

“Philosophical and Theological Foundations for Augustinian Theology in the Future”  
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### *Introduction*

I am deeply grateful to Fr. Robert Dodaro and the organizers of this conference for inviting me to make my first contribution as a theologian in the Roman Catholic Church here today. This seems to me to be happily and providentially appropriate. It was in a parish administered by this venerable Order that I was received last month into the Catholic Church. The Augustinianum and the College of Saint Monica have been generous hosts to me in Rome, lavishing on me friendship, food and the treasures of their splendid Library. At home in Nova Scotia, your Monastery welcomed me as a second home and there I conducted at least six retreats a year for a decade. The Order of Saint Augustine has been a place for my past ministry as an Anglican priest, for my on going work as a scholar, for my new beginning in the Catholic Church. I am grateful to you for it and to it and to Almighty God for you. I am very pleased to be allowed to attempt to contribute to the future of your spirituality.

My pleasure is, however, almost overwhelmed by trepidation. Its cause I may illustrate as follows. Having written a draft of this paper, I showed it to two close friends, both learned Augustinians. One is a scholar of Catholic religious life in the Classical Modern period. He is both immersed in and attached to the Augustinianism of that period and to the *spiritualité* which developed in that second great Augustinian epoch of the western Church. This is a *spiritualité* of the inner life, of the individual's subjective relation with God, a *spiritualité* of personal states and experiences. Having read part of my paper, he pronounced it not about *spiritualité* at all.

The other friend is a student of the text of St. Augustine himself. He finds there a spirituality, but not of the self in its inner relations, states and experiences as these are directed toward God. Rather, with him distinctively Augustinian spirituality is an institutionally critical activity of communal love. My paper's discussion of the structures of the self and the life of God in Himself he judged irrelevant empty rhetoric.

Thus began my personal experience of what one of these friends describes as the civil war within the Catholic Church. I am, as usual, in the worst position, caught in the middle between right and left. Both right and left, reactionary and revolutionary, have in common the rejection of the metaphysical centre of Augustine's theology. The criticisms are many; in these instances this metaphysics is regarded as being in our time either evangelically inappropriate and ineffective or impossible and false ideology. What is worrying is this: their common rejection of what belongs at the centre does not bring right and left together to explore their common ground and our contemporary situation. Rather it drives them apart. They do not even wish to attempt communication. They would rather fight to the death than to parley.

However, it is the work of metaphysical theology both in its pagan and its Christian forms to show how the opposed principles of thought and action are themselves related and are united in God. This makes it sapiential science; what both Aristotle and Augustine regarded as the highest human knowing: indeed so high as to be beyond humans except insofar as God graciously shares his life with us. Today we have the combatants in our civil war together in the same room. Let us hope and pray that sapiential science may have again among us the power to show the common ground of opposed spiritualities and to generate the Augustinian spirituality of the future.

#### *An Augustinian Future: its Necessity and its Problems*

Augustinian spirituality is our future, as also it has been our past and, unrecognized, is our present. St. Augustine above all others determined what spirit is for the Latin Church and for the Western Civilization which it produced. This civilization is the most dynamic in human history. For the past half millennium it has made the human future on this planet. As far ahead as we can foresee it looks to be that in relation to which every other cultural tradition must establish itself.

Augustinian spirituality is at the center of things, where the movement is, whether the world knows it or not.

Herein we find our problem. The world, even the religious world, does not know what moves it. The task of the teachers of the Augustinian tradition in the Latin Church in their mission to the Westernized world is above all the threatening labor of self-understanding. Augustinians have the task of helping the Western world to understand itself. They must begin, of course, by more deeply understanding themselves, understanding again both their proper tradition and, by its means, what the self really is. Augustinians believe healing is found here.

#### *The Poles in Western Spirituality*

It is both false and useless to exaggerate the influence of Augustine. Certainly we neither wish to credit to him nor blame him for everything which the Latin Church and the Western world have become or done in the last 1600 years! Far from it! In fact,

many different thinkers, traditions, circumstances and deeds shaped those terrible entities. Among them was another spiritual tradition stemming from the 6th century Greek author Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite. Like Augustine his thought was a Christian transformation of the pagan intellectual heritage summed up in the various Neoplatonisms.

The Dionysian spirituality has opposite characteristics to the Augustinian. It is strictly systematic, rigidly hierarchical and draws the soul outward to sensible signs in the order to rise to divinization by a learned ignorance. Beginning with John Scotus Eriugena in the 9th century, the Latin Church began combining Augustine and Dionysius. Their two spiritualities, or total intellectual and practical attitudes to reality, conflict, intermingle, and develop one another in western mediaeval Christendom. Though rooted in opposed developments of Classical paganism, in the Middle Ages they seemed complementary and ultimately reconcilable.

The Greek Church did not absorb Augustine in the way the Latins assimilated Dionysius, just the opposite. This has made all the difference.

Before we pass on to some individual characteristics of the future Augustinian spirituality, we pause to glean three fruits of what we have already learned.

(i) First, the Augustinian is not of course the only spirituality and intellectual tradition in the western Church. It is essential but not total. Augustinians can make a distinctive and critical contribution by following Augustine. Guided by him, they can illumine the western future but, as always, they will need to accept that there are other perspectives and the need for mutual correction and complementarity.

(ii) Second, Augustinian spirituality is by nature intellectual. Augustine deeply thought about, widely borrowed from, and fundamentally transformed the pagan intellectual heritage in its most comprehensive result. His is not spirituality as opposed to critical thought, but living in that very element. This is so much specifically the character of his thought that from it emerges Modern western enlightenment and secularity.

(iii) Third, while Augustine, unlike Dionysius, is not a systematic theologian, his writing is comprehensive and invites inclusiveness. There is little of importance to Christian thought and life which he did not treat and much of what he thought and did was subject to revision and repentance. As a result, for the first millennium of his influence in the church, his thought was assimilated to, reconciled with, and developed by encountering the opposed Dionysian spirituality.

The late Middle Ages brings the opposition of these two spiritualities to one another and their exclusion of one another. Some turn Augustine against an ecclesiastical hierarchy whose absolute claims for itself seem to be self-corrupting. He is also turned against an intermediating hierarchy of sacraments, saints and angels which seem to oppose rather than to assist the soul's encounter with God, and against a conceptual

system which seems to relativize and reduce what is taken to be Biblical revelation. The Reformation is, in this sense, the assertion of the Augustinian against the Dionysian. Generally, the Reformers eliminate and replace all these hierarchies. Secular Modernity, and its positive sciences, grounded in the overcoming of skepticism by rational certainty through the direct encounter of the self and God, are an Augustinian triumph. Indeed, the difference between medieval and modern Christianity, both religious and secular, is arguably a result of the conquest of Dionysian unknowing by Augustinian self-knowledge.

The modern calamities of the church are largely a result of the breakdown of comprehensiveness in Western theology and culture. In this we see something of the character and limits of Modernity relative to its Classical and mediaeval antecedents. A more comprehensive Latin spirituality must then characterize a genuinely post-Modern culture. A spirituality effective for the future will strive to recover the comprehensiveness of medieval Augustinianism.

The last great meeting of the Augustinian and the Dionysian spiritualities took place at about the same time in England and in France. The Reformed Catholicism developed in England under Elizabeth Tudor and James Stuart preserved political, ecclesiastical and liturgical hierarchies within an Augustinian doctrine of grace. The Christocentric revolution in Catholic piety, which we associate with Cardinal Bérulle and the French School in the Seventeenth century, redefined and transformed Catholic sacerdotal *spiritualité* and remade the priest into a spiritual director. The ways in which this School balanced and united Augustine and Dionysius have not yet been completely understood, but the powerful effectiveness of their combination for the inner life of the Church is beyond doubt.

However, having noted that these two unifications of Augustine and Dionysius were created in and were effective in Modernity, and that they are therefore at least partly exceptions to what I have said about its general character, I must deliver a sad judgement on them. Neither of these beautiful creations of early Modernity seem capable of surviving in our days. In my judgement, the Anglican synthesis is disintegrating before our eyes; none of the great societies established in the spirit of the French School aiming to form the priest as mystic and so as spiritual director is any longer effective at this. It seems that the future forms of this spiritually powerful synthesis must be created by us.

### *Philosophical Book of Augustinian Spirituality*

(a) Self-knowledge is the key to spiritual life in Augustine. This is not a mere experience of the self, a narcissistic introspection, and it is the very opposite of the self as bundle of experiences. No, for Augustine the revelation of God in Christ, recorded in the Holy Scripture and understood in the Spirit ruled Councils of the Church, restores to humans their proper knowledge of the structure of the self. The human self is without any

intermediary a mirror of the Divine Trinity. The human self directly and immediately reflects what God truly is. The life of God, his essence flowing in an eternal circle from the Father to the Son and from them to the Spirit, is best reflected in the human mind. This stupendous affirmation is the center of Augustinian spirituality.

Augustine's affirmation of the human self when it is face to face with God and his embrace of self-knowledge as the best way to the knowledge of God and nature has a direct result. Of St. Augustine, we know more than of any figure from antiquity. He willed it so, having exhibited the process of his conversion in his *Confessions* and having written prodigiously after his baptism as the occasions of his Christian life moved him. Augustine originates autobiography. In contrast, the Dionysius who followed St. Paul in teaching the Unknown God, has succeeded in hiding himself behind the mask of Paul's convert on the Areopagus. So Dionysius became the preeminent guide of those who seek to lose the self in mystical union with the Unknown.

Before passing on to consider some consequences for us of this central difference between these two spiritualities, justice and concern for one of our most urgent needs requires us to pause. We must at least mention an area where Dionysian thought developed, deepened and structured for the mediaevals something we usually neglect in Augustine.

For Augustine God's Trinitarian life is not just reflected in rational beings. Non rational substances by their measure, number and weight also mirror God. The mediaevals, stimulated by the Dionysian turn to sensible signs and symbols as necessary on our journey to God, found also in Augustine a way to the contemplation of creation outside the self and to harmony with the sensible cosmos. Both the *Peri Physeon* of Eriugena and the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* of St. Bonaventure are systematic contemplations of this three fold mirroring between God, his rational creation and his non rational creatures. As we shall see, Modern Idealism sought the same unity by somewhat the same means. We need to recover such an understanding for ourselves.

### *The Spirituality of Modernity*

What must we take from the center of St. Augustine's theology?

(i) First, future Augustinian theology is inescapably Modern. The unification of our self-knowledge with knowledge of God, which took place so decisively in Augustine's theology, became the new beginning for philosophy in Descartes, Father Malebranche and their successors.

Thereby philosophy cut itself away from the pagan Neoplatonism which Christianity had used as the vehicle of its thinking for a millennium and a half. The new beginning of Modern philosophy, based in Augustine's unification of the structure of human thought and conversion with the Christian idea of God, gave it a claim to be regarded as

the first radically Christian philosophy. The Church has been trying to assess this claim and to deal with its consequences ever since it was asserted.

This new philosophy was not without its own problems. The Cartesian form of the Augustinian self was set against nature and history. The correction given Modern philosophy by the German Idealists at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century was intended to overcome this division of the Modern Christian self from nature and history. History and nature were understood as the life of the spirit, which life had the same trinitarian structures as the human and the divine. In the life of spirit, nature, man and God were unified.

For a brief period at the end of the Eighteenth and the first third of the Nineteenth centuries, Catholic theologians and philosophers attempted with conceptions and approaches from Modern philosophy and Idealism to fashion a Catholic thought appropriate to Modernity. This was a great moment for Augustine. His spirituality was the crucial bond between the Catholic tradition and Modern thought. For various reasons these efforts were condemned in the nineteenth century. Augustinian ways of thinking were replaced by a revived Thomism explicitly closed to those features of Augustine which opened Catholicism to Modernity.

#### *The Thomist Revival and its Collapse*

For those who promoted the Thomist revival, it was all important to reestablish the independence and power of the Church against the confident all consuming advance of the Modern secular state. They deemed it essential to define very strictly the exact respective domains of philosophy and of sacred doctrine, of reason and of faith, of nature and of grace, and to give to each a proper objectivity. Aquinas was revived as a Aristotelian turning to external nature for philosophical proofs of the existence of the God whose character, gracious teaching and saving acts were revealed to faith. Faith held them as a fixed deposit of propositions. That deposit provided the presuppositions of the deductive science of sacred theology, and saving grace was objectively conveyed by the sacraments of the Church. Such an Aquinas seemed to supply just what Augustine and the Modernity which claimed him seemed to lack.

For Augustine, Christian faith is our philosophy. For him revelation exposes the structure of the self to be image of the Trinity, and thus the believer passes from self-knowledge to the highest mystery of faith. For him, revelation heard from without moves the soul to find the very point where it touches God and to seek the knowledge of all things in His Truth. Therefore, Augustinian theology seemed incapable of sufficiently separating philosophy from sacred doctrine, reason from revelation, nature from grace. This perceived incapacity provoked the Holy Office to condemn the Catholic theologies which used Augustinian approaches to make peace with Modernity. It seemed these approaches could not also assist the Church in her struggle for freedom against that Modernity.

This Thomist revival has now collapsed for two reasons. First it has been discovered that St. Thomas is as much a Neoplatonist as an Aristotelian. On this account and because Aquinas is a true disciple of Augustine, true Thomism is not anti Modern.

Second, Modern ways of thinking have proved inescapable for the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council faced that reality and we now proceed from that assumption. Catholic thought now swims in the currents and counter currents of the intellectual flood pouring from Modern Idealism. Like Augustine and Modern philosophy, Catholic thought now finds beginning from the human self inescapable. The present Pope's philosophy is called "Personalist" and it does begin from the human self. His followers tell us that this was also the philosophy of the Council.

But, Catholic theology and spirituality have returned to more than the subjective beginning of Modern philosophy. It has also proved impossible to maintain the separations neoThomism was designed to secure. To defend and develop the discipline, order and moral teaching of the Church, His Holiness has needed to make reason more directly dependent on the forming power of revelation and to contemplate human nature more immediately from the perspective of grace than nineteenth century neoThomism did. The Pope sometimes cites Augustine when doing this. Hans Urs von Balthasar probably best represents this direction of contemporary Catholic spirituality.

An Augustinian tradition which knows and embraces its decisive contribution to the foundations of Western Modernity is essential to the Catholic spirituality of the future. If the well being of the Church once seemed to require us to renounce this, it now requires the renunciation of our renunciation. We will build upon the so-called "Transcendental" philosophies and theologies of the twentieth century. Karl Rahner is a notable exponent of this approach, but he has many predecessors and companions in what has been the most creative and developed direction of Catholic philosophic theology in our time. Building upon what our era has added to that long history means that we will explore more deeply the way to God and his creation revealed in the structure of the human self which by an internal necessity seeks God. For "Transcendental" theologians the structure of the question and of the one who must ask reveals more than any answer can do. In my view this is only one side of a complete Catholic philosophical theology, but it is necessarily present, and it is especially appropriate for Augustinians. We remember that Augustine was only able to overcome ancient skepticism by taking this route. Descartes, Kant and the "Transcendental" theologians have followed him.

*Converting the Augustinian Self: the Limits of Authority*

Confronting a narcissistic culture, what is called the "me" generation, we shall acknowledge that the secular western self has not and will not disappear. The attempts to deconstruct it and to make it only intuitive, immediate, impulsive, extatic, nothing

but spontaneous erotic creativity have not succeeded, though this has been the chief effort of humanistic education, many religious and most cultural institutions for some time. Even if objectifying knowledge, selfish calculation, technocratic and bureaucratic control for the sake of pleasure are only decadent forms of the western self, they remind us of how tough it is and how well established. After all we Augustinians know that this selfishness was established face to face with God. To make it healthy again it must, like Augustine, be converted.

The mere assertion of hierarchical authority will not convert a post Christian world and this is not the Augustinian way. It was not Augustine who developed the vision of heavenly and ecclesiastical hierarchies. He distinguished sharply between the state (whether pagan or Christian) and the church in pilgrimage, on the one hand, and the City of God, on the other. Though his ecclesiology and political theory were not and are not adequate to all the needs of Christendom, Augustinians will follow him in making this distinction which must abide. They will remember that their saint had, like our world, a Christian past which could only be reclaimed by conversion.

Even more in our world, than in his, communal membership and authority are not enough for most evangelism. Happily, the Augustinian will more characteristically ask: Is it true? or How can we know it is true? than asking, Who said it? For the Augustinian the authority of the speaker is only the beginning not the end of the question. Ultimately the Augustinian will direct the searcher to discover the origin of his quest within himself. Thus, we have the means to address the “me” generation.

Third, there is in Augustine a gracious Christocentric humanism which is able to invert the natural subordination of humans to angels, indeed to overthrow the hierarchy of creatures generally. It has certainly functioned at some points in western intellectual and institutional history to reverse hierarchical authoritarianism. Augustinians will surely be required to recollect this aspect of their heritage in the future also. Augustinian spirituality is not authoritarian and hierarchical even in the Church. It will be a spirituality for a church attempting to replace a hierarchical and authoritarian clerical style with a pastoral one. There is in Augustine no “divine” bishop.

Though the bishop is a priest, pastor, father and preacher, he is not the perfect or divine hierarch, nor the causally mediating link between the heavenly and the earthly orders, the point where the lowest rank of heaven touches the highest pinnacle of earth. Augustine definitely places the bishop within the church as a servant member, a sinner, a lamb of the flock, a son of the divine Father, a hearer of the Word. I judge that many in the church, including many bishops, will want to embrace this understanding of the Christian pastor.

Fourth, Augustinian spirituality is one of fall and conversion, of grace and forgiveness. The human which is without intermediary the mirror of God's Trinitarian life is abased

when it sees its actual ignorance and enslavement in that light. Memory becomes guilt and shame; its essential activity is confession. Those who wish to see these two views of the self in direct relation may meditate on the preface and first three chapters of Anselm's *Proslogion*.

This extremism at the center of Augustine's teaching has caused endless difficulties. We will have one reminder of these when we read the first chapters of John Calvin's *Institutes* where man discovers himself a worm because he has looked at himself in the mirror God holds up to him, but Calvin never finds in himself the immediate image of the Trinity. We need to remind ourselves and the Catholic Church that, having accepted the Augustinian account of sin, freedom and grace, leading to the western emphasis on original sin and predestination, we are also committed to its theological origin, namely, Augustine's unification of human self-knowledge and knowledge of the divine. Catholics may reject the Protestant developments and orderings of the Augustinian doctrines of sin, nature, grace, freedom, and justification, but the doctrines themselves are ours. The Protestants generally reject Augustine's understanding of the divine Trinity through the triadic structure of the human mind, but develop very strongly the religion of personal conversion dependent on it. Future Augustinian spirituality will be intellectually creative and genuinely ecumenical by holding both.

### *Theological Foundations*

Let us recollect the structure of the self as it is the life of the Most Holy Trinity. God the Father is being as absolute source. His mirror in the human mind is memory in which, from which, and to which all is. The being of the Father is uttered and conceived in the Son who is His eternal Word; His mirror in the human mind is conceptual thought, the activity of science and wisdom. Because the eternal Word loves the being whose fullness He expresses, and because the Father loves himself imaged in the activity of thought, in their very difference these two are united in an activity of Love. This Love between the Father and the Son is the Person of the Holy Spirit. His mirror in the human mind is the will or love. This sounds very abstract and of necessity it is. This is the way fundamental structure must appear to humans but it has important consequences.

(i) To begin at the absolute beginning, Augustinian thought is founded in being, put technically, that means it cannot avoid metaphysics, the scientific wisdom devoted to being. Augustinian thought is as much a philosophy of being as any, but it will not be dogmatically or uncritically realist.

Christianity is for Augustine "our philosophy." So his metaphysics is not separated off from what revelation teaches about the fundamental structure of God, world, and self. Augustine's metaphysics is genuine Christian philosophy and has two results. (a) First, being and self belong together. Being, or reality, is not something merely given out there, outside the self, a fact or facts against which the self is broken. No, rather being is

a moment in the activity of self. This thought of Augustine is the root of Modern philosophy. (b) Second, in God, and therefore absolutely, being gives itself to thought. This merits a consideration of its own.

(ii) The Being of the Father is altogether communicated to and expressed in the Son whom Scripture and philosophy both call LOGOS, thinking. Thus Augustinian theology is inescapably onto-theo-logy: being, God and thought together. Martin Heidegger, the greatest philosopher of our time, maintained that their fateful union in western culture resulted in a will dominated technocracy which has lost being in the knowledge and manipulation of beings.

Generally the theologians of the last 70 years, accepting Heidegger's description of the self and of our historical fate, have aimed to separate being, God and thought. Ultimately, this is not possible for Augustinians. They must either more honestly confront Heidegger or die. This fixes the limits to which Augustinians can travel with "Transcendental" theologians. So far as they place knowledge of the questing self against objective conceptual knowledge of God, replacing conceptual, or thematic, knowledge, we cannot go with them. Augustine's God is not the Unknown for conceptual thought who is only known in and at the world. Ours is a spirituality which lives on the doctrine of the faith and gives conceptual form to theological realities. Its future will find meaning and truth in the conceptual forms of Christian theology.

(iii) Of course we must learn again what thought and truth are. Before we can learn from or teach Augustinian spirituality we must hear what St. Augustine says about the teacher. Remember that for Augustine, no mere human can teach anyone anything. More mere information is actually the enemy of spiritual knowledge. So, scholars and the most sophisticated professional teachers are part of the problem for us. Distinguishing sharply between the sources and the interpretative traditions derived from them, scholars divide us even further from the origins of wisdom and multiply facts. If we attempt to teach just more and more, endlessly more, information, we are enemies of the health of souls. Scholarship is a necessary but subordinate tool in Augustinian spirituality.

The culture of our time is a culture of experiences, of facts, of information. We have self-consciously turned against our Augustinian origins, deconstructing the self, in order to live at the surface in passions and poses. We deny metaphysics and ontology and thus have lost our memory. For us thoughts do not reveal the structure of the self. At best we have only diverse 'insights'. Thus, in an Augustinian analysis, commitment has become impossible because the loving will cannot fix itself on the known abiding good. Plato showed, and Augustine agreed, that experience is, as such, the enemy of wisdom, true knowledge. In the flux of experience there is in fact neither knower nor known. In our time, even more than in the times of Plato and Augustine, the teacher

and what he teaches remain outside us in the inundating flux of the information explosion.

For Augustine teaching was only possible because of Christ, the LOGOS, and ultimately when Christ became our teacher. For only Christ as God and man spoke to us both from within and from without at once. Only Christ the Son of the Father, incarnate of the Virgin Mary, joined our internal and external discourses. Only because of Him, and ultimately by Him, can we discover from experience the deep structure of the self which we had forgotten. For this self-distracted age of Western culture, the determining world culture, there can be neither authentic being nor loveable knowledge, nor decision and commitment which are authentically acts of the will, unless the self be confronted and discovered again in what it experiences. Our teaching must have again that Christian and Augustinian character.

(iv) Augustinian interiority is a necessity for the future in respect to liturgy and the sacraments. For Augustine sacraments are effective signs of God's love. To participate in them we must enter by knowledge and love into spirit's signifying activity. Knowledge of, and love for, what the sign intends is essential. Subjective, interior participation is essential. Being and self are never separated for Augustine. Knowledge of their union is the heart of Christianity for him. Of course the other side of this union is equally determinative for him. The sacraments are objectively effective. They signify a reality which works through them. The identity between God and humans achieved through the sacraments is not in the subjective acts of signifying, rather signifying has itself an objective presupposition. Nothing will be harder or more necessary for future Augustinian spirituality than maintaining Augustine's balance in respect to the sacraments. Before the Second Vatican Council, liturgy was paradoxically often at the same time both private rather than communal and almost magically objective. Since the Council, liturgy is too often communal and practical at the expense of interiority, and paradoxically subjective at the expense of depth.

(v) The sacraments are God's loving means of union with us and properly effect loving union with Him and with the City of God. We come then to the third aspect of the Augustinian self, love or will. As he says, the will is all important. On account of his emphasis on the will, there is almost no distortion of Western culture for which Augustine is not blamed. We are told by the Heideggerians that he is at the origins of a supposed Latin turn from a contemplative Greek reverent beholding of being to an endless manipulation of beings as objects of the empty will to power. Heideggerians would convert us from an Augustinian theology of the conceptualizing LOGOS in order to wrest us from the objectifying habits of the western mind and will. But such a conversion, were it possible, is not the way to the future.

In fact, it is very evident that the will has no empty autonomy for Augustine. Will originates for Augustine in the emergence of thought from being. It is found in their unification from out of their distinction.

Whatever that means, and many have made their theological careers by saying that it means nothing, at least it can not mean that will is independent of truthful thought, thought which holds to and reveals being. What it really does mean frightens us more than our misrepresentation of it. That is why we misrepresent it.

It means that the practical, decision, and the works of love can have, and do have, and must have their ground in the revelation of being in thought. This is the standard for and true character of our fundamental Christian institutions. Further, if they correspond to their spiritual origin, they must give and will give and must be made to give satisfaction to the individual self. If you want to make a radical beginning of the Augustinian spirituality of the future, try implementing that vision of institutions in the convent where you live! At enmity with the Augustinian doctrine of the will and thus of love are endless mindless practicality, cynicism which keeps decision on the same plane with experiences: multiple and tentative. Its enemies are also those who determine the laws of love from the necessities of the body, here the libertines and the reactionaries meet.

(vi) Future Christian spirituality is inescapably Augustinian just because it is inescapably union with God and neighbour by the “more excellent way” of love. Can we imagine the Christian assent as a dialectic of knowing and unknowing toward an unknowable God without being? Can we conceive of union which is neither by love nor by concentration on Christ? Can we aspire to final beatitude which does not fully reconstitute the self? Yet, historically, the Dionysian spirituality, the alternative western spirituality to the Augustinian, had these characteristics. So unimaginable and inconceivable was this alternative to the Twelfth Century Augustinians who were almost the first Latins to encounter it that the God who is, the love of Christ for us and our love for him as the way to union with the Father by participation in the resurrection of his Son, were all read into the Dionysian corpus which possessed a complete logic without them. The Augustinian cocktail mixing the God who is, the human self as God's direct mirror, and love as the way to him has proved historically so explosive that many, perhaps most, advanced theologians are trying to escape it. Can we so mix it that it is salvific rather than destructive? That is the challenge for those who would carry Augustinian spirituality into the future.

To sum up: Augustine found in self, world and God the same fundamental triadic structure. The Trinitarian God and the human self are both best understood as the ceaseless movement into one another of being, understanding, and love. Therefore the best way to God is through understanding ourselves. *Gnothi seauton*, know thyself. We are to move inward so as to move upward. We are to move from exterior things to find

the higher things. There, inwardly, we encounter God. In and through the self known deeply, we find God, in God, we find ourselves: ourselves in their true reality, more fully known than we know ourselves, better loved than we love ourselves, eternally fully alive.

Thus the final future of Augustinian spirituality is to see God “face to face” and to know “as we are known.” By this theological and philosophical anthropology and cosmology, Augustine gave the Latin Christian spirituality its specific character and determined the fate of Western civilization. There is no future for Western Christianity religious or secular without a recovery of Augustinian spirituality.

Why is the Church so unconscious of this need and so ill equipped to supply it? In brief because Augustine is found at the origins of the Protestant Reformation, of Modern philosophy and of the Modern controversies about grace (like Jansenism) which have so troubled the Catholic Church for five centuries. For almost five hundred years she has felt forced very often to combat, condemnation and silence. As the cause of so much trouble, Augustine has been treated with suspicion and an attempt was made to impose an alternative philosophical and theological mind on the Latin Church. That effort has now failed in part because it required misrepresenting both Augustine and Aquinas. With that failure the initiative is now with the Augustinians.

Shall we so listen to Augustine as to hear what he and his followers have to teach us? Shall we so examine ourselves in the light of what we hear that we can begin to discover whether what Augustine and his friends teach is true? Shall we try to find a way to God in this examination? On our answers to these questions the contribution of the Order of St. Augustine to the future of Augustinian spirituality depends. That spirituality must be at the heart of the future, this is not in doubt . The only question is as to the role this great Order will play in the Augustinian future.

W.J. Hankey  
July 1994