michael Fournier has a word to say about this in the present volume.

Second, what from the Greek Fathers and the Procline Dionysius, Eriugena cannot reconcile to Augustine is not brought forward by Robert. In fact, the fundamental logic of the *Periphyseon* is not Augustinian, and the formula Robert borrowed from a 1980 conference paper by Édouard Jeauneau “the Eastern elements constituted ... an exotic embroidery upon a basic Latin tradition”, and repeatedly cited by Robert, is not correct. Instead, Eriugena's Augustinian education was wholly rethought and radically transformed in virtue of the Neoplatonism he imbibed from the Greek Fathers and Dionysius. Jeauneau's greatest piece of scholarship, his massive critical edition of the *Periphyseon* tracing all Eriugena's changes helps us see this.⁸⁷ Benjamin Lee has recently published an article on Eriugena's critical use of texts from Augustine which do not conform to what he learned from Gregory of Nyssa and his successors.⁸⁸

Third, although it may be possible to deny a direct relation to the complex Neoplatonism of Proclus, and an indirect transforming influence for Latins until the 12th century, afterwards this is impossible.⁸⁹ Thus, for example, Thomas

⁸⁶ Robert's repeated citation of Stephen Gersh's 1986 judgment that scholarly estimates of the influence of Proclus on Boethius are “somewhat excessive” does not settle the question. See Crouse, “Predestination, Human Freedom, ms p. 6, note 37.

⁸⁷ Crouse, “Predestination, Human Freedom, ms p. 2, note 11. See *Periphyseon: Editionem nouam a suppositiciis quidem additamentis purgatam, ditatam uero appendice in qua uicissitudines operis synoptice exhibentur. Liber Primus, Liber Secundus, Liber Tertius, Liber Quartus, Liber Quintus*. Ed. É. Jeauneau. *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 161, 162, 163, 164, 165 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996-2003), the important *Eriugena's Commentary on the Dionysian Celestial Hierarchy*, by Rorem Paul (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005), and W.J. Hankey and Lloyd Gerson, “John Scottus Eriugena,” *Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, edited Lloyd Gerson (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), 829-840.

⁸⁸ See Benjamin Lee, “*Stupefactus haesito maximoque horrore concussus titubo*: Paradise, Resurrection, and Eriugena's Critical Use of Augustine in the *Periphyseon*,” *Dionysius* 29 (2011): 233-246.

⁸⁹ See my “Misrepresenting Neoplatonism in Contemporary Christian Dionysian Polemic: Eriugena and Nicholas of Cusa versus Vladimir Lossky and Jean-Luc Marion,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82:4 (2008): 683-703.

Aquinas acquired the same Iamblichan-Procline formula essential to Boethius on providence and freewill from the Arabic *Liber de causis*, and from Dionysius, Boethius, and, ultimately from Proclus himself. It is essential to his whole system and is opposed to Augustinian ways of thinking.⁹⁰ Moreover, Augustine's trinitarian immediate union of multiplicity and simplicity has been subjected to a Neoplatonic criticism by Aquinas, and his own treatment of the Trinity has all the complexity of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, from which many of its features were indirectly derived.⁹¹

Fourth, under the influence of the Greek Fathers, Dionysius, Proclus, the Neoplatonic commentators like Ammonius and Simplicius, Eriugena, Honorius Augustodunensis, the Arabic Neoplatonised Peripatetics, and Aquinas, later Latin theologians like Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa do give subjectivity a simple ground prior to the trinitarian emanations of intellect and will. Evan King has a note about this in the present volume. Whether or not they are preliminaries to the break down of mediaeval Augustinianism and the move to a Cartesian one which Robert rejected and James Doull embraced is a large question upon which Neil Robertson touches.

Robert is able to hold together what is normative and what is distinctive in Christian Platonism because of the limitation of his concern to Patristic and Mediaeval Latin Christianity. He does it by steadfastly repeating that Augustine is everywhere in the West because the seeds of all the diverse developments from him, even contradictory ones, are found in his *corpus*.⁹² However, as his scholarship advanced, he made some important qualifications. I shall quote a final formulation published in 2002 and will go on to note the qualifications.

Robert begins by observing that "During the formative early centuries of medieval Europe, the works of St. Augustine were everywhere present, copied in profusion, studied, digested and emulated."⁹³ He goes on to report that this does not mean, however, that there is a single or even a non-contradictory Augustinianism. Indeed, such a thing cannot be:

Difficult problems of interpretation are inherent in the very nature of the Augustinian *corpus*: its scope is so vast that hardly any reader attains an intimate knowledge of the whole. It includes works of widely differing

⁹⁰ See my "Secundum rei vim vel secundum cognoscentium facultatem: Knower and Known in the *Consolation of Philosophy* of Boethius and the *Proslogion* of Anselm," in *Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition in Islam, Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John Inglis (Richmond [England]: Curzon Press, 2002), 126–150.

⁹¹ See my *God in Himself, Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, Oxford Theological Monographs / Oxford Scholarly Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987 /2000).

⁹² See Crouse, "Honorius Augustodunensis: Disciple of Anselm?" idem, "Anselm of Canterbury and Medieval Augustinianisms," idem, "A Twelfth Century Augustinian: Honorius Augustodunensis," idem, "What is Augustinian in Twelfth-Century Mysticism," idem, "Predestination, Human Freedom, and the Augustinian Theology of Hope in Eriugena's *De Divina Praedestinatione*."

⁹³ Crouse, "Predestination, Human Freedom," ms p. 1.

character...and very few texts which take the form of strictly systematic theology. Furthermore, there is a history of development in the thought of Augustine.⁹⁴

Throughout his writing Robert identified and described the many Augustinianisms which the early mediaevals developed. He depicted repeatedly the cosmic optimism drawn out of and added to Augustine when he was combined with the Greek Fathers by Eriugena, an optimism carried forward by Honorius Augustodunensis.⁹⁵ Related to this he paid especial attention to the question as to whether what Boethius and Eriugena wrote passed beyond what could be drawn out of texts of Augustine. For him these three figures were related. He wrote: “[W]hat one finds in Eriugena’s treatise on predestination is a strikingly Boethian understanding of Augustine, thoroughly documented (as it never is in Boethius) in the texts of Augustine.”⁹⁶ This may or may not be true—it is not in my view a full statement because it does not speak of what in Boethius on providence is not Augustinian—but in any case it cannot settle the question of whether Eriugena remained within the Augustinian norm. All agree that Eriugena’s *De predestinatione dei* is a very early work and is certainly written before he made his translations of Dionysius and the other Greek Fathers, whose doctrines transformed his thinking and those of his followers like Honorius. However, there is at least a partial way out for Robert, one which he suggests in more detail elsewhere and is also hinted at here: Augustine and Proclus can be reconciled because Augustine’s thought was moving in a Procline direction. In this paper his hints consist of quoting John O’Meara on the “rediscovery of the Neoplatonism of Augustine”,⁹⁷ and his noting that the objections to Augustine on providence are the same as those which gave rise to *De providentia* of Proclus.⁹⁸

A communication Robert delivered to the 10th Oxford Patristics Conference in 1987, and published in 1989, on “The Meaning of Creation in St. Augustine and Eriugena” shows a shift. First Robert undermines his previous judgment at the 8th Oxford Patristics Conference, held in 1979. There he had proposed that “the notion of God as *ipsum esse*”, and treating the difference between God and creatures in terms of the identity of essence and existence, on the one side, and the real distinction of essence and existence, on the other side, was characteristically “Christian”, and the basis of understanding creatures as good.⁹⁹ In the 1989 publication, he refers instead to the work of Pierre Hadot, which upset a Christian origin for this notion in virtue of “the clarification of the Porphyrian doctrine of God as *Ipsum esse*.” Robert notes the “vast implications” this has for “the

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ See Crouse, “INTENTIO MOYSI: Bede, Augustine, Eriugena and Plato in the *Hexaemeron* of Honorius Augustodunensis.”

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, ms p. 7.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, ms p. 3, and note 13.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, ms p. 5, and note 28.

⁹⁹ Crouse, “The Doctrine of Creation in Boethius: The *De Hebdomadibus* and the *Consolatio*,” 420.

interpretation of Augustine's Christian Platonism" and for Gilson's history of mediaeval thought.¹⁰⁰ He goes on to two even more important statements, representing further shifts in his thinking about the relations of pagan and Christian Platonisms.

First, in respect to Augustine, Robert judges:

In the notion of matter as divine creation (and therefore unambiguously good), his doctrine seems to parallel the development of later Neoplatonism, as that appears, for instance, in Proclus' *De malorum subsistentia*; and, in general, the enhanced regard for the revelatory significance of the sensible, especially in *De civitate Dei*, seems strikingly consistent with the Procline view of the essential role of the sensible in the soul's way of return to God. Here one does not, of course, speak of influence, in one direction or the other...but rather of parallel tendencies of thought in the logical resolution of dilemmas common to both Christian and pagan forms of Platonism.¹⁰¹

Second, Robert offers this parallel movement as an explanation as to how Eriugena can bring concord between his dissonant Greek and Latin authorities:

John Scottus Eriugena... in the *Periphyseon*, drawing heavily upon precisely those texts of Augustine we have mentioned, finds Augustine in basic accord with the Christianly revised Procline Platonism of Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor.¹⁰²

He goes on to find Iamblichan and Dionysian systematization in Eriugena, though the "substance" is, for him, Augustinian. Equally, if

in his regard for creation as the theophanic way of the soul's return to God, Eriugena seems to follow Dionysius and Maximus, rather than Augustine, still the inclination to see creation as revelatory is not alien to the argument of *De civitate Dei*.¹⁰³

Robert proceeds to treat Eriugena's apophatic language in the same way.

A paper published four years later, in 1994, takes the last step Robert will venture on this matter. He admits the continuing interventions and changes the development of pagan Neoplatonism has on Christian theology. He writes:

¹⁰⁰ Crouse, "The Meaning of Creation in St. Augustine and Eriugena," 230.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 231–232.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 233.

The distinction between Dionysian (i.e. Procline) and Augustinian (Plotinian, or perhaps Porphyrian) Neoplatonism as major directions in medieval philosophy and theology has become conventional. But both are forms of Christian Platonism, and cannot be understood only in terms of the several phases in the development of the pagan Platonic tradition with which they are especially associated. They are not different or alternative metaphysics, just as the position of Proclus is not really alternative to that of Plotinus, but rather a further development and systematization of it. St. Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius were indeed influenced by successive phases in the continuous logical development of pagan Neoplatonism, but they both understood and interpreted the doctrines in relation to the fundamentals of Christian doctrine.¹⁰⁴

This final position leaves many questions seeking answers. For example, he had previously linked the Christian doctrines of the Trinity, on the one side, and of the creation and goodness of matter, on the other. What are the implications of recognising the pagan development of the second without the first? Certainly, *creatio ex nihilo* was a doctrine of concordant Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism in late Antiquity and Robert alludes to this in a 1987 paper on mediaeval Augustinianisms.¹⁰⁵ The notion that Plato and Aristotle taught it was conveyed to Islamic, Jewish, and Christian mediaevals by the later Neoplatonists; thus, Aquinas attributed creation from nothing to the two greatest Classical Greek philosophers.¹⁰⁶ If the directions of the Christian and pagan Platonisms are parallel, what is the cause of the same logical movement in both? Why does all, or almost all, of the influence come from the pagan side? Given the hermeneutical circle which Robert always admitted, how would “the fundamentals of Christian doctrine” be preserved from being reformulated and differently understood in virtue of their rethinking within a new phase of Platonism? Most importantly, when the Trinity of Persons is thought through the relation of the One and the henads as increasing happened in both Greek and Latin Christianity under the influence of Proclus and the post-Plotinian Neoplatonists, the doctrine of the Trinity looks very different from that formulated by Augustine, as more than a millennium of dispute between Eastern and Latin Christians importantly exhibits. Certainly, what Robert laid down as the norm for Christian Platonism, Augustine’s triad of *memoria, intellectus, voluntas*, with the requirement of an equality of

¹⁰⁴ Crouse, “What is Augustinian in Twelfth-Century Mysticism,” ms pp. 5–6.

¹⁰⁵ Crouse, “Anselm of Canterbury and Medieval Augustinianisms,” 63.

¹⁰⁶ See my “Thomas’ Neoplatonic Histories: His following of Simplicius,” *Dionysius* 20 (2002): 153–178 and “*Ab uno simplici non est nisi unum*: The Place of Natural and Necessary Emanation in Aquinas’ Doctrine of Creation,” in *Divine Creation in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Thought: Essays Presented to the Rev’d Dr Robert D. Crouse*, edited by Michael Treschow, Willemien Otten and Walter Hannam, Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 309–333.

intellect and will, did not abide even among Latins, as he regretfully admitted.¹⁰⁷ That fact, and those questions, he left as matters for our work as his successors.

VI. *MEMORIA, INTELLECTUS, VOLUNTAS* AND THE QUESTION OF MODERNITY

It is not surprising that Robert's publications on the nature of modernity are not extensive.¹⁰⁸ He did not develop his Platonism in such a way as to regard time as essential to the explication of the divine ideas. They are, in principle, universally accessible. When treating them, he might begin from, and use in his explication, their manifestations in Greco-Roman or Jewish or Christian, poetry, philosophy, Scripture, plastic art or architecture, ancient and medieval. Moreover, the spiritual aim of his teaching was our transformation by the idea. He cultivated personally, and by his pedagogy, the purgation and quietness of mind necessary to attention which might advance to vision, with the ideal of the union of love and knowledge in simple intuition.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, the turn toward the subject of the kind he associated with modernity was an evil, which, although not making the apprehension of the truth impossible, was to be suffered through as purgative, rather than celebrated as freedom.

In a 1997 unpublished lecture for the Foundation Year Programme at King's College, entitled "The Birth of Modernity. Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio,"¹¹⁰ Robert contrasted the harmonic balance of the opposed elements of ancient and medieval culture constructed by Dante in the *Divine Comedy*, and by the *antiqui* partisans in the fourteenth century controversies, on one side, to the evil disintegration of the same in modernity, on the other:

It is to that world of the *antiqui* that Dante belongs. It is a world which, for all its divisions, unites in understanding itself theocentrically; it is a universe in which nature leads to God, where reason is perfected by faith, where nature is perfected by grace....The whole tendency of the *moderni* was to effect a radical separation of what the *antiqui* had sought to hold

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, ms p. 12. See my "Visio" and Robert D. Crouse, "The Development of the Doctrine of Sin and Grace from Augustine to Anselm," *The Journey Home: Sin and Grace*, Papers delivered at the 2001 Atlantic Theological Conference, St Peter's Cathedral, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, edited Susan Harris (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 2002), 37–46 at 45.; idem, "Trinitarian Anthropology in the Latin Middle Ages," *Christian Anthropology: the Trinitarian Theology of Man*, Proceedings of the Atlantic Theological Conference, edited Susan Harris (Charlottetown: St. Peter Publications, 1997), 63–73 at 71–72.

¹⁰⁸ Robert D. Crouse, "The Birth of Modernity. Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio," a lecture for the Foundation Year Programme, 1997, idem, "Dante as Philosopher: Christian Aristotelianism," *Dionysius* 16 (1998): 141–156, idem, "Commentary: The Augustinian Philosophy and Christian Institutions," *Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull*, edited by David G. Peddle and Neil G. Robertson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 210–218; idem, "St Augustine and Descartes as Fathers of Modernity."

¹⁰⁹ See my "Visio."

¹¹⁰ Because it is unpublished and because so many seek Robert's views on modernity, I quote it at length.

together in tension: reason and faith, philosophy and theology, the temporal and the spiritual, the natural and the supernatural. No longer now, according to the *moderni*, can faith be understood, no longer can one see the world embraced within the knowledge and will of God.¹¹¹

He went on to limit modernity to a spirit, a state of mind; it is not a temporal period, but “a way of thinking, a pattern of assumptions developed in the recent centuries of European history”. He wrote:

In the spirit of modernity, we assume the autonomy of the secular, *vis-à-vis* the sacred, in politics, in philosophy, in the arts, and so on. That is an assumption which a very considerable portion of the modern world does not share, and it is an assumption of which the medieval world (and Dante, its spokesman) knows nothing. Dante knows a distinction between temporal and spiritual powers, but that is a very different conception. ...

Equally, the autonomy of the secular is not mediaeval. Here he brings Aquinas into consideration:

Likewise with regard to secular reason: St. Thomas Aquinas (and Dante, following him¹¹²) certainly makes a clear distinction between what belongs to natural human reason, and what is grasped by faith in divine revelation. But the consequence is not an autonomous secular philosophy; it is a *Summa theologiae*, in which the distinct elements of natural reason and supernatural revelation are held together in the unity of a system of sacred doctrine.

Modern subjectivity belongs to the same pattern of assumptions:

Also important among those assumptions of modernity which divide it from the medieval world are certain conceptions of human nature and human freedom, and of individual subjectivity as the ground of philosophy. Sometimes the famous “cogito” of Descartes is hailed as the character of modern thought; but already in the fourteenth century, especially with Eckhart and other German mystics, the conception of pure subjectivity in the presence of the infinite as the ground of speculation is powerfully present.¹¹³

In a moment, we must return to the question of Descartes on which Robert wrote a chapter, “St Augustine and Descartes as Fathers of Modernity,” for a book

¹¹¹ Crouse, “The Birth of Modernity”, ms pp. 1–3.

¹¹² See Crouse, “Dante as Philosopher: Christian Aristotelianism.”

¹¹³ Crouse, “The Birth of Modernity”, ms pp. 5–7.

published by Gordon McOuat and Neil Robertson in 2007, and about which he raised questions with James Doull. But, before that, we should look at how Robert ended his 1997 lecture. Having surveyed his three poets on love, he wrote:

What we see in this succession of Florentine poets is actually a kind of paradigm for what is to be seen in European history in general in the fourteenth century: it is a matter of the breaking down of the old unities, the old reference points, the old connections in all areas of human experience, individual and social. And it is in this late medieval world that we see the roots of modernity: philosophical, psychological, religious, aesthetic, political, etc. From a Dantean standpoint, all this amounts to a descent into hell, a descent into the realm of alienation and unconnectedness. And a good many of the most significant poets and writers of the past century or so would concur in his judgement.¹¹⁴

Hell is not to be undertaken for its own sake. It is to be passed through. Despite an essential agreement with his teacher and colleague, James Doull, he differed from him because he did not find in modernity the subjective appropriation of antique substance which would allow ancient Hellenic concrete freedom to return universally.

Nonetheless, the passage through hell and modernity can serve the good. Robert continued:

But if from a Dantean standpoint modernity is hell, we do well to remember that for Dante the descent into hell is not a negative, but a positive move; it is a realm in which he says he found great good. Indeed, it was his necessary preparation for the ascent of *Purgatorio* to *Paradiso*.¹¹⁵

Clearly modernity was not a form of mind in which Robert wished to settle down, and he did not. Nonetheless, a philosophical scholar whose work centred on Augustine in the way his did, and whose circumstances were his, was more or less required to treat the relation of Augustine to modernity. Revivals of Augustine belong to the origins of modernity, and, of all ancient and medieval Christians, he indisputably dominates in it. The persistent question of the relation of Descartes to Augustine troubled Gilson and other medievalists, and that question is central within postmodern theology.¹¹⁶ Then, there was the importance, both for James Doull, and for their common students, in the relation of Descartes to Augustine, and of each of them to modernity.

¹¹⁴ Crouse, "The Birth of Modernity", ms p. 12.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ See my "Between and Beyond Augustine and Descartes: More than a Source of the Self," *Augustinian Studies* 32:1 (2001): 65–88 and "Self-Knowledge and God as Other in Augustine: Problems for a Postmodern Retrieval", *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 4 (1999), 83–123. Robert cited them in his own treatment of the question.

In fact, Robert's essay precisely devoted to that matter, published in 2007, takes us back more than fifty years to his very first publication, because it not only begins with Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger assessing Descartes' importance, but also quotes Jacques Maritain whose book he reviewed in 1955. From those assessments, Robert went on to outline the role of self-knowledge, the *gnothi seauton* and the *cogito*, from the Delphic oracle to modernity. He concluded these preliminaries with the essential questions:

But if Descartes—three centuries after Petrarch and twelve centuries after Augustine—is the founder of modern philosophy, and progenitor of the modern sense of the self, what is the relation of his modernity to that of St. Augustine? Was Descartes in some way an Augustinian?¹¹⁷

In answering, Robert deals with Descartes' own statements and those of his contemporaries on the relation of the *cogito* to Augustine and with the 20th and 21st-century scholarly positions, spanning the distance from Gilson to Doull and Hankey. He concludes by engaging the arguments of James Doull, who puts what is fundamentally at issue by arguing that “the genius of Descartes...is that he begins to give the Augustinian philosophy a properly philosophical form; that is, to show it in its independence from the religious form which it has in Augustine.”¹¹⁸

Anyone who has travelled with me this far through Robert's work will expect his response, which takes us back fifty-one years to the beginnings of his scholarship, to Matthew of Aquasparta and Robert's second publication. He asks:

But is this really a remaking of the Augustinian philosophy? Does it not rather depend upon a rejection of the fundamental principles of the Augustinian position, which would indicate precisely the folly of such independent reason, and insist upon the beginning in faith: “for the eye of man's mind does not focus in so excellent a light, unless strengthened by the justice of faith”. Would not the rational independence of the Cartesian position depend upon the distinctions between philosophy and theology advanced first by St. Thomas Aquinas, and vigorously opposed by such Augustinians as Bonaventure and Matthew of Aquasparta? Does not the Cartesian autonomy of philosophy depend upon the radical separation of philosophical and theological sciences, between physics and metaphysics, which are the Scotist response to the Averroist crisis of the thirteenth century? Is not the inward isolation of Descartes more that of some late medieval mystics than the interiority of St. Augustine?¹¹⁹

He then concludes:

¹¹⁷ Crouse, “St Augustine and Descartes as Fathers of Modernity,” ms § 5.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, ms § 10.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ms § 11.

I put all this in the form of questions, and I am by no means certain of the answers; but it seems to me that the sources of modernity (in the Cartesian sense) are to be sought in the intellectual, social and political crises of the three centuries preceding Descartes; and I think he can be called “Augustinian” only with equivocation.¹²⁰

When, a few years earlier, Robert had commented on an essay by James Doull treating Augustine and modern institutions, he made the same points, though generalizing them to include Neoplatonism. I conclude by considering those comments, not only because they bring out a fundamental agreement and difference between those two great teachers who have justly been called the refounders of our Department, but also because they bring us back to the questions about Porphyrian-Augustinian and Procline-Dionysian Neoplatonisms, which concluded the last section of this essay and which are crucial for philosophy, theology, and religion now.

Robert’s comments contain the same allegations of anachronism in respect to James’ categories and historical judgments, the same conclusion to which he reverted four years later. In them he continued to defend against James his own work, and the works he studied, as philosophical:

Certainly, [he writes,] in terms of a much later definition of philosophy [the one James laid down] which would see it as independent of faith and divine revelation, there is no Patristic philosophy. But for St Augustine, true philosophy (*nostra philosophia*) involves a continual interrelation of *fides* and *intellectus* in the ‘hermeneutic circle’: *credo ut intellegam, intellego ut credam*. The understanding finds, that faith may yet continually seek: *et inveniendum quaeritur et quaerendum invenitur*. For St Augustine, the religious form and the philosophical form are not alternative, but complementary and always interdependent.¹²¹

Here, however, Robert adds that this complementarity of religion and philosophy was true also for the pagans. Neither the Christian Patristic, nor the mediaeval philosophic theologians, “nor, indeed, their pagan Neoplatonist contemporaries could think of a philosophy independent of divine revelation.”¹²² Consequently, he argues, that, when, as James asserted “the Augustinian system will only assume an independent philosophical form in modern philosophy”¹²³, Doull’s Descartes is an Augustinian “only equivocally.”¹²⁴

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Crouse, “Commentary: The Augustinian Philosophy and Christian Institutions,” 212.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 213.

¹²³ Crouse is quoting Doull, “The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions, Part Two,” *Dionysius* 8 (1984).

¹²⁴ Crouse, “Commentary: The Augustinian Philosophy and Christian Institutions,” 213.

Robert's inclusion of the Neoplatonists in the discussion argument was not an accident. James had characterised pre-modern Augustinianism as Dionysian. For Robert, "Doull's Protestant view of medieval history" was exposed when he judged: "The reason in the Church, though occupied with the content of Augustinian theology, is not Augustinian. The Augustinian content is approached through the abstract logic of the Dionysian system', which, according to Doull, dominates medieval philosophy from Eriugena to Cusanus."¹²⁵ Doull would also generalise this by characterising medieval Augustinianism, as he set it against its modern philosophical form, as Procline. Robert makes several responses to this, correcting Doull's history. For example, Robert reiterates the conclusions of his many studies of the diverse forms of medieval Christian Platonism, of which "Dionysian Platonism was always one" but only one.¹²⁶ Again, he notes, reverting to his understanding of the shift which took place in the 14th century, that "the development of the secular (along with the concept of an independent philosophy) would depend upon philosophical and theological developments far beyond both Augustine and Dionysius."¹²⁷ While these and his other responses are far from being mere quibbles, they do not bring us to what united and divided Robert and James fundamentally, a consideration which raises again the questions about how Robert stands to the history of philosophy generally and to the history of Platonism particularly.

Fundamentally, James and Robert were both intellectualists in ways which established Aristotle and Augustine as norms. Hilary Armstrong had it right when he complained that, under them, the Department was "Hippocentric." James Doull evaluated Neoplatonism relative to Aristotle and Augustine, and Augustine through Aristotle, Descartes and Hegel.¹²⁸ When we recollect that, for Robert, Augustine establishes the norm for divine and human subjectivity, does so in contrast to pagan Neoplatonism generally, and especially *vis-à-vis* Proclus, and the transcendent One placed above absolute intellect identified as Aristotle's God, James and Robert come together on the greatest matter. If we change to Robert's language about Christian Platonism whose norm is Augustine, Doull's judgments are also Robert's. James "already found in Augustine what the whole development of Neoplatonism sought. Moreover, Augustine's *notitia sui* is seen as retrieving Aristotle...."¹²⁹ Robert also found Augustine's Trinitarian divine subjectivity anticipated in the self-thinking thought of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover. As we have seen, both also give important places to pagan Neoplatonism, and to Procline and Eastern Christian Platonisms, in the development of theology and institutions, but

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 214, again quoting Doull, "The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions, Part Two."

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹²⁸ See my "Neoplatonism and Contemporary Constructions and Deconstructions of Modern Subjectivity," a response to J. A. Doull's "Neoplatonism and the Origins of the older Modern Philosophy" *Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull*, edited by David G. Peddle and Neil G. Robertson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 250–278 at 251.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 253.

they are subordinate places. Unfortunately, a detailed comparison of them on this is beyond the scope of my paper. Nonetheless, the role of Procline Neoplatonism for them both raises the most difficult questions and with these I shall close.

Theurgic Neoplatonism in the tradition of Proclus, precisely on the basis of its doctrine of the One and the henads, provides the best philosophical ground for three doctrines which are necessities for Robert: 1. the complementarity of philosophy and divine revelation which prevents the autonomous independence of philosophy, 2. the goodness of matter and the *creatio ex nihilo*, and, 3. a universal and particular divine providence. In consequence, two questions confront those who see reason in the differing positions of both our teachers. The first goes to those thinking with Robert, the second to those with James.

If the modern Augustine established the independence of philosophy and the secular, can their proper interconnection now be reestablished without what Proclus gives? If Proclean Neoplatonism is necessary for the transition from Classical Antiquity to modernity, can modernity be sustained without it? Both James and Robert recognized that these are pressing questions for post-modern philosophy and theology, with its revival of Dionysius and its assimilation of Augustine to Proclus, but it is not only for this reason that they do and will occupy those who continue their legacy.