

and this sort of spirituality, easily formulated, is the be-all and end-all of most Christian lives. However, someone who is sensitive to contingency will recognise that God exercises a seemingly direct influence on the soul, much less easy to formulate. One obvious way is by calling a soul to the religious life. But this, while beginning as a contingency (for one is not bound to respond) becomes by the vows a 'necessity'. However, the response to the will of God's good pleasure should not end there. It certainly did not for Dom John, as later on I hope to show.

## St Augustine on the Trinity—VII

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In this concluding article on St Augustine's great masterpiece, as well as seeing how he finally completes the many subtle patterns of his thought, we must also recapitulate and try to get a comprehensive view of the work as a whole. In his closing book, xv, he himself provides the reader with a recapitulation of the earlier books. But first we must see how in books XIII and XIV he finishes what we can almost call the history of the divine image in man which he began in book XII. In so doing he also brings to a conclusion the analysis of this image which he had begun much earlier in book IX.

In book XII, then, he had introduced his discussion of the 'inner man', or mind, by distinguishing its lower function of concern with temporal things from its higher function of contemplating eternal things. He told the story of these two functions of mind, or rather made the Bible tell it for him, by an ingenious adaptation of the story of Adam and Eve. It is the story, that is to say, of the fall of Everyman, of the seduction of the noblest in him, the contemplative, God-attracted compass needle of his mind by the deceitful, animal, serpentine lowest element in him, his sensuality, through the intermediary of the practical, inquisitive, busy feminine function of the mind. Thus the image in man, which can only be realised in the highest reaches of mind, is overpowered and smothered and defaced by the not-image, those analogous trinities which in book XI he had ascertained in the lower levels of human awareness.

Interwoven with this 'story' pattern is precisely the diagrammatic analysis of these trinities at the lower levels of awareness as models of the divine image at the highest level. To forward this analysis Augustine had also introduced in book XII his distinction between *scientia*—knowledge in a down to earth sense, *savoir-faire*—and *sapientia*, wisdom; the former being the proper endowment of the lesser, feminine function of mind, and the latter of the higher, masculine element. And it is only in the contemplative activation of wisdom that Augustine will consider the divine image is ever realised.

In book XII the 'story' is continued; but it is now no longer the story of man's fall but of his reconciliation, and of the divine image renewed; and so Adam and Eve fade into the background. Just as it was the feminine function of mind, however, which initiated the fall—pride conjured forth by that knowledge which puffs up; so it is the feminine function of mind which initiates the reverse movement—knowledge humbling itself in faith. If the first instalment of the story was told in terms of Adam and Eve, one might half expect Augustine to tell the sequel in terms of the second Adam and the second Eve; and to some extent he does—particularly in terms of the second Adam. The symbolic reference of our Lady to the mind's feminine function as used in faith unto salvation is not developed at all fully, like the contrary sinister symbolism of Eve. But it is hinted at in a most elaborately antithetical passage which sets out the suitability, the beautiful propriety, of the incarnation and the virgin birth:

God could have created a second man to be the conqueror of the first man's conqueror in any way he chose. But he judged it best, in order to conquer the enemy of the human race, to take himself a man from the race that had been conquered; to take him, however, from a virgin, whose conceiving had spirit instead of flesh, *faith* instead of lust, for its prelude. Nor was there present any fleshly desire by which others who contract original sin are sown and conceived. On the contrary, without the slightest trace of such a thing, it was by *believing*, not by embracing, that holy virginity was made fruitful . . . (XIII, 23 (18)).

Here, it is true, the virgin motherhood of Mary is explicitly presented only as the achievement of faith, not also as the symbol of it. But the implicit suggestion of its symbolic value may be inferred from the long discussion on faith, a manifestation of the mind's lower function, cognate with *scientia*, in the middle of which this passage occurs.

In any case the symbolic reference of Jesus and Mary is clearly a much

more difficult matter to handle than that of Adam and Eve. It is not simply that here we are dealing with historical persons, there with 'metahistorical types', or however we may try to categorise Adam and Eve; for in Augustine's eyes they were as much historical persons as our Saviour and his mother, and orthodoxy still forbids us today to deny them all historical reality. But ordinarily a symbolic person, even though real, is subordinate as symbol to the reality symbolised. In St Paul's allegory Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael are subordinate to the two testaments; they are less important. So in Augustine's study of the divine image in man Adam and Eve are subordinate to the psychological realities he uses them to illumine. But one cannot possibly subordinate Christ, and it is scarcely appropriate to subordinate the Virgin, even as symbols, to lesser human realities. Yet one must allow them to have a symbolic reference to these realities of human nature and destiny, a reference which describes for man his meaning, his value, and his direction.

This problem is implicit, but only implicit, in the way Augustine develops his theme in book XIII. First he shows the affinity of faith with *scientia*, the proper act of the mind's lower function. For the object of *scientia*, as he uses the word, is temporal and material reality. And most of what we know about temporal and material things we accept on faith, as for example that Tokyo is the capital of Japan, or that Sir Alec Douglas-Home is Prime Minister. Furthermore, most of what we accept on Christian faith is temporal and material fact, the whole course of salvation history culminating in the birth, death and resurrection of Christ the incarnate Word.

Then he goes on to show the necessity of Christian faith, arguing from the universal desire of men to be happy. This desire implies, for its complete fulfilment, a desire for immortality, because a happiness that comes to an end is not perfect happiness—its coming to an end cannot be included in the desire for it. But it is only faith that can give us a serene certainty of immortality; a certainty which no philosophical arguments can provide. Even if some men can follow and accept such arguments, they do not reach to the fulness promised by faith, namely the immortality of the whole man, body and soul, in the resurrection:

Whether human nature can achieve this immortality, which it yet acknowledges to be so desirable, is no small question. But if faith is there, which is found in those to whom Jesus gave the power of becoming sons of God, there is no question at all. In the effort to answer it by human arguments only a few men of outstanding

intelligence, enjoying plenty of leisure, trained in the subtleties of philosophy, have been able tentatively to investigate the immortality of the soul alone . . . But this faith of ours promises on divine authority, not human argument, a future immortality to the whole man, who consists of course of soul and body, and who is thus assured of a true and complete happiness (XIII, 12 (9)).

It is now that Augustine goes on to sketch the pattern of salvation, or rather of justification, by the redemptive acts of the Mediator. He prefers the word 'justification', because he unfolds the matter in the traditional dramatic terms of a contest with the devil, in which God defeats the adversary not by his power, which would as it were have been too easy and have lacked value, but by his justice; not by might, but by right. The passage on the virgin birth quoted above occurs in the course of this sketch. The whole thing looks like a digression from the subject of faith, the healing act of the mind's lower function; just as a similar excursus on the redemption in book IV looked like a digression from the subject of the sending of divine persons, which he was there engaged upon.<sup>1</sup> But each apparent digression is in fact a deliberate transposition of the subject in hand into the mode of the central mystery of the Christian faith. How the transposition works in each case Augustine does not explain; perhaps he could not, because it is really a matter of having an ear for a certain kind of theological music. But that it was performed deliberately he as good as tells us when summing up this section in book XIII:

It is a point of faith that this same faith defines itself in Christ, who in the flesh rose from the dead, to die no more; and that only through him can anyone be released from the devil's tyranny, through the forgiveness of sins . . . All this I have discussed in this book as best I could within the limits available, even though I had already said much about the same topic in the fourth book of this work. But there I had one reason, here another; there I was meaning to show why and how Christ was sent by the Father in the fulness of time, having those people in mind who say that the sender and the sent cannot be equal in nature. Here on the other hand my aim has been to distinguish active *savoir-faire* from contemplative wisdom (XIII, 25 (20)).

At the end of this book he returns briefly to the subject of trinities in man. The trinity we find with reference to this *activa scientia*, proper to the mind's lower function, is still not the image of the divine Trinity.

<sup>1</sup>See the first of these articles, June 1961, p. 547.

Nor is the trinity elicited by that form of, or prelude to, this *scientia* which we call faith. When a man believes the words of this faith—the creed—to be true, and loves them, when the just man lives by the faith that works through love, then he is certainly living according to the inner man, he is renewed in the spirit of his mind; but he still has not realised in himself the image of the divine Trinity. The reason why this is so, Augustine goes on to consider in book XIV, where he at length returns to the image which he adumbrated in book X.<sup>2</sup>

As for the religious knowledge which we have just seen sketched out in book XIII in what we might call 'An Essay on Justification', knowledge 'by which the saving faith that leads to true happiness is begotten, nourished, defended, strengthened; knowledge in which a great many of the faithful are not in the least proficient, though they are very proficient in faith itself', the trinity realised in the retention, contemplation, and love of this faith or this knowledge is not to be regarded as the image of God, because we must not think of placing in temporal things what finds its proper place in eternal things (XIV, 3, 4 (1, 2)). The objects of such knowledge and faith happened in time, and we learn them in time; knowledge and faith about them come to the mind 'from outside'. There is thus no suitable representation of the consubstantiality of the divine persons.

It is true that besides believing temporal things like the mysteries of the incarnation and redemption by faith, we also believe eternal things, like the mystery of the Trinity which has been our whole concern. But though the object believed is eternal, our faith in it is still temporal; we acquired it at a certain point in our lives, we learned it, not having known it before, and furthermore it will come to an end. Faith will pass away and give place in heaven to vision. So retaining, contemplating, loving our faith in the Trinity, precisely as faith, cannot realise the image of God. It is still marked by temporality. But the image of the creator that we have to find in man's rational or intellectual soul must be something that 'is immortally ingrafted in its immortality' (XIV, 6 (4)).

Augustine now recalls the image sketched in book X, constituted by the mind's remembering, understanding, and loving itself, and subjects it to some searching criticism. We have just stated a requirement for the image that it should be as it were congenital to the mind, *immortaliter immortalitati ejus insita*. Can one really say, as one must if this condition is to be satisfied, that a baby's mind remembers, understands, and loves itself? Perhaps, he suggests, we can say that it would if it were not

<sup>2</sup>See fifth article, April 1963, p. 435 ff.

distracted by its sensations, which wholly preoccupy its attention. The strength of sensible attraction on infantile curiosity is shown by what happens if a mother is careless enough to leave a night light burning in a position which the child can just look at out of the corner of its eyes, without being able to turn its head—it gives itself a permanent squint. In any case we can save this image of God in infants by saying that it is not a case of the infant's mind being ignorant of itself, but of its being unable to think about itself (xiv, 7 (5)).

The point is, whenever a man first becomes aware of himself (or rather his mind aware of itself), he does not find himself anywhere but in himself. This knowledge is not adventitious, it does not come from outside; it was potentially there all the time. But it is only actualised by actual thought; it is only in an act of thought that a mental word is produced, a word of self-understanding begotten from self-memory. Once again he makes it clear that he finds the image of the Trinity properly realised not in powers of the mind (as the catechism would have it) but in mental *acts* of remembering, understanding and willing; and not in such acts in general, but in actually remembering, etc., a definite object, namely in the first instance *self*.<sup>3</sup>

However, we must not shun the catechism's Scylla only to be caught by Charybdis opposite. Augustine accepts that the mere capacity so to remember, understand, and will in the first instance oneself, however remote it is from being actualised, still entitles the mind to be called God's image; because it was made in God's image insofar as it is able to use reason and understanding in order to understand and contemplate God. And from the first moment of its existence this quality of image is always there, however faint, almost to vanishing point (as in infants), or however badly tarnished and disfigured (as in sinners). But it is only the actual use of such ability that will bring the image to life, or—so to say—switch it on.

The first stage of switching it on, then, is remembering, etc., oneself. And in this trinity, because mind is always present to itself, and does not come to itself from outside—even though it has not always been actually thinking about itself—we can recognise the consubstantiality of the three acts with the mind, and their equivalent co-eternity with it, which justifies us at last in seeing in this trinity an image of the divine. But Augustine will not let himself off lightly. There is another serious objection: is there any real sense in talking about remembering oneself?

But you will say: 'This is not memory, this act by which mind,

<sup>3</sup>See fifth article, April 1963, p. 429.

which is always present to itself is said to remember itself. Memory has reference to things in the past, not the present; thus moralists have divided prudence into these three aspects, memory, understanding, foresight; clearly assigning memory to things past, understanding to things present, and foresight to things future' (XIV, 14 (11)).

Augustine merely admits that he is not using memory in the usual sense of the word, and quotes Virgil to show that even masters of language talk about a man forgetting himself; when Virgil says that Ulysses did not forget himself, what else did he mean to say except that he remembered himself? The making present to the mind of what is past, which we usually mean by memory, is only a special case of making patent to the mind what is latent; and so we can extend the name memory to this further case, and talk now even more appropriately of remembering oneself than of remembering the past.

Now we go on to the second and capital stage of 'switching on' the image of God—remembering, understanding and loving God. This is wisdom. He ends his remarks on the first stage by saying:

This trinity of the mind, then, is the image of God, not however simply because the mind remembers, understands and loves itself, but because it is thereby able to remember, understand and love him by whom it was made. When it does this it becomes wise. If it fails to do so, then even when it remembers, understands and loves itself, it is foolish. Let it remember its God then, after whose image it was made, and understand and love him. To put it in a nutshell, let it worship God . . . ; for it is written, 'Behold the worship of God is wisdom' (Job 28. 28); and it will be wise, not by its own light but by partaking of that supreme light (XIV, 15 (12)).

Now at last the image is realised or quickened by direct, living contact with its original exemplar. Nor is this done by the mind's going outside itself, or learning about God 'out there' from its knowledge of the external world, but by discovering God within itself, or itself within God. For it is by its very nature as mind *capax Dei*, that is open to God, created deep calling directly to uncreated deep. Of course we do learn about God from the world, we learn about him from scripture and by instruction in the faith. But such knowledge of God is knowledge of him as an object, knowledge of him in the third person, so to say. It is not enough by itself; its function is to stimulate discovery of him in the second person, as a Thou. That is the relationship the mind establishes with him in worship; and the essence of worship is in the biblical phrase 'to know the Lord', a knowledge that begins in remembering him and

expresses itself in loving him. It is the culminating point of conversion to God.

It is this realisation of the image in conversion to God of which St Paul speaks when he says 'Be refashioned in the newness of your mind' (Rom. 12. 2), and 'Be renewed in the spirit of your mind' (Eph. 4. 23), and 'Put on the new man who is being renewed according to the image of him who created him' (Col. 3. 10).

But this renewal does not happen in one moment of conversion like that other sort of renewal which happens in the one moment of baptism by the forgiveness of all sins . . . Just as it is one thing to throw off a fever and another to recover from the weakness the fever has caused; one thing to remove the bullet from the body, another to heal the wound it made by a second process of cure; so the first cure is to remove the cause of sickness, and this is done by the forgiveness of all sins; the second cure is to heal the sickness, and this is done through making progress little by little in renewing this image . . . And when the last day of this life finds anybody making this progress and holding to the faith of the Mediator, then he will be led into the presence of the God he has worshipped, to receive his body incorruptible at the world's end, not for punishment but for glory. Indeed only then will this image show a perfect likeness of God, when it enjoys the perfect vision of God (xiv, 23 (17)).

Only in heaven will conversion be complete; only then will the 'I-Thou' relationship with him be fully established, when we can talk to him face to face, as a man is wont to talk to his friend.

So Augustine concludes his history of man, God's image. But it is not the end of his work, which is being written about the Trinity, not about man. He has paraded before us man the image in order to help man see the Trinity in its image, as he is accustomed to look at his own face in a mirror. Now in the last book he assesses the result; it is, of course, a failure, as he knew it would be all along. The image, genuine though it is, is altogether too dim and hazy and fragmentary, like the reflection of trees on the wind-ruffled surface of a river, to give us a comprehensive sight of the divine Trinity. Starting from the knowledge we have of the Trinity given us in faith by revelation, we can indeed look at the image, observe the analogies, and so achieve a more discriminating hold both on the mystery of God and the destiny of man. But starting from our knowledge of the image we can never infer from the trinity of three coextensive acts of one mind (one person) a Trinity of three consubstantial persons in one God. All we can infer from the



image is what we can infer from the created world at large, 'that it has a most surpassing creator, who gave us mind and natural reason by which we tell that living things come before non-living things, intelligent beings before non-intelligent, just before unjust, beautiful before ugly. And so as we undoubtedly put the creator before things created, we say that he must pre-eminently live, and understand, and be the ultimate in justice and beauty, etc.' (xv, 6 (4)). All this applies equally and indifferently to the one God, and to each of the three divine persons, who each are the one God, and altogether are the one God. So too, the acts of remembering and understanding and loving, which we can infer from the image to belong pre-eminently to the creator, belong indifferently, as divine attributes, to the divine substance and each of the divine persons who are that substance; as divine attributes they are identical with the divine substance, for God does not so much have attributes as simply be whatever we can attribute to him, wisdom, love, intelligence, power, etc.

Augustine examines the incommensurability of the image to the divine original at some length, both with reference to the unity of God's substance and to each of the persons. He makes the point, vividly perceived centuries later by St Teresa of Avila, that the divine persons are more perfectly distinct from each other than three human beings, while at the same time they are more perfectly one in the divine substance than the single mind of one human person. He has much to say about the Holy Spirit and the analogue of mental willing, and he returns to the question why we do not say that the Holy Ghost was born or begotten, or call him Son. He ends an inconclusive discussion of the topic by quoting from one of his own sermons (99 on the Gospel of St John):

Because it is extremely difficult to distinguish generation from procession, being begotten from coming forth in the coeternal, coequal, and inseparable Trinity, let it suffice for those who cannot rack their brains any further if I quote what I said in a sermon on this matter in the ears of the Christian people. I was teaching them from the testimonies of scripture that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son: 'If then,' I said, 'the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, why did the Son say he proceeds from the Father (Jn. 15. 26)? Why indeed, except according to his custom of referring whatever is his own to him from whom he himself is? From the Father the Son has his being God (for he is God from God), so also from the Father he has the Holy Spirit's proceeding or coming forth from himself. So also the Holy Spirit has it from the Father

that he also proceeds from the Son as he proceeds from the Father. Here we may perhaps begin to understand, as far as creatures such as we are can understand, why the Holy Ghost is not also said to be born, but only to proceed. For if he too were called Son, he would of course be called the Son of both, and that would be preposterous. No one is the son of two other than of father and of mother. Heaven forbid we should imagine anything of that sort between God the Father and God the Son to produce the Holy Spirit. In any case even a human son does not come forth simultaneously from father and mother. When he proceeds from the father into the mother he does not at that moment proceed from the mother; and when he proceeds into the light of day from the mother, he does not at that moment proceed from the father. The Holy Spirit however does not proceed from the Father into the Son and then proceed from the Son to the sanctification of created beings; no, he proceeds simultaneously from each . . .'

I have copied this from my sermon into this book, but addressing myself, now as then, to the faithful, not to unbelievers (xv, 48 (27)). This reference to unbelievers brings Augustine back to the starting point of his work; for in his introduction in book I he professed to be writing against those who despise the starting point of faith and are led astray by an immature and exaggerated love of reason.<sup>4</sup> This allusion indicates, in my opinion, the sure grasp Augustine had on the extraordinarily intricate pattern of his work; for from that opening sally to the present point at the end of the work he has scarcely been occupied with unbelievers at all. The *De Trinitate* is in no sense an apologetical or polemical work. But it has been concerned, in a way so characteristic of the author, in trying to understand what we believe. The reference here, then, to unbelievers, and the brief exhortation to them, which follows, to believe in the testimonies of scripture to the divine Trinity, if they have not been able to grasp the analysis of the trinity of their own minds, this is purely schematic and structural. Let us take the opportunity, then, of recapitulating the structure of the whole work.

Its opening section, books I-IV, is a detailed examination of these testimonies. The distinction and the equality of the divine persons is established in book I with a wealth of New Testament texts. But already the strong dramatic element in the pattern of the whole work is introduced with the constant harping on I Cor. 15. 24-28, 'when he hands over the kingdom to God and the Father . . . When all things are sub-

<sup>4</sup>See first article, June 1961, p. 540 ff.

jected to him, then the Son also himself will be subject to him who subjected all things to him, that God may be all in all'. The revelation of the mystery still awaits its consummation at the *parousia*. This dramatic interest is brought much to the fore in the next three books, which by way of discussing the mission of the divine persons to show that it does not mean any inequality between them, trace the divine interventions in history in the Old and New Testaments; showing that no divine persons were sent in the O.T. theophanies, but only ministering angels, and displaying the N.T. missions of the Son and the Holy Ghost as saving acts. Hence the long exposition of the redeeming sacrifice of Christ in book iv.

Books v-vii are a frankly mataphysical section, in which the mystery of faith is justified and defended mainly against the Arians. The technical theological terms needed to set out the mystery, such terms as 'relationship', 'person', 'substance', the difference between Greek and Latin terminology, are here explained and indeed developed. In this section he fulfils his plan of 'giving reasons' for the scriptural faith he has established in the first four books.<sup>5</sup>

In these first seven books, then, divided into two sections, he has been considering the mystery objectively, God as he is in himself and as he has revealed himself. Now in book viii he begins to procede 'in a more inward' fashion, to approach God subjectively as he is in us, in the looking-glass world of creation. This book is the point of contact between the two worlds, where we begin to go through the looking-glass, and is in fact the most difficult and involved part of the whole work. Its function is to establish our right to this looking-glass procedure, as I call it.<sup>6</sup>

Once through the looking-glass, we procede to identify and sketch out the divine image in the human mind in books ix and x,<sup>7</sup> and then to find analogues for it, images of the image in the lower reaches of human awareness in book xi. These three books are mainly rational or psychological in tone, corresponding in the looking-glass world to books v-vii in their discussion of the realities of the objective divine world in itself.

Already in book xi there are stirrings of the dramatic interest again, the drama of the divine image; but it is only fully opened in book xii, where we pass from the outer man of the senses back to the inner man of

<sup>5</sup>See second and third articles, November 1961, and March 1962.

<sup>6</sup>See fourth article, July 1962.

<sup>7</sup>See fifth article, April 1963.

the mind,<sup>8</sup> whom we had considered only *in abstracto* in books IX and X. In examining the two functions, higher and lower, feminine and masculine of the inner man, we live over again in *Everyman* the story of Adam and Eve and the serpent, the fall of man, the disfigurement of the image. In book XIII, which corresponds so clearly to book IV, being its looking-glass reflection, the restoration of the image begins in faith with the rectification of the Eve function of mind, whose type and model is now Mary. In book XIV we come back again to the image as it was sketched in book X, but now it is the term of the dramatic process of renovation or renewal. But this term is itself only a beginning, for the renewal is a lifelong process that will only be complete in heaven, when we finally emerge from our looking-glass world to behold God face to face. Book XV, if Augustine's pattern were to be wholly satisfactorily rounded out, ought to have been written in heaven. As it is, it concludes his work by showing why it cannot be satisfactorily concluded.

After his brief exhortation to the unbelievers which we took occasion of to make this recapitulation, he concludes with what art he can this side of the perfection of eternity, first by a short soliloquy, an address to his soul which recalls his exploration of the mind, and then by a prayer to the One in Three who is the sole real object of his quest. In the course of it he very handsomely apologises for talking so much. We cannot give the whole prayer, but we must let him have the last word by quoting the end of it:

When therefore we get at last to thee, there will be an end to these 'many things which we say and get nowhere' (Eccli. 43. 29); and thou alone shalt abide, all in all (I Cor. 15. 28); and without end we will say one thing praising thee together in one, ourselves also made one in thee. Lord, one God, God Trinity, whatever comes from thee in what I have said in these books, let those that are thine acknowledge on looking at it; whatever comes only from me do thou and thine overlook on recognising it. Amen.

<sup>8</sup>See sixth article, August-September 1963.