Åke Bergvall

Augustinian Perspectives in the Renaissance

The study investigates four areas in which the Augustinian presence was felt throughout the Renaissance: psychology, epistemology, the arts, and politics (one chapter is dedicated to each area). Augustine's intellectual and spiritual development is interpreted as consisting of an early Plotinian period (ca. 386–396), and a later Pauline period (ca. 386–430). These influences resulted in two partially contradictory perspectives: one predominantly vertical (incorporeal and a-historical), the other more horizontal (taking into account the vicissitudes of time and history). The argument of the study is that the Plotinian and Pauline paradigms influenced the Renaissance in different ways, traceable in its literature. Without pretending comprehensiveness, the study follows a rough chronological outline. After an introduction that investigates Augustine's development, the first chapter centers on Petrarch while the last three have Edmund Spenser as their special focus. Chapters two and four have a broader perspective that in addition to Spenser take in seminal thinkers from Ficino and Luther to Greville and Hooker.

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ABSTRACT

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The study investigates four areas in which the Augustinian presence was felt throughout the Renaissance: psychology, epistemology, the arts, and politics (one chapter is dedicated to each area). Augustine's intellectual and spiritual development is interpreted as consisting of an early Plotinian period (ca. 386–396), and a later Pauline period (ca. 386–430). These influences resulted in two partially contradictory perspectives: one predominantly vertical (incorporating real and a-historical), the other more horizontal (taking into account the vicissitudes of time and history). The argument of the study is that the Plotinian and Pauline paradigms influenced the Renaissance in different ways, traceable in its literature. Without pretending comprehensiveness, the study follows a rough chronological outline. After an introduction that investigates Augustine's development, the first chapter centers on Petrarch while the last three have Edmund Spenser as their special focus. Chapters two and four have a broader perspective that in addition to Spenser take in seminal thinkers from Ficino and Luther to Greville and Hooker.

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Acknowledgments

The making of a study like this is a long and at times confusing process, and relies on many helping hands. I have been intrigued by St Augustine for almost two decades, and some of that interest was channeled into my dissertation on Sir Philip Sidney, published in 1989. The present book had its genesis in an essay (now forming the second half of chapter 3), yet it received its overall shape during a research leave at the University of North Carolina in the fall of 1991 and spring of '92. Thanks to a generous grant from the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation I could spend many a stimulating hour poring over books at the Davis Library in Chapel Hill. The igniting spark, though, came not from a printed book but from a work-in-progress manuscript: S.K. Heninger, Jr. asked me to read what was to become *The Subtext of Form in the English Renaissance*. While I had very little to add to his study, it triggered in my mind the importance of a basic dichotomy between an "early Plotinian" and a "late Pauline" Augustine, a dichotomy which had influenced the Renaissance in different and complex ways. As this initial insight developed, Tim Heninger has remained a trusted and valuably critical reader of the various essays and chapters that gradually coalesced into the present book.

Several of these essays are in print, and I want to thank the following journals for permission to use published material in revised and expanded form: *English Literary Renaissance*, *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*, *Studies in Philology*, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, and *Connotations*. As part of the process of publication I have also received many useful suggestions from several (to me) anonymous readers. Thank you! In addition to these unknown helpers I am especially grateful to Arthur F. Kinney for his general support, and to Sara Sturm-Maddox for her expert suggestions on my Petrarch chapters. Other careful readers include Inge Leimberg and Roger D. Sell. A special *gratias*! to Henrik Vitalis from the Uppsala classics department

for his invaluable help with the Latin. Like Marvin Gaye, however, I can be a stubborn kind of fellow, and therefore assume full responsibility for any errors or infelicities still left.

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Last but not least, this book (as so many other valuable things in my life) would never have come to fruition without the loving and caring support of my wife Rose.

Karlstad, October 2001

Å.B.

Abbreviations

WORKS BY AUGUSTINE SERIES

ACW	<i>Ancient Christian Writers</i> (Westminster, 1946-)
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i> (Turnholt, 1954-)
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> (Vienna, 1866-)
FOTC	<i>The Fathers of the Church</i> (New York, 1948-)
LCC	<i>The Library of Christian Classics. Augustine: Earlier Writings</i> (Philadelphia, 1963)

EDITIONS (LATIN AND ENGLISH)

<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Confessiones</i> . Ed. James J. O'Donnell. Oxford: Clarendon, 1992; <i>Confessions</i> . Trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961.
<i>C. Acad.</i>	<i>Contra Academicos</i> . Ed. W.M. Green. CCSL 29, 1970; <i>Against the Academics</i> . Trans. John J. O'Meara. ACW12, 1950.
<i>De Civ. Dei</i>	<i>De Civitate Dei</i> . Ed. Bernardus Dombart and Alphonsus Kalb. CCSL 47-48, 1955; <i>City of God</i> . Trans. Gerald G. Walsh et al. Garden City: Doubleday-Image, 1958.
<i>De Dial.</i>	<i>De Dialectica</i> . Ed. Jan Pinborg. Trans. B. Darrell Jackson. Dordrecht: Reidel, 1975.
<i>De Doct. Chr.</i>	<i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> . Ed. Josephi Martin. CCSL 32, 1962; <i>On Christian Teaching</i> . Trans. R.P.H. Green. Oxford: OUP, 1997.
<i>De Gen. c. M.</i>	<i>De Genesi contra Manichaeos</i> . Ed. Dorothea Weber. CSEL 91, 1998; <i>Two Books On Genesis Against the Manichees</i> . Trans. Roland J. Teske. FOTC 84, 1991.
<i>De Div. Q.</i>	<i>De Diversis Quaestionibus Octoginta Tribus</i> . Ed. Almut Muzybecher. CCSL 44A, 1975; <i>Eighty-Three Different Questions</i> . Trans. David L. Mosher. FOTC 70, 1982.
<i>De Lib. Arb.</i>	<i>De Libero Arbitrio</i> . Ed. W.M. Green. CCSL 29, 1970; <i>On Free Choice of the Will</i> . Trans. Anna S. Benjamin and L.H. Hackstaff. <i>The Library of Liberal Arts</i> 150. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964.
<i>De Mag.</i>	<i>De Magistro</i> . Ed. K.D. Daur. CCSL 29, 1970; <i>The Teacher</i> . Trans. John H.S. Burleigh. LCC, 1963.
<i>De Mus.</i>	<i>De Musica</i> . Ed. Guy Finaert and F.-J. Thonnard. <i>Bibliothèque Augustinienne: Oeuvres de Saint Augustin</i> 1:4, 1947; <i>On Music</i> . Trans. Robert Catesby Taliaferro. FOTC 4, 1947.

De Ord.

De Q. An.

De Trin.

De Ver. Rel.

En. in Ps.

Ench.

Epist.

Exp. Rom.

Retr.

De Ordine. Ed. W.M. Green. CCSL 29, 1970; *Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil.* Trans. Robert P. Russell. FOTC 1, 1948.
De Quantitate Animae. Ed. Wolfgangus Hörmann. CSEL 89, 1984; *The Greatness of the Soul.* Trans. Joseph M. Collier. ACW 9, 1950.
De Trinitate. Ed. W.J. Mountain and Fr. Glorie. CCSL 50, 1968; *On the Holy Trinity.* Trans. Arthur West Haddan and William G.T. Shedd. In vol 3 of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
De Vera Religione. Ed. K.D. Daur. CCSL 32, 1962; *Of True Religion.* Trans. John H. S. Burleigh. LCC 6, 1953.
Enarrationes in Psalmos. Ed. Eligius Dekkers and Iohannes Fraipont. CCSL 39, 1956.
Enchiridion ad Laurentium. Ed. E. Evans. CCSL 46, 1969; *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love.* Trans. J.F. Shaw. Chicago: Regnery-Gateway, 1961.
Epistulae. Ed. Al. Goldbacher. CSEL 44, 1904; *Letters.* Trans. Sister Wilfrid Parsons. FOTC 20, 1953.
Expositio Quarundam Propositionum ex Epistola ad Romanos; Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans. In *Augustine on Romans.* Ed. and trans. Paula Fredriksen Landes. Chico: Scholars Press, 1982.
Retractationes. Ed. Almut Mutzenbecher. CCSL 57, 1984; *Retractions.* Trans. Sister Mary Inez Bogan, FOTC 60, 1968.

Introduction

The Augustinian Perspectives

How know we that saint Augustine (which is the best or one of the best that ever wrote upon the scripture) wrote many things amysse at the begynnyng / as many other doctors doo? Verely by the scriptures / as he him selfe well perceived afterwarde when he looked moore diligently upon them / and revoked many thynges agayne. He wrote of many thynges which he understode not when he was newly converted / yet he had thorowly sene the scriptures / and followed the opinions of Plato and the commune persuasions of mans wisdom that were then famous.

—William Tyndale¹

I

St. Augustine, the fifth-century Church Father, cast a long shadow over early modern Europe, inspiring and troubling writers from Petrarch to Spenser. Faced with the newly discovered treasures of classical thought, poets and humanists, who with a few exceptions took their religion seriously, needed guidance in how to deal with the non-Christian heritage. Many felt that the Schoolmen with their arid logic were no longer adequate. Following Petrarch's lead, the humanists instead returned to the rhetorically trained patristic authors who had developed strategies for interaction with the surrounding pagan culture and thus could provide patterns for study and emulation.² "The Church Fathers," concludes Charles Trinkaus, "provided the frame within which renaissance humanists in great preponderance viewed

¹ William Tyndale, *The obedience of a Christian man* (Antwerp, 1528), fol. 16v.

² See Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Augustine and the Early Renaissance," *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1956): 355-72, and Eugene F. Rice, Jr., "The Renaissance Idea of Christian Antiquity: Humanist Patristic Scholarship," *Renaissance Humanism*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 3: 17-28.

the antique past."³ As a result, the original writings of the Fathers, perceived by the humanists as "classical" texts, gradually supplanted the redactions and compendia provided by Peter Lombard and others. The eastern Fathers were translated into Latin or studied in the original Greek, while new editions of the Latin Fathers were published at an increasing pace.⁴ Augustine played an especially exciting part in the early history of printing,⁵ so much so that by the sixteenth century more students and teachers at Cambridge University owned books written by him than by Plato or Calvin, not to speak of Ficino.⁶

The list of seminal writers whose thought was profoundly shaped by Augustine is long indeed. Even a partial inventory (with an English bias) would include names such as Petrarch, Salutati, Valla, Ficino, both Picos, Erasmus, Vives, More, Colet, Fisher, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Sidney, Spenser, Donne, Herbert, Milton—not to speak of the countless writers who show only intermittent interest. Not that any of these slavishly copied Augustine or agreed with him in everything. The point of this study is precisely to show how those authors most influenced by Augustine could differ greatly with each other and, on occasion, with uncongential aspects of the Father's thought. If the Renaissance saw Augustine as a guide, it mattered tremendously which Augustine it sought. Instead of talking about some all-encompassing "Augustinianism," we must learn to distinguish between several quite distinct Augustinian strains.

The need for a more discerning approach stems from the growing realization among patristic scholars that during his more than forty

³ Charles Trinkaus, *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism* (Ann Arbor: The Univ. of Michigan Press, 1983), p. 428. Trinkaus sees the relationship between secular and sacred as crucial to early modern Europe, and he emphasizes the particular importance of Augustine: "Unquestionably the relationship of the sacred and the secular became a critical problem in our period of the Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation; and the major cultural innovations—nominalism, mysticism, humanism, reformation theories—should perhaps be seen as varied attempts to clarify the relationship of secular and religious values while somehow preserving both. The revival of Augustine or 'Augustinianism' should be equally seen as a recourse to a thinker who seemed so centrally to be trying to solve the same problem" (p. xx). Trinkaus also elaborates Augustine's importance for the Renaissance in *In Our Image and Likeness*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970), 1: 18–20. For a similar appraisal, see Rice, p. 27.

⁴ See the chapter on "The Augustinian renaissance in the later Middle Ages" in Heiko A. Oberman, *Masters of the Reformation: The Emergence of a New Intellectual Climate in Europe*, trans. Dennis Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981), pp. 64–110. The high point of this concerted effort was Erasmus's celebrated patristic editions. In addition to Augustine (see following note), Erasmus edited complete editions of Jerome (1516), Cyprian (1520), Ambrose and Athanasius (1522), Hilary (1523), Irenaeus (1526), Ambrose (1527), Chrysostom (1530), Basil (1532), and Origen (published posthumously in 1536).

years of incessant writing, Augustine changed his views and indeed his complete outlook on some fundamental issues. He was himself frank about the process. "I endeavor to be one of those," he confesses in a letter, "who write because they have made some progress, and who, by means of writing, make further progress" (*Epist.* 143.2).⁷ In the prologue to the *Retractions*, a survey of all his published works written towards the end of his life, Augustine warns readers about what he now considers errors in his early thought. To better follow his development, he suggests we read his books in chronological order:

⁵ The very first Italian incunabulum was a 1467 Subiaco edition of *De Civ. Dei*, while the fourth book of *De Doct. Chr.*, entitled *De arte prædicandi*, had been printed in Strasbourg the year before, followed by the *De Civ. Dei* in 1468. Pride of place among early Augustinian publishers is taken by John Amerbach of Basle, who in 1489–97 published an edition consisting of the *Sermons*, the *Epist.*, and the *De Civ. Dei*, and in 1506 was the first to publish the complete *Opera omnia*, an edition even more important than that of Erasmus, whose Froben *Opera* (also Basle) came out in 1528–29. In addition to various reprints and pirated versions, the other big sixteenth-century edition of Augustine was published by Plantin in Louvain in 1576–77, providing the copy-text for numerous later editions. For the printing history of these early Augustinian editions, see Joseph de Ghellinck, S.J., *Patristique et Moyen Âge*, vol. 3 (Brussels: Édition Universelle, 1948), pp. 366–403.

To these complete editions must also be added the widely used patristic anthologies, in which Augustine accounts for some two thirds of the total number of entries. At least six anthologies, four of which were Protestant, were dedicated to Augustine alone. The Protestant anthologies were Johann Piscator's three-volume *Omnium operum divi Augustini epitome* (1537), and six later editions; Erasmus Sarcerius's *Præfatus sacrae scripturae commentum loci* (1539), as well as his shorter *De consensu verae ecclesiae et patrum* (1540), and two later editions; vol. 1 of Jean Crespin's three-volume *Bibliotheca studii theologiae* (1565). Two others were Catholic: Sebastian Annius's *Conclusiones catholicae ex divi Augustini dictis* (1553), and one later edition, and the reprint of Bartholomew Urbinat's 14th-century *Divi Aurelii Augustini milloquium veritatis* (1555). On these anthologies, see Anthony N.S. Lane, "Justification in Sixteenth-Century Patristic Anthologies," in *Authoritas Patrum: Contributions on the Reception of the Church Fathers in the 15th and 16th Century*, ed. Leif Grane, Alfred Schindler and Markus Wriedt (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1993): 69–95.

⁶ The mandatory sixteenth-century inventories (consisting mainly of book titles) made for deceased persons within the jurisdiction of Cambridge University, compiled and studied by E.S. Leedham Green, present a clear picture. While Augustine was among the top ten authors (41% of the 16th century inventories contain at least one of his works), we find Plato in the company of Luther at about half that figure (22%, trailing Calvin at 26%), while Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola do not reach even double digit figures. Excluding the writers of the Bible, only five authors were more widely owned than Augustine: Erasmus (by an amazing 73%), Cicero (69%), Aristotle (60%), Melancthon (50%), and Chrysostom (43%). See Leedham Green, *Books in Cambridge Inventories*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986). While Leedham Green lists 200 inventories made from 1535 to 1760, I have based my computations on the 176 inventories made in the sixteenth century. The library catalogues at Cambridge underscores the Augustinian dominance; consult "Augustine" in H.M. Adams, *Catalogue of Books Printed on the Continent of Europe, 1501–1600 in Cambridge Libraries*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967).

⁷ "... qui proficiendo scribunt et scribendo proficiunt, ..."

Let those, therefore, who are going to read this book not imitate me when I err, but rather when I progress toward the better. For, perhaps, one who reads my books in the order in which they were written will find out how I progressed while writing. (Prologue to *Retx*.)⁸

While many renaissance writers seem unaware of the complexity of Augustine's thought, others, however, were aware of his changing outlook, as is clearly seen in William Tyndale's comment in the epigraph above. The Protestant Reformers, who saw themselves as Augustine's direct heirs, were particularly conscious of his shift of focus,⁹ yet they were by no means the only ones to recognize it. Recognition, however, did not necessarily translate into consent. While Luther and Calvin held to the late anti-Pelagian bishop, some Catholic writers because of the Reformation gravitated towards the young Augustine.¹⁰ Yet if the Reformation highlighted the Augustinian tensions, Petrarch already had struggled to reconcile them, while others had aligned themselves squarely with either the young neoplatonic convert or the elder bishop. Ficino is a good example of the first category while Erasmus preferred the mature Augustine, brushing aside the early dialogues in which the Father "boasts with youthful conceit of any smattering of philosophy he had acquired."¹¹ In whichever direction their preferences led them, renaissance writers appropriated the "Augustine" that suited them best.

⁸ "Quapropter quicumque ista lecturi sunt, non me imitentur errantem, sed in melius proficiant. Inveniet enim fortasse quomodo scribendo profecerim, quisquis opuscula mea ordine quo scripta sunt legerit."

⁹ Martin Luther for one not only acknowledged Augustine's development but actually followed the Father by changing his own theological emphasis from a position close to that of the early Augustine (seen in the early commentary on the Psalms) to one saturated by the mature vision of the aging bishop. We shall return to Luther in chapter 2.

¹⁰ The Catholic scholar and polemicist Albert Pighius, for instance, in *De libero hominis arbitrio et divina gratia* [*Man's Free Will and Divine Grace*] (1542) clearly aligned himself with the views of the young Augustine in his attack on Calvin's views on the bondage of the will. Calvin, for his part, harnessed a multitude of quotations from anti-Pelagian and other late Augustinian writings in his responses, *Defensio sanctorum et orthodoxae doctrinae de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii adversus calumnias Alberti Pighii Campensis* [*The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius*] (1543). "Both men," writes Anthony N.S. Lane, "recognized the importance of discerning the changes in Augustine's position" ("Calvin and the Fathers in *Bondage and Liberation of the Will*," in *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex: Calvin as Protector of the Purer Religion*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser and Brian G. Armstrong, *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies* 36 (Kirkville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1997), p. 90.

II

In our own time patristic scholars have sometimes ignored Augustine's own pointers towards a diachronic interpretation of his writings and have instead presented his views as a seamless synchronic system.¹² Yet in recent years there has been a greater stress on the development, sometimes discontinuity, of Augustine's thought: "It is now generally accepted that Augustine himself must be studied as a man whose thought changed and developed over the years from his conversion through the many diverse controversies until the final revision of his works."¹³ In particular, many scholars now distinguish between an earlier period, the years between his conversion in Milan in 386 and entering the priesthood in 391 (followed by his consecration as a bishop in 396), and the long ecclesiastical career, right up to his death in 430.¹⁴ Not that we have two clear-cut periods separated by some cataclysmic event. Prodded by external circumstances or internal convictions, Augustine's exploring mind discarded or revised old assumptions throughout his life. Becoming the shepherd of souls, though, quickened the pace of change by radically changing the context for his thought. Being thrust into the active life of a churchman, he had to deal with the spiritual and social needs of a largely uneducated church.

Between 386 and 391, however, he had dedicated his life to a more philosophical pursuit, seeking God through solitary contemplation or in the conducive environment of a select circle of friends. At Cassiciacum, a peaceful country villa near Milan, he had most nearly realized his philosophic aspirations by gathering a select group (including his

¹¹ Erasmus, Letter to von Eck, in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 6, trans. R.A.B. Mynors and D.F.S. Thomson (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1982), pp. 34–35. Noting the second thoughts of the old bishop—"[Augustine] admits himself [in the *Retx*] that those books still have a touch of academic conceit in them"—Erasmus blames this state on the young convert's poor knowledge of St. Paul and goes on to attribute his "progress" to the influence of Jerome, whose biblical knowledge places him even higher in his estimation than Augustine.

¹² Preeminently seen in Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L.E.M. Lynch (New York: Random House, 1960).

¹³ Roland J. Teske, S.J., Introduction to *Saint Augustine on Genesis, The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 84 (Washington: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1991), p. 37. The new diachronic awareness is evident in, for example, John M. Rist's recent survey of Augustine's thought, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), or in the new encyclopedia *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); see e.g. Lewis Ayres and Michel R. Barnes' entry on "God," in which they distinguish between Augustine's "Early" and "Mature Understanding" (pp. 384–90).

¹⁴ See next page.

mother Monica and his son Adeodatus) to explore the nature of God and the soul.¹⁵ Augustine transcribed and edited these conversations in the form of Platonic dialogues—influenced, however, not so much by Plato as by the neoplatonism of Plotinus.¹⁶ Indeed, neoplatonic writings (some of the earlier essays from Plotinus' *Enneads* and possibly some works of Plotinus' disciple Porphyry)¹⁷ had been instrumental in releasing Augustine from the materialistic dualism of the Manichees. These works "stirred up an incredible conflagration" (*C. Acad.*

¹⁴ Rist affirms that "our three signposts (conversion in 386, ordination to the priesthood in 391 and the reply to Simplicianus in 396 [the year of the ordination to bishop]) are indisputable, and the evidence for them is easily discovered in Augustine's own text. But important changes," he adds, "in both the broad substance and the more minor details of Augustine's thought continued well after 396" (p. 15). Even a thematic study like Isabelle Bochet's *Saint Augustin et le Désir de Dieu* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1982) distinguishes between the two periods (p. 17), and limits her study to Augustine the bishop. My brief survey of Augustine's development is indebted to Peter Brown's excellent biographical study, *Augustine of Hippo* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), and R.A. Markus, *Seculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970). I have also benefited from Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1996), as well as Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), and Robert O'Connell's "trilogy": *St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man*, A. D. 386–391 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), *St. Augustine's "Confessions": The Odyssey of Soul*, 2nd ed. (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1989), and *The Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine's Later Works* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1987). While both Harrison and O'Connell give detailed accounts of Augustine's changes, the first tends to read the views of the mature bishop into the works of the young convert, while the second, in his single-minded attempt to prove that Augustine retained a neoplatonic belief in the pre-existence of the soul, does the opposite.

¹⁵ See *De Ord.* 2.18.47 and the *Solitiloques* 1.2.7.

¹⁶ There has been a heated discussion about whether Augustine's initial conversion was Christian or, in a first stage, only Platonic. But, according to Frederick Van Fleteren, "Out of this discussion has come an almost universal agreement that: (1) Augustine's conversion to Christianity was sincere insofar as he, a Christian neophyte, understood the faith he was about to embrace; (2) Augustine was converted to a kind of Neoplatonic Christianity which was in the air in Milan in the ninth decade of the fourth century; (3) both Plotinus and Porphyry influenced his conversion" ("St. Augustine's Theory of Conversion," in *Augustine: "Second Founder of the Faith,"* ed. Joseph C. Schnaubelt and Frederick Van Fleteren [New York: Peter Lang, 1990], p. 65).

¹⁷ There has been an ongoing debate since the early decades of this century as to whether Augustine was primarily influenced by Plotinus or by Porphyry. Of more recent participants, John O'Meara (followed by Frederick Van Fleteren and others) has supported the Porphyrian connection while Robert O'Connell has vigorously defended the Plotinian cause. Today the general consensus seems to be that Augustine was first introduced to a Latin translation of certain essays in Plotinus' *Enneads* (1.6 ["On Beauty"], 4.8 ["On the Descent of the Soul into the Body"], and 5.1 ["On the Three Divine Hypostases"]) are the ones suggested by Rist, p. 3), while the dating of his first contact with Porphyry's *The Return of the Soul* (now lost, apart from certain passages salvaged by quotation in *De Civ. Dei*) is uncertain. My use of "Plotinian" in this study should be seen as generic, and does not imply my full endorsement of either side. The differences between the two philosophers do not affect my conclusions.

2.2.5)¹⁸ as they helped him resolve long-standing doubts concerning the nature of evil and the non-corporeality of the soul. Another result, however, was to steer him back to the Catholic faith of his youth:

Swiftly did I begin to return entirely to myself. Actually, all that I did—let me admit it—was to look back from the end of a journey, as it were, to that religion which is implanted in us in our childhood days and bound up in the marrow of our bones. . . . Therefore, stumbling, hastening, yet with hesitation I seized the Apostle Paul. (*C. Acad.* 2.2.5)¹⁹

Plotinus led Augustine to St. Paul! To us the two seem unlikely bedfellows, but the Christian intelligentsia of Milan felt differently. Not only were Plotinus and Paul compatible, but they proclaimed the same message: by leaving the things of this world and turning within, one can return to the heavenly fatherland.

To the new convert, Paul was therefore in general agreement with Plotinus's *On Beauty*:

We must ascend again to the good, which every soul desires. . . . The attainment of it is for those who go up to the higher world and are converted and strip off what we put on in our descent; . . . until, passing in the ascent all that is alien to the God, one sees with one's self alone That alone, simple, single and pure, from which all depends and to which all look and are and live and think: for it is the cause of life and mind and being.²⁰

For Plotinus, that "stripping off" meant a turning inwards (which Augustine found congenial):

Let him who can, follow and come within, and leave outside the sight of his eyes and not turn back to the bodily splendours which he saw before. When he sees the beauty in bodies he must not run after them; we must know that they are images, traces, shadows, and hurry away to that which they image. For if a man runs to the image and wants to seize it as if it was the reality . . . then this man who clings to beautiful bodies and will not let them go, will . . . sink down into the dark depths where intellect has no delight, and stay blind in Hades, consorting with shadows there and here.²¹

¹⁸ " . . . incredibile incendium concitarunt."

¹⁹ "Prorsus totus in me cursim redibam. Respexi tamen, confiteor, quasi de itinere in illam religionem, quae pueris nobis insita est et medullitus implicata: . . . Itaque titubans properans haesitans arripio apostolum Paulum." The same order of events is recalled ten years later in *Conf.* 7.21.27 and 8.12.29.

²⁰ Plotinus, *On Beauty* 7, in *The Enneads*, trans. A. H. Armstrong, vol. 1 (London: Loeb, 1966). Plotinus, of course, in his turn falls back on Plato's *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*.

²¹ Plotinus, *On Beauty* 8.

When Augustine gathered some of his best friends at Cassiciacum to discuss God and the soul, passages such as these were very much on his mind. He was suspicious of the body (with its troublesome sexuality) and the physical world in general; indeed, with Plotinus he seemed to perceive the soul as being fallen from some unsullied original state into the prison-house of the body.²² This Fall into the body was a punishment for the original sin of pride, which the soul had committed *before* entering the body.²³ The soul's return to God consequently meant discarding the body in order to regain the purity of the original blissful state.

Augustine was able to ferret out verses from Paul's epistles, which he had taken with him to Cassiciacum, to support these teachings from the *Enneads*. There undoubtedly are Pauline passages susceptible to Platonic interpretation, especially if read out of context: Paul's admonishment in Colossians 3:2 to "set your minds on things above, not on earthly things," for example, or the report in 2 Corinthians 12 of how the Apostle, not unlike Plotinus, had been "caught up to the third heaven." And Augustine could easily have misconstrued Paul's "if you live according to the flesh, you shall die" in a Plotinian light.²⁴ Yet the verse that spoke most clearly of the concord between the Platonic and the biblical traditions, thereby justifying the Plotinian ascent, was Romans 1:20: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—has been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made."²⁵

The young convert therefore came to believe that Paul supported a vertical and hierarchical perspective. The corporeal creation was seen as a prison-house for a soul that must strive to rid itself of everything

²² Robert O'Connell even contends that "The underlying notion is one that makes the 'I' essentially soul. The composite of body and soul becomes accordingly an uneasy amalgam, its semi-accidental unity being explained by a 'fall' of soul into body, a fall that (at this point in Augustine's career) seems to require that the soul 'return' to a pre-embodied state" (*Early Theory*, p. 185). O'Connell's advocacy of Augustine's adherence to neo-platonic theories of the origin of the soul has been hotly contested by other scholars; see, for example, Harrison, pp. 32–35.

²³ This can be seen in Augustine's first commentary on Genesis, *De Gen. c. M.* (388–390). The first six chapters of book 2 imply that Adam and Eve were disembodied souls until they fell. See also *De Q. An.* 20.34. For Augustine's later repudiation of this tenet, see Retr. 1.7.2.

²⁴ By 414 he had come to see that the Pauline "flesh" could not be identified with the body (see Margaret R. Miles, *Augustine on the Body* [Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979], p. 61, and Harrison, pp. 152–62, on Augustine's mature appreciation of the body).

²⁵ The troubling context of that verse, to which I shall return in later chapters, limited its concord with Platonism only later in Augustine's career.

earthly in order to ascend to the unity of the One. While Augustine saw the created universe as a graded order, beautiful in its symmetry, his focus was on the Platonic realm of "being," the intelligible world that he conflated with the Kingdom of God.²⁶ The hierarchical order was not so much a description of the universe as a ladder on which to ascend. God's "invisible qualities" permeated the sensible world by way of mathematical ratios, which could be abstracted by the wise man into the timeless forms of the intelligible world. The return to the heavenly kingdom was therefore an intellectual undertaking guided by the arithmetic certainties of pure number. Accordingly, book six of *On Music*, with its mixture of Plotinian dogma and Pythagorean numerology, in the words of the *Retractions* sought to demonstrate "how, from corporeal and spiritual but changeable numbers, one comes to the knowledge of unchangeable numbers which are already in unchangeable truth itself" (*Retr.* 1.11.1).²⁷

While the young Augustine stressed mathematical certainties, he was caught in the old Platonist dilemma of having to conceptualize the transcendent in human categories, even if that meant beginning with fallible sense impressions or an imprecise language that was ultimately to be discarded for pure number. In the dialogue *On Order* he spelled out a program of liberal studies that would purify the mind, dispensing with the distractions of time and place, an order of studies, as he summarized his intellectual program in the *Retractions*, "by which one can proceed from the corporeal to incorporeal things" (*Retr.* 1.3.1).²⁸ He then ambitiously set out to produce the required humanistic textbooks on grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, music, and philosophy. The very ordering of these studies—from the language arts via the mathematical disciplines to philosophy—speaks of his desire to reach the incorporeal through a systematic and progressively more abstract study of the liberal arts.²⁹

Thinking highly of the capabilities of the human intellect, Augustine was quite sanguine about the possibility of achieving the contemplative goal in this life. Perfectibility was within the reach of the wise

²⁶ See *De Ord.* 1.11.32. In Retr. 1.3.2 Augustine regrets confusing Christ's words, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18.36), with the Platonic world of ideas.

²⁷ "... quomodo a corporalibus et spiritualibus sed mutabilibus numeris perveniatur ad immutabiles numeros, qui iam in ipsa sunt immutabili veritate, ..."

²⁸ "... quo a corporalibus ad incorporea potest profici."

²⁹ See James J. O'Donnell's "Excusus" on the liberal arts in his commentary on Augustine's *Confessions*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 2: 269–78.

human. But since he realized that not everybody had the required intellectual capacity (he was particularly pained by his mother's lack of it, despite her evident piety), he devised a two-pronged approach to God: one for the few, those who possessed the necessary understanding, and another for the many, those who had to fall back on the authority of the Church and the example of Christ.³⁰

The implication is clear: if you are one of the "few," you can ascend to God without either Christ or the Church. While "faith" might preclude both "understanding" and "vision" for the young Augustine, that faith, like the body, can be discarded as soon as the initiate reaches the higher levels.

Before Augustine had time to finish the textbooks, however, changing circumstances forced him to re-evaluate his whole project. He had tried to practice what he taught: for the first few years after his conversion, he had dedicated himself to the pursuit of perfection. The Cassiciacum dialogues in particular should be seen as stepping-stones designed to purify his mind in preparation for the beatific vision. Despite its Plotinian echoes, the vision that finally occurs in Ostia (related in *Conf.* 9.10.23–26) is centered on the Incarnation and is thus radically different from the neoplatonic model.³¹ As we shall see in more detail in chapter 3 below, the doctrine of the incarnate Christ, the Word made flesh, increasingly placed language in general and the Holy Scriptures in particular at the center of Augustine's attention. Back in Africa, he finished the sixth book of *On Music*, but that high point proved to be the end of his intellectual program.³² Visiting the Episcopal center of Hippo in 391, he was reluctantly convinced to become a presbyter, a position that forced him to deal with the less philosophic needs of the North African Church.³³ He was called upon to preach

³⁰ See *C. Acad.* 3.19.42, and the *Soliloquies* 1.13.23. When Augustine writes *Retr.* in old age, he refutes the idea of there being another way besides Christ (1.4.3).

³¹ See Colin Starnes, "Augustine's Conversion and the Ninth Book of the *Confessions*," in *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*, ed. Joanne McWilliam (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1992): 57–61.

³² Apart from *De Mus.*, only the grammar was finished, partially preserved in a later medieval redaction. Of the unfinished fragments, only *De Dial.* and possibly the *Rhetoric* are extant. Even *De Mus.* is incomplete since it includes only the section on rhythm, while a further six books on melody remained unwritten (see O'Donnell, 2: 275).

³³ Nowhere is this change of direction seen more clearly than in *De Div. Q.*, composed in the crucial years 388–396. Consisting of Augustine's answers to various questions, the book illustrates beautifully his move from a preoccupation with philosophical issues to an interest in scriptural exegesis. See David L. Mosher's excellent introduction to his translation of the work (*The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 70 [Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1982]).

on a regular basis,³⁴ and he therefore asked his bishop for time off to study the Bible.³⁵ In the next few years he spent time on Genesis (which had already attracted his attention) and the Psalms.³⁶

Of even greater importance for the development of Augustine's thought, however, was his grappling with the Epistles of St. Paul.³⁷ Not that Paul was new to him, as we have seen. Yet what happens after 391 is something different. Instead of looking for neoplatonic congruence, he set himself the exacting task of trying to understand what the Apostle was actually saying in the context of each letter.³⁸ This study, as Peter Brown explains, led to a "flattening" of the vertical ascent:

Augustine did not "discover" Paul at this time. He merely read him differently. Previously, he had interpreted Paul as a Platonist: he had seen him as the exponent of a spiritual ascent . . . The idea of the spiritual life as a vertical ascent, as a progress towards a final, highest stage to be reached in this life, had fascinated Augustine in previous years. Now, he will see in Paul nothing but a

³⁴ It has been estimated that Augustine preached some 8000 times in the following 30 years, normally extempore. More than one-third of his extant writings consist of sermons, to date around 900, some of which were discovered as late as 1990. See George P. Lawless, "Augustine of Hippo as Preacher," in *Saint Augustine the Bishop: A Book of Essays*, ed. Fan-nie LeMoine and Christopher Kleinhenz (New York and London: Garland, 1994), pp. 13–37.

³⁵ See *Epist.* 21.3–6. According to Charles Kannengiesser, even before this request Augustine had "studied Scripture intensively for a substantial part of the two and a half years spent in Thagaste from the fall of 388 through the spring of 391" ("The Interrupted *De doctrina christiana*," in *De doctrina christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*, ed. Duane W.H. Arnold, and Pamela Bright [Notre Dame and London: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1995], p. 3).

³⁶ Augustine wrote five commentaries on Genesis (or on its first three chapters to be more exact, dealing with the seven days of creation and the fall): *De Gen. c. M.* (388 or 389), an unfinished *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis* (393), the last three books of *Conf.* (401), the monumental *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (404–420?), and part of book eleven of *De Civ. Dei* (417 or 418). The Psalms stimulated a comprehensive series of sermons, *En. in Ps.*, that occupied Augustine intermittently from 391 to his death in 430.

³⁷ The immediate results were an *Unfinished Commentary on Romans* (which did not get beyond the first verses of chapter one), a short *Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans* and an equally short *Propositions from the Epistle to the Galatians* (all three written in 394), questions 66 to 75 of *De Div. Q.* (394–395), and the first book of *To Simplician* (397). On Augustine's study of Paul, see William S. Babcock, "Augustine's Interpretation of Romans (a.d. 394–396)," *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979): 55–74, and Paula Fredriksen, "Beyond the Body/Soul Dichotomy: Augustine on Paul against the Manichees and the Pelagians," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 23 (1988): 87–114.

³⁸ On Augustine's development into a reader of scripture, see Stock, esp. p. 74: "Paul thus replaced Plotinus; progress through reading superseded the ascent of the mind on its own." See also John C. Cavadini, "The Sweetness of the Word: Salvation and Rhetoric in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*," in Arnold and Bright, pp. 164–81.

single, unresolved tension between "flesh" and "spirit." . . . It is a flattened landscape; and in it the hope of spiritual progress comes increasingly to depend, for Augustine, on the unfathomable will of God.³⁹

The book that hit Augustine the hardest was Romans; chapters 7 to 9 in particular would not leave him alone. During the next two decades he felt the weight of these dense passages, which increasingly questioned or modified the equilibrium he had achieved. Paul's description in Romans 7 of the internal struggle between wit and will (to use the Elizabethan terms) challenged his assumptions about perfection, while the stark words in Romans 9: 11 about God choosing Jacob before Esau regardless of their own merits became the starting point for protracted meditations on God's sovereignty and grace.⁴⁰

The development of a more Pauline theology was also encouraged by external developments. Pelagianism, a new heresy that emphasized human free will at the expense of God's grace, was brought to North Africa by Pelagius himself in 411, thereby supplanting Manicheism and Donatism as Augustine's favorite bugbear. Especially galling was the fact that Pelagius had drawn from Augustine's own early writings to support his claims. While Augustine felt impelled to defend the catholicity of his own works, the challenge from Pelagius' concept of unaided human progress must at the same time have made him painfully aware of the dangers of some of his earlier ideas.⁴¹ In the words of James J. O'Donnell, "His vehemence in the face of the Pelagians is vehemence in the face of his younger, deluded self."⁴²

For the impact of the Bible was not simply a matter of isolated insights: it had provoked a radical shift of perspective. R.A. Markus explains it well:

The imagery derived from the philosophic context is part of a cosmological scheme. The "spiritual" is on a higher level than the "carnal" in the cosmic order. Their relation can be pictured in spatial terms, as "above" and "below." The biblical opposition, on the other hand, depends on Christ's redemptive work: the "spiritual" is what is transformed, the "carnal" is unregenerated. The

³⁹ Brown, pp. 151–52.

⁴⁰ For Augustine's developing views and increasing reliance on the concept of grace, see Dennis R. Cresswell, *St. Augustine's Dilemma: Grace and Eternal Law in the Major Works of Augustine of Hippo* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997).

⁴¹ As one of the ironies of history one can note that early Augustine and Pelagius was close enough for Erasmus to include Pelagius' *Confession of Faith to Pope Innocent* as an Augustinian work (entitled *Sermon* 236) in his 1528/9 Froben edition of the *Father's Opera omnia*, an attribution that Calvin was later to question (see Lane, p. 76).

⁴² O'Donnell, 1: xliii, note 71.

opposition is not between something cosmologically "higher" and something "lower." It is one best expressed in temporal rather than spatial terms, as "new" and "old." Thus, though capable of being rendered in the same terms, the two sets of contrasts are in reality essentially disparate. But Augustine did pass from the cosmological dualities of neo-Platonism to the temporal dualities of biblical redemption history.⁴³

Whereas the neoplatonic perspective had been strictly vertical and incorporeal, the Prologue to St. John's Gospel (a favored Augustinian text), with its message of God descending to earth in order to become a human, insisted on the horizontal level. The Incarnation of Christ stressed corporeality, history,⁴⁴ time, language, all those aspects of "becoming" that a true Platonist distrusted. And with the Incarnation came the complementary dogma of the physical Resurrection. The return to God, according to the New Testament, is the prerogative not only of the soul but of the body as well. That the Logos, the divine reason, could have become mixed up with the corporeal realm in this way was much too hard for a neoplatonist to stomach. Indeed, Porphyry had launched his bitter attack on Christianity precisely because of the absurdity of the Incarnation.⁴⁵ For Augustine, this meant that his earlier enthusiasm for Plotinus was tempered by an increasing critique of the neoplatonic tradition noticeable in his later writings, especially the *City of God* and *On the Trinity*.

III

The Plotinian and Pauline perspectives are particularly evident in two different schemes Augustine used to describe the progress towards God. The first scheme, taken from the early dialogue *The Greatness of the Soul* (387–88), is significantly termed the seven levels of the soul,

⁴³ Markus, p. 79. Also Lewis Ayres distinguishes between "Augustine's use of the two main anthropological patterns or metaphors of his day [...] . . . the Platonic scheme of an ascending order pointing to the One, . . . [and] the 'horizontal' pattern of humanity portrayed as progressing towards the new Jerusalem" ("Between Athens and Jerusalem: Prolegomena to Anthropology in *De Trinitate*," *Modern Theology* 8:1 [January 1992]: 53). See also Paula Fredriksen, "Augustine on History, the Church, and the Flesh," in LeMoine and Kleinhenz, pp. 109–23.

⁴⁴ On Augustine's view of history, see Rüdiger Bittner, "Augustine's Philosophy of History," in *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1999), pp. 345–60, esp. p. 349.

⁴⁵ Augustine, arguing pointedly against the neoplatonic distrust of the Incarnation, writes that he had not found in the books of the Platonists that "the Word was made flesh and came to dwell among us [verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis]" (*Conf.* 7.9.14).

while the second, here cited from his *Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans* 13–18, is called “four stages of *man*” (my emphasis).⁴⁶ Plotinus is clearly the guiding light behind *The Greatness of the Soul*. After having proved to his friend Evodius that the soul cannot be corporeal, Augustine explicates its seven levels, or as he summarizes the progression: acts of the soul “from the body”; ‘through the body’; ‘about the body’; ‘toward itself’; ‘in itself’; ‘towards God’; ‘with God’” (*De Q. An.* 35.79).⁴⁷

I shall put it in diagram form for greater clarity (reversing the usual order of numbering so as not to destroy the upward progression):

7. Contemplation (with God)
6. Initiation (towards God)
5. Tranquillity (in itself)
4. Virtue (toward itself)
3. Art (about the body)
2. Sensation (through the body)
1. Vitality (from the body)

The first two levels are simply descriptions of what the soul has in common with the plant and animal kingdoms, and the third what the soul alone possesses. But with level four we are moving beyond enumeration:

Take hold now and swing yourself onto the fourth level, which goodness and true worth call their home. Here it is that the soul ventures to take precedence not only over its own body, acting some part in the universe, but even over the whole body of the universe itself. The goods of the world it does not account its own, and comparing them with its own power and beauty, it keeps aloof from them and despises them. Hence, the more the soul turns to itself for its own pleasure, the more does it withdraw from sordid things and cleanse itself and make itself immaculately clean through and through. (*De Q. An.* 33.73)⁴⁸

Augustine concedes that this purification requires strenuous effort, yet he is confident that “so great is the soul that it can do even this, by

the help, of course, of the goodness of the supreme and true God” (*De Q. An.* 33.73).⁴⁹

Coming after this difficult task of self-purification, advancing towards the last three levels is easy:

When the soul will be free from all corruption and purified of all its stains, then at last it possesses itself in utter joy and has no fears whatever for itself nor any anxiety for any reason. . . . [T]hen with unbounded and wondrous confidence it advances toward God, that is to the immediate contemplation of truth; and it attains that supreme and transcendent reward for which it has worked so hard. (*De Q. An.* 33.74)⁵⁰

Having arrived at the seventh level (in his narrative at least), Augustine thinks it fit to praise the nurture of Mother Church and the nourishing milk of St. Paul’s teaching. Like all mother’s milk, however, this is meant for children only, while those who have grown up and arrived at the higher levels can dispense with it for an unspecified meatier nourishment. There are few passages in all of Augustine where the elitist tendencies of his early thought shine through as clearly as here.⁵¹

Before describing the second scheme in its fully developed form, it is instructive to follow Augustine as he modifies his “seven levels” in succeeding works before finally assimilating them into the Pauline model. In the *Two Books On Genesis Against the Manichees*, written soon after *The Greatness of the Soul*, he is forced by his allegorical method to square the seven levels with the seven days of creation, a self-imposed task that does not make for clear exegesis. Yet the scriptural context does blunt the neoplatonic edge by introducing an historical dimension. Before allegorizing the seven days of creation as the seven levels of a just life (1.25), Augustine describes the seven ages of the world in terms of human development from infancy to old age (1.23–24). When he returns to the topos in *Of True Religion* (389–91), it has been transformed into the seven spiritual ages of “the new man” (*De Ver. Rel.* 26.49).⁵² There is a clear upward progression toward “eternal rest and

⁴⁶ “... quattuor . . . gradus hominis . . .”

⁴⁷ “... de corpore, per corpus, circa corpus, ad seipsam, in seipsa, ad deum, apud deum.” Translation amended.

⁴⁸ “Suscipe igitur atque insili quarto gradui, ex quo bonitas incipit atque omnis vera laudatio. Hinc enim anima se non solum suo, si quam universi partem agit, sed ipsi etiam universo corpori audet praeponere bonaque eius bona sua non putare atque potentiae pulchritudinique suae comparata discernere atque contemnere et inde, quo magis se delectat, eo magis sese abstrahere a sordibus totamque emaculare ac mundissimam et compissimam reddere. . . .”

⁴⁹ “Tanta est . . . anima, ut etiam hoc possit adiuuvante sane iustitia summi et veri dei. . . .”

⁵⁰ “Quod . . . cum fuerit anima ab omni tabe libera maculisque diluta, tum se denique in seipsa laetissime tenet nec omnino aliquid metuit sibi aut ulla sua causa quicquam angitur. . . . tunc vero ingenti quadam et incredibili fiducia pergit in deum, id est in ipsam contemplationem veritatis, et illud, propter quod tantum laboratum est, alissimum et secretissimum praemium.”

⁵¹ Tendencies he had already abandoned by the time of writing *De Ver. Rel.* in 390; see Stock, p. 65.

⁵² “... novus homo . . .”

perpetual beatitude," yet the Pauline coloring is unmistakable. It is no longer possible to achieve the final contemplation of God in this life because the biblical discourse has preempted much of the original Plotinian force: "A man can live the whole of this life as 'the old and earthly man.' But no one in this life can live as 'the new and heavenly man,' but must associate with 'the old man'" (*De Ver. Rel.* 27.50).⁵³

The process of assimilation is carried a step further in his commentary on *The Lord's Sermon on the Mount* (393–94), where the seven steps have been grafted on to the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 (but without the historical dimension seen in the last two works):

7. Peace (contemplation of the truth)
6. Purity (cleanness of heart)
5. Mercy (divine assistance)
4. Justice (effort to wrench itself from sin)
3. Sorrow (over sin)
2. Meekness (acquaintance with Scriptures)
1. Humility (submission to divine authority)

While the goal is still the contemplation of truth, not much else remains of the original scheme. The greatest difference is perhaps the humble admission that nothing can be accomplished without divine assistance. This is reinforced by the addition of another progression to complement the first: the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (from Isaiah 11:2). All in all, we are left in no doubt about the need for God's grace.⁵⁴

After these transitional versions, we are ready for Augustine's mature model, elaborated during his period of immersion in St. Paul while preparing for the priesthood. This model, derived from Romans 5: 12–21, centers on the Incarnation of Christ and emphasizes the dimension of time and history, its four periods being "prior to the

⁵³ "[quies aeterna et beatitudo perpetua] . . . veterem atque terrenum possit in hac tota vita unus homo agere, novum vero et caelestem nemo in hac vita possit nisi cum veterem." In an early seed of the *City of God*, Augustine goes on to apply the concept of the "old" and the "new" to two classes of people throughout world history. The further steps towards *De Civ. Dei* can be seen in *De Div. Q.* 58.2 and in particular in *The First Catechetical Instruction* 18.29–23.43, where Augustine traces the two cities through history, while still making the connection with the hexameron.

⁵⁴ The Gifts of the Spirit is the aspect that Augustine stresses when he refers to the sevenfold progression of the individual believer in later works: *En. in Ps.* 11.7 and 119.2, *De Doct. Chr.* 2.7.9–11, and *Sermons* 248–250, 270, and 347 (see Canisius van Lierde, "The Teaching of St. Augustine on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit from the Text of Isaiah 11:2–3," in *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, ed. Frederick Van Fleteren et al. [New York: Peter Lang, 1994]: 5–110).

Law; under the Law; under grace; and in peace" (*Exp. Rom.* 13–18).⁵⁵ The operative terms are law and grace, concepts central to Pauline theology. The scheme has two distinct but interrelated parts: the salvific history of God's people and the history of the individual Christian. The first part provides a thumbnail sketch of human history:

Given the entire life span of the human race, this period in which the grace of Christian faith is given is the third period. The first is before the Law, the second, under the Law, and the third, under grace. . . . There yet remains a fourth period in which we shall achieve the abundant peace of the heavenly Jerusalem . . . (*De Div. Q.* 61.7)⁵⁶

While the fourth period is actually outside time, the first three neatly divide all of human history: from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Christ, from Christ's coming to his second coming. The hub is clearly the period of grace, "this period in God's plan, in which the Lord has deigned to appear in time and visibly as a man and has given us as a pledge the Holy Spirit, by whose sevenfold working we are given life" (*De Div. Q.* 61.7).⁵⁷ Notice how Augustine incorporates and thereby collapses the earlier vertical perspective by introducing the seven Gifts of the Spirit into his horizontal scheme. In his later writings he manages to combine the two systems by juxtaposing the first three periods with the six days of creation, sometimes allotting a round thousand years to each day, while letting the last period (fourth or seventh) dissolve into God's final Sabbath rest.⁵⁸

The same four stages are at work also on the individual level: "There are four different phases even in the life of one man, and after the progressive completion of these he will abide in eternal life" (*De Div. Q.* 66.3).⁵⁹ As with the seven levels of the soul, we have a progression

⁵⁵ " . . . ante legem, sub lege, sub gratia, in pace."

⁵⁶ "In toto enim saeculo generis humani tertium tempus est, quo fidei christianae gratia data est; primum est ante legem, secundum sub lege, tertium sub gratia; et . . . quartum adhuc restat, quo ad plenissimam pacem Hierusalem caelestis venturi sumus, . . ."

⁵⁷ "Ista . . . dispensatio, qua nobis dominus temporaliter et visibiliter in homine appare dignatus est et dedit nobis pignus spiritum sanctum, cuius operatione septenaria vegetaremur, . . ."

⁵⁸ See *De Trin.* 4.4.7.

⁵⁹ " . . . quatuor esse differentias etiam in uno homine, quibus gradatim peractis in vita aeterna manebitur." The same explication is given in *Exp. Rom.* 13–18. That this twofold (historical/personal) scheme remained an important part of Augustine's thinking is demonstrated by its inclusion in the brief but influential catechism he published in 421, the *Enchiridion* (31.118), which in turn stands behind both the first version of Calvin's *Institutes* and Spenser's description of the House of Holiness. We shall return to the influence of this twofold scheme on Spenser in chapter 4.

toward beatitude and peace; yet unlike the neoplatonic perspective, this model stresses the saving work of Christ. Without his grace one gets nowhere, and even with it one does not reach the last level in this life. Though the goal is still otherworldly, it no longer is incorporeal, since both soul and body are resurrected at the last day.

But why have I spent so much ink on these two models in a study of Augustine's influence on early modern literature? First of all because versions of both perspectives turn up with some frequency in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the writings of Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, for example, we find the steps (sometimes seven) of the soul's return to God,⁶⁰ while the same Pico in a later work was to describe the fourfold "horizontal" scheme. Melancthon did the same in *Carion's Chronicles*, which in turn influenced Tudor England.⁶¹ Indeed, both the vertical and the horizontal schemes became cultural commonplaces. But even more important than these direct borrowings is how the two perspectives reflect two distinct ways of structuring reality, ways that define the extreme positions of early modern Europe.

IV

Everything Augustine wrote was motivated by a profound faith, and all subsequent theology owe him a great debt. No one outside the Bible comes even close to matching his overall impact on western Christendom. He dominated medieval dogma, while the Protestant and Catholic reformations might not even have occurred if it had not been for him; they certainly would have looked very different. We must not, however, limit his influence to the religious sphere. Endowed with a penetrating and inquisitive intellect, coupled with the communicative skills of a professional rhetor, he managed to discuss, not seldom with great sophistication, every conceivable topic under the sun. There is something for everyone in Augustine, and few were those early mod-

⁶⁰ Pico, to give but one example, in Book 3 of his *Commentary on a Canzone of Benivieni* delineates the seven steps of ascent from sensible beauty to intelligible beauty. We shall return to Ficino and Pico in chapter 2.

⁶¹ In the *Heptaplus: A Discourse on the Seven Days of Creation* 7.4, Pico explicates the fourfold scheme in the guise of the "oracles of Elia." Melancthon makes the same "oracles" the structural backbone for his immensely influential world history, also known as *Carion's Chronicles*. John Bale then uses the scheme in his *Comedy concerninge the lawes* (1548), while Spenser, as we shall study at greater length in chapter 3, made it a structural principle for Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*.

ern thinkers who at one point or another did not avail themselves of some little part of his thought, whether directly or channelled through others.

Although theology inevitably will color aspects of this study, my interest is centred on a few large topics that Augustine himself would have placed within what Markus terms the *saeculum*, the sphere that while lying within divine jurisdiction is dedicated to humanity's earthly rather than heavenly existence. We shall begin in chapter 1 where Augustine himself often begins: with the volition of the introspective self. Another reason for starting with psychology is that the genesis of the period under investigation—whether called Renaissance or early modern—is habitually associated with the increasing importance given to the individual will, often located to a single historical person, Petrarch. Chapter 2 then moves on to another mental faculty: what is the function and limits of human reason within the *saeculum*? The epistemological question was of fundamental importance to early modern Europe since it involved the relationship between sacred and secular, and the place and function of classical culture and education. And, as Trinkaus reminded us above, Augustine had provided some of the basic answers. In the third chapter we shall investigate a related topic: the Augustinian semiology behind both renaissance numerology and language theory. If the first three chapters centre on various aspects of the individual mind, with its educational and poetic dimensions, chapter 4 moves out by investigating the Augustinian political theory behind the heated renaissance discussions on the relationship of church and state.

The four chapters have been organized around particular Augustinian and renaissance texts. If chapter 1 centers on *Of True Religion* and the *Confessions*, chapters 2 and 3 take their cue from *On Christian Doctrine* (as well as *On Order* and *The Free Choice of the Will*), while chapter 4 deals with aspects of the *City of God*. Of early modern authors I have concentrated on the works of two poets separated by some two hundred years: Petrarch (in chapter 1) and Edmund Spenser (in chapters 2 to 4; two of these chapters have a broader perspective that in addition to Spenser takes in seminal thinkers from Ficino and Luther to Greville and Hooker). I have a two-fold reason for my choice of authors: both were Augustinian to the core, but for both that Augustinianism was not simplistic or uncomplicated. In both the tension between what I term the "vertical" and the "horizontal" perspectives is acutely felt, if in different ways.

Let us end this introduction by reviewing these dominant perspectives of Augustine's pre- and post-Episcopal periods. The earlier "Plotinian" perspective is predominantly vertical, meaning that an unbroken intellectual ascent is possible in this life by the wise and morally perfect individual, or rather "soul." In the "Pauline" perspective the vertical ascent is modified by a horizontal perspective that takes account of the vicissitudes of time and history.⁶² The elder bishop of course remained committed to the heavenly homeland, but the favored metaphor for getting there had become the physical journey rather than the climb: we are pilgrims en route to the heavenly Jerusalem. The Incarnation in particular forced Augustine to become more focused on the here-and-now of that pilgrimage. The earth and the human body, no longer simply impediments to the soul's ascent, were not to be discarded but acquired value as God's creation and the vessel for the divine Word. As Carol Harrison puts it, "The Christian doctrines of Creation *ex nihilo*, of the Incarnation, of a historical revelation, and of the resurrection of the body, . . . have the effect of making Augustine's thought much more positive concerning the beauty of the temporal realm."⁶³ Yet Augustine's anthropology was at the same time increasingly tempered by the Fall and its effects on creation, including original sin.⁶⁴ In the Plotinian perspective, earth is a copy (however distant) of the ideal realm, thereby providing points of contact and thus of ascent. For the mature Augustine, the Fall had seriously marred the copy. As a result, the direct vertical ties between the sensible and the intelligible world were severed. No longer was the human microcosm able to reflect in any direct way the heavenly patterns. Earthly life, according to a tag from the *City of God* that was to leave a lasting impression on early modern Europe, takes place in a Heraclit-

⁶² No Augustinian model is purely horizontal, of course, since the "here and now" is always subject to the ultimate authority of God. This is perhaps best expressed by the basic Augustinian distinction between "use" and "enjoyment," the former characterizing our attitude towards the created world, while the latter applies only to our relationship with God.

⁶³ Harrison, p. 32.

⁶⁴ Harrison shows how consciousness of the fall actually contributes to his more positive assessment of the created world: "implicit in Augustine's conviction of man's fallenness is his attribution of a more positive role to the beauty of the created, temporal realm and divine revelation within it From a rational, spiritual idea of beauty (since man can no longer clearly see or understand it) the emphasis is placed upon an appreciation of beauty in Creation, history, man, and the Incarnate, met by faith in their divine source, hope for vision of it, and love which moves towards it" (p. 46; see also her conclusion, pp. 272-73).

can world in which there is "nothing substantial, nothing lasting" (*De Civ. Dei* 20.3).⁶⁵ In such a world, as St. Paul had confessed in Romans 7 and Augustine elaborated in the *Confessions*, even a Christian cannot reach perfection but is torn by a divided will. God, in his inscrutable wisdom and grace, must instead reach down to redeem his chosen people.

Perhaps without knowing it, Augustine's view of the cosmos became more Aristotelian than Platonist in the process. Instead of a *ladder* he began to envision the creation as a series of interconnected *levels*. Rather than one seamless order that held everything together, there were several distinct if interrelated orders. Within the *saeculum*, Augustine envisioned spheres for reason and for the political order, spheres that were necessary and ultimately depended on God, but which were not part of any unbroken ladder of Plotinian return to the One. Education, operating under the guidance of reason, could no longer deify mankind but was needed as a handmaiden to faith and for the ordering of this life. Nor could human language transparently reflect the divine logos, but was subject to the temporal and conventional rules of each speech community. The secular state was no copy of the heavenly kingdom, but its task was to control the sins of its citizens by maintaining an earthly peace. It was the incarnate Christ, not intellectual vision, imperial rulers, or Cratylan theories of language, that provided the only guarantee for human salvation.⁶⁶

This is not to argue, however, that Augustine completely exchanged one perspective for the other. Insights gained from his encounters with Paul and Plotinus remained at the core of his thought. The two coexisted for long periods in an uneasy and constantly redefined alliance, with Paul slowly gaining the upper hand. And it is not simply a matter of chronology. A horizontal or a vertical model may govern any particular book, depending on what question Augustine is addressing.

⁶⁵ "... nihil solidum, nihil stabile . . ." So Petrarch, as we will see in chapter 1 below, opens his "Triumph of Eternity" with the affirmation that "Da poi che sotto 'l ciel cosa non vidi / stabile e ferma . . ." [When I had seen that nothing under heaven / Is firm and stable . . .], while John Donne can preach "that there is nothing in this world perfect; And then, That such as it is, there is nothing constant, nothing permanent" ("Cokayne Funeral Sermon," in *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. Evelyn Simpson and George R. Potter [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1962], 7: 259). Henry Cornelius Agrippa, in the context of changing language use, paraphrased the expression as "there is nothing stable and of continuance [nihil stabile, nihil diuturnum]" (*On the vanitie and uncertainty of artes and sciences*, trans. James Sanford [1569; rpt. Northridge: California State Univ., 1974], p. 376).

⁶⁶ See Harrison, pp. 54-96.

If the *City of God* is an extension of the historical aspects of the Pauline scheme, then *On the Trinity* is an equally good example of a mature work composed along the vertical axis, but with a new non-Plotinian emphasis on the Incarnation.⁶⁷ For that reason, while Augustinian works were to affect western culture profoundly for centuries to come, that influence was not uniform. Both perspectives were transmitted and assimilated throughout the period, and never in their pure forms. The examples of Petrarch and Spenser show that many vacillated between the two. We would do well to investigate which "Augustine" a renaissance writer is using as a starting-point or justification for his own particular concerns. That Ficino and Calvin both thought they were following the bishop of Hippo should give us pause.

⁶⁷ On the Incarnation in *De Trin.*, see Harrison, pp. 202–10, and on Augustine's critique of Plotinus in the work, see Ayres, pp. 56–62.

CHAPTER 1

Psychology The Divided Self

Amid my winds and tempests I can recognize from time to time the traces of your own storm-tossed passions. So that as often as I read the book of your Confessions, and am made partaker of your conflict between two contrary emotions, between hope and fear, (and weep as I read), I seem to be hearing the story of my own self, the story not of another's wandering, but of my own.

—Petrarch¹

At the end of a long and eventful life, Petrarch begins his last poem, the "Triumph of Eternity," with a confession:

Da poi che sotto 'l ciel cosa non vidi
stabile e ferma, tutto sbigottito

mi volsi al cor e dissi: "In che ti fidi?"

Rispose: "Nel Signor, che mai fallito

non à promessa a chi si fida in lui;

ma ben veggio che 'l mondo m' à schernito,

e sento quel ch' i' sono e quel ch' i' fui,

e veggio andar, anzi volare, il tempo,

e doler mi vorrei, né so di cui,

che la colpa è pur mia, che più per tempo

deve' aprir gli occhi, e non tardar al fine,

ch' a dir il vero, omai troppo m' attempo.

Ma tarde non fur mai grazie divine;

in quelle spero che 'n me ancor faranno

alte operazioni e pellegrine.

¹ "... inter procellas meas fluctuationis tue vestigium recognosco. Ex quo fit ut, quotiens *Confessionum* tuarum libros lego, inter duos contrarios affectus, spem videlicet et metum, letis non sine lacrimis interdum legere me arbitrer non alienam sed propriam mee peregrinationis historiam" (Petrarca, *De secreto conflictu curarum mearum*, in *Opere Latine*, vol. 1, ed. Antonietta Bufano [Torino: Unione Tipografica, 1975], p. 68). English trans. William H. Draper, *Petrarch's Secret: Or the Soul's Conflict with Passion* (1911; rpt. Westport: Hyperion Press, 1987), p. 21. Further references to this work, abbreviated *Secretum*, will be given in the text by page references to both Latin and English versions (in that order).

When I had seen that nothing under heaven
Is firm and stable, in dismay I turned
To my heart, and asked: "Wherein hast thou thy trust?"
"In the Lord," the answer came, "Who keepeth ever
His covenant with one who trusts in Him.
Well do I see the mockery of the world,
And know what I have been, and what I am,
And see Time marching, nay more, flying on;
Yet there is none of whom I may complain.
For the fault is mine: long since I should have opened
Mine eyes, instead of waiting to the end,
And true it is that I have delayed too long.
But divine mercies never come too late:
In them I hope, that they may work in me
A transformation deep and excellent."²

What might seem a conventional deathbed rite epitomizes many of Petrarch's life-long concerns. The poem starts by echoing the Augustinian commonplace from the *City of God* 20.3: "nihil solidum, nihil stabile."³ Petrarch, like Augustine, lived in a world in which much was uncertain, including the state of his own spiritual well-being.⁴ If he turns to his heart, it is not to find there the stability lacking in a fickle world. He instead must join Augustine's celebrated cry to God: "Our hearts find no peace until they rest in you" (*Conf.* 1.1.1).⁵ Indeed, Petrarch's heart had been the main battleground for the world's disruptive powers. Even at the end of a life of intense spiritual struggle, he still longed for "a transformation deep and excellent" that he apparently had not yet achieved. Spiritual perfection, at least for the poet, does not seem possible in this world. His hope rests in the stability of eternity.

² Francesco Petrarca, *Rime e Trionfi*, ed. Fernando Neri (Torino: Unione Tipografica, 1960), p. 596; *The Triumphs of Petrarch*, trans. Ernest Hatch Wilkins (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 107.

³ See the end of my Introduction above. Like Augustine, Petrarch was aware of the Heraclitean echoes in this tag. As Charles Trinkaus points out, Petrarch "cited Heraclitus twice to assert the chaotic and fluctuating character of the world of human experience under the dominion of fortune" ("Petrarch and Classical Philosophy," in *Francesco Petrarca: Citizen of the World*, ed. Aldo S. Bernardo [Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1980]: 254).

⁴ Hans Baron writes about "that melancholic sense of the eternal instability of all things and of man himself that colors [Petrarch's] lyric poetry" (*From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni* [Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968], p. 49, while Trinkaus states: "Central to all of Petrarch's thought is his conception of the situation of man in a universe that was beyond man's understanding" (*In Our Image and Likeness*, 2 vols. [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970], 1: 4).

⁵ "... inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te."

In the "Triumph of Eternity" the poet's beatific vision of the transfigured Laura comes to symbolize that eternal rest. Yet the lady is at the same time a potent reminder of Petrarch's lifelong strife: "amor mi diè per lei sì lunga guerra / che la memoria ancora il cor accenna [Love gave to me for her a war so long / My heart still bears the memory thereof]" (ll. 140-41). He had expressed these tensions graphically in the *Rime sparse*:

Pace non trovo et non ò da far guerra,
e temo et spero, et ardo et son un ghiaccio,
et volo sopra 'l cielo et giaccio in terra,
et nulla stringo et tutto 'l mondo abbraccio.

Tal m' à in pregon che non m' apre né serra,
né per suo mi riten né scioglie il laccio,
et non m' anide Amore et non mi sferra,
né mi vuol vivo né mi trae d' impaccio.

Veggio senza occhi, et non ò lingua et grido,
et bramo di perir et chieggo aita,
et ò in odio me stesso et amo altrui.

Pascomi di dolor, piangendo rido,
egualmente mi spiace morte et vita.
In questo stato son, Donna, per vui.

Peace I do not find, and I have no wish to make war; and I fear and hope, and burn and am of ice; and I fly above the heavens and lie on the ground; and I grasp nothing and embrace all the world.

One has me in prison who neither opens nor locks, neither keeps me for his own nor unites the bonds; and Love does not kill and does not unchain me, he neither wishes me alive nor frees me from the tangle.

I see without eyes, and I have no tongue and yet cry out; and I wish to perish and I ask for help; and I hate myself and love another.

I feed on pain, weeping I laugh; equally displeasing to me are death and life. In this state I am, Lady, on account of you. (*Rime sparse* 134)⁶

The antithetical pairings—peace/war, fear/hope, burning/freezing, weeping/laughing, death/life—that characterize the Petrarchan diction embody the internal tension. And Laura is the metaphorical vehi-

⁶ I am citing the *Rime sparse* from Robert M. Durling's edition and translation of *Petrarch's Lyric Poems* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976). *Rime sparse* 132 is another sonnet that vividly represents the poet-lover's inner tensions.

cle of the unrest: "In this state am I, Lady, on account of you." Furthermore, through her semantic connection with the laurel, Laura becomes the symbol not only of love, but also of worldly glory. And love and glory, as the poet confesses in the *Secretum* (III: 168; 108), are the two strong chains that keep him from reaching inner peace.

Yet at the end of Petrarch's life we find Laura beckoning him to heaven, as Beatrice had done for Dante and countless other *donne* had done for their stillnovist lovers. It seems as if Laura not only symbolizes the poet's inner turmoil, but also embodies the tension between conflicting views of human achievement and the function of human love. To use the language of the "Vergine bella" (*Rime sparse* 365), is Laura a Beatrice or a Medusa? Does she bring beatitude or destruction?⁷ This, of course, is not a new question. But Petrarch's devotion to Augustine may shed new light on it. Particularly illuminating is Petrarch's view of the human predicament in terms of the two Augustinian perspectives, Plotinian and Pauline. Which Augustine does Petrarch follow, the young convert or the mature bishop? It is doubtful whether he himself would even understand the question: to him Augustine was a revered authority not to be dissected into periods. Like the Renaissance at large Petrarch was apt to be eclectic, borrowing whatever he found useful from any text that came in his way. As he grew older, however, he seemed to move towards a mature Augustinian (or Pauline) theology of grace. This did not hinder him, though, from holding on to tenets culled from the "Plotinian" Augustine. One consequence of this is the contradictory view of Laura in the *Rime sparse* and the *Trumphs*: in the first she is seen ultimately as Medusa, while the second portrays her as a Beatrice.

I

Ever since 1907, when Pierre de Nolhac documented Petrarch's reliance on Augustine,⁸ there has been a growing number of studies that investigate the nature and chronology of that dependence.⁹ At the age of 21, two years before first seeing Laura in Avignon in 1327, Petrarch bought his first Augustinian manuscript, the *City of God*. Ten years later he acquired *Of True Religion*, on the flyleaf of which he compiled

⁷ See Kenelm Foster, "Beatrice or Medusa," in *Italian Studies Presented to E.R. Vincent*, ed. C.P. Brand, K. Foster and U. Limentani (Cambridge: Heffer & Sons, 1962): 41-56.

⁸ In the second edition of his *Petrarque et l'Humanisme*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1907), 2: 189-237.

a list of his "specially prized books." The fifty or so titles were mainly classical, led by philosophical works by Cicero. But four Augustinian works were included. In addition to the *City of God*, Petrarch listed the *Confessions*, the *Soliloquies*, and *Epistle* 130. Of these, the *Confessions* was to become one of his most prized books. Pocket-size, it had been given to him in 1333 by a friend and mentor, the Augustinian monk Dionigi da Borgo San Sepulcro. For the next forty years Petrarch carried the book with him, until he finally passed it on to another Augustinian monk in 1374, the year of his death. In a cover letter, the aging poet apologizes for the threadbare condition of his gift:

As in my restless youth I was a wanderer by nature, I carried the book through most of Italy and through France and Germany because I was delighted with its substance, with its author, and with its handy pocket size. Thus by constant use hand and book became so inseparable that they seemed to grow together.¹⁰

Next to the *Confessions*, *Of True Religion* proved the most important Augustinian work throughout the 1330s and '40s. But additional works were also acquired, such as the massive *Expositions on the Psalms* in 1337. After 1353, when Petrarch settled in Milan (the city of Augustine's conversion), the pace of his patristic studies increased. Augustinian works that impressed him in his last decades were *On the Trinity* and in particular *On Christian Doctrine*, which "served him well in his

⁹ This is not a comprehensive bibliography of works on Petrarch and Augustine, but a listing of the general studies I have benefited from the most: Carlo Calcaterra, *Nella selva del Petrarca* (Bologna: Capelli, 1942); Ernest H. Wilkins, *The Making of the "Canzoniere" and Other Petrarchan Studies* (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1951) and *Life of Petrarch* (1961); rpt. Chicago and London: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963); Nicolae Iliescu, *Il Canzoniere Petrarcesco e Saint'Agostino* (Rome: Società Accademica Romana, 1962); Pierre Courcelle, "Les Confessions" de Saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1963); Hans Baron, *Petrarch's "Secretum"* (Cambridge: MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1985); Charles Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1979); Francis X. Murphy, "Petrarch and the Christian Philosophy," in Bernardo, pp. 223-47; Kenelm Foster, *Petrarch: Poet and Humanist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1984); Sara Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1985) and *Petrarch's Laurels* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1992); Albert Rabil, Jr., "Petrarch, Augustine, and the Classical Christian Tradition," in *Renaissance Humanism*, ed. A. Rabil, Jr., 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Univ. of Philadelphia Press, 1988), 1: 95-114; Albert Russell Ascoli, "Petrarch's Middle Age: Memory, Imagination, History, and the 'Ascent of Mount Ventoux,'" *Stanford Italian Review* 10 (1991): 5-43.

¹⁰ "... sed ego cum et natura forsitan et aetate tunc vagus, quod mihi perituncus et materia et auctore et parvitate sua pugillaris esset atque ad ferendum habilis, saepe per omnem ferme Italiam ac Gallias Germaniamque circumuli, ita ut iam prope manus mea et liber unum esse viderentur, sic inseparabiles visu perpetuo facti erant" (Petrarch, *Epistolae de Rebus Senilius* 15.7, in *Epistolae Selectae*, ed. A.F. Johnson [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923], p. 194). English trans. Morris Bishop, in *Letters from Petrarch* (Bloomington and London: Indiana Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 291-92.

defense of himself both as a humanist and a Christian, as it did generations of humanists after him."¹¹

Although Petrarch already had access to the *City of God* in his twenties, most scholars agree that it was the acquisition of the *Confessions* and *Of True Religion* in the 1330s that sparked an interest in the Father that was to develop almost into an obsession over the next decades. The young poet (he had written the first sonnets of what was to become the *Rime sparse*) felt a close kinship with the struggles of the young unconverted Augustine. Since both had difficulty controlling their sexual drives, in Augustine's conversion Petrarch saw an example to emulate. Augustine's attraction to the Platonic tradition also appealed to him, and in particular the fact that the Saint had begun his road towards Christianity by reading the *Hortensius*, a (now lost) work by Petrarch's cultural hero Cicero.¹² The desire for emulation was so strong that Petrarch tried to copy the manner of Augustine's famous conversion in a Milanese garden (as related in *Conf.* 8.12.28–30). After the young rhetor had heard a voice say "tolle lege [pick up and read]," he had looked randomly in the Bible next to him and come upon some verses in St. Paul's letter to the Romans. Petrarch, for his part, was led to take a random look, not in the Bible, but in the *Confessions*. The incident is related in a famous letter, "The Ascent of Mont Ventoux," supposedly sent in 1336 to Dionigi da Borgo San Sepulcro, the monk who had given Petrarch his copy of the *Confessions*. If not explicitly as in the *Secretum*, the whole letter is a dialogue with Augustine, the outcome of which has attracted much critical attention.¹³

¹¹ Rabil, p. 111. I shall return to Petrarch's use of *De Doct. Chr.* in chapter 2.

¹² See Courcelle, pp. 333–34. Courcelle also discusses Petrarch's various responses to Augustine as seen in his letters (pp. 334–42).

¹³ Robert M. Durling, "The Ascent of Mt. Ventoux and the Crisis of Allegory," *Italian Quarterly* 18:69 (1974): 7–28, contrasts Augustine's allegory with Petrarch's irony; John Freccero, "Autobiography and Narrative," in *Reconstructing Individualism*, ed. Thomas C. Heller et al. (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1986): 16–29, argues that Petrarch "based his self-proclaimed uniqueness on a reading of the *Confessions*, turning Augustine against himself, making sin the principle of individuation" (p. 21); likewise, Walter Haug, "Franko Petrarca–Nicolaus Cusanus–Thüring von Ringoltingen: Drei Probestücke zu einer Geschichte der Individualität im 14./15. Jahrhundert," in *Individualität*, ed. Manfred Frank und Anselm Haverkamp (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1988): 291–324, proposes that Petrarch established a new sphere (*Zwischen-sphäre*, p. 303) for individual expression; Lyell Asher, "Petrarch at the Peak of Fame," *PMLA* 108 (1993): 1050–63, goes even further by claiming that the letter "elides the very differences—between saint and sinner, good writing and bad—that Augustine is at pains to enforce," making it "possible to conceive an order of salvation existing elsewhere than in the City of God—existing in the city of humanity, in the *studia humanitatis*" (pp. 1054 and 1059). Ascoli, on the other hand, sees the letter in part "as a critique of the potential for idolatrous pride intrinsic to a narrative, like Dante's or Augustine's, of fully realized conversion" (p. 12).

Petrarch describes in the letter how after a strenuous climb of the French mountain he and his brother Gerardo reached the top with its breathtaking view:

I admired every detail, now relishing earthly enjoyment, now lifting up my mind to higher spheres after the example of my body, and I thought it fit to look into the volume of Augustine's *Confessions* . . . Where I fixed my eyes first, it was written: "And men go to admire the high mountains, the vast floods of the sea, the huge streams of the river, the circumference of the ocean, and the revolutions of the stars—and desert themselves" [*Conf.* 10.8.15]. I was stunned, I confess. . . . I was completely satisfied with what I had seen of the mountain and turned my inner eye toward myself. ("Ventoux" 373–75; 44)¹⁴

As we shall see when we turn to the *Confessions* in a moment, Petrarch actually misinterprets Augustine through partial quotation. What virtually all modern commentators agree on is that Petrarch, for all his reliance on the *Confessions*, does not in fact experience any "conversion" himself. The mountain-top experience instead results in an Augustinian introspection, bordering on a fixation on his own inner life: his epiphany excludes even his own brother.¹⁵

Petrarch's introspection is evident already during the ascent of the mountain, which he turns into an elaborate allegory. While his brother, later to become a monk, goes straight for the top, Petrarch loses his way among the foothills and valleys. Sitting down exhausted, he turns on himself:

What you have so often experienced today while climbing this mountain happens to you, you must know, and to many others who are making their way towards the blessed life. . . . However, having strayed far in error, you must

¹⁴ "Que dum mirarer singula et nunc terrenum aliquid saperem, nunc exemplo corporis animum ad altiora subveherem, visum est michi *Confessionum* Augustini librum . . . inspicere; . . . ubi primum defixi oculos, scriptum erat: 'Et eunt homines admirari alta montium et ingentes fluctus maris et latissimos lapsus fluminum et oceani ambitum et giros siderum, et relinquunt se ipsos' [*Conf.* 10.8.15]. Obstrupui, fateor; . . . Tunc vero mentem satis videsse contentus, in me ipsum interiores oculos reflexi, . . ." (Petrarca, *Le Familiari* 4.1, ed. Ugo Dotti, 2 vols. [Urbino: Argalia, 1974]); Petrarch, "The Ascent of Mont Ventoux," trans. Hans Nachod, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Ernst Cassirer et al. (Chicago and London: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1948). References to these two editions are given in the text. To ensure that the reader does not miss the parallel to Augustine's own conversion, Petrarch pointedly elaborates the similarities on pp. 375–77 (trans. p. 45).

¹⁵ See Michael O'Connell, "Authority and the Truth of Experience in Petrarch's 'Ascent of Mount Ventoux,'" *Philological Quarterly* 62 (1983): 516–17, and in particular Jill Robbins, "Petrarch Reading Augustine: 'The Ascent of Mont Ventoux,'" *Philological Quarterly* 64 (1985): 540–41.

either ascend to the summit of the blessed life under the heavy burden of hard striving, ill deferred, or lie prostrate in your slothfulness in the valleys of your sins. ("Ventoux" 367-69; 39-40)¹⁶

Looking forward to a time when he will have reached the spiritual summit, he confides to Dionigi that he then wants to follow Augustine's example ("Ventoux" 371; 42). What Petrarch proposes is the writing of his own confessions.

In the meantime, however, his assurance is peeled off layer by layer, exposing a heart torn by a divided will:

Many dubious and troublesome things are still in store for me. What I used to love, I love no longer. But I lie: I love it still, but less passionately. Again have I lied: I love it, but more timidly, more sadly. Now at last I have told the truth; for thus it is: I love, but what I should love not to love, what I should wish to hate. Nevertheless I love it, but against my will, under compulsion and in sorrow and mourning. ("Ventoux" 371; 42)¹⁷

Although never mentioned by name, Laura is the source of his inner turmoil, being the recipient of the tormented love Petrarch now tries to renounce with the help of Augustine. He sees 1333, the year when the copy of the *Confessions* had reached him, as the starting point for a spiritual battle:

The third year has not yet elapsed since that perverted and malicious will, which had totally seized me and reigned in the court of my heart without an opponent, began to encounter a rebel offering assistance. A stubborn and still undecided battle has long been raging on the field of my thoughts for the supremacy of one of the two men within me. ("Ventoux" 371-73; 42-43)¹⁸

The "two men within me"—one being Petrarch, the lover of Laura; and the other, the admonishing voice of Augustine—were to battle it

¹⁶ "Quod totiens hodie in ascensu montis huius expertus es, id scito et tibi accidere et multis, accedentibus ad beatam vitam; . . . veruntamen, ubi multum erraveris, aut sub pondere male dilati laboris ad ipsius te beate vite culmen oportet ascendere aut in convallibus peccatorum tuorum segnem procumbere; . . ."

¹⁷ "Michi quidem multum adhuc ambigui molestique negotii superest. Quod amare solebam, iam non amo; mentior: amo, sed parcius; iterum ecce mentitus sum: amo, sed verecundius, sed tristius; iantandem verum dixi. Sic est enim: amo sed quod non amare amem, quod odisse cupiam; amo tamen, sed invitatus, sed coactus, sed mestus et lugens."

¹⁸ "Nondum michi tertius annus effluxit, ex quo voluntas illa perversa et nequam, que me totum habebat et in aula cordis mei sola sine contradictore regnabat, cepit aliam habere rebellem et reluctantem sibi, inter quas iandudum in campis cogitationum mearum de utrusque hominis imperio laboriosissima et anceps etiam nunc pugna conseritur."

¹⁹ Foster, p. 100.

²⁰ Baron, *Secretum*.

²¹ Baron, *Secretum*, p. 197.

²² Rabil, p. 106. O'Connell is more careful to limit himself to Petrarch's view of the Father: "Here [in the 'Ascent'], as in the *Secretum*, St. Augustine is the champion of the decisive and exclusive turning of the will towards God and the things of the spirit" (p. 511).

out in that most personal of Petrarch's works, the *Secretum*. The two men were also to reappear conspicuously in the *Rime sparse*. It can be argued that the two works—*Secretum* and *Rime sparse*—together form the *Confessions* Petrarch had intimated to Dionigi he would one day write. To these can perhaps be added Petrarch's "Epistle to Posterity," written in 1351.

A common impetus behind the three works is all the more likely since they were probably written or planned during the same period, sometime in the late 40s or early 50s.¹⁹ Petrarch had compiled earlier versions of what was to become the *Rime sparse*, but in the years following Laura's death in 1347 the collection assumed its permanent form, in two parts introduced by the pivotal poems 1 and 264. The *Secretum* used to be dated to 1342, but the scholarly consensus is now that it too was written after 1347.²⁰ Scholars have likewise recognized that the "Ascent" was most likely written, or was at least heavily revised, long after the purported date of 1336. The latter year was probably chosen to allow Petrarch's age at the time of the ascent to coincide with Augustine's age at the time of his conversion (both would have been 32 years old). As Hans Baron argues, "The chronology of [Petrarch's] spiritual life—not only in his fictional letters but also in the autobiographical sections of his other works—has been modeled on Augustine's development."²¹ To better understand the nature of Petrarch's Augustinian emulation, we must now turn to the works that served as models: the *Confessions*, but also *Of True Religion*. This return to the sources is all the more important since the scholarly consensus seems to be that the main difference between the model and the copy was that Augustine did enjoy a genuine conversion, while Petrarch did not. "Augustine's will was transformed and his old habits abandoned once and for all," judges Albert Rabil, while "Petrarch carried his *dissidio* ['sadness of soul'] with him throughout his life."²²

II

Of True Religion and the *Confessions* enclose a crucial period of transition for Augustine. The earlier work was written in 390, the year before he became a presbyter in Hippo, while the *Confessions*, "the last product of Augustine's youth and the first work of his maturity,"²³ was written in 397, the year after his consecration as bishop. The '90s were dedicated to intense Bible study caused by new preaching duties, the pivotal years between what I have termed Augustine's "early" and "late" periods. Both works therefore exhibit a tension between the Platonic and the Pauline perspectives.

Of True Religion (*De vera religione*) is patterned after the Platonic ascent. One of Augustine's objectives is to show that the Christian religion fulfills what Plato had anticipated. The Greek philosopher had in fact been a proto-Christian; had he lived under the new dispensation he would have become a follower of Christ. Taking the place of an imaginary student, Augustine approaches Platon in a dialogue, beginning with what unites them:

He was persuaded that truth is seen not with the bodily eyes but by the pure mind, and that any soul that cleaves to truth is thereby made happy and perfect. Nothing hinders the perception of truth more than a life devoted to lusts, and the false images of sensible things, derived from the sensible world and impressed on us by the agency of the body, which beget various opinions and errors. (*De Ver. Rel.* 3.3)²⁴

The imaginary student then asks Plato the rhetorical question if it would not be wonderful if some "great and divine man" should arise to help mankind overcome these errors. God's Son, who is also the divine Logos, he continues, has indeed appeared "in order that men may receive the Word, love him, and enjoy him so that the soul may be healed and the eye of the mind receive power to use the light" (*De Ver. Rel.* 3.4).²⁵ The Platonists are right about the general outline and necessity of the ascent of the soul, but that ascent can be accomplished

²³ James J. O'Donnell, Introduction to vol. 1 of Augustine, *Confessions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 1.

²⁴ "... persuaderetur non corporeis oculis, sed pura mente veritatem videri, cui quaecumque anima inhaesisset, eam beatam fieri atque perfectam, ad quam percipiendam nihil magis impedire quam vitam libidinis deditam et falsas imagines rerum sensibilibus, quae nobis ab hoc sensibili mundo per corpus impressae varias opiniones erioresque generarent." Translation emended.

²⁵ "... vir magnus atque divinus, ...; ... ad hoc [sc. verbum] percipiendum, diligendum, perfruendum, ut anima sanetur et tantae luci hauriendae mentis acies consualescat, ..."

only through the prior descent of Christ. Reason, the philosophers' logos, must be complemented with the divine Logos. In this stage of Augustine's career, however, the two kinds of logos are not clearly distinguished, with the result that the Incarnation functions not unlike a Platonic form.

If the vertical ascent is the basic metaphor,²⁶ Augustine has become more aware of the human impediments in the few years since writing *The Greatness of the Soul*. He may still somewhat glibly urge his reader "transcend yourself" (*De Ver. Rel.* 39.72),²⁷ yet underlying the whole discussion are Paul's words in Romans 1: 20: "For the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead" (cited in *De Ver. Rel.* 42.101). This verse provides Augustine with the scriptural sanction to see "how far reason can advance from visible to invisible things in its ascent from temporal to eternal things" (*De Ver. Rel.* 29.52).²⁸ He takes it as axiomatic that the soul must transcend corporeal beauty in order to contemplate the supreme beauty, yet he also takes special note of Paul's warning in the continuation of Romans 1: 20-21: "So that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." The problem is that the soul, serving "the creature rather than the Creator," cannot transcend the corporeal level. Conflating Paul's "vain imaginations" with Plato's "false images of sensible things" (referred to in *De Ver. Rel.* 3.3),²⁹ Augustine blames the inability to ascend on "phantasms, ... figments of corporeal shapes appearing to bodily sense" (*De Ver. Rel.* 10.18),³⁰ which "do not permit us to see abiding unity" (*De Ver. Rel.* 35.65).³¹

Can the soul actually make the jump from the corporeal to the spiritual? Augustine voices serious doubts: "Obstinate souls! Give me a single man who can see without being influenced by imaginations de-

²⁶ Yet in *De Ver. Rel.* 26.48-27, 50 we also find the first "horizontal" references to the Pauline "old" and "new man" with their corresponding cities, a premonition of the psychological perceptions of the *Conf.* and the historical perspective of *De Civ. Dei*.

²⁷ "... transcede et te ipsum."

²⁸ "... quatenus ratio possit progredi a visibilibus ad invisibilia et a temporalibus ad aeterna conscendens."

²⁹ "... falsas imagines rerum sensibilibus, ..."

³⁰ "Phantasmata ... de specie corporis corporeo sensu attracta figmenta, ..."

³¹ "... constantem unitatem videre non sinunt." See also *De Ver. Rel.* 50.95-98, and 55.108.

rived from things seen in the flesh" (*De Ver. Rel.* 34.64).³² Again alluding to Romans 1: 21, he clinches the matter by seemingly blocking all ways of human ascent:

It is sin which deceives souls, when they seek something that is true but abandon or neglect truth. They love the works of the artificer more than the artificer or his art, and are punished by falling into the error of expecting to find the artificer and his art in his works, and when they cannot do so they think that the works are both the art and the artificer. God is not offered to the corporeal senses, and transcends even the mind. (*De Ver. Rel.* 36.67)³³

If there is a way to God, it does not seem to start from below. To solve this dilemma, Augustine falls back on the Incarnation: God has intervened by sending his Son, who as true God and true human bridges the gap between God and humanity (*De Ver. Rel.* 16.30, and 36.66). Yet since the divine Logos is not only "the grace whereby we are reconciled," but also "the form we imitate" (*De Ver. Rel.* 65.113),³⁴ that solution involves Pythagorean numerology (*De Ver. Rel.* 29.52). Number, found both in the beauty of the human form (*De Ver. Rel.* 40.75) and in poetry (*De Ver. Rel.* 22.42), can lead to the unity of the One:

If fleshly pleasure is loved, let it be carefully considered and vestigial traces of number will be recognized in it. We must, then, seek the realm where number exists in complete tranquillity; for there existence is, above all, unity. (*De Ver. Rel.* 42.79)³⁵

As we shall see when we return to Petrarch, both the problem of the phantasms and the formal solution will figure prominently in the *Secretum* and the *Rime sparse*.

A decade after his conversion, Augustine decided to write his *Confessions*, a spiritual autobiography that internalizes and subjectivizes the theory of ascent expounded and explored in earlier philosophical and doctrinal treatises. His own experience becomes the testing-ground for the viability of his theoretical hypotheses—in particular,

³² "O animae pervicaces, date mihi, qui videat sine ulla imaginatione visorum carnalium, . . ."

³³ "... peccata animas fallunt, cum verum quaerunt relicta et neglecta veritate. Nam quoniam opera magis quam artificem atque ipsam artem dilexerunt, hoc errore puniuntur, ut in operibus artificem atque artemque conquirant, et cum invenire nequeverint—deus enim non corporalibus sensibus subiacet, sed ipsi menti supereminet—ipsa opera existiment esse et artem et artificem."

³⁴ "... formam, quam sequimur, et gratiam, qua reconciliamur, . . ."

³⁵ "Si ergo voluptas carnis diligitur, ea ipsa diligentius consideretur; et cum ibi recognita fuerint quorundam vestigia numerorum, quaerendum est ubi sine tumore sint. Ibi enim magis unum est quod est."

the relation between Plotinus and Paul: do they complement or confront each other? After having covered his early life up to the point of his coming to Milan, the newly consecrated bishop in Book 7 relates how God had used proud men to provide him with "books of the Platonists, translated from the Greek into Latin" (*Conf.* 7.9.13).³⁶ He believes that despite differences of wording, their sense was the same as St. John's gospel and the Pauline epistles. That is, the heavenly Word of John 1 had much in common with the Platonist logos. Yet he also realized that if the divinity of Christ could be explained in Plotinian terms, his humanity could not: he had not read in his writings that "the Word was made flesh and came to dwell among us" (*Conf.* 7.9.14).³⁷ What Augustine instead stresses is the resulting introspection: "These books served to remind me to return to my own self. Under your guidance I entered into the depths of my soul" (*Conf.* 7.10.16).³⁸ The turn within leads to a Plotinian ascent, characteristically clinched with a reference to Romans 1: 20:

So, step by step, my thoughts moved on from consideration of material things to the soul, . . . And so, in an instant of awe, my mind attained to the sight of the God who is. Then, at last, I caught sight of your invisible nature, as it is known from your creatures.

But the Pauline reference leads to a confession of shortcomings:

But I had no strength to fix my gaze upon them. In my weakness I recoiled and fell back into my old ways, carrying with me nothing but the memory of something that I loved and longed for, as though I had sensed the fragrance of the fare but was not yet able to eat it. (*Conf.* 7.17.23)³⁹

Augustine instead finds the answer outside himself, in the Word.⁴⁰ he regained his strength by embracing "the mediator between God and men,

³⁶ "... platoniorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinam versos, . . ."

³⁷ "... verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis, . . ."

³⁸ "Et inde admonitus redire ad memet ipsum, intravi in intima mea duce te, . . ."

³⁹ "Atque ita gradatim a corporibus ad sententiam per corpus animam . . . et pervenit ad id quod est in actu trepidantis aspectus. Tunc vero invisibilia tua per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspexi, sed aciem figere non evalui, et repercussa infirmitate redditus solitus non mecum ferebam nisi amantem memoriam et quasi olefacta desiderantem quae comedere nondum possem."

⁴⁰ As Brian Stock explains, "In *Confessions* 7, [Augustine] took a step in a new direction: he effectively domesticated the neoplatonic ascent by uniting its goals to those of Christian reading and meditation. The move permitted him to remain critical of philosophy while incorporating the key feature of meditative reflection into a programme accessible to all. . . . At the end of book 7, he wants us to be students of scripture like himself, not neoplatonic mystics" (*Augustine the Reader* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1996], pp. 65 and 69).

Jesus Christ, who is a man, like them" (Conf. 7.18.24, quoting 1 Timothy 2: 5).⁴¹ The assimilation of Plotinus and Paul gives way to separation. The Platonists lack charity (Conf. 7.20.26) and, above all, the humility to seek God's grace (Conf. 7.21.27). Like Moses on Mount Horeb, they had seen the land of peace but were unable to enter into it.

Augustine relates how he with renewed interest had seized upon the writings of St. Paul. Romans 1: 20, the Pauline justification for the spiritual ascent, is now complemented with chapter 7 of the same book (together with related texts), in which Paul describes the war between the old and the new man:

For even if a man inwardly applauds God's disposition, how is he to resist that other disposition in his lower self, which raises war against the disposition of his conscience, so that he is handed over as a captive to that disposition towards sin, which his lower self contains? . . . What is man to do in this plight? Who is to set him free from a nature thus doomed to death? Nothing else than the grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Conf. 7.21.27, quoting Romans 7: 22–25)⁴²

The human subject is torn by a divided will that prevents any divine ascent unless God himself first reaches down. Grace has become the central concept.

As Augustine in Book 8 approaches his conversion, he repeatedly describes his own situation in terms of this internal war of the wills:

The enemy held my will in his power and from it he had made a chain and shackled me. For my will was perverse and lust had grown from it, and when I gave in to lust habit was born, and when I did not resist the habit it became a necessity. . . . But the new will which had come to life in me and made me wish to serve you freely and enjoy you, my God, who are our only certain joy, was not yet strong enough to overcome the old, hardened as it was by the passage of time. So these two wills within me, one old, one new, one the servant of the flesh, the other of the spirit, were in conflict and between them they tore my soul apart. (Conf. 8.5.10)⁴³

⁴¹ " . . . mediatorem dei et hominum, hominem Christum Iesum, . . . "

⁴² " . . . quia, etsi condelectetur homo legi dei secundum interiore hominem, quid faciet de alia lege in membris suis repugnante legi mentis suae et se captivum ducentem in lege peccati, quae est in membris eius? . . . Quid faciet miser homo? Quis eum liberabit de corpore mortis huius, nisi gratia tua per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum, . . . "

⁴³ "Velle meum tenebat inimicus et inde mihi catenam fecerat et constrinxerat me. Quippe ex voluntate perversa facta est libido, et dum servitur libidini, facta est consuetudo, et dum consuetudini non resistitur, facta est necessitas. . . . Voluntas autem nova quae mihi esse coeperat, ut te gratis colerem fruique te vellem, deus, sola certa iucunditas, nondum erat idonea ad superandam priorem vetustate roboratam. Ita duae voluntates meae, una vetus, alia nova, illa carnalis, illa spiritalis, confligebant inter se atque discordando dissipabant animam meam."

When Augustine enters a small Milanese garden, the tensions come to a crisis. He describes the inner turmoil in a passage that almost certainly found an echo in Petrarch's tortured antitheses: "Meanwhile I was beside myself with madness that would bring me sanity. I was dying a death that would bring me life. I knew the evil that was in me, but the good that was soon to be born in me I did not know" (Conf. 8.8.19).⁴⁴ The release comes with the hearing of children's voices urging him to "pick it up and read"; he takes this to mean the Bible that he carries with him, and his eyes fall on some verses in Romans 13 that admonish him to seek Christ's help in his battle against the flesh (Conf. 8.12.29).

A growing awareness of the need for divine grace made Augustine revise but never completely discard the general Plotinian outline of his theology. He can therefore dedicate book 10 of the *Confessions* to the theoretical ramifications of his own broken ascent, centering on an important faculties of the soul, the memory and the imagination. Book 10 is also a justification of the project Augustine has been involved in throughout the preceding nine books: the gathering and structuring of the scattered images of a torn life, stored in the memory, into a coherent narrative of conversion.⁴⁵ Based on Aristotelian faculty psychology, the memory and the imagination stand between the senses and the intellect. As Albert Russell Ascoli explains: "The imagination is the faculty by which sense impressions are converted into mental records; while memory is the faculty in which such records are conserved over the passage of time. . . . they mediate the mental movement from the sensual to the intellectual world by the formation and retention of images and words, which, respectively, represent, but do not partake essentially of, the purely sensual and purely ideal realms."⁴⁶ It is in this context that Petrarch's reading of the *Confessions* on Mont Ventoux comes in:

So I must go beyond this natural faculty of mine [i.e., the senses], as I rise by stages towards the God who made me. The next stage is memory, which is like a great field or a spacious palace, a storehouse for countless images of all kinds

⁴⁴ " . . . sed tantum insaniebam salubriter et moriebar vitaliter, gnarus quid mali essem et ignarus quid boni post paululum futurus essem."

⁴⁵ And as a narrative of conversion, explains Freccero, the *Confessions* "came to be regarded only in the modern era for what it is: not simply the life of a saint, but also the paradigm for all representations of the self in a retrospective literary structure. . . . When he told his life story in terms of a conversion from paganism to Christianity, Augustine was at the same time establishing a literary genre, the confession, or narrative of the self" (p. 17).

⁴⁶ Ascoli, p. 17

which are conveyed to it by the senses. . . . Yet men go out and gaze in astonishment at high mountains, the huge waves of the sea, the broad reaches of rivers, the ocean that encircles the world, or the stars in their courses. But they pay no attention to themselves. They do not marvel at the thought that while I have been mentioning these things, I have not been looking at them with my eyes, and that I could not even speak of mountains or waves, rivers or stars, which are things that I have seen, or of the ocean, which I know only on the evidence of others, unless I could see them in my mind's eye, in my memory, and with the same vast spaces between them that would be there if I were looking at them in the world outside myself. (*Conf.* 10.8.12 and 15)⁴⁷

Where Petrarch found a renunciation of the physical world, Augustine was rather marvelling at the glory of his mental faculties, which, explains Ascoli, were "responsible for mediating the human self's passage between the sensual world of time and space and the infinite, eternal world of the 'beata vita'."⁴⁸

Characteristically, however, Augustine's inquiries about the memory and imagination reveal rupture rather than smooth continuity. With *Of True Religion* in fresh memory, we are aware that images may turn into disruptive phantasms. Augustine's mental ascent, covering chapters 6 to 27, in fact never gets beyond the faculty of memory, and the last 15 chapters emphasize the debilitating impediments to a successful ascent.⁴⁹ In the end, progress is impossible without God's direct intervention:

During this life, which may be called a perpetual trial, no one should be confident that although he has been able to pass from a worse state to a better, he may not also pass from a better state to a worse. Our only hope, our only confidence, the only firm promise we have is your mercy. (*Conf.* 10.32.48)⁵⁰

Unless illumined by grace, the human microcosm suffers from the same fragmentation as the fluctuating macrocosm: "my life is a kind of

⁴⁷ "Transibo ergo et istam naturae meae, gradibus ascendens ad eum qui fecit me, et venio in campos et lata praetoria memoriae, ubi sunt thesauri innumerabilium imaginum de cuiuscumodi rebus sensis invectarum. . . . Et eunt homines mirari alta montium et ingentes fluctus maris et latissimos lapsus fluminum et oceani ambitum et gyros siderum, et relinquunt se ipsos, nec mirantur quod haec omnia, cum dicerem, non ea videbam oculis, nec tamen dicerem, nisi montes et fluctus et flumina et sidera quae vidi et oceanum quem credidi intus in memoria mea viderem, spatiis tam ingentibus quasi foris viderem."

⁴⁸ Ascoli, p. 13.

⁴⁹ See Stock, pp. 215–16.

⁵⁰ " . . . nemo securus esse debet in ista vita, quae tota temptatio nominatur, utrum qui fieri potuit ex deteriore melior non fiat etiam ex meliorem deterior. Una spes, una fiducia, una firma promissio misericordia tua."

distraction and dispersal, . . . I am divided up in time whose order I do not know" (*Conf.* 11.29.39).⁵¹ Only in God, through the mediation of Christ the Logos, can the scattered images of the past be pieced together:

But in all the regions where I thread my way, seeking your guidance, only in you do I find a safe haven for my mind, a gathering-place for my scattered parts, where no portion of me can depart from you. (*Conf.* 10.40.65)⁵²

Confessing to God in writing permeated by scriptural quotations constitutes for Augustine that "gathering place" into which the "scattered parts" of his life gain coherence and meaning.

The question remains if Augustine's conversion meant the immediate healing of his divided self. Were the tensions only pre-conversion pangs resolved once and for all in the garden? When he looked back on his first ten years as a Christian, his own assessment is not so assured:

And sometimes you [i.e., God] allow me to experience a feeling quite unlike my normal state, an inward sense of delight which, if it were to reach perfection in me, would be something not encountered in this life, though what it is I cannot tell. But my heavy burden of distress drags me down again to earth. Again I become a prey to my habits, which hold me fast. (*Conf.* 10.40.65)⁵³

As Augustine met the challenge of Pelagius, he became less and less optimistic about the possibility of reaching earthly perfection even under grace. According to Frederick H. Russell, he even came to see the presumption of perfectibility as the defining mark of heresy: "The common denominator of all his foes was that they advanced the possibility of spiritual perfection here below."⁵⁴ The question of perfectibility could be put in exegetical terms: when Paul wrote about the inter-

⁵¹ " . . . distentio est vita mea, . . . At ego in tempora dissilui quorum ordinem nescio, . . ." As translated in E.J. Hundert, "Augustine and the Sources of the Divided Self," *Political Theory* 20 (1992): 99, to which Hundert adds: "In the process of attaining knowledge of the good, the empowered reflexive subject would discover the self as an object in the making, an entity paradoxically constituted by its own self-regard, and composed of dispersed and unconnected elements in all the morally unilluminated moments of its career." For the relevance of this passage to Petrarch, see James T. Chiampì, "Petrarch's Augustinian Excess," *Italica* 72: 1 (1995): 1–20, esp. p. 9.

⁵² "Neque in his omnibus quae percurro consulens te invenio tuum locum animae meae nisi in te, quo conligantur sparsa mea nec a te quicquam recedat ex me."

⁵³ "Et aliquando intrinsecis me in affectum multum inusitatum introrsus, ad nescio quam dulcedinem, quae si perficiatur in me, nescio quid erit quod vita ista non erit. Sed recido in haec aerumnosis ponderibus et resorbeor solius et teneor . . ."

⁵⁴ Frederick H. Russell, "Only Something Good Can Be Evil": The Genesis of Augustine's Secular Ambivalence, *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 710.

nal battle in Romans 7, the central text for Augustine's discussion of the divided will, was he talking about an unregenerate person still living under the law, or was he talking about a Christian living under grace? In *Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans* (394), Augustine's first struggling exegesis of Paul, he was confident enough that "the man described here [in Romans 7: 15–16] is under the Law, prior to grace; . . . For by his free will man has a means to believe in the Liberator and to receive grace so that, with the liberating assistance of him who gives it, he might cease to sin" (*Exp. Rom.* 44).⁵⁵ Commenting on his earlier verdict at the end of his life, however, he now felt that even a Christian living under grace had to struggle with sin: "every saintly person already living 'under grace' can say all those things which I have said are the words of the man not yet living 'under grace,' but 'under the Law'" (*Retr.* 1.23.1).⁵⁶ As for himself, he confessed that "I do not claim this perfection for myself even now when I am old, and even less when, in early manhood, I had begun to write and speak to the people" (Prologue to *Retr.*).⁵⁷ The humanity and humility of the aging bishop, who on his death-bed recited the penitential Psalms of David, shines through as it had not done in the youthful philosopher.

III

In "The Ascent of Mont Ventoux," Petrarch's divided self is expressed through two men (373; 43, see above), the poet himself and Augustine. "Augustinus" and "Franciscus"⁵⁸ return in that most introspective of documents, the *Secretum*. Both are *internal* voices, subjective repre-

⁵⁵ "Nunc enim homo describitur sub lege positus ante gratiam. . . . In libero autem arbitrio habet, ut credat liberatori et accipiat gratiam, ut iam illo, qui eam donat, liberante et adiuvante non peccet. . . ."

⁵⁶ " . . . potest quisque sanctus iam sub gratia positus dicere ista omnia, quae hic esse dixi verba hominis nondum sub gratia positi sed sub lege." For a comprehensive discussion of Augustine's views on Paul's status in Romans 7, see James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), esp. pp. 144–97.

⁵⁷ "Ego mihi hanc perfectionem nec nunc arrago, cum iam sim senex, quanto minus cum juvenis coepi scribere vel apud populos dicere." The importance that the mature Augustine attaches to the inability of reaching perfection in this life can be gauged by the frequency with which he corrects his earlier writings on this issue (see *Retr.* 1.7.5; 1.15.2; 1.19.1–2; 1.23.1; 1.24.2; 1.26.66; 1.28.1) or brings it up in his anti-Pelagian works (see *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 8.13–11.24; *On the Spirit and the Letter* 2.2–4 and 36.65–66; *On Nature and Grace* 35.41 and 60.7; *On Man's Perfection in Righteousness* 7.16 and 21.44; *On Forgiveness of Sins*, and *Baptism* 2.1–34; *Against Julian* 2.3 and 6.23).

⁵⁸ Following established scholarly practice, I distinguish these fictive personae from the historical Augustine and Petrarch by using their Latin/Italian name forms.

sentations not to be identified in any simplistic way with the historical Augustine or with Petrarch. They can profitably be interpreted in the Freudian categories of the author's ego trying to negotiate between the id (Franciscus) and the superego (Augustinus). A parallel approach, used in this chapter, is to see both men as differing Augustinian voices, representing the perspectives of the "young" and the "old" Augustine. Here Freud is not as useful, since the focus is less on the ego of either Augustine or Petrarch than on the transmission of anthropological world views.

Scholars have stressed the divergence between the opinions of the dialogue's fictive "Augustinus" and the views found in the writings of Augustine himself. Some even associate the fictive "Franciscus" with the real Augustine, while "Augustinus" is perceived as a representative of Ciceronian Stoicism, with a touch of Platonism.⁵⁹ Trinkaus comes close to my own position when he posits: "The two figures are seen dynamically as the 'before' and 'after' of a single man; they are Augustine, and they are Petrarch too, as he feels he is and aspires to become."⁶⁰ The focus for Trinkaus is the conversions of Augustine (as recorded in the *Confessions*) and of Petrarch (longed for in the *Secretum* but not achieved). To use the Pauline terms from Romans 7 that were central to both Augustine and Petrarch, Franciscus would still be living under the law, while Augustine speaks from a position of grace. Yet as we have seen, the mature Augustine recognized that even as a Christian, living in a state of grace, he suffered from the divided self that he as a young convert considered a sign of the unconverted life under the law. Seen from this perspective, the *Secretum* (or at least large parts of it) can be read as a dialogue between the perfectionist assumptions of the young Augustine (in the persona of Augustinus) and the more realistic assessment of the old bishop (in the persona of Franciscus).

⁵⁹ See, among others, Trinkaus, "Petrarch and Classical Philosophy," p. 271 (yet for a divergent view, see his own *Poet as Philosopher*, p. 58), and Foster, pp. 161–71. In an influential article first published in 1975, William J. Bouwsma sees Stoicism and Augustinianism in the *Secretum* as representing two contradictory traditions: "The Two Faces of Humanism: Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance Thought," reprinted in *A Usable Past* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990), pp. 19–73. There are points of contact between Bouwsma's two categories and my own "early" and "late" Augustinian perspectives in that Bouwsma's Augustinianism is that of the mature bishop, while the young Augustine was influenced not only by Platonism (which I have emphasized) but also by Stoicism. Both Augustine and Petrarch first encountered Stoicism and Platonism in Cicero, who had already partially conflated the two schools.

⁶⁰ Trinkaus, *Poet as Philosopher*, p. 58.

The argument of the first of the three dialogues that comprise the *Secretum* centers on the question whether Franciscus can muster the will-power to lead a holy life, in order that "optimus fiam [I may become better and better, even to perfection]" (*Secretum* I; 72; 24). To achieve this goal, a conspicuously medieval Augustinus urges him to meditate on death. Augustinus' own example proves that a transformed will is possible:

And then my will after that became fully changed, and my weakness also was changed in that same moment to power, and by a marvelous and most blessed alteration I was transformed instantly and made another man, another Augustine altogether. (*Secretum* I; 66; 20)⁶¹

The change, however, is made possible not only by religious meditation, but also by listening to the precepts of philosophy (*Secretum* I; 58; 12). Stoicism in particular is useful, but also the Platonism mediated by Petrarch's favourite Cicero (*Secretum* I; 94; 44).

The philosophical perspective is vertical and non-incarnate. As Augustinus teaches Franciscus, "It was from heaven your soul came forth: never will I assert a lower origin than that. But in its contact with the flesh, wherein it is imprisoned, it has lost much of its first splendour. Have no doubt of this in your mind" (*Secretum* I; 92; 41–42).⁶² Referring to *Of True Religion*, Augustinus warns Franciscus of the phantasms that prove the greatest hindrance for a successful ascent:

Of a truth the countless forms and images of things visible, that one by one are brought into the soul by the senses of the body, gather there in the inner centre in a mass, and the soul, not being akin to these or capable of learning them, they weigh it down and overwhelm it with their contrariety. Hence that plague of too many impressions tears apart and wounds the thinking faculty of the soul, and with its fatal, distracting complexity bars the way of clear meditation, whereby it would mount up to the threshold of the One Chief Good. (*Secretum* I; 94; 43)⁶³

⁶¹ "Itaque postquam plene volui, illicet et potui, miraque et felicissima celeritate transformatus sum in alterum Augustinum. . . ."

⁶² "Animum quidem tuam, sicut celtus bene institutam esse non negaverim, sic ex contagio corporis huius, ubi circumsepta est, multum a primeva nobilitate sua degenerasse ne dubites."

⁶³ "Conglobantur siquidem species innumere et imagines rerum visibilibus, que corporeis introgressae sensibus, postquam singulariter admisse sunt, catervatim in anime penetralibus densantur; eamque, nec ad id genitum nec tam multorum difformiumque capacem, pregravant atque confundunt. Hinc pestis illa fantasmatum vestros discerpens laserasque cogitatus, meditationibusque clarificis, quibus ad unum solum summumque lumen ascenditur, iter obstruens varietate mortifera."

When Augustinus in the second dialogue takes Franciscus through the seven deadly sins, the same Platonic bias is evident. To carry a human body is to be imprisoned "in some dungeon, dark, damp, and dirty" (*Secretum* II; 112; 58).⁶⁴ while the sin of lust is best combatted with Plato's heavenly doctrines, which show that "the soul must separate itself from the passions of the flesh and tread down its imaginings before it can rise pure and free to the contemplation of the mystery of the Divine" (*Secretum* II; 133–34; 77).⁶⁵ Human images, connected as they are to the human body, are consequently a dangerous thing.

Franciscus, while seemingly going along with Augustinus, shows both active and passive resistance to the doctrines of perfectibility. What more is there to say, asks Augustinus, and gets the answer:

Just this need, that I think I have seen very many people, and I am one of them, to whom nothing is more distressful than the inability to break the yoke of their faults, though all their life long they make the greatest effort so to do. (*Secretum* I; 60; 13)⁶⁶

The Augustine Franciscus identifies with is the struggling sinner of the *Confessions*:

Amid my winds and tempests I can recognize from time to time the traces of your own storm-tossed passions. So that as often as I read the book of your *Confessions*, and am made partaker of your conflict between two contrary emotions, between hope and fear, (and weep as I read), I seem to be hearing the story of my own self, the story not of another's wandering, but of my own. (*Secretum* I; 68; 21)⁶⁷

For his part, Franciscus seems unable to transcend a divided will. Whatever success he has had in his fight against lust is as much due to God's grace as to his own efforts. Even Augustinus acknowledges as much: "None can be chaste except God give him the grace of chastity"

⁶⁴ "... in carcerem tenebrosam atque humentem olentemque pestifera. . . ."

⁶⁵ "... animam a libidinibus corporeis arcendum et eradenda fantasmata, ut ad pervidenda divinitatis archana, cui proprie mortalitatis annexa cogitatio est, purus expeditusque consurgat."

⁶⁶ "Quia multos vidisse michi video, inter quos et me ipsum, nichil molestius ferentes quam quod vitiorum iugum non liceret excutere, quamvis ad id per omnem vitam summis viribus niterentur."

⁶⁷ "... inter procellas meas fluctuationis tue vestigium recognosco. Ex quo fit ut, quod tiens *Confessionum* tuarum libros lego, inter duos contrarios affectus, spem videlicet et metum, letis non sine lacrimis interdum legere me arbitrer non alienam sed propriam mee peregrinationis historiam."

(*Secretum* II; 136; 79).⁶⁸ The medieval component in Augustine's persona in fact goes against the grain of his Platonism, subtly undercutting his own optimism. The ascent to heaven does not go through some Platonic meditation on the One, but, paradoxically, through "the perpetual recollection of our mortal nature" (*Secretum* I; 74; 26).⁶⁹ To become perfect requires a realization of our imperfect nature.

In the final dialogue, Augustine attacks what he believes to be the areas of Franciscus' principal weaknesses: love and desire for glory. As the object of the poet's love and the figurative representation of "the laurel of empire or of poetry" (*Secretum* III; 198; 134),⁷⁰ Laura is intimately connected with both impediments. These weaknesses function like "two strong chains" (*Secretum* III; 168; 108)⁷¹ that prevent the poet's spiritual ascent. Petrarch borrows this metaphor from *Conf.* 8.5.10, where Augustine describes himself as having been fettered by the iron chains of an uncontrollable lust. Sexual purity was of paramount importance to the Father, a troubled topic that became central also to Petrarch's quest for salvation. In an image that I believe colored Petrarch's conception of Laura, Augustine pictures his imminent release from the "chains" of lust through the female figure of Continence: "I had turned eyes elsewhere, and while I stood trembling at the barrier, on the other side I could see the chaste beauty of Continence in all her serene, unsullied joy, as she modestly beckoned me to cross over and to hesitate no more" (*Conf.* 8.11.27).⁷² This at least is how Franciscus would like to picture Laura: she is "the image of virtue" (*Secretum* III; 172; 111),⁷³ "whose character is the image and picture of perfect honour" (*Secretum* III; 176; 114).⁷⁴

Augustine, as is to be expected, does not accept that argument. If Laura is an image, she is an example of the detrimental phantasms of *Of True Religion*. Alluding to Romans 1: 20–25, that key Pauline text about the scope and limitations of the intellectual ascent, Augustine punctures the stillnovist adoration of the *donna*: "She has detached your mind from the love of heavenly things and has inclined your

⁶⁸ "Continens equidem, nisi cui Deus dederit, esse non potest."

⁶⁹ "... mortalitas vestre recordatione continua."

⁷⁰ "... sive cesaream sive poeticam lauream, ..."

⁷¹ "... duabus ... adamantinis ... cathenis ..."

⁷² "Aperiebatur enim ab ea parte qua intenderam faciem et quo transire trepidabam casta dignitas continentiae, serena et non dissolute hilaris, honeste blandiens ut venirem neque dubitare, ..."

⁷³ "... specimen virtutis ..."

⁷⁴ "cuius mores consummate honestatis exemplar sunt."

heart to love the creature more than the Creator" (*Secretum* III; 186; 124).⁷⁵ Demonstrating that the love of human beauty leads to idolatry rather than beatitude, Augustine echoes the strictures of *Of True Religion*.

But the mind operates perversely, for it and not the eye was made to contemplate supreme beauty. Such a man as we have been speaking of wants to turn his mind to corporeal things and his eyes to God. He seeks to know carnal things and to see spiritual things. But that is impossible. (*De Ver. Rel.* 33.62)⁷⁶

Franciscus is eventually forced to concede what Petrarch also admits in "The Ascent Of Mont Ventoux": he had turned off the straight and narrow road when he first laid eyes on Laura (*Secretum* III; 192; 129).

Victoria Kahn has demonstrated that the *Secretum* is both a reading and a willful misreading of the *Confessions*.⁷⁷ Franciscus ends the dialogue with a halfhearted promise to follow Augustine's admonitions:

I will collect the scattered fragments of my soul, and will make a great endeavor to possess myself in patience. But even while we speak, a crowd of important affairs, though only of the world, is waiting for my attention. (*Secretum* III; 258; as translated in Kahn, 163)⁷⁸

Franciscus attempts to follow Augustine's example in the *Confessions*, in which a "converted memory ... collects and orders the fragments of past experience into a coherent self, that is, a coherent narrative."⁷⁹ Yet, as Kahn points out, while Augustine writes a confessional narrative that gathers his fragmented experiences into the unity of God's larger purpose, Franciscus uses writing (a "crowd of important affairs") as an excuse for not meditating on his mortality. The *Secretum*, therefore, does not qualify as a redemptive narrative any more than "The Ascent of Mont Ventoux," which also ends on a note of dispersal:

⁷⁵ "Ab amore celestium elongavit animum et a Creatore ad creaturam desiderium inclinavit."

⁷⁶ "Sed animus perverse, cui ad contemplandam summam pulchritudinem mens, non oculus factus est. Ille autem vult mentem convertere ad corpora, oculos ad deum. Querit enim intellegere carnalia et videre spiritualia, quod fieri non potest."

⁷⁷ Victoria Kahn, "The Figure of the Reader in Petrarch's *Secretum*," *PMLA* 100 (1985): 154–66.

⁷⁸ "... sparsa anime fragmenta recolligam, moraborque mecum sedulo. Sane nunc, dum loquimur, multa me magnaue, quamvis adhuc mortalia, negotia expectant."

⁷⁹ Kahn, p. 156, rephrasing Augustine's own words: "recollecting myself out of the broken condition of mine, wherein I was piecemeal shattered asunder [conligens me a dispersione, in qua frustatim discissus sum]" (*Conf.* 2.1.1, as translated in Kahn, p. 157).

Pray for these thoughts, I beseech you, that they may at last find stability. So long have they been idling about and, finding no firm stand, been uselessly driven through so many matters. May they now turn at last to the One, the Good, the True, the stably Abiding. ("Ventoux" 377; 46)⁸⁰

IV

In the same period that Petrarch engages in this dialogue with Augustine (and perhaps writes "The Ascent of Mont Ventoux" as well), he organizes the basic structure of what he terms his *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, "Fragments of vernacular poetry." Might this collection of fragments constitute the poet's attempt at a coherent and salvific narrative of the self?

Voi ch' ascoltate in rime sparse il suono
di quei sospiri ond' io nudriva 'l core
in sul mio primo giovenile errore,
quand' era in parte altr' uom da quel ch' i' sono:

del vario stile in ch' io piango et ragiono
fra le vane speranze e 'l van dolore,
ove sia chi per prova intenda amore
spero trovar pietà, non che perdono. . . .

You who hear in scattered rhymes the sound of those sighs with which I nourished my heart during my first youthful error, when I was in part another man from what I am now:

for the varied style in which I weep and speak between vain hopes and vain sorrow, where there is anyone who understands love through experience, I hope to find pity, not only pardon. (*Rime sparse* 1)

Does Petrarch expect the reader or listener of his "scattered rhymes" to collect the fragments into a coherent unity? Is the poet to be pardoned and pitied?

One way to achieve such coherence would be through the unifying and redemptive force of his lady. Petrarch had a powerful example of such a force near at hand in Dante's Beatrice, and both the *Vita nuova* and the *Divina commedia* function as persistent subtexts throughout the *Rime sparse*. Dante announces his reliance on an Augustinian poet-ics in the very first lines of the *Vita nuova*, when he introduces the key concepts of memory and imagination culled from *Confessions* 10:

⁸⁰ "pro quibus ora, queso, ut tandiu vagi et instabiles aliquando subsistant, et inutiliter per multa iactati, ad unum, bonum, verum, certum, stabile se convertant."

In that part of the book of my memory before which little could be read, a rubric is found that says: *Incipit vita nova*. . . . Nine times since my birth had the heaven of light returned to almost the same point in its orbit when to my eyes first appeared the glorious lady of my mind, who was called Beatrice by many who did not know her given name. . . . I say that from that time forward, Love ruled over my soul, which was so early espoused to him, and he began to assume over me such assurance and such mastery, through the power that my imagination gave him, that I was obliged to do all his bidding fully. . . . And although her image, which continually stayed with me, gave Love its strength to rule over me, it was nevertheless of such noble power that at no time did it allow Love to rule me without the faithful counsel of reason, in those things where such counsel was useful to heed. (VN1-2;9)⁸¹

Right from the start, the image of Beatrice recollected from the book of his memory leads the poet towards moral and spiritual purification. The religious significance of her name is immediately hinted at, and her numerological status as "a miracle" associated with the Triune God, later in the book to be explicated,⁸² makes the first of many obtrusive appearances. While the poet is warned in words reminiscent of *Of True Religion* that "it is time for our false images to be put aside"

⁸¹ "In quella parte del libro de la mia memoria dinanzi a la quale poco si potrebbe leggere, si trova una rubrica la quale dice: *Incipit vita nova*. . . . Nove fiate già appresso lo mio nescimento era tornato lo cielo de la luce quasi a uno medesimo punto, quanto a la sua propria girazione, quando a li miei occhi apparve prima la gloriosa donna de la mia mente, la quale fu chiamata da molti Beatrice li quali non sapeano che si chiamare. . . . D'allora innanzi dico che Amore segnoreggiò la mia anima, la quale fu sì tosto a lui disponsata, e cominciò a prendere sopra me tanta scurtade a tanta signoria per la verità che li dava la mia imaginazione, che me convenia fare tutti li suoi piaceri compiutamente. . . . E avvegna che la sua imagine, la quale continuamente meco stava, fosse baldanza d'Amore a segnoreggiare me, tuttavia era di sì nobilissima verità, che nulla volta soffesse che Amore mi reggesse sanza lo fedele consiglio de la ragione in quelle cose là ove cotale consiglio fosse uile a udire." I am citing Dino S. Cervigni and Edward Vasta's edition and translation: Dante, *La Vita Nuova* (Notre Dame: The Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1995). John Freccero has written the already classic study of Dante's Augustinian poetics: *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986), but see also Martha Nussbaum, "Augustine and Dante on the Ascent of Love," in *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1999), pp. 61-90.

⁸² "Dunque se lo tre è fattore per se medesimo del nove, e lo fattore per se medesimo de la miracoli è tre, cioè Padre e Figlio e Spirito Santo, li quali sono tre e uno, questa donna fue accompagnata da questo numero del nove a dare ad intendere ch'ella era uno nove, cioè uno miracolo la cui radice, cioè del miracolo, è solamente la mirabile Trinitade [Therefore, if three multiplied by itself is the factor of nine, and the factor of miracles multiplied by itself is three, that is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are three and one, this lady was accompanied by this number nine to make it understood that she was a nine, that is, a miracle, whose root—that is, of the miracle—is solely the wondrous Trinitate]" (VN 29:3).

(VN 12:3),⁸³ that is not spoken about Beatrice but the image of another woman. And while he suffers from spells of a divided and distracted mind—"many and diverse thoughts began to assail and try me" (VN 13:1)⁸⁴—the final beatific outcome is never really in doubt:

E quando trova alcun che degno sia
di veder lei, quei prova sue vertute,
ché li avvien, ch'ò che li dona, in salute,
e sì l'umilia, ch'ogni offesa oblia.
Ancor l'ha Dio per maggior grazia dato
che non pò mal finir l'ha parlato.

And when she finds someone worthy
to behold her, he experiences her power,
for what she gives him turns into salvation,
and so humbles him that he forgets every offense.
God has given her an even greater grace:
that one cannot end in evil who has spoken to her. (VN 19:10)

Beatrice's death and subsequent elevation to glory, having been intimated already on the first page, does not radically change the poet's writerly situation. The whole text is a recollection, written from a "in morte" perspective, and with the "wonderful vision" (VN 42:1)⁸⁵ of the *Commedia* already in view. All along, it has been the salvific image of Beatrice, in vita or morte, that has lead Dante onward and upward. Her physical presence never once distracted him while she was alive (even if that of other women did), and after death she "became great spiritual beauty," moving the intellect rather than the body (VN 33:8).⁸⁶ All in all, she fulfils the role of Lady Continence in *Conf.* 8.11.27 and 10.29.40, a role she also performs to perfection from Canto 30 of the *Purgatorio*, guiding the poet towards a beatific vision of God that ultimately leaves her behind:

Cor di mortal non fu mai sì digesto
a divozione ed a rendersi a Dio
Con tutto il suo gradir cotando presto
come a quelle parole mi fec'io,
a sì tutto il mi' amore in lui si mise
che Beatrice eclissò nell' oblio.

⁸³ "... tempus est ut praetermittantur simulacra nostra."

⁸⁴ "... mi cominciaro molti e diversi pensamenti a combattere e a tentare."

⁸⁵ "... mirabile visione ..."

⁸⁶ "... divenne spiritual bellezza grande."

Never was mortal so disposed to place
his mind on God, and none surrendered e'er
his heart to God with so much willingness,
as I did, when I heard that call to prayer;
and so on Him was all my longing stayed,
that Beatrice, eclipsed, seemed no more there. (*Paradiso* 10: 55–60)⁸⁷

While Aldo Bernardo has perhaps most forcefully claimed that Laura in the *Rime sparse* is modelled on Beatrice, holding that Petrarch "had felt all along that somehow Laura had indeed served as a 'scala al fador,'" ⁸⁸ Sara Sturm-Maddox has argued persuasively that "the experience of the poet of the *Rime* stands in direct contrast [to Dante's solution]: here the attempts to transcend the attachment to Laura's earthly image is intermittent, and ultimately it ends in failure."⁸⁹ Augustine had provided both poets with a powerful female symbol of coherence and unity in lady Continence: "Truly it is by continence that we are made as one and regain that unity of self which we lost by falling apart in the search for a variety of pleasures" (*Conf.* 10.29.40).⁹⁰ If the "unity of self" is the answer to the perennial human dilemma of the divided soul, lady Continence must overcome lady Pleasure. As lady Continence, Laura could have taught Petrarch, as Beatrice had taught Dante, in Bernardo's words, "how to overcome Man's original sin, *cupiditas*."⁹¹ As Augustine had admonished the male readers of *Of True Religion*: "Let us conquer the blandishments and troubles of desire. If we are men let us subdue this woman, *Cupiditas*. With our guidance she will herself become better and be called no longer Cupidity but Temperance" (*De Ver. Rel.* 41.78).⁹² The problem for Petrarch, however, is that he cannot make up his mind which of the two ladies Laura represents. One voice sees Laura as the "sol già d'onestate intero albergo [sole unblemished dwelling place of

⁸⁷ I am citing Geoffrey L. Bickert's edition and translation: Dante, *The Divine Comedy* (1965; rpt. Oxford: Blackwell, 1981).

⁸⁸ Aldo S. Bernardo, *Petrarch, Laura and the "Triumphs"* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1974), p. 162.

⁸⁹ Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses*, p. 57. In *Petrarch's Laurels*, Sturm-Maddox demonstrates how the presentation of Beatrice and Laura are contrasted rather than assimilated: see esp. pp. 180–81, 194–200, 207, 245–46, 298–300.

⁹⁰ "Per continentiam quippe conligimur et redigimur in unum, a quo in multa defleximus." See Stock on the similarities between memory and continence as "unifiers" of disordered experience" (p. 227).

⁹¹ A role Bernardo claims for Laura in the *Triumphs* (p. 183; see also p. 194).

⁹² "Vincamus ergo huius cupiditatis vel blanditias vel molestias. Subingemus nobis hanc feminam, si viri sumus. Nobis ducibus et ipsa erit melior nec iam cupiditas, sed temperantia nominabitur."

chastity]" (*Rime sparse* 146),⁹³ while the other accuses her of causing the "fero desio ch' al cor s'accese [fierce desire that was lit in my heart]" (*Rime sparse* 62). The *Rime sparse* as a whole, as Sturm-Maddox demonstrates, contrasts two incompatible cosmologies that Dante to his own mind had succeeded in bridging: the Christian religion and the quasi-religious adoration of the *donna*, grounded in neoplatonic theory. As a result, "the itinerary of the *Rime*, rather than a journey from sin to redemption, is that from the embracing of an illusion to the end of illusion."⁹⁴ Indeed, there is a debate, carried out by the now internalized voices from the *Secretum*,⁹⁵ between the two cosmologies—or using my terminology, between the two Augustinian perspectives—reverberating throughout the *Rime* and adding to the poet's mental turmoil.

The debate comes to a head in "I'vo pensando" (264), the opening Canzone of the "in morte" section purportedly added after Laura's death in 1348 as part of the restructuring of the *Rime sparse*.⁹⁶ The narrator of "I'vo pensando" is torn by internal voices, voices that echo those of Augustine and Francis in the *Secretum*. As in the dialogue, the perspectives of the "young" and "old" Augustine—neoplatonic perfectionism versus a theology of grace—rub shoulders in the introduction (lines 1–18):

I'vo pensando, et nel penser m'assale
una pietà sì forte di me stesso
che m' conduce spesso
ad altro lagrimar ch' i' non soleva:
ché vedendo ogni giorno il fin più presso,
mille fiato ò chieste a Dio quell'ale
co le quai del mortale
carcer nostr' intelletto al Ciel si leva.

⁹³ A partial list of references to Laura's chastity would also include *Rime sparse* 29, 154, 228, 247, 261, 341, and 351.

⁹⁴ Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Laurels*, p. 233. She continues, "in both Part I and Part II [of the *Rime*] the poet appropriates from Scripture a language and an imagery that suggests the quasi-religious nature of his response to Laura; . . . the paradise created about the figure of Laura, *in morte* as well as *in vita*, is a rival to the heavenly Paradise, and . . . her radiance, illuminating his world, dazzles him and renders him oblivious to the divine light" (p. 235).

⁹⁵ While these internal voices are not named (as they are in the *Secretum*), Augustine makes his "loud voice" heard in *Rime sparse* 54: "el lei seguendo su per l'erbe verdi, / udi' dir alta voce di lontano: / Ah! quanti passi per la selva perdi! [and, as I followed her across the green grass, I heard a loud voice say from afar: 'Ah, how many steps you are wasting through the wood!']"; see Iliescu, p. 51.

⁹⁶ Baron, *Secretum*, p. 64.

Ma infin a qui niente mi releva
prego o sospiro o lagrimar ch' io faccia;
et così per ragion conven che sia,
ché chi possendo star cadde tra via
degnò è che mal suo grado a terra giaccia.
Quelle pietose braccia
in ch' io mi fido veggio aperte ancora,
ma temenza m' accora
per gli altrui esempi, et del mio stato tremo,
ch' altri mi sprona et son forse a l'estremo.

I go thinking and in thought pity for myself assails me, so strong that it often leads me to a weeping different from my accustomed one: for, seeing every day the end coming near, a thousand times I have asked God for those wings with which our intellect raises itself from this mortal prison to Heaven.

But until now no prayer or sigh or weeping of mine has helped me; and that is just, for he who, able to stand, has fallen along the way deserves to lie on the ground against his will. Those merciful arms [of the crucified Christ] in which I trust I see still open; but fear grasps my heart at the examples of others, and I tremble for my state; another spurs me and I am perhaps at the end.

Contemplating his final end (a meditation initiated by the death of Laura, but also responding to Augustine's call for contrition in the *Secretum*), the poet weeps because he has not achieved perfection, despite asking God repeatedly for the Platonic wings "with which our intellect raises itself from this mortal prison to Heaven." The problem, he accuses himself, is that his soul is divided: he remains earthbound against his own will. Recognizing that Christ's "merciful arms" are still open to him, he nevertheless doubts they will avail him.

As a response to this dilemma, two contradictory voices come to Petrarch's mind. The first voice is clearly the Augustine of *Of True Religion*, warning him in well-known terms against the world's lack of "pace et di fermezza [peace and stability]" (line 31). Unless the poet plucks up every root of the world's pleasure (ll. 24–26), his soul will never achieve peace. The destructive pleasure comes from the "image" (line 42) of Laura, which prevents Petrarch from raising himself "a più beata spene / mirando 'l ciel [to a more blessed hope by gazing at the heavens]" (ll. 48–49). As in the *Secretum*, the Augustinian voice makes the love of human beauty, in the person of Laura, a tempting and disruptive phantasm rather than a divine reflection of the heavenly beauty or a lady Continence.

The admonishing voice of Augustine is answered by the piled-up oxymora of the poet-lover's "pensier dolce et agro [sweet sharp

thought],” speaking the language of instability and psychic tension: “faticosa e dilettevol salma [difficult and delightful weight],” “io agghiaccio / io flagro [I freeze / I flame]” (ll. 55–60). Franciscus’ heart is oppressed with desire and tied down by the “duo nodi [two knots]” (l. 83) of love and fame, another metaphor for what Augustine in the *Secretum* had termed Franciscus’ “two chains.” The mood is similar to the ending of the *Secretum*: the poet accepts the Augustinian verdict, an adaptation of St. Paul’s words in Romans 1: 25: “Ché mortal cosa amar con tanta fede / quanto a Dio sol per debito conversi / più si disdice a chi più pregio brama [For the more one desires honor, the more one is forbidden to love a mortal thing with the faith that belongs to God alone]” (ll. 99–101).

Yet with death before his eyes, and having asked Christ to take away his shame, Petrarch nevertheless has “a soffrir l’aspra guerra / che ‘ncontra me medesimo seppi ordire [to suffer the bitter war that I have managed to combine against myself]” (ll. 111–26). The mature Augustinian perspective now makes itself felt, reminding us how the dying bishop had read the penitential Psalms of David with tears. The Pauline cry became the cry of both Augustine and Petrarch: “What I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. . . . For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7: 22–25). When Petrarch echoes this passage in the last line of the Canzone—“veggio ‘l meglio et al peggior m’apiglio [I see the better but I lay hold on the worse]”⁹⁷—he not only recognizes his inability to live up to perfectionist standards, but also he embraces a mature Augustinian theology of grace.

This was not the first time Petrarch had alluded to Romans 7. We have already seen a similar echo in “The Ascent of Mont Ventoux.” In a letter written to Giacomo Colonna in 1336, he conflates the message of Paul with words of Vergil from the *Aeneid*:

⁹⁷ Peter Hainsworth (*Petrarch the Poet* [London and New York: Routledge, 1988], p. 86) demonstrates how the line imitates Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. This “double reference” to both pagan and biblical sources is a not uncommon renaissance practice; even Luther’s right hand man Melancthon performs exactly the same conflation: “But here let us recognize and deplore our weakness, because the will and the heart rush into foul sins, even against the judgment of the knowing power, as Medea says: I see the better things and I approve, but I follow the worse” (*On the Soul*, in *A Melancthon Reader*, trans. Ralph Keen [New York: Peter Lang, 1988], p. 257).

My will fluctuates, my desires vary and in their variance they tear my heart. The outer man wars with the inner man; as Virgil puts it: “Under redoubled blows from right and left there is no respite and no rest.”⁹⁸

It is only later, however, that Petrarch acknowledges not only his inner division, but also the power of God to redeem him *in spite of* his divided self. From being a description of a human being living under the bondage of the law, Romans 7 comes to speak of a state of grace.

The change, again, seems to have occurred in those eventful years at the end of the 1340s. It is particularly evident in *The Repose of the Religious* (*De otio religioso*), begun in 1347.⁹⁹ Writing for Carthusian monks that included his brother Gerardo, Petrarch stresses that perfection in this life is not possible even for the religious. He has come to accept the unavoidable sinfulness of human life. Again, it is St. Paul’s cry for mercy in Romans 7 that gives hope:

And resuming hope solely through the mercy of God, [the wretched human] should reply to himself: “I thank God through Christ our Lord”: to that one who alone is able to succor in this internal and domestic battle it must be cried out; he must be humbly beseeched that he should liberate us from the body of this death, whence the merit of man does not liberate but the grace of God alone, to whom nothing I do not say is impossible, but not even difficult.¹⁰⁰

A theology of grace attracts the mature poet,¹⁰¹ evident in the quotation from the “Triumph of Eternity” with which we began this chapter, or in a letter to Boccaccio written in 1366 in which he, paraphrasing Romans 7:24–25, thanks God for delivering his wretched self from the body of death through grace.¹⁰² Petrarch can therefore prefigure Luther’s famous tag “simul iustus et peccator [both justified and a

⁹⁸ “Voluntates mee fluctuant et desideria discordant et discordando me lacerant. Sic adversus interiore hominem exterior pugnat, ‘Nunc dextra ingeminans ictus, nunc ille sinistra; / Nec mora nec requies’” (Petrarch, *Le Familiari*, ed. Doti, p. 207; *Letters*, p. 31).

⁹⁹ My analysis of *De otio* is based on Trinkaus, *Poet as Philosopher*, pp. 85–88.

¹⁰⁰ “. . . et de sola Dei misericordia spe resumpta ipse [sc. infelix homo] sibi respondet: ‘Gratia Dei per Iesum Christum dominum? Ad illum unum qui solus potens est succurrere in hoc intestino et domestico prelio clamandum est: ille suppliciter exorandus ut nos liberet de corpore mortis huius, unde meritum hominis non liberat, sed gratia Dei solus, cui nichil, ne dicam impossibile, sed ne difficile quidem est’” (Petrarch, *De otio religioso*, in *Opere Latine*, I: 720; English transl. in Trinkaus, *Poet as Philosopher*, p. 88).

¹⁰¹ See also Charles Trinkaus, “The Religious Thought of the Italian Humanists, and the Reformers: Anticipation or Autonomy?,” in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. Charles Trinkaus and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1974), pp. 349–51, and *Poet as Philosopher*, p. 24.

¹⁰² See Petrarch, *Epistolae de Rebus Senilius* 8.1.

sinner]": "licet peccator, certe cristianus sum [Though I am a sinner, I certainly am a Christian]." ¹⁰³

The scriptural references speak of a growing familiarity with St. Paul, but they also reveal a move towards a more Pauline Augustine, a combination that made some Averroist detractors taunt Petrarch for "your Paul and Augustine."¹⁰⁴ Petrarch's adherence to a more Pauline perspective meant that some of the Platonic and perfectionist assumptions of the young Augustine had to go. As he writes in *On His Own Ignorance* (finished in 1370), "The very men who know most and understand most possess, I presume, in the highest degree this knowledge of themselves and of their own imperfection, this knowledge which I have called their consolation" (*Ignorantia* 1050; 67).¹⁰⁵ A purely intellectual ascent was therefore no longer an option: "In this Life it is impossible to know God in his fullness" (*Ignorantia* 1110; 105).¹⁰⁶ Likewise, the Platonic view of the body as a prison was replaced with a much more positive assessment of the human frame. This change was influenced by the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Resurrection,¹⁰⁷ but also by a better understanding of the mature writings of Augustine, in particular the *City of God*.¹⁰⁸

Petrarch as a result becomes more at ease with Laura's physical beauty in "The Triumph of Eternity," probably the last poem to leave his pen. While the Laura of the *in morte* section of the *Rime* had appeared more alive than she had ever been *in vita*, "there are compelling indications in the poems *in morte*," explains Sturm-Maddox, "that she is no less the creation of [the poet's] deliberate imagining, no less a projection of his desires, than the 'old' Laura."¹⁰⁹ In a conflation of the salvific strategies of *Confessions* 10 with the dangerous use of phantasms warned against in *Of True Religion*, the poet is entrapped by his

¹⁰³ Petrarch, *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, in *Opere Latine*, vol. 2, ed. Antonietta Bufano (Torino: Unione Tipografica, 1975), p. 1120; English trans. Hans Nachod, *On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others*, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, p. 113. Further references to this work, abbreviated *Ignorantia*, will be given in the text by page references to both the Latin and the English version (in that order). On Petrarch and Luther, see Trinkaus, "Religious Thought," pp. 349–52.

¹⁰⁴ As related in another letter to Boccaccio written in 1364 (*Sen.* 5.2), translated by Hans Nachod in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, p. 141.

¹⁰⁵ "Et hanc sui cognitionem ac proprie imperfectionis extimationem, siquie ipsius quam dixi consolationem, his maxime qui plus sciunt plusque intelligent inesse auguror."

¹⁰⁶ "Nam et cognosci ad plenum Deus in hac vita nullo potest modo, . . ."

¹⁰⁷ See Trinkaus, *Image and Likeness*, p. 37, and Foster, pp. 42–43.

¹⁰⁸ Murphy, p. 242. We shall return to Augustine's changing views of the human body in chapter 3.

¹⁰⁹ Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Laurels*, p. 191.

recollection of the living Laura, creating "fantasies, the cherished projections of a cherishing imagination."¹¹⁰ In the *Triumphs*, however, the tensions within the *Rime sparse* are much less evident, and Laura is finally given the beatific status never achieved in the sonnet sequence.¹¹¹ For the first time she is given a voice and a story of her own, no longer being reduced to a projection of the poet's desires. As a result, "memory too is to be redeemed,"¹¹² as she is able to follow the example of Beatrice, guiding her lover without the interference of phantasms. When she, body and soul, beckons Petrarch to join her in the last lines of "The Triumph of Eternity," her beauty speaks of the glories of the redeemed creation. Yet it is not her beauty but the Lord of Creation that redeems both her and her poet:

che, poi ch'avrà ripreso il suo bel velo,
se fu beato chi la vide in terra,
or che fia dunque a rivederla in cielo!

And now that her beauty has resumed,
If he was blessed that saw her on earth,
What then will it be to see her again in heaven!

But if Laura in the end can be both Beatrice and Medusa, depending on which poem we read, one conclusion we can draw is that Petrarch, for all his drift towards what I call a mature Augustinian theology of grace, was still attracted by the neoplatonic leanings of the young Augustine (as mediated through Dante).

Petrarch felt an attraction even in old age for a particular aspect of the Platonic inheritance: the priority of form. The sublunar world was unstable and the postlapsarian heart divided, yet there was a divine unity behind the transient world. The Pythagorean imperatives as mediated by Augustine inclined Petrarch, as it had Dante,¹¹³ to see that unity in mathematical and formalist terms. I shall return to this issue at greater length in chapter 3, but a few observations are germane at this point. If the macrocosm and the microcosm, despite their appar-

¹¹⁰ Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Laurels*, pp. 191–92.

¹¹¹ See Sara Sturm-Maddox, "Arbor vittoriosa triumphale: Allegory and Spectacle in the *Rime* and the *Trionfi*," in *Petrarch's Triumphs: Allegory and Spectacle*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler and Amilcare A. Iannucci (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1990): 113–34.

¹¹² Sturm-Maddox, "Arbor vittoriosa triumphale," p. 131.

¹¹³ In addition to the numerology associated with Beatrice (see VN 29:3, cited in note 38 above), integers of 3 structure both the *Vita nuova* and the *Commedia*, reinforcing the connection with the Trinity.

ent multeity, point toward the ultimate unity of their Maker, so does a work of art. *Rime sparse* and *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, Petrarch's own designations for his sonnet sequence, speak of dispersal and fragmentation (if with the implied Augustinian promise of recollection and reintegration). Yet the *Canzoniere*, the title given by a later generation, refer to music, and thus to harmonious proportionality. Petrarch had in vain hoped that the Laura of the *Rime* could function as the poem's (as well as the poet's) unifying form in an unstable world:

I dì miei più legghier che nesun cervo
fuggir come ombra, et non vider più bene
ch' un batter d'occhio. et poche ore serene
ch' amare et dolci ne la mente servo.

Misero mondo instabile et protervo!
del tutto è cieco chi 'n te pon sua spene,
ché 'n te mi fu 'l cor tolto, et or sel tene
tal ch' è già terra et non giunge osso a nervo.

Ma la forma miglior che vive ancora
et vivrà sempre su ne l' alto cielo,
di sue bellezze ogni or piu m'innamora;

et vo sol in pensar cangiando il pelo
quale ella è oggi e 'n qual parte dimora,
qual a vedere il suo leggadro velo.

My days, swifter than any deer, have fled like a shadow and have seen no good any longer than an instant, and few cloudless hours, which bitter and sweet I preserve in my memory.

Wretched world, unstable and obstinate! He is entirely blind who puts his hope in you! For in you my heart was taken away, and one holds it who is dust and does not join bone to muscle.

But her better form, which still lives and shall always live up in the highest Heaven, makes me ever more in love with her beauties,

and I go with my hair turning, only thinking of what she is like today and where she dwells, and what her lovely veil is to see. (*Rime sparse* 319)

Yet Augustinian strictures had denied Laura that role. While Petrarch would have liked to see her as lady Continence, through whom "we are made as one and regain the unity of self" (*Conf.* 10.29.40),¹¹⁴ her

¹¹⁴ "... conligimur et redigimur in unum, ..."

function in the *Rime* was more like the phantasms that "do not permit us to see abiding unity" (*De Ver. Rel.* 35.65).¹¹⁵

But if beauty in female form is too closely allied to desire, there remains the beauty of the poetry itself: "The verse is beautiful as exhibiting the faint traces of the beauty which the art of poetry keeps steadfastly and unchangeably" (*De Ver. Rel.* 22, 42).¹¹⁶ Poetry partakes of the unity of art, based on the harmony of each individual part within the whole: "In all the arts it is symmetry that gives pleasure, preserving unity and making the whole beautiful" (*De Ver. Rel.* 30, 55).¹¹⁷ For Petrarch this meant that the form of his poems could point to the unity that eluded him in the image of Laura. The collection as a whole, as Thomas Roche has argued, has a theological and numerical meaning since the 365 poems are sequenced according to the liturgical year.¹¹⁸ The same is true also for the individual sonnet. Since 4 is a mundane number and 3 is sacred, the sonnet form itself, as S. K. Heninger has convincingly demonstrated, with its "proportion 4/3 leads inexorably toward heaven, toward arrival in the presence of God, toward salvation."¹¹⁹ But if the "interplay between the subtext of form and the verbal system in a sonnet," as he goes on to argue, was for Petrarch "wondrously suited to the conflict between body and soul,"¹²⁰ that only shows how aware Petrarch was of the tensions within the Augustinian system, and indeed within Augustine himself. Giuseppe Mazzotta, discussing "Petrarch's poetics of fragmentation," argues that in the Petrarchan "universe of desire, totality is never possible: desire knows only shreds and fragments, even if plenitude is its ever elusive mirage." The *Rime sparse*, he therefore contends, is only "the attempt to restore the pieces, to give an illusory unity to the fragments."¹²¹ Mazzotta is at least partially right. But if the collection is a failed attempt at unity, this does not make Petrarch an early deconstructionist; his philosophy and religion were too firmly logocentric for that.

¹¹⁵ "... constantem unitatem videre non sinunt."

¹¹⁶ "... pulchrum [sc. versum], quia extrema vestigia illius pulchritudinis ostentat, quam constanter atque incommutabiliter ars ipsa custodit."

¹¹⁷ "... in omnibus artibus convenientia placeat, qua una salva et pulchra sunt omnia, ..."

¹¹⁸ Thomas P. Roche, Jr., *Petrarch and the English Sonnet Sequences* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), pp. 32-69.

¹¹⁹ S. K. Heninger, Jr., *The Subtext of Form in the English Renaissance: Proportion Poetical* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1994), p. 78.

¹²⁰ Heninger, *Subtext of Form*, p. 80.

¹²¹ Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch* (Durham and London: Duke Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 60 and 78.

Rather, he had come to agree with the mature Augustine that no human endeavor can produce or even replicate a unity barely glimpsed in this life. Until the veil is pulled back in epiphany or death, we rely upon the grace of a hidden God.¹²²

V

The human dilemma of living in an unstable world, yet looking in faith to the "stably Abiding,"¹²³ created in Petrarch a "double consciousness," "dual elements of tension, or dialectical interplay."¹²⁴ The divided self is just one area in which this tension is felt. Guided by God through internal illumination and written revelation, the human subject still has to live in the fallen world of Romans 7, resulting in a conflict between wit and will (to use the Elizabethan terms).¹²⁵ Although of classical origin, the double consciousness, as Trinkaus shows, was a fundamental tenet for the mature Augustine. Derived from the heavenly and earthly cities of the *City of God*, it also incorporated the distinction between "uti et frui," to use and to enjoy, from *On Christian Doctrine* 1.4.4. As pilgrims en route to the heavenly city, Christians use the services of the earthly city, yet only God is to be enjoyed. Within the area of "use" Augustine placed education and political life, precariously situated in the unstable environment of postlapsarian experience. This was also the existential condition for Petrarch, as it was for the Christian world around him. "Petrarch's double consciousness of both an experienced and a revealed truth"¹²⁶ was therefore analogous to Thomas Aquinas's distinction between nature and grace (to

¹²² Ascoli draws an analogous conclusion about Petrarch's strategies in the "Ascent of Mont Ventoux": "Petrarch is actually constructing a radically existential Christian stance—one based on the perception . . . that within this life there can be no true and secure perspective of the end, that man is always *in via*, caught between the body and spirit. . . . In this view, what Petrarch's confession loses in authenticity and authority by revealing its continuing bondage to the physical world and the 'old will' and by demonstrating its imitative dependence on literary models, it soon regains by admitting its all-too-human instability and mobility, and thus deferring to divine Grace" (30–31).

¹²³ Petrarch, "Ventoux", p. 46.

¹²⁴ Trinkaus, *Petrarch as Philosopher*, p. 51n. This distinction, elaborated on pp. 27–51, forms the basis for Trinkaus's discussion of Petrarch's philosophy; my whole last paragraph relies on that discussion.

¹²⁵ Or as Petrarch puts it, "It is one thing to know, another to love; one thing to understand, another to will [Aliud est enim scire atque aliud amare, aliud intelligere atque aliud velle]" (*Ignorantia* 1106, 103).

¹²⁶ Trinkaus, *Petrarch as Philosopher*, p. 52.

which we shall return in chapter 2), as well as to the Lutheran distinction between the two regiments (discussed in chapter 4). Nowhere is Petrarch's awareness of these "dual elements of tension" so evident as in the work with which the next chapter starts, the poet's late treatise *On His Own Ignorance*.

Cicero, read with a pious and modest attitude, did no harm to [Jerome] or to anybody else at any time. He was profitable to everybody, so far as eloquence is concerned, to many others as regards living. This is especially true in Augustine's case, as I have already said. Augustine filled his pockets and his lap with the gold and silver of the Egyptians when he was about to depart from Egypt. (*Ignorantia* 1122; 114)⁷

The "Egyptian" metaphor was of course picked up from Augustine himself, who had used it in *On Christian Doctrine* to delineate the Christian response to heathen culture.⁸ Like the Egyptians had not only idols and burdens to offer the Israelites, but also useful things in gold and silver,

similarly all the branches of pagan learning contain not only false and superstitious fantasies and burdensome studies that involve unnecessary effort, . . . but also studies for liberated minds which are more appropriate to the service of the truth, and some very useful moral instructions, as well as the various truths about monotheism to be found in their writers. (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.40.60)⁹

On Christian Doctrine provided Petrarch not only with a colorful metaphor, but with a method how to integrate classical and Christian culture. He transmitted the lesson to others,¹⁰ and the lesson was heeded. As Albert Rabil comments, "Humanists could find in [*On Christian Doctrine*] not only many reasons for learning pagan literature but also a justification of their interests in the recovery and editing of texts and

⁷ "Nec vero Cicero fideliter ac modeste lectus aut illi [i.e., Jerome] nocuit, aut cuique alteri, cum ad eloquentiam cunctis, ad vitam multis valde profuerit, nominatum, ut diximus, Augustino, qui ex Egipto egressurus, Egipiorum auro et argento sinum sibi gemiumque complevit. . . ."

⁸ See Carol E. Quillen, "Plundering the Egyptians: Petrarch and Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*," in *Reading and Wisdom: The "De doctrina christiana" of Augustine in the Middle Ages*, ed. Edward D. English (Notre Dame and London: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1995), pp. 153–71. Quillen goes too far, however, when she claims that Petrarch creates "an Augustine for whom the reading of poetry can bring redemption" (163).

⁹ " . . . sic doctrinae omnes gentilium non solum simulata et superstitiosa signimenta gravesque sarcinas supervacanei laboris habent, . . . sed etiam liberales disciplinas usui veritatis aptiores et quaedam morum praecepta utilissima continent deque ipso uno deo colendo nonnulla vera inveniuntur apud eos, . . ."

¹⁰ In *Sen.* 15.6, Petrarch writes: "But there is one thing I shall not pass over, so that you will not lend ear and heart to those who, under pretext of theological studies, try hard to dissuade you from acquaintance with secular letters. Without them, Lactantius and Augustine, not to mention others, would not have dislodged so easily the superstitious notions of the heathens, nor would Augustine have built the *City of God* with such skill and such walls. . . . And that same Augustine discusses these matters in the second book of *On Christian Doctrine*" (as cited in Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch* [Durham and London: Duke Univ. Press, 1993], p. 161).

the need for persuasion in moral philosophy. All these tendencies, present in Petrarch—in significant measure through his reading of Augustine—culminated in Erasmus.¹¹

But if Petrarch, advocating the mature Augustinian view of human reason and the humanities, provided the most widely copied pattern, there was also an influential minority that took the early neoplatonic Augustine as its champion. Before we proceed with these later thinkers, however, we need to return *ad fontes* to see within what Augustinian parameters the choices could be made.

II

In compendia and handbooks, Augustine's philosophical legacy is often reduced to his dictum that "faith must precede reason," usually bolstered with one of his most favored scriptural verses: "unless you have believed, you will not understand" (Isaiah 7: 9). The connotative freight of the terms "faith" and "reason" is indeed heavy and justifies the importance attached to this saying. Not only are the areas of philosophy and religion involved, but also the weight of the Hebraic-Christian and the classical traditions. The problem with this reduction of Augustine's position, however, is that it reflects the views of the mature bishop only, not the thought of the young rhetor.¹²

¹¹ Albert Rabil, Jr., "Petrarch, Augustine, and the Classical Christian Tradition," in vol. 1 of *Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Albert Rabil, Jr. (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), p. 112. Cf. Monika Asztalos on the humanist "defeat" of scholastic theology: "When humanists like Lorenzo Valla (d.1457) applied to the Bible textual criticism that had been developed for the study of the classics, they came close to the conception of theology as an interpretation of the holy Scriptures with the help of the secular sciences, the view put forth by Saint Augustine in his *De doctrina christiana*" ("The Faculty of Theology," in *A History of the University of Europe*, vol. 1, ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992], p. 440). For a dissenting view, see John Monfasani, "The *De doctrina christiana* and Renaissance Rhetoric," in English, pp. 172–88. Monfasani, however, too quickly dismisses Augustine's influence on, for example, Melancthon, and he misinterprets the fact that the renaissance authors often did not accept Augustine wholesale. Rather than proving the Father's insignificance, this rather supports my view of a complex and multi-faceted influence.

¹² Robert E. Cushman's chapter "Faith and Reason," in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. Roy W. Battenhouse (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1955), pp. 287–314, provides a survey of the views of the mature Augustine. For more recent discussions that shows greater awareness of Augustine's changing thought, see John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 56–63, and the section on "Belief and Understanding" in *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, ed. Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J., et al. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), pp. 277–316.

For the newly converted Augustine, reason was the essential factor. Faith and the authority of the Scriptures are only preparatory in the ascent toward the higher rungs of "understanding and knowledge":

The treatment of the soul, which God's providence and ineffable loving-kindness administers, is most beautiful in its steps and stages. There are two different methods, authority and reason. Authority demands belief and prepares man for reason. Reason leads to understanding and knowledge. (*De Ver. Rel.* 24.45)¹³

As Augustine states bluntly in *On Order*, the prolegomenon of his intellectual agenda: "It is not by faith alone, but by trustworthy reason, that the soul leads itself little by little to most virtuous habits and the perfect life" (*De Ord.* 2.19.50).¹⁴ Indeed, for the educated few, faith is hardly needed at all: "Although the authority of upright men seems to be the safer guide for the uninstructed multitude, reason is better adapted for the educated" (*De Ord.* 2.9.26).¹⁵ The authority of the Scriptures, therefore, is needed only for the unlettered, and it shines through how the enlightened rhetor pities their unhappy lot:

As to those who are content to follow authority alone and who apply themselves constantly to right living and holy desires, while they make no account of the liberal and fine arts, or are incapable of being instructed in them—I know not how I could call them happy as long as they live among men. (*De Ord.* 2.9.26)¹⁶

With his confidence in culture and education, Augustine at times sounds much like Matthew Arnold or I.A. Richards.

Behind this reliance on reason stands the young Augustine's supposition that a seamless vertical order permeates the universe. A central

¹³ "Quamobrem ipsa quoque animae medicina, quae divina providentia et ineffabili beneficentia geritur gradatim distincteque pulcherrima est. Tribuitur enim in auctoritatem atque rationem. Auctoritas fidem flagitat et rationi praeferat hominem. Ratio ad intellectum cognitionemque perducit, . . ."

¹⁴ "Gradatim enim se et ad mores vitamque optimam non iam sola fide sed certa ratione perducit."

¹⁵ " . . . quamquam bonorum auctoritas imperitiae multitudini videatur esse salubrior, ratio vero aptior eruditibus, . . ." In *De Ord.* 2.5.16 Augustine outlines in embryonic form what was to become his mature view of the relationship between reason and revelation, i.e., reason preparing us for the mysteries of faith. This is an isolated occurrence, however, and the intellectualist perspective reigns in the rest of the book.

¹⁶ "Qui autem sola auctoritate contenti bonis tantum moribus rectisque votis constanter operam dederint aut contemnentes aut non valentes disciplinis liberalibus atque optimis erudiri, beatos eos quidem, cum inter homines vivunt, nescio quo modo appellem . . ."

tenet of his philosophical creed is succinctly expressed in *On Order*: order is that "by which God governs all things" (*De Ord.* 2.1.2).¹⁷ So far, so good. This is simply a belief in the well-known chain of being, acceptable to both Aristotelians and Platonists.¹⁸ Yet in another definition he becomes narrowly neoplatonic: "Order is that which will lead us to God, if we hold to it during life; and unless we do hold to it during life, we shall not come to God" (*De Ord.* 1.9.27).¹⁹ The chain has become a ladder. This ordered ascent permeates the young Augustine's thinking in all areas, education not the least, since the quadrivium provides the best way of climbing the ladder towards understanding and vision:

Now in music, in geometry, in the movements of the stars, in the fixed ratios of numbers, order reigns in such manner that if one desires to see its source and its very shrine, so to speak, he either finds it in these, or he is unerringly led to it through them. (*De Ord.* 2.5.14)²⁰

Almost all his early writings grew out of this educational project,²¹ and he began to produce appropriate textbooks in order to implement his intellectual program.

That Monica, his pious but not very intellectual mother, was among the number of the "uninstructed multitude" disturbed him greatly, but it was long after their common ecstatic vision at Ostia that it sank in fully that intellectual prowess was not a necessary prerequisite for happiness or communion with God. In his old age Augustine was to comment on the educational theories of his youth: "I regret . . . that I attributed a great deal to the liberal disciplines about which many

¹⁷ " . . . per quem deus ageret omnia."

¹⁸ See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1936), esp. pp. 82-90 on the "conflict between two irreconcilable conceptions of the good." See also Edward P. Mahoney, "Metaphysical Foundations of the Hierarchy of Being According to Some Late-Medieval and Renaissance Philosophers," in *Philosophies of Existence, Ancient and Medieval*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1982): 165-249, esp. pp. 207-12. On the young Augustine's view of order, see N. Joseph Torchia, "The Significance of *Ordo* in St. Augustine's Moral Theory," in Lienhard, pp. 263-76.

¹⁹ "Ordo est, quem si tenverimus in vita, perducet ad deum, et quem nisi tenverimus in vita, non pervenimus ad deum." The mature Augustinian view of order can be found in *De Civ. Dei* 19.13 (to which we shall return in chapter 4).

²⁰ "Iam in musica, in geometrica, in astrorum motibus, in numerorum necessitatibus ordo ita dominatur, ut, si quis quasi eius fontem atque ipsum penetrale videre desideret, aut in his inveniat aut per haec eo sine ullo errore ducatur."

²¹ See James J. O'Donnell's commentary on Augustine, *Confessions*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 2: 278.

saintly persons do not know much—some, in truth, know them and are not saintly" (*Retr.* 1.3.2).²² He had quietly dropped his intellectual agenda after he had been ordained priest and then consecrated bishop. This did not mean, however, that he gave these issues no more thought. His new concerns about the Church and his deepened understanding of St. Paul forced him rather to reconsider the relationship between reason and faith, and the function of the liberal arts.

The change of heart must have come rather quickly, because soon after his consecration as bishop in 395 Augustine began writing *On Christian Doctrine*, the work that encapsulates his mature views on education.²³ The impact of this work on Western culture cannot be overstated; its shadow reached beyond both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.²⁴ Erasmus, to take but one important example, depended heavily on it and constantly referred to it in his writings.²⁵ Without dismissing the classical heritage as Tertullian had done, the work drastically modified the earlier program through a desacralizing of human learning.²⁶ In *On Order* Augustine had regretted that the unlearned could expect no happiness; in the later work he warns "young people who are keen and intelligent":

²² "... displicet mihi ... quod multum tribui liberalibus disciplinis, quas multi sancti multum nesciunt, quidam etiam qui sciunt eas sancti non sunt."

²³ Which does not make the work primarily an educational or humanistic undertaking: it was specifically designed as an aid for biblical studies. "Nonetheless," explains Christoph Schäublin, "with *De doctrina christiana* [Augustine] did produce one of the 'classics of Western Culture'; more or less by accident, perhaps, since the work seems to have had a reception rather different from what he intended" (*"De doctrina christiana: A Classic of Western Culture?"*, in *"De doctrina christiana": A Classic of Western Culture*, ed. Duane W.H. Arnold, and Pamela Bright (Notre Dame and London: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1995), pp. 47–67).

²⁴ On its meaning and influence, see the two companion volumes: *"De doctrina christiana": A Classic of Western Culture* (see note above), and *Reading and Wisdom: The "De doctrina christiana" of Augustine in the Middle Ages*, ed. Edward D. English (Notre Dame and London: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

²⁵ "Augustine," writes Leif Grane, "is important to [Erasmus] as an authority for the necessity of the liberal arts in connection with the study of theology" ("Some Remarks on the Church Fathers in the First Years of the Reformation," in *Auctoritas Patrum*, p. 26). Charles Béné documents in great detail Erasmus' borrowings from *De Doct. Chr.* throughout his career, from the *Antibarbarum liber* of 1494 to the *Ecclesiastes* of 1535 (*Érasme et Saint Augustin* [Geneva: Droz, 1969], esp. pp. 59–95, and the appendices on pp. 433–48). Investigating Erasmus's skirmish with Luther over free will, Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle concludes that Erasmus's "theology was Augustinian" ("Erasmus and the 'Modern' Question: Was He Semi-Pelagian?", *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 75 [1984]: 75).

²⁶ On Augustine's changing views from *De Ord.* to *De Doct. Chr.*, see Frederick Van Fleteren, "St. Augustine, Neoplatonism, and the Liberal Arts: The Background to *De doctrina christiana*," in Arnold and Bright, pp. 14–24.

Do not venture without due care into any branches of learning which are pursued outside the church of Christ, as if they were a means to attaining the happy life, but discriminate sensibly and carefully between them. (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.39.58)²⁷

As in the earlier work, he goes through the arts systematically, but they are no longer rungs on a metaphysical ladder. Each art has an independent value based upon its usefulness for earthly living, or its service as a handmaiden to faith by equipping the Christian with the tools needed to understand the Scriptures. Augustine still has room for mathematics, music, and astronomy (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.16.25–18.28; 2.29.45; 2.38.56),²⁸ but they are included for their practical utility and not as part of a progression towards the unity of the One.

His new emphasis is upon the mutable language arts. In a program that was to permeate both the humanists' and the reformers' educational outlook, he especially pushes the study of Greek and Hebrew in addition to his own Latin (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.11.16; 2.14.21; 2.26.40).²⁹ He also introduces new terrestrial disciplines which had not fitted into his earlier intellectual program: natural history, geography, and the practical arts (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.29.45–30.47). His change of heart is particularly felt in the strong endorsement of a discipline that was to take center stage in the humanist curriculum: history (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.28.42–44). The altered perspective is most strikingly seen in the new view of dialectics: instead of treating it as an art of exact logic, Augustine transforms it into a probabilistic language art placed next to rhetoric, a combination that was to be characteristic of the humanist reform (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.31.48–37.55, and the whole of Book 4).³⁰ As he did for his earlier program, Augustine was to write influential "textbooks" of sorts: book four of *On Christian Doctrine*, added to the earlier three books at the end of his life, set a pattern for all subsequent Christian rhetorics, while the *City of God* shaped the renaissance conception of history.

²⁷ "... studiosis et ingeniosis adulescentibus," "ut nullas doctrinas, quae praeter ecclesiam Christi exercentur tamquam ad beatam vitam capessendam secure sequi audeant, sed eas sobrie diligenterque diiudicent, ..."

²⁸ In *De Doct. Chr.* 2.21.32–24.37 and *De Civ. Dei* 5.1–17, however, Augustine warns against astrology, an admonition that went largely unheeded in the Renaissance.

²⁹ It is ironic that Erasmus, who valued *De Doct. Chr.* highly and vigorously promoted the trilingual study throughout Europe, was critical of the bishop on exactly this point: Augustine had himself lacked an adequate knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. This was indeed the main reason why he instead saw Jerome, the preeminent patristic linguist and biblical editor, as his primary mentor.

³⁰ See my *The "Enabling of Judgement": Sir Philip Sidney and the Education of the Reader* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989), pp. 17–41.

III

It was Augustine's mature view, as expressed in *On Christian Doctrine*, that informed most renaissance educational theories, yet some adhered to the minority view characteristic of the young convert. Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), and to a lesser extent Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), are prime examples of the choices inherent in the young Augustine. Yet before his death in 1494, Pico, under the influence of Savonarola, had moved towards the position of the mature Augustine; and his nephew Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533), by his espousal of scepticism and fideism (the two almost always went together in the Renaissance), advanced even beyond the parameters of the aging bishop of Hippo.

Paul Oskar Kristeller, who has laid the foundation for all modern Ficinian research, stresses the Augustinian stamp on Ficino's work: "Augustine is Ficino's guide and model in his attempts to reconcile Platonism with Christianity."³¹ It was not the views of the mature bishop that interested the Florentine, however, but the preoccupation of the young Augustine, the twin concepts of "Soul" and "God."³² Augustine provided the impetus and the stamp of approval for Ficino's Plotinian investigations of the fall of the soul into the body and its return to the One. The liberal arts were to both Augustine and Ficino rungs on a metaphysical ladder. All along flashing his Christian credentials (and we have no reason to doubt his sincerity), Ficino is at pains to show that nothing in his philosophy is contrary to the received dogma of the Church. Yet such is the power of his Platonic metaphors that they color every corner of his religion. Only token space is left for the mystery of the Incarnation in Ficino's Platonic Theology.³³ Reason and Faith, like

³¹ Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, trans. Virginia Conant (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1943), pp. 14–15. See also Michael J. B. Allen, "Marsilio Ficino on Plato, the Neoplatonists and the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity," *Renaissance Quarterly* 37 (1984): 581–83.

³² Kristeller, p. 204. For additional examples of Augustinian influence in such important areas as the will and esthetics, see Kristeller, pp. 24, 206, 211, 213, 257, and 306. Yet at the same time, as Michael Allen points out, "Ficino seems never to have been particularly inspired by the problems of sin, the infected will, the necessity of prevenient grace, and other dogmas associated with Pauline and/or Augustinian views on the Atonement and its theology" (*The Platonism of Marsilio Ficino* [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984], p. 182).

³³ Allen believes that in the commentary on the *Phaedrus*, Ficino "successfully arrived at an interpretation that was wholly compatible with Christianity, and most notably with the great dogmas concerning the Fall, the Incarnation, and the Redemption" (*Platonism*, p. 257). I cannot apply that assessment to the *De amore*, however.

Philosophy and Religion, are simply different names for the same thing, since Plato—via Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, and the other ancient theologians—had learned from Moses, and the later neoplatonists in turn had learnt from Dionysius the Areopagite, the disciple of St. Paul.³⁴ This equality can of course work both ways. If two separate entities are to be united, one or the other—or, more likely, both—will have to give. As we shall see, with similar premises Giovanni Pico forced much of the Platonic tradition (and the Jewish Kabbala to boot) into a largely Christian (and Aristotelian) mold. For Ficino, Christianity yielded as much to Platonic thought patterns as vice versa.³⁵ This conflation is particularly evident in a work that became something of a sixteenth-century blockbuster: the *De amore*, Ficino's free commentary on Plato's *Symposium*.

The basic framework for the *De amore* is a largely pseudo-Dionysian version of Plotinian emanation theory:

This divine beauty has generated love, that is desire for itself, in all things. Since if God attracts the World to Himself and the World is attracted, there exists a certain continuous attraction (beginning from God, emanating to the world, and returning at last to God) which returns again, as if in a kind of circle, to the same place whence it issued. (*De amore* 2.2)³⁶

³⁴ See Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 1–20. The place of pseudo-Dionysius (ca. A.D. 500) in renaissance thought deserves a full-length study of its own. After Valla had exploded Dionysius' claims of being the disciple of Paul, which had endowed him with almost scriptural authority, his influence experienced a slow but steady decline, especially amongst Protestants. For Dionysius' role in the history of Christian mysticism, see the two works of Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), pp. 159–78, and *Denys the Areopagite* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1989), as well as Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (London: SCM Press, 1992), pp. 157–82. For Dionysius in the Renaissance, see C.A. Patrides, "Renaissance Thought on the Celestial Hierarchy: The Decline of a Tradition," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20 (1959): 155–66, E.N. Tigerstedt, *The Decline and Fall of the Neoplatonic Interpretation of Plato*, *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum*, vol. 52 (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1974), pp. 21–31, and Mahoney.

³⁵ Not even Ficino, however, completely equated the two. As Allen, correcting Edgar Wind, points out: "[Ficino's] enthusiasm for Plato and the Platonic tradition did not blind him to the various differences with Christianity, even to their irreconcilability on certain fundamental issues" ("Trinity," p. 555).

³⁶ "Divina vero haec species in omnibus amorem, hoc est sui desiderium procreavit. Quoniam si Deus ad se rapit mundum, mundusque rapiatur, unus quidem continuus tractus est a Deo incipiens, transiens in mundum, in Deum denique desinens, qui quasi circulo quodam in idem inde manavit, iterum reneat" (*Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's "Symposium"*, ed. Sears Jayne [Columbia, Missouri: Univ. of Missouri, 1944]); English translation taken from Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's "Symposium" on Love*, trans. Sears Jayne, 2nd ed. (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1985). References by "speech" and chapter will hereafter be given in the text.

From the perspective of man,³⁷ however, this produces not so much a circle as a vertical ladder, where going up is by definition good and going down (especially into the body with its sexuality) is bad. Ficino does give lip-service to human procreation (but not to sexual pleasure) through the earthly Venus, the lower of the two Venuses (*De amore* 2.7; 6.8, 11); yet that concession is vitiated by the whole rigid vertical setup. For while he acknowledges two kinds of love, within the individual they compete rather than cooperate: "These two loves certainly oppose each other in man." While human love "drives him down to the bestial or voluptuous life," the divine love "raises him up to the angelic or contemplative life" (*De amore* 7.1).³⁸ For Ficino only the vulgar masses follow the earthly Venus, and they in reality are afflicted with a certain madness by which "man sinks back to the nature of beasts" (*De amore* 7.12).³⁹ This madness is not to be confused with the "furor divinus," the divine madness by which a prophet, a priest, a poet, or a lover ("the four faces of the truly Platonic philosopher")⁴⁰ "is raised above the nature of man and passes into a god" (*De amore* 7.13).⁴¹

For Ficino, the heart of the *Symposium* is Diotima's address to Socrates. The *De amore* therefore builds towards the end of Speech 6, where Ficino "quotes" Diotima's speech on "How the soul is raised from the beauty of the body to the beauty of God" (*De amore* 6.18).⁴² The speech is based on Plotinus' "On Beauty" (*Enneads* 1.6), the same essay that inspired the young Augustine in *The Greatness of the Soul*.⁴³ Like Augustine, Ficino sees the ascent in terms of moral and intellectual purification; and, as in the young Augustine, there is a Pelagian assurance about its easy accomplishment. Furthermore, in the Dedication of his

³⁷ I use "man" deliberately, and in an exclusive sense, since these kinds of theories without fail seem to be male-oriented. Who has ever heard of a woman being led to God by contemplating the beauty of a man? For a *male* to love a male is all right, indeed even preferable to loving a female, as long as no homosexual inclinations are displayed (see *De amore* 6.14 and 7.2-9, where Ficino is clearly embarrassed by Plato's description of physical male love).

³⁸ "Hos utique amores sibi ipsis in homine repugnare, et illum deorsum ad ferinam et voluptuosam depellere, hunc sursum ad angelicam vitam contemplativamque attollere."

³⁹ "... homo in bestiae naturam devolvitur."

⁴⁰ Allen, *Platonism*, p. 42.

⁴¹ "... super hominis naturam erigetur, et in Deum transit." Ficino had already written about the divine madness in his early essay *De divino furore* (1457), and returned to it in his commentary on the *Ion*. See Allen, *Platonism*, pp. 41-67, and "The Soul as Rhapsode: Marsilio Ficino's Interpretation of Plato's *Ion*," *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. John W. O'Malley, Thomas M. Izbic, and Gerald Christianson (Leiden: Brill, 1993): 125-48.

⁴² "Quomodo Anima a Corporis Pulchritudine ad Dei Pulchritudinem Elevetur."

⁴³ See Introduction above.

own Italian translation of *De amore*, Ficino places Diotima's message on the same level as the Scriptures. Not simply recovering an important philosophical text, the philosopher is striving for the salvation of his readers. No doubt Ficino felt that Diotima's message was compatible with that found in the Scriptures. This was a case of direct divine inspiration: according to his Dedication it had been the Holy Spirit that inspired Diotima.⁴⁴ With such a salvation, what need is there for the redemptive work of Christ? Philosophy, in this influential work at least, has indeed become Religion.

IV

Even more than Ficino himself, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola has, at least since Jakob Burckhardt, come to embody renaissance aspirations of perfectability. The picture we get when we look closer at Pico's writings, however, is not quite what we have been led to believe. Pico wrote a love treatise in the wake of the *De amore*, a *Commentary on a Canzone of Benivieni*. But unlike other popular treatises that were to follow, Pico's is abstruse and contentious, seemingly designed to mark his distance from Ficino.⁴⁵ While following its general neoplatonic framework, Pico undercuts the religious claims of *De amore*. The love of beauty leads only to the outskirts of heaven.⁴⁶ To reach God, he has to be loved for himself, "because love for God is not a desire for beauty."⁴⁷ Pico in effect negates Diotima's redemptive vision.

For over a century now Pico's *Oration On the Dignity of Man* has been viewed as the quintessential renaissance manifesto. Protean man, completely unhampered, is free to turn himself into whatever he pleases along the chain of being, including "an angel and the son of God."⁴⁸ While the possibility of a descent to the animal or plant kingdom is allowed in theory, Pico assumes we all want to climb up. As with Ficino and the young Augustine (who both followed Plotinus), the rungs of this Jacob's-ladder consist of moral and intellectual

⁴⁴ See Jayne's translation of Ficino's dedication, p. 181.

⁴⁵ Pico distanced himself from Ficino one step further in *Of Being and Unity*, where, in the process of subjecting Plato to Aristotle, he dismisses Ficino's Plotinian separation of "being" and "unity." In his final Platonic commentaries, Ficino objected strenuously to Pico's Aristotelian interpretation; see Michael J.B. Allen, *Isaiah: Marsilio Ficino's Interpretation of Plato's 'Sophist'* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989), pp. 9-48.

⁴⁶ See Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Commentary on a Canzone of Benivieni*, trans. Sears Jayne (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), p. 160.

⁴⁷ Giovanni Pico, *Commentary*, p. 164. I have not been able to consult the Latin original.

purging. The vision of man turning into anything he pleases, from animal to angel, proves to be an extended metaphor for this ascent. Protean man is simply Pico's fanciful way of expressing what moralists had said for millennia: by giving one's passions free rein, one becomes *like* a beast; but by following reason's rule, one becomes *like* an angel (*Oratio* 1:316; 226). Pico, like Ficino, seems to blur the distinction between reason and faith by turning Pythagoras and Plato into ancient theologians. And in an inclusive gesture that embraces not only the various pagan philosophies but also the Kabbala of the Jews, Pico everywhere finds traces of the Christian religion.⁴⁸ Yet where Ficino molds the Gospel to fit a Platonic frame, Pico does the reverse. In his desire to reconcile all philosophies, first with each other and then with Christianity, it is Christianity that comes out on top.⁴⁹ It is arguable whether Pico transforms the Catholic faith (the censors thought so in some instances and put him on the Index),⁵¹ but it is undeniable that he twists the pagan and Jewish sources into new shapes.

Even with these qualifications, Pico's encomium may seem to follow Ficino's pattern of equating philosophy with religion, reason with faith. If we look closer, however, this is not quite the case. While Pico starts by claiming that there is no internal "discord" that philosophy cannot allay, he immediately refines that assertion:

⁴⁸ "... angelus ... & Dei filius" (quoted from the facsimile of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Gian Francesco Pico della Mirandola, *Opera Omnia*, 2 vols. (Basel, 1557), ed. Cesare Vasoli [Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1969], I: 315; English trans. Elizabeth L. Forbes, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Ernst Cassirer et al. [Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1948], p. 225). Further references to the *Oratio* will be given in the notes to both Latin and English editions.

⁴⁹ Pico does not put the pagan and Jewish testimony on equal footing, however. The Kabbala, being God's secret teaching to Moses transmitted orally to the Jews, has a divine status not accorded the ancient theologians. See Chaim Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1989), p. 199.

⁵⁰ As Bernard McGinn explains concerning the Kabbala: "Perhaps the fundamental point to be grasped at the outset is that Cabala [for Pico] does not teach anything new—it rather reveals that the truths that Christians already hold, especially concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation, have always been known, especially to Jews but also to some gentiles" ("Cabalists and Christians: Reflections on Cabala in Medieval and Renaissance Thought," in *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. Richard H. Popkin and Gordon M. Weiner [Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994]: 18–19); see also Wirszubski, pp. 161–84.

⁵¹ Pico, like Ficino, tread on dangerous ground in his espousal of magic; see Wirszubski, pp. 133–52, 188–97.

But [natural philosophy] will so assuage [strife and differences of opinion] as to compel us to remember that, according to Heraclitus, nature was begotten from war, that it was on this account repeatedly called "strife" by Homer, and that it is not, therefore, in the power of natural philosophy to give us in nature a true quiet and unshaken peace but that this is the function and privilege of her mistress, that is, of holiest theology.⁵²

Describing the unstable situation of the post-lapsarian world, Pico refers to the same Heraclitean flux as did Augustine in the *City of God* 20.3. Even more revealing is Pico's appellation "mistress." It points us to a very different tradition from the one seen in *De amore*: philosophy as a *handmaiden* to theology. This had of course been the prevailing view for over a millennium, based as it is on *On Christian Doctrine*. Pico agrees with the traditional Augustinian teaching that philosophy (with reason as its guiding light) should function as a propaedeutic to theology (based on the revelation of the Scriptures): "She [natural philosophy] will show us the way and as comrade lead us to her [theology] who, seeing us hastening from afar, will exclaim 'Come to me, ye who have labored. Come and I will restore you. Come to me, and I will give you peace, which the world and nature cannot give you.'"⁵³ Pico's reliance on Augustinian formulas should come as no surprise. Throughout his oeuvre the Fathers had been favored and much quoted authors.⁵⁴ As Thomas More was to translate the verdict of Pico's nephew and first biographer, Gianfrancesco Pico: "Of the olde fathers of the chyrch / so gret knowledge he had as hit were harde for hym to haue

⁵² "Sed ita sedabit [naturalis philosophia opinionis lites et dissidia], ut meminisse nos iubeat esse naturam iuxta Heraclitum ex bello genitam, ob id ab Homero contentione vocitatum. Idcirco in ea veram quietem & solidam pacem se nobis praestare non posse esse hoc dominae suae, id est, sanctissimae Theologiae munus & privilegium" (*Oratio* 1:318; 231).

⁵³ "Ad illam ipsa & viam monstrabit & comes ducet, quae procul nos videns properantes, Venite inclaimabit ad me qui laborastis, venite & ego reficiam vos, venite ad me & dabo vobis pacem, quam mundus & natura vobis dare non possunt" (*Oratio* 1:318; 231, paraphrasing Matthew 11:28 and John 14:27).

⁵⁴ Of the books in Pico's library, writes Pearl Kibre, Augustine together with Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas "held numerical precedence over all other writers except Aristotle" (*The Library of Pico della Mirandola* [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1936], pp. 112–13). According to the preserved library inventory that forms the basis of Kibre's study, Pico owned at least seventeen Augustinian volumes (several of which contained more than one work), including the early *Soliloquies* and *De Q. An.*, but also one or two of Augustine's commentaries on Genesis (which influenced the *Heptaplus*), *En. in Ps.*, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, *De Trin.*, *De Civ. Dei*, and, intriguingly, the anti-Pelagian *The Spirit and the Letter*, which was to play such a large part in the genesis of the Lutheran Reformation.

that hath lyued longe & all his lyfe hath done nothing els but red them."⁵⁵

In a recent study, Kristeller makes a crucial point: "Several of the most striking phrases [of the *Oration*], often quoted out of context, are actually addressed by God to Adam before his fall."⁵⁶ If the encomium is addressed to the pre-lapsarian Adam, this has far-reaching consequences for our reading of the whole oration, which takes on a much less Pelagian coloring. Even John Calvin heaped praise on Adam, giving him both free will and the power to reach God through his own reason: "With these noble gyftes the first state of man excelled, so that he not onely had enough of reason, vnderstandyng, wisdom, and iudgement, for the gouernment of this earthly life, but also to clime vp euen to God and to eternal felicitie. . . . In this Integritye, man had freewill, whereby if he would he myght haue attained eternall life."⁵⁷ The wide-ranging allusive metaphors and the syncretist drive of Pico's oration set it apart from Calvin's cool scholasticism, yet they agree on the main point: the dignity of unfallen humankind. The difference is of course that Calvin immediately turns to the much bleaker prospects of the post-lapsarian Adam, while Pico in the *Oration* only obliquely alludes to it.

However, when Pico returns to Genesis in his *Discourse on the Seven Days of Creation*, the *Heptaplus*, he presents a much less rosy picture of our post-lapsarian condition. A panegyric on man is included, complete with the famous Hermetic outcry, "Great miracle, O Asclepius, is man" (*Heptaplus* 5.6).⁵⁸ Yet the tone is much more restrained and the context is scriptural and patristic rather than neoplatonic.⁵⁹ Not much is left of the *Oration*'s protean freedom:

⁵⁵ Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *The lyfe of Johan Pico Erle of Myrandula*, trans. Thomas More (London, c. 1525), sig. B iv. STC 19898. Further references to this work, abbreviated *Life*, will be given in the text.

⁵⁶ Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and His Sources," in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters III* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e di letteratura, 1993), p. 242.

⁵⁷ John Calvin, *Institution of the Christian religion* 1.15.8, trans. Thomas Norton (London, 1561). STC 4415. References to this edition will be given in the text by book, chapter, and section.

⁵⁸ "Magnum o Asclepi miraculum est homo" (quoted from the facsimile of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Gian Francesco Pico della Mirandola, *Opera Omnia*, 2 vols. (Basel, 1557), ed. Cesare Vasoli [Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1969]; English trans. Jessie Brewer McGaw, *Heptaplus* [New York: Philosophical Library, 1977]. Further references to *Heptaplus* are given in the text by book and chapter.

⁵⁹ Pico states in the introductory materials to *Heptaplus* that he tried to imitate Basil and Augustine in the structure of his work. Its sevenfold division he got from Augustine's *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*.

But, when the image of God has been forgotten through the stain of sin, miserable and unhappy, we begin to serve the beast within us. . . . Indeed, all of us—through the first Adam, who obeyed Satan more than God, and of whom [Adam] we are offspring by flesh—were dishonored and have degenerated from men to beasts. (*Heptaplus* 4.6–7)⁶⁰

This is not a Plotinian but a Pauline "fall." Pico aligns himself with the Augustinian theory of original sin, and the continuation makes clear that only the redemptive work of Christ can bring mankind back to God. This is traditional Christian dogma, with only a thin layer of neoplatonism. Indeed, while Pico continues to refer to the pagan philosophers, that is only to win those over "who have been persuaded by an evil spirit to believe [the pagans] rather than the Church" (*Heptaplus* 6.5).⁶¹ The man so often billed as the supreme syncretist makes it quite clear that unless the pagan philosophers and the Jewish Kabbalists yield to the incarnate Christ, all their efforts are in vain:

Let us be led back to the great sacrament that is madness to heathens, a scandal to the Hebrews, and the virtue and wisdom of God for us: Man can be united with God only through Him Who—since in Himself He united man to God—can, as a true Mediator, so unite men to God that just as in Him the Son of God put on manhood, so through Him men are made sons of God . . . ; and if that ineffable grace by which the Word becomes flesh can be realized only in Christ, then it is only through Christ that the flesh can ascend to the Word; and there is not (as John correctly wrote so well) under the heavens another name through which it is possible for men to be saved. (*Heptaplus* 6.7)⁶²

Based on St. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1: 22–25, Pico's position is as dogmatic as that of the Protestant reformers, who indeed made good use of the same text.

⁶⁰ " . . . sed oblitterata imagine Dei per maculam peccati coepimus miseri & infelices servire bestis nostris. . . . Verum . . . omnes in primo Adam qui obediuit Satanae magis quam Deo: Cuius filii secundum carnem deformati ab homine degeneramus ad brutum. . . ."

⁶¹ " . . . quibus a malo daemone persuasum, ut gentibus potius credant quam ecclesiae, . . ."

⁶² "Admonemur hinc magni illius sacramenti, quod gentibus sultitia, Hebraeis scandalum, nobis Dei virtus & sapientia est, non posse hominem Deo coniungi, nisi per eum, qui cum in seipso hominem Deo coniunxerit, verus mediator effectus, potest ita homines Deo annectere, ut sicut in eo filius Dei hominem induit, ita per eum homines Dei filii fiant. . . . profecto si dispensatio illa ineffabilis in solo contingit Christo, ut verbum ferret caro, solus etiam est Christus, per quem ad verbum caro potest ascendere, nec est (ut recte scripsit Ioannes) aliud sub coelo nomen in quo oporteat salvos homines fieri."

If Giovanni Pico shows increasing restraint in his encomium of human aspirations, that is nothing compared to his nephew Gianfrancesco Pico's Savonarolan condemnation of philosophy in *An Examination of the Vanity of Pagan Teaching and the Verity of Christian Doctrine (Examen vanitatis)* (1520).⁶³ Under the sway of Savonarola, even the elder Pico had moved from philosophy to scriptural piety. The change of heart comes out clearly in two letters which Giovanni wrote his nephew at the end of his life, and which were later included in More's translation of Gianfrancesco's *Life of Pico*. As he had done in the *Heptaplus* 6.7, Giovanni quotes St. Paul's condemnation of worldly wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1: "The wysdom of this worlde is folysshnes afore god" (*Life*, sig. D iii').⁶⁴ One contributing factor in this move away from philosophy to fideism was Giovanni's and Gianfrancesco's increasing interest in the early Fathers, Augustine not the least.

The work that most clearly reveals Gianfrancesco's dependence upon Augustine's mature views on the relationship between faith and reason is not the *Examen vanitatis*, but the early *On the Study of Divine and Human Philosophy* (1496). A brief work written before Pico's espousal of scepticism, the *De studio* is based largely upon *On Christian Doctrine*. "Human philosophy," Gianfrancesco begins, "is not necessary for a Christian, although it may be useful" (1.2).⁶⁵ While there had been learned men in the Church, many (like the twelve disciples) "were not experts in grammar (as Augustine says), not armed with dialectics, nor

⁶³ See Eugenio Garin, "Gian Francesco Pico della Mirandola: Savonarolan Apologetics and the Critique of Ancient Thought," in *Christianity and Renaissance*, ed. Timothy Verdon and John Henderson (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1990): 523–32. On Savonarola, see Walker, *The Ancient Theology*, pp. 42–62, and Donald Weinstein, "Explaining God's Acts to His people: Savonarola's Spiritual Legacy to the Sixteenth Century," in *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. John W. O'Malley et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1993): 205–25.

⁶⁴ As Charles B. Schmitt observes: "One might almost say that the philosophical position which reaches maturity in the *Examen Vanitatis* is nothing other than a logical progression from that which was expressed more and more clearly during the last few years of Giovanni Pico's life" (*Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533) and His Critique of Aristotle* [The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967], p. 33). Schmitt discusses Giovanni Pico's letters on pp. 33–34. My discussion of Gianfrancesco Pico relies heavily on Schmitt's seminal study.

⁶⁵ "Humanam philosophiam non esse necessariam Christiano, quantum utilis esse potest," quoted from Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *De studio divinae et humanae philosophiae*, in *Opera omnia* (Basle, 1573). I have consulted a copy in *Carolina Rediviva*, the Uppsala University Library. I am grateful to my friend Per Landgren for his help with translating the Latin. See also Schmitt's explication of the work in *Gianfrancesco Pico*, pp. 37–43.

puffed up by rhetoric" (1.3).⁶⁶ The real use of the doctrine and eloquence of the philosophers, Pico contends (alluding to Augustine's metaphor of the Israelites appropriating the gold of the Egyptians), is as a handmaiden to faith (1.3). The liberal arts should be used to better understand the Scriptures (1.6), but, according to *On Christian Doctrine*, like the rest of philosophy they are subordinated to the authority of the Bible (1.8). Pico dedicates Book 2 to the "divine philosophy," which turns out to be not Ficino's Platonic theology, but biblical studies: "The Holy Scriptures, the true and divine philosophy, should be studied carefully and with the Christian's full attention" (2.1).⁶⁷ Compared to these studies, the arts are of little value. Towards the end, however, in a gesture that seems to go against the grain of the rest of the treatise, Pico refers to the mysticism of Dionysius the Areopagite and Augustine by means of which we may scale the ladder towards the highest being (2.7).⁶⁸ In the very last chapter this view is qualified by a contrast with the better Scriptural way; as Charles Schmitt writes, "Even here where human philosophy reaches its highest value as an aid to the apprehension of God himself, it falls short of divine philosophy."⁶⁹

Yet as Pico's thought developed in contact with ancient scepticism, he would not grant even that much to human reason. If the ladder of the world had become unscalable levels for the old Augustine, this was even more true for the later Gianfrancesco Pico. He objected strenuously to Ficino's *De amore*. While his uncle had limited himself to a subtle critique of the ladder of love, Gianfrancesco wrote *De amore divino* in 1516 to show, in Sears Jayne's words, "that both Ficino and [Giovanni] Pico were wrong and that the only proper way to deal with the subject of love is in Christian terms."⁷⁰ Yet the sustained attack came with the *Examen vanitatis*, which "is conceived as a polemic against the philosophy of the *gentes*."⁷¹ Augustine's very first work *Against the Aca-*

⁶⁶ "... non peritos grammaticæ (ut Augustinus ait) non armatos dialectica, non inflatos rhetorica, ..."

⁶⁷ "Sacras literas quæ vera et divina philosophia est omni studio Christiano excellendas."

⁶⁸ The weight of the negative theology of Pseudo-Dionysius—whom Gianfrancesco like Giovanni Pico and Ficino believed to be the divinely inspired disciple of St. Paul—largely accounts for this anomaly in a thinker who otherwise shunned philosophic interference with the Gospel. Pico later wrote a lengthy letter in defense of Dionysius: *Pro asserendis a calumnia libris Dionysii Areopagitæ ... epistola* (printed 1523; see Schmitt's survey of Pico's writings, *Gianfrancesco Pico*, p. 195).

⁶⁹ Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico*, p. 42.

⁷⁰ Jayne, Introduction to Ficino's *De amore*, pp. 20–21.

⁷¹ Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico*, p. 43.

demics had been written to counteract the Ciceronian scepticism he had flirted with before his conversion.⁷² Pico, on the other hand, taking up a suggestion by Savonarola, made the scepticism of Sextus Empiricus an ally of faith. Although Augustine never wrote a work in support of scepticism, Gianfrancesco nevertheless drew inspiration from the mature bishop: "Pico saw Scepticism as a service to Christianity; it could serve the function of destroying the claims of dogmatic philosophers, thereby allowing Christian doctrine to become recognized as the one valid source of knowledge. Understanding for him, as for [the old] Augustine, came through faith and not through reason."⁷³ So while not willing to call himself a sceptic, Pico uses Sextus Empiricus for the purpose of demolishing the edifices of pagan learning:

Even if in many things I certainly do not approve of the sceptic philosophers, nevertheless, I do not disapprove of them up to a certain point; that is, up to the point that they diminish the arrogance of those who declare that they know and are in possession of all or at least most things . . . The sceptics refute those other philosophers who declare that they know something by virtue of human philosophy. (*Examen vanitatis* 3.14)⁷⁴

In the first three books Gianfrancesco Pico therefore attacks philosophy in general, and in the last three the Aristotelian philosophy in particular. Turning against the big project of his uncle Giovanni Pico, Gianfrancesco believes "that it is more proper and more useful to render the teachings of the philosophers uncertain than to reconcile them as my uncle wished to do." In this he consciously follows certain of the Fathers: "I prefer to follow in this matter those ancient theologians of our faith who held that some action must be taken against the pagan philosophers and that their teachings must be demolished" (*Examen vanitatis* 1.2).⁷⁵ This tearing down is only preparatory for building a better edifice: he will invalidate the teachings of Aristotle "so that following the example of the early theologians we may devote more study hereafter to the Sacred Scriptures" (*Examen vanitatis*

⁷² See Charles B. Schmitt, *Cicero Scepticus* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1972), pp. 29–33.

⁷³ Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico*, pp. 6–7.

⁷⁴ "Quos quidem Philosophos Scepticos tamesi in plerisque non probo, eatenus tamen non improbo, quatenus eorum qui vel omnia vel plurima scire se tenereque profitebantur, arrogantiam obtunderent . . . Improbant alios philosophos sceptici, qui scire quicquam profitentur vi humanae philosophiae" (as cited and translated in Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico*, p. 53).

⁷⁵ " . . . consentaneum magis esse et utile magis incerta reddere philosophorum dogmata, quam consiliare, ut patruus volebat. Sequi enim in hac re malo antiquos illos ex nostra fide theologos qui in genium philosophos potius agendum duxere et eorum excindenda dogmata" (as cited and translated in Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico*, p. 48).

4.2).⁷⁶ That certain views of the aging Augustine are included amongst the advice of the "early theologians" is clear, but on the whole one must conclude that Pico had moved beyond the mature position of the bishop of Hippo to the uncompromising stance of Tertullian, who had wondered what Athens had to do with Jerusalem. No place whatsoever seems to be allowed for philosophy or for human reason.

VI

I have outlined the two extreme renaissance positions concerning human reason. One extreme, influenced by the young Augustine, virtually makes religion out of philosophy; the other, going beyond the doubts of the old bishop, seems to assign no value whatsoever to reason. To trace the developments of the first extreme we can turn to the influential love treatises and sonnet sequences, with their simplistic expositions of the cult of beauty, that followed in the wake of Ficino's *De amore*. There we find Pietro Bembo's commendation of "the power to follow reason and to raise ourselves to that which is above us,"⁷⁷ or Baldassare Castiglione's promise, put into the mouth of "Bembo" in *The Courtier*, that the soul, "rid of vices, purged with the studies of true philosophy, occupied in spiritual, and exercised in matters of understanding," can reach the heavenly beauty.⁷⁸ At the acme of this tradition are Giordano Bruno's writings, including *The Heroic Frenzies*, the work dedicated to Philip Sidney. With Bruno, though, philosophy has shed its ties with Christianity altogether (and thus with Augustine), becoming a religion of its own. In a less extreme form a syncretistic and neoplatonic impulse, often consciously derived from Augustine via Ficino and Giovanni Pico, can be seen in Symphorien Champier, Francesco Giorgio, Agostino Steuco, Guillaume Postel, Jacques Charpentier, Paul Scalichius,⁷⁹ and Andreas Camutius.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ " . . . ut maius inde studium sacris literis possumus impartiri exemplo veterum theologorum" (as cited and translated in Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico*, p. 62).

⁷⁷ Pietro Bembo, *Gli Asolani*, trans. Rudolf B. Gottfried (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1954), p. 178.

⁷⁸ Baldassare Castiglione, *The Courtier*, trans. Thomas Hoby, in *The Renaissance Man* (New York: Franklin Watts, n.d.), p. 504. But even here some dissent is present through a dialogue form that permitted—even encouraged—contradictory voices.

⁷⁹ For all these, see Charles B. Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27:4 (1966): 505–32.

⁸⁰ See Charles B. Schmitt, "Andreas Camutius on the Concord of Plato and Aristotle with the Scripture," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1982): 183.

At the other end of the spectrum we find a developing tradition of Christian scepticism with a more or less overt Augustinian pedigree that included in its ranks Cornelius Agrippa, Peter Ramus and his assistant Omer Talon, the publisher Henri Estienne, Montaigne, and (spilling into the next century) Pascal.⁸¹ Of these, it was Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486–1535), author of *Of the Uncertainty and Vanity of the Arts and Sciences* (1530), who was to have the greatest impact on Tudor writers. In 1510 Agrippa had been in England and spent time with John Colet, who may have initiated Agrippa's evangelical interest through his lectures on the Epistles of St. Paul.⁸² Colet was a thoroughgoing Augustinian, and very likely some of that interest rubbed off on Agrippa. Whatever Colet's impact may have been, by the time Agrippa came to write the *De vanitate* he was himself saturated with Augustinian doctrine.⁸³ Unlike Gianfrancesco Pico, who borrowed liberally from Sextus Empiricus, Agrippa depended less upon ancient scepticism than patristic sources. Also unlike Pico, he relied less on close argumentation than on rhetorical flourishes. Much like the later iconoclast Jacques Derrida, he sought to deconstruct the structures of human reason by means of his own "very strong reasons" (*Vanitie* 1: 11).⁸⁴ and demolish human traditions by flaunting his own thorough knowledge of those traditions.

The target of Agrippa's attack is revealed up front:

It is an ancient, and almoste an agreeable and common opinion, of all the Philosophers, by the whiche they thinke, that euery Science doothe bringe vnto man some Diuinitee, accordinge to the capacite and value of them both, so that oftentimes, beyonde the limites of Humanitie, they may be reckened

⁸¹ The standard work is Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1960), but see also the works by Schmitt above as well as his *Reappraisals in Renaissance Thought*, ed. Charles Webster (London: Variorum Reprints, 1989). Also see Hiram Haydn, *The Counter-Renaissance* (New York: Scribner's, 1950), and the collection *Scepticism from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. Richard H. Popkin and Charles B. Schmitt (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987). The Augustinian presence is evident, for example, in Montaigne's "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," not to speak of Pascal's *Pensées*.

⁸² See Charles G. Nauert, Jr., *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1965), p. 145.

⁸³ As Nauert writes, "The only theology which Agrippa could praise was that of the Church Fathers" (p. 186), and again: "The writers whom he cites most frequently and for the most significant doctrines are St. Augustine and, above all, Dionysius the Areopagite" (p. 128).

⁸⁴ Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *Of the vanitie and vn certainty of artes and sciences*, trans. James Sanford, ed. Catherine M. Dunn (1569; rpt. Northridge: California State Univ., 1974). References to the work are given in the text by chapter and page.

amonge the fellowship of the Godds. From hence arose the diuers and infinite commendations of Sciences, with whiche euery man dooth endeuour with no lesse eloquente, then longe discourse, to exalte and extoll aboute the Heauens, these Artes and Disciplines. . . . Notwithstanding, . . . there can chaunce to the life and saluation of our Soules, nothing more hurtfull and pestilente, then these Artes and Sciences. (*Vanitie* 1: 11)

It is the philosophers' religious presumptions that gall Agrippa, and he quickly pulls in Augustine to buttress his case: "*Augustine* knewe this, and was afraide, speakinge with a lowde voice, this sayinge of *Paule: The Ignorante arise, and take the Kingedome of Heauen: and we with our learninge, fall headlonge into Hell*" (*Vanitie* 1: 15). As Agrippa proceeds to demolish the pretensions of the arts one by one, the bishop is repeatedly called upon to testify: "*Augustine* witnesseth, that many for the desire of knowledge haue lost their witte, neither is there any thinge more contrary to Christian faithe and religion, then knowledg" (*Vanitie* 101: 379).⁸⁵

Even more significant than these separate testimonies (Agrippa after all calls up many other witnesses as well) is the underlying Augustinian world view that prevents Agrippa from relying on human reason. In chapter 100, "Of the Woorde of God," he sketches a picture of the sublunary world that reminds us of Gianfrancesco Pico. Perhaps unwittingly, Agrippa criticizes the thought of the young Augustine in the process. In *On Order* Augustine had made the facile assumption that the knowledge of numbers, as practiced in arithmetic and music, will lead to an upright and harmonious soul:

Indeed, it is not by faith alone, but by trustworthy reason, that the soul leads itself little by little to most virtuous habits and the perfect life. For, to the soul that diligently considers the nature and the power of numbers, it will appear manifestly unfitting and most deplorable that it should write a rhythmic line and play the harp by virtue of this knowledge, and that its life and very self—which is the soul—should nevertheless follow a crooked path and, under the domination of lust, be out of tune by the clangor of shameful vices. (*De Ord.* 2.19.50)⁸⁶

⁸⁵ See also 4: 32 and 34; 11: 58; 17: 68; 53: 158. This is not an exhaustive list of Augustinian references, but only some of those that pit the Father against particular disciplines.

⁸⁶ "Gradatim enim [anima] se et ad mores viamque optumam non iam sola fide sed certa ratione perducit. Cui numerorum vim atque potentiam diligenter intuenti nimis indignum videbitur et nimis flendum per suam scientiam versum bene currere citharamque concinere et suam viam sequi ipsam, quae anima est, devium iter sequi et domitante sibi libidine cum turpissimo se vitiorum strepitu dissonare."

For Agrippa, however, in a rundown of the shortcomings of the arts that was to influence Sidney's *Defence of Poesie*,⁸⁷ the lesson to learn is the very opposite: "The Arithmeticians [sic], and the Geometricians number and measure al thinges, but they make no accompte of the numbers and measures of soule and life. The Musicians also entreate of soundes and songes, dispisinge the manners and discordaunces of the minde" (*Vanitie* 100: 374). The reason for this inability to move from theoretical to moral harmony lies in the nature of the post-lapsarian experience. Only God's Word offers a fixed point in an unstable world. Compared to it, "all other knowledges are subiecte to time and forgetfulnes, and not onely these sciences and Artes, but also these letters, carracters, and tongues, whiche we vse, shall perishe, and other shall arise." The changing nature of both knowledge and language leads Agrippa to paraphrase Augustine's influential conclusion in the *City of God*: "There is nothing stable and of continuance" (*Vanitie* 100: 376).⁸⁸ For Agrippa the sceptic, this leaves only fideism as a viable option.⁸⁹

Although Agrippa often sounds as though he allows no benefits to accrue from reason, careful reading reveals that this is not quite the case. Looking back at the long quotation above from his introductory chapter, we will see that he has inserted an important qualification: science should not go "beyond the limites of Humanitie" (*Vanitie* 1: 11). On the next page he repeats the proviso: the sciences "bringe to vs, above the limite of Humanitee," only the serpent's deceitful promise of the knowledge of good and evil. To use the arts within the limits of humanity is to restrict their operation to society: "But, if some good and wyse man possesse the same, peraduenture the Sciences, wilbe good and available to the Common Weale, yet therefore they will not make their possessor the more blessed" (*Vanitie* 1: 14). Put succinctly, reason, and all the arts that go with it, has the earth as its permitted sphere: "So much as we are men, we must not seeke to know any thing

⁸⁷ See A.C. Hamilton, "Sidney and Agrippa," *Review of English Studies* ns 7 (1956): 151-57. Hamilton's conclusion, however, that for Sidney "poetry guides man on the way to salvation" (p. 156) I disagree with; see my *The "Enabling of Judgement"*, pp. 49-57.

⁸⁸ Agrippa's Latin reads "nihil stabile, nihil diuturnum," as against Augustine's "nihil solidum, nihil stabile [nothing substantial, nothing lasting]" (*De Civ. Dei* 20.3).

⁸⁹ Or possibly fideism coupled with magic. There is disagreement amongst the scholars whether Agrippa renounced the magic of his younger days. Nauert, pp. 220-21, believes he did (taking his denunciation of magic in chapters 41-46 of *De vanitate* at face value), while Michael H. Keefer, "Agrippa's Dilemma: Hermetic 'Rebirth' and the Ambivalences of *De vanitate* and *De occulta philosophia*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 41 (1988): 614-53, sees occult substrata lurking below the fideist surface of the *De vanitate*.

about our reach: but earthly thinges alone" (*Vanitie* 31: 102). Sidney, familiar as he was with *De vanitate*, was to make the analogous point: "The ending end of all earthly learning [is] virtuous action," while theology has "his scope as far beyond any of these [human skills, including poetry,] as eternity exceedeth a moment" (*Defence*, pp. 83-84).⁹⁰ For both, as it had been for Giovanni Pico, it is the clear demarcations between different levels set by the mature Augustine that underpin their distinctions. Pico and Agrippa (if we leave Sidney out for the moment) may come from different ends of the spectrum we have delineated in this chapter, yet they meet in common agreement that the Fall separates the spheres of reason and faith.

VII

For Martin Luther, an analogous distinction between faith and reason became the cornerstone of his theological and social teaching. As this chapter has shown, Luther's strictures on reason did not occur in a vacuum.⁹¹ It is important to place his views against this cultural backdrop, if only to show the continuities between Renaissance and Reformation. Luther's reliance on Augustine hardly needs documentation.⁹² Even Erasmus grudgingly admitted that the reformer followed his own advice to return *ad fontes*: "[Luther] has done a service to the world at large. Many people have been driven to study the works of the early divines."⁹³ As Luther himself boasted in 1517:

⁹⁰ Philip Sidney, *A Defence of Poetry*, in *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973). References to the work are given in the text.

⁹¹ William J. Bouwsma even argues that the Renaissance as a whole can be characterized by its distinctions between faith and reason; see "Renaissance and Reformation: An Essay on Their Affinities and Connections," in *A Usable Past* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990), p. 229.

⁹² As David C. Steinmetz writes: "No one doubts for a moment that Luther was profoundly influenced by Augustine . . . or that Luther regarded Augustine as the one Father really worth intense study. His own knowledge of Augustine . . . grew almost geometrically in the period from 1513 to 1518, the period in which Luther struggled to interpret the Psalter and the writings of St. Paul" (*Luther in Context* [Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986], p. 12). On the Augustinian roots of the Lutheran movement, see Grane, in *Auctoritas Patrum*, pp. 21-32, Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 158-61, and the entries on "Luther, Martin" (pp. 516-18) and "Reformation, Augustinianism in the" (pp. 705-07) in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

⁹³ Written 1520 in a letter to the rector of the University of Erfurt, as cited by Grane, p. 32.

Our theology and St. Augustine are making good progress, and are dominant in our university, thanks to what God has done. Aristotle is gradually declining, and is approaching his imminent and final demise. To an astonishing extent, lectures on the *Sententiae* [of Peter Lombard] are disdained, and the only people who can expect anyone to attend their lectures are those who have resolved to deal with this theology, that is, the Bible or St. Augustine, or one of the other neglected Fathers of the Church.⁹⁴

Luther's gloating over the demise of Aristotle proved premature. Philip Melancthon, who the following year joined Luther on the faculty of Wittenberg University, soon spearheaded a Protestant neo-Aristotelianism that proved influential throughout northern Europe. Yet Luther was correct about the dominance of Augustine. Together with St. Paul he became one of the two founding fathers of Protestantism.

Not that Luther always agreed with Augustine. He did not care for the philosophically inclined convert. "Where Luther is dependent on Augustine," writes David Steinmetz, "he is dependent on the old anti-Pelagian Augustine."⁹⁵ As early as 1521 Melancthon had claimed the same thing: "Augustine's books against the Pelagians are extant, which he wrote when advanced in years. If you compare them with Luther's doctrines, you will see that they agree on the sum of the matter."⁹⁶ In its broad outlines, Luther's theology was an elaboration of Augustine's differentiation of spheres. Gerhard Ebeling, one of the great Luther scholars of this century, emphasizes these differentiations: "The remarkable fact [is] that the touchstone of [Luther's] theology, the point which decides whether one has really grasped its true substance, is presented as a *distinction*."⁹⁷ Luther's master distinction, according to Ebeling, is that between "the law and the gospel," developed from an earlier distinction between "the letter and the Spirit."

Both pairs derive from St. Paul's Epistles (especially Romans) via *The Spirit and the Letter*; the Augustinian work that inflamed the young Luther (significantly, the same work may also have influenced Giovanni Pico, who had a copy of it in his library). Yet the law and the

⁹⁴ As cited in Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought*, trans. R.A. Wilson (1970; rpt. London: Collins-Fontana, 1975), p. 19.

⁹⁵ Steinmetz, *Luther in Context*, p. 21. Steinmetz is specifically talking about Luther's use of Augustine in his explication of Romans 9, but the verdict has general validity.

⁹⁶ Philip Melancthon, "Luther and the Paris Theologians," in *Melancthon: Selected Writings*, trans. Charles Leander Hill (1962; rpt. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), p. 74. Later in the same work, Melancthon stresses the importance of Augustine's *The Spirit and the Letter* (p. 85). He made the same claim 25 years later in his *Preface to Luther's Works* (1546); see *Corpus Reformatorum*, ed. C.G. Bretschneider, vol. 6 (Halle, 1839), column 159.

⁹⁷ Ebeling, p. 111. Ebeling's study is synchronic, however, and with few exceptions does not trace Luther's debts to Augustine.

gospel is only the most basic of a whole range of dichotomies that touch all areas of life: the "civil" vs. the "theological" use of the law, philosophy vs. theology (or reason vs. revelation), freedom vs. bondage of the will, or the distinction between the two kingdoms (or regiments).⁹⁸ All these pairs are characterized both by unrelieved tensions and by mutual interdependence. Typically, one side of the dichotomy is not the stepping stone to the other (except for the theological use of the law to prepare a sinner for the gospel of grace); instead, the two sides reflect the individual's position before God (*coram Deo*) and before the world (*coram mundo*). Both positions are necessary, as Ebeling shows: "To exist before God and to exist before the world are not two possible and mutually exclusive choices, two separate realities, but an alternate relationship which is necessarily simultaneous."⁹⁹ To be a Christian is therefore to have two different modes of existence (but not two different lifestyles).

Coram Deo, Luther is as suspicious of intellectual attempts to ascend to God as was his contemporary Gianfrancesco Pico. Grace is the key concept. Human kind has no free will, except to sin, and reason is "Frau Hulda," the Devil's whore.¹⁰⁰ Luther is therefore averse to any form of Dionysian mysticism (even though he accepted Christocentric varieties).¹⁰¹ The Incarnation provides him with the only possible ladder to God. "Every ascent to the knowledge of God is dangerous," he writes, "beyond the ascent which takes place through the humanity of Christ, because this humanity is Jacob's ladder, by which one should ascend."¹⁰² Yet the situation is totally different *coram mundo*. On the earthly level Luther even allows for free will,¹⁰³ and he waxes lyrical in

⁹⁸ We shall return to Luther's *Zwei-Reiche-Lehre* in chapter 4.

⁹⁹ Ebeling, p. 200.

¹⁰⁰ See B.A. Garrish, "Luther's Belief in Reason," in *Luther: A Profile*, ed. H.G. Koenigsberger (London: Macmillan, 1973), p. 203. The article, an unsurpassed overview of Luther's views on reason, is excerpted from Garrish's *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

¹⁰¹ See Heiko A. Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), pp. 126-54, and David C. Steinmetz, *Luther and Staupitz* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 126-40.

¹⁰² As cited in Steinmetz, *Luther and Staupitz*, p. 140.

¹⁰³ See Luther's *On the Bondage of the Will*. "Free choice is allowed to man only with respect to what is beneath him and not what is above him. That is to say, a man should know that with regard to his faculties and possessions he has the right to use, to do, or to leave undone, according to his own free choice, though even this is controlled by the free choice of God alone, who acts in whatever way he pleases. On the other hand in relation to God, or in matters pertaining to salvation or damnation, a man has no free choice, but is captive, subject and slave either of the will of God or the will of Satan" (*Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969], p. 143).

his description of reason as "the best [of the things of this life] and something divine."¹⁰⁴

It is easy to forget that Luther instigated his reforms from a platform as a university lecturer, but the fact is that Wittenberg, especially after Melanchthon had joined the faculty in 1518, "far surpassed every other German university. For several decades it was far and away the leading one."¹⁰⁵ Luther and Melanchthon saw their roles as reciprocal: Luther's biblical studies were directed *coram Deo*, while Melanchthon's classical studies were directed *coram mundo*.¹⁰⁶ This division of labor, however, did not mean that Luther did not actively promote education. In a "Letter to the Mayors and Aldermen of all the Cities of Germany in Behalf of Christian Schools" (1524) he sets out the twofold use of the liberal arts: "The languages and other liberal arts, . . . [are a great] ornament, benefit, and honor . . . , both for understanding the Holy Scriptures and carrying on the civil government" (pp. 57–58).¹⁰⁷ *Coram Deo*, the arts serve as a handmaiden to the gospel: "We will not preserve the Gospel without the languages. The languages are the scabbard in which the Word of God is sheathed. . . . St. Augustine himself was obliged to confess that the Christian teacher, in addition to Latin, should be acquainted with Hebrew and Greek" ("Christian Schools," pp. 60–63). When Luther suggests what books should be put in the school library, we recognize the emphasis from *On Christian Doctrine*. Next to Bibles "in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, and other languages," we find patristic commentaries, but also "such books as are useful in acquiring the languages, as the poets and orators, without considering whether they are heathen or Christian, Greek or Latin." In addition, Luther also wants "books treating of all the arts and sciences, . . . books on jurisprudence and medicine." And last but not least: "A prominent place should be given to chronicles and histories" ("Christian Schools," p. 77).

The library inventory also shows that in addition to aiding biblical

¹⁰⁴ Martin Luther, *Disputation Concerning Man* (1536), as cited in Lewis W. Spitz, *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), p. 247. See also Garrish.

¹⁰⁵ Ebeling, p. 18.

¹⁰⁶ "Luther's and Melanchthon's roles at Wittenberg not only complemented each other," explains Ralph Keen, "but do so similarly to the way in which revelation and reason, and the constituent members of each 'category,' complement each other in this system that both men shared" (Introduction to *A Melanchthon Reader* p. 34).

¹⁰⁷ Trans. F.V.N. Painter, in *Early Protestant Educators*. Page references are given in the text.

studies, the arts have an equally important function *coram mundo*. Luther spells it out in no uncertain terms (note the novel recognition of female education):

Even if there were no soul, . . . and men did not need schools and the languages for the sake of Christianity and the Scriptures, still, for the establishment of the best schools everywhere, both for boys and girls, this consideration is of itself sufficient, namely that society, for the maintenance of civil order and the proper regulation of the household, needs accomplished and well-trained men and women. ("Christian Schools," p. 68)

He couples this recommendation with what we may think an uncharacteristic paean to learning:

We have, alas! lived and degenerated long enough in darkness; we have remained German brutes too long. Let us use our reason, that God may observe in us gratitude for His mercies, and that other lands may see that we are human beings, capable both of learning and of teaching, in order that through us, also, the world may be made better. ("Christian Schools," p. 73)

And this was no empty rhetoric. Spearheaded by Melanchthon, Wittenberg became a pattern for primary and secondary education throughout Germany; and with the Reformation the influence spread to England as well.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, it was largely because of Melanchthon's authority within English higher education that the Lutheran distinction between the realms of faith and reason caught hold.¹⁰⁹

Throughout his vast educational output, Melanchthon follows Luther's distinction.¹¹⁰ Melanchthon associates it with Augustine in

¹⁰⁸ See Lowell C. Green, "The Reformation and Education in the Sixteenth Century," *Bulletin of Appalachian State University* 67 [1970]: 34–49; John M. Fletcher, "Change and Resistance to Change: A Consideration of the Development of English and German Universities during the Sixteenth Century," *History of Universities* 1 (1981): 1–36; as well as two articles by Lewis W. Spitz: "The Importance of the Reformation for the Universities: Culture and Confession in the Critical Years," in *Rebirth, Reform and Resilience: Universities in Transition 1300–1700*, ed. James M. Kittelson and Pamela J. Transue (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1984): 42–67, and "Humanism and the Protestant Reformation," in *Renaissance Humanism*, 3: 380–411.

¹⁰⁹ Among renaissance authors, Melanchthon's impact on 16th century Oxbridge was second only to that of Erasmus; see my "Melanchthon and Tudor England," in *Cultural Exchange between European Nations during the Renaissance*, ed. Gunnar Sorelius and Michael 'Srigley (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1994): 85–95.

¹¹⁰ See *On Philosophy* (1536; Keen, pp. 65–70), *Oration on Aristotle* (1544; Keen, pp. 86–87), *Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics*, *Book I* (1546; Keen, pp. 179–81, 185, 190, 196–201), *Summary of Ethics* (1592; Keen, pp. 203–05), and *On the Soul* (1553; Keen, p. 267). For a discussion of the similarities to, and the differences from, Luther's distinctions, see Keen's Introduction, pp. 27–34. See also Quirinus Breen, *Christianity and Humanism: Studies in the History of Ideas*, ed. Nelson Peter Ross (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), pp. 69–85.

the university disputation "On the Discrimination between the Gospel and Philosophy,"¹¹¹ but the Church Father's historical importance is most evident in *The Church and the Authority of the Word* (1539).¹¹² The main problem facing the fifth-century church, according to Melancthon, was the blurring of the spheres of philosophy and revelation: "For nowe in his [Augustine's] tyme, there had crepte intoo the Churche philosophical opinions which *Pelagius* confirmed, transforming the Gospel intoo philosophic." The same confusion was later perpetrated by the Schoolmen, and still threatens the church, since "now agayne in our time many doe slide away into *Pelagian opinions*" (*Church*, fol. 35v; p. 162). Augustine, on the other hand, "beleued touching Grace & faith the very same which we do teach" (*Church*, fol. 41v; p. 167). That is why his voice again needs to be heard:

Augustine in his tyme restored afreshe and agayne lightened the doctrine of the gospel touching Grace, & faith in Christe, when as it was almost extinguished. For this benefite, the Church is much bounde vnto him. Touching Originall sinne, he speaketh with much more perspicuity, than all others. Also hee speaketh more distinctly and more rightly, as touching Free will. That by force of free will, man may doe the externall woorkes of the lawe and other honest ciuil woorkes. But hee sayeth without the holy Ghoste, men can not haue spiritual motions, true feare of God, true fayth, and true patience . . . Hee geueth vs a profitable difference betweene the *Letter* and the *Spirite*. He teacheth vs of the free remission of sinnes. Hee admonisheth howe and after what maner Paule is to bee vnderstood of vs, where hee sayeth: *By the woorkes of the lawe, is no man iustified*. (*Church*, fol. 35v–36r; p. 162)

What is unusual about this passage is the clear acknowledgment of the Augustinian pedigree for the central insight of the Reformation. We recognize Luther's and Melancthon's master distinction between the realms of law and grace, exemplified in the passage by the restrictions on free will. Of additional interest is that Philip Sidney may have had

¹¹¹ *De discrimine Evangelii et Philosophiae*, in *Corpus Reformatorum*, vol. 12, ed. C.G. Bretschneider (Halle, 1844), columns 689–91. Melancthon also gave an oration in 1539 on the life of Augustine, *De vita Augustini* (*Corpus Reformatorum*, vol. 11, ed. C.G. Bretschneider [Halle, 1843], columns 446–56).

¹¹² This is the title given by Hill, who translates the work in *Melancthon: Selected Writings*, pp. 131–86. I will cite Richard Robinson's Elizabethan translation (references in the text, however, will be given to both Robinson and Hill): *A godly and learned assertion in defence of the true church* (London, 1580). STC 17790. For a discussion of the work, see Peter Fraenkel, *Testimonia Patrum: The Function of the Patristic Argument in the Theology of Philip Melancthon* (Geneva: Droz, 1961), pp. 52–107 (in particular pp. 93–96 on Augustine).

something to do with Richard Robinson's English translation of Melancthon's work. What we know for sure is that Sidney actively patronized Robinson, and had been the dedicatee of another Melancthon translation the year before.¹¹³

Like Luther, Melancthon bases his discussion on the fundamental distinction between law and grace, but he also incorporates Aristotelian ethics by allowing it to operate within the sphere of the law. He begins his *Commentary on Aristotle's "Ethics"* by insisting that "the difference between law and gospel must be kept in mind, and it must be realized that ethical teaching is a part of the divine law of civil behavior."¹¹⁴ As the *Summary of Ethics* makes clear, despite its great usefulness in the civil sphere, the law (and philosophy) is of no avail *coram Deo*: "And still the Christian must realize that he must be pronounced justified freely through Christ, not through law or philosophy."¹¹⁵ Instead, ethics should function on the personal level like the law on the public level: "For just as the laws of the magistrate are certain public disciplines that are necessary for restraining force, so philosophy is a certain domestic discipline necessary on the one hand for coercing the passions, and on the other for inuring men to the understanding and study of virtue." As we shall see in chapter 4, Melancthon's description of the law conforms closely to Augustine's views of the role of the "earthly kingdom": restraining the havoc caused by the Fall, helping us make some kind of order in a fallen world. What is novel is Melancthon's strong emphasis upon Aristotelian ethics within this Augustinian system.

VIII

Even if Luther was the fountain-head of the Reformation, it was John Calvin who systematized the new doctrines. Calvin's views on reason, not unexpectedly, show substantial concord with those of Luther. Also

¹¹³ Robinson dedicated to Philip Sidney *Godly prayers, meete to be used in these later times: collected out of Philip Melancthon and others* (London, 1579). STC 17790.5. He later looked back on the generous support he had received over a period of time from both Philip and his father: "[Philip Sidney] gave me for his book [i.e., the book dedicated to him] 4 angels, and his honourable father gave me for his book ten shillings. These two honourable personages many times benevolent unto my poor study" (as cited in Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney, Courtier Poet* [London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991], p. 229).

¹¹⁴ Keen, p. 179.

¹¹⁵ Keen, p. 204.

Calvin cherished and repeatedly cited Augustine, "with whom he felt a deep affinity."¹¹⁶ As we saw with Giovanni Pico, Calvin had a high opinion of Adam's pre-lapsarian reason: "He not onely had enough of reason, vnderstandyng, wisdom, and iudgement, for the gouernment of this earthly life, but also to clime vp euen to God and to eternal felicitie" (*Institutes* 1.15.8). After the fall, however, the situation was completely different: "The common sayinge whyche thei [i.e., the schoolmen] haue borrowed oute of Augustine pleaseth mee well, that the naturall gyftes were corrupted in manne by synne, and of the supernaturall hee was made emptye" (*Institutes* 2.2.12). Calvin immediately introduces a distinction: some gifts are completely extinguished by the Fall, others only corrupted. To the first category belong those of the kingdom of God. In the human sphere, the situation is somewhat different. In human nature, Calvin concedes, "there shyne yet some sparkes that shewe that hee ys a creature hauinge reason, and that hee differeth from brute beastes, bicause he is endued with vnderstanding." He then makes explicit Luther's (and Augustine's) distinction between the two kingdoms:

Lette thys therefore bee the distinction, that there is one vnderstandyng of earthly thynges, an other of heauenly thynges. Earthly thynges I call those that doe not concerne God and his Kyngedome, true ryghteousnesse, and the blessednesse of eternall lyfe, but haue all theyr respecte and relation to thys presente lyfe, and are as yt were contayneth wythin the boundes thereof. Heauenly thynges, I cal the pure knowledge of God, the ordre of true righteounesse and the misteries of the heauenly kyngdome. Of the fyrste sorte are policy, gouernaunce of householde, all handy craftes, and liberrall Sciences. Of the seconde sorte are the knowledge of God and Gods will, and the rule to frame oure lyfe accordyng to yt. (*Institutes* 2.2.13)

¹¹⁶ Richard Stauffer, "Calvin," in *International Calvinism 1541–1715*, ed. Menna Prestwich (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 29. See also the entry on "Calvin, John" in Fitzgerald, pp. 116–20. Calvin even more than Luther pored over Augustine, as Lucius Smits has conclusively shown in *Saint Augustin dans l'oeuvre de Jean Calvin*, 2 vol. (Assen: van Gorcum, 1957–1958). By painstakingly examining Calvin's large oeuvre, Smits has instanced over 3800 references to a total of 88 genuine Augustinian works (calculations are mine). Calvin's Top Ten Augustinian works were the *Epist.* (532 references, all to letters written after 390), *Sermons* (382 ref.), *On the Gospel of John* (358 ref.), *En. in Ps.* (251 ref.), *Admonition and Grace* (175 ref.), *De Civ. Dei* (149 ref.), *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* (146 ref.), *Ench.* (125 ref.), *The Predestination of the Saints* (123 ref.), and *On Grace and Free Will* (116 ref.). Other major Augustinian works often consulted were *Against Faustus* (85 ref.), *Against Julian* (77 ref.), *Retr.* (82 ref.), *De Trin.* (60 ref.), *On the Spirit and the Letter* (54 ref.), *Conf.* (49 ref.), and *De Doct. Chr.* (49 ref.). The dominance of late Augustinian works is almost total: less than 3% of the references are to works written before Augustine was consecrated bishop.

"In the orderynge of thys lyfe," he concludes, "no manne ys voyde of the lyghte of reason." As with Luther, within the human sphere—again constituted by the humanist curriculum—reason, however frail, is not to be discounted. What follows are words of appreciation we may not have expected from the reformer:

So oft therefore as we lyghte vpon profane wryters, lette vs be putte in mynde by that maruylous lyghte of trueth that shyneth in them, that the wytte of manne, howe muche soeuer yt bee peruerter and fallen from the fyrste integritye, ys yet sylly clothed and garnysed wyth excellent gyftes of God. If wee concyder that the spyryte of God ys the onely fountayne of trueth, *wee wyll neyther refuse nor despise the trueth yt selfe, wheresoeuer yt shall appaere, excepte wee wyl dishonourably vse the spyryte of God.* (*Institutes* 2.2.15; italics added)¹¹⁷

By a wonderful sleight of hand, Calvin is able to raise human dignity and capability. We may be totally depraved, but by a "generall grace" (*Institutes* 2.2.17) available to everybody, God empowers us to function adequately within the human kingdom. The Holy Spirit, even in pre-Christian times, had illuminated the human understanding and enabled the pagans to produce writings of enduring value. Calvin here reveals his humanist and Erasmian sympathies. "Everything in the pagan world," Erasmus had written in the *Antibarbari*, "that was valiantly done, brilliantly said, ingeniously thought, diligently transmitted, had been prepared by Christ for his society."¹¹⁸

God's general illumination thereby provides Calvin with a platform for his reformed academies, whose curriculum was based on the classics:

Shall wee saye that thei had no wytte, whiche by settinge in ordre the arte of speache [*arte disserendi*], haue taught vs to speake wyth reason? Shall we saye that they were madde, whiche in settinge fourthe Physycke, haue employed theyr diligence for vs? What of all the Mathematicall sciences? shall wee thynke them the dootyngge erroours of madde menne? no, rather wee canne not readde the wrytynges of the oulde menne [i.e., the ancients], concernyng these thynges, wythoute great admiration of theyr wytte. . . . If it haue ben the Lordes will that we should be holpen by the trauaile and seruice of the wicked in naturall Phylosophie, Dialectike, the mathematicall knowledges, and others: lette vs vse it. (*Institutes* 2.2.15–16)

¹¹⁷ As so often, Calvin is here echoing Augustine: "A person who is a good and true Christian should realize that truth belongs to his Lord, wherever it is found [immo vero quisquis bonus versusque christianus est, domini sui esse intellegat, ubicumque inuenit veritatem]" (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.18.28).

¹¹⁸ As quoted in Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Christening Pagan Mysteries: Erasmus in Pursuit of Wisdom* (Toronto: Toronto Univ. Press, 1981), p. 85. For Erasmus' influence on Calvin, see William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 3, 13–14.

From Geneva to Harvard College and beyond, the Reformed Church, spurred by Calvin, consequently worked for the establishment of centers of learning. Sidney, with his active interest in these schools, is a good example of the attitude of the Protestant intelligentsia. In addition to an early training under the Puritan schoolmaster Thomas Ash-ton and his years at Oxford, he spent several months of his grand tour at Johann Sturm's famous Strasbourg Academy,¹¹⁹ and while serving in the Low Countries, he kept in close contact with the University of Leiden, founded by the Calvinists in 1574.

Calvin wavered as to which sphere to delegate one important area of the humanist study: ethics. The traditional view held that moral philosophy, in Sidney's words, "extendeth itself out of the limits of a man's own little world to the government of families and maintaining of public societies" (*Defence* 83). Calvin unequivocally placed government and household management within the earthly sphere, but he seemed to relegate personal ethics to God's kingdom, thereby putting it out of bounds for the fallen intellect. His reason was that the moral law, in the form of the Decalogue, belonged to the Scriptures. But he made a further distinction, shared with Luther, between the two tablets of the Mosaic law. The first tablet covers humankind's relation with God. Only the special illumination of the Spirit can enlighten man about these issues. Calvin, however, expresses a more qualified view about the second tablet, which prescribes a human's relation to other humans:

Truely [reason] attaineth not at all to those that are the chiefe things in the First table, . . . In the commaundementes of the Second table it hath some more understanding, by so much as they came nerer to the preservation of ciuile felowshyppe among menne. (*Institutes* 2.2.24).

With the first tablet, God's word is our only guide, but with the second a certain space is allotted to human reason, and a door is thereby opened to study the writers of antiquity. Their views had to be complemented and corrected by the Scriptures, but they were not shut out.

Calvin's overriding concern, of course, is humanity's eternal salvation, and here humankind has need of outside help. The reformer falls back on an Augustinian concept, divine illumination: "And Augustine so farre acknowledgeled this default of reson to vnderstande those thinges that are of God, that he thinketh the grace of illumina-

¹¹⁹ John Buxton, *Sir Philip Sidney and the English Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1954), p. 59.

tion to be no lesse necessarie for our mindes, than the light of the sunne is for our eyes" (*Institutes* 2.2.25). The Holy Spirit must become "an inward teacher, by whose workynge the promyse of saluation pearceeth into oure mindes" (*Institutes* 3.1.4). This special saving illumination of the Spirit, however, should not be confused with the general illumination which everyone benefits from, the "generall grace" that enables mankind to function *coram mundo*.

IX

Thanks to Melancthon's and Calvin's enormous influence, Luther's educational theories became a permanent fixture at northern universities. As far as the English universities were concerned, the Reformation modified earlier humanist reforms by strengthening the two facets—*coram Deo* and *coram mundo*—of the Protestant vision. On the one hand there was a new stress on educating the clergy: "A majority of those students who took degrees at the university," writes the historian of education Rosemary O'Day, "appears to have entered the Church."¹²⁰ The reason for this was that "the Protestant Church of England was in the process of developing a distinctive attitude to education" by insisting "upon the need for a pastoral, preaching ministry."¹²¹ On the other hand, the social élite increasingly felt the need for higher education (if not necessarily for a degree) in order to better serve the state, so that by the end of the century more than half of the Oxford matriculants were gentlemen or above.¹²²

The Augustinian stamp on the developing Protestant educational vision is revealed in a fascinating letter that the educator Roger Ascham wrote from Cambridge in 1545 to Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. "If you would like to know how the University flourishes and what harvest of learning we reap," Ascham begins, "I shall give my opinion in a few words. Many pursue the road to a knowledge of sacred learning, but different men have different ideas."¹²³ He then contrasts

¹²⁰ Rosemary O'Day, *Education and Society 1500-1800* (London and New York: Longman, 1982), p. 132.

¹²¹ O'Day, p. 132. O'Day contrasts this new emphasis with the situation before the Reformation, when only the clerical élite received higher education, while "the clergy who performed the pastoral work . . . [only rarely] possess[ed] more than a modicum of education."

¹²² O'Day, p. 90.

¹²³ *Letters of Roger Ascham*, trans. Maurice Hatch and Alvin Vos (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 68.

those at Cambridge that follow the Catholic polemicist Albert Pighius with those that "follow the right way with St. Augustine." He delineates this "right way," which unsurprisingly turns out to be derived from *On Christian Doctrine*.

In connection with the daily reading of God's word, others follow Augustine's thinking above all, and go as far as they can in bringing to it the full range of their knowledge of languages, as though calling in the reserves. Everywhere languages are taught by those who are considered the best teachers of both knowledge and understanding, so that no thought is silent for want of speech and no language swells loquaciously for want of wisdom. We bring in Plato and Aristotle . . .; from the throng of Latins Cicero is almost the only one we add to them.

Ascham is primarily interested in training the clergy, and is less favorably disposed than Luther to those who "use their thin and superficial knowledge to get themselves more easily into some government position."¹²⁴ Yet he confirms what was to become the pattern at Elizabethan Oxbridge: the faculty of arts functioned as the training ground for the later study of theology.¹²⁵ In other words, the educational program of the mature Augustine had become university policy in England.

X

Even though the Reformation provides a relevant background to the intellectual milieu of Tudor England, it nevertheless cannot account for the whole picture. Not only were there important connections between the Florentine neoplatonists and the early English humanists, but the Catholic Church for a long time provided an imposing counterbalance to the newfangled ideas of Luther and Calvin. It is an old commonplace that after the council of Trent, especially, the authority of Augustine became tainted by too close a contact with the Reformation. The Catholic Church instead renewed its dedication to Thomas Aquinas, whose Aristotelian synthesis was reaffirmed as the basis for its teachings. Yet the bishop of Hippo was too important an ally to be handed over to the Protestants. Instead, he was interpreted in ways that salvaged Catholic dogmas, a process facilitated by the fact that Augustine had been a respected authority for virtually every medieval doctor,

¹²⁴ Ascham, p. 69.

¹²⁵ Fletcher, p. 24.

Aquinas not the least. The Protestant threat sometimes led to the Catholic adoption of the neoplatonic views of the early Augustine rather than the suspect thoughts of the anti-Pelagian bishop.¹²⁶ Such a dichotomy holds true even today to some extent, as Protestants have tended to prefer the mature Augustine, while a fair number of Catholics have placed greater emphasis on the early writings. Yet there have also been recurring movements within the Catholic Church, such as the Spirituals of sixteenth-century Italy or the Jansenists of seventeenth-century France, that have rediscovered the anti-pelagian bishop.

How do the early English humanists fit into this picture? Thomas More was the earliest and most important Catholic polemicist to enlist Augustine against Luther. More's Augustinianism is well-known.¹²⁷ He had lectured on the *City of God* early in the century, and the Father remained with him for his later bouts with Luther and Tyndale.¹²⁸ Colet was another dedicated Augustinian, who unlike his friend died before the Reformation.¹²⁹ Thomas Starkey, finally, is not known as an Augustinian, yet that makes him all the more interesting. Writing in the midst of the confessional and political turmoil of the first phase of the English Reformation, and seemingly with one foot in each religious camp, Starkey provides a convenient testing ground for my Augustinian claims.

¹²⁶ This was true for Albert Pighius, the Catholic scholar Ascham opposes in the letter quoted above, who a few years earlier had argued with Calvin about the respective merits of the views of the young and old Augustine on the freedom of the will (see Anthony N.S. Lane, "Calvin and the Fathers in *Bondage and Liberation of the Will*," in *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex: Calvin as Protector of the Purer Religion*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser and Brian G. Armstrong, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies 36 [Kirkville, Md: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1987], pp. 67-96).

¹²⁷ As Richard Marius writes: "Augustine was always [More's] favorite saint, the writer who more than anyone else influenced the shaping of his mind. He knew Augustine almost by heart, and *The City of God* is more often quoted in his works than anything else in the Augustinian corpus" (*Thomas More: A Biography* [1984; rpt. London: Dent, 1985], p. 36).

¹²⁸ See Louis L. Martz, *Thomas More: A Search for the Inner Man* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1990), p. 37.

¹²⁹ John Colet's Augustinianism is most clearly seen in his "A Right Fruitful Monition Concerning the Order of a Good Christian Man's Life" (1534), a sermon based on the well-known admonition from *De Doct. Chr.* (as expressed by Colet): "Use well temporal things. Desire eternal things." John B. Gleason's revisionist *John Colet* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989) supersedes earlier general accounts of Colet's life and thought; Gleason discusses Augustine's influence on pp. 196-202, and 335-36. On Colet's Augustinianism see also Peter Iver Kaufman, *Augustinian Piety and Catholic Reform: Augustine, Colet, and Erasmus* (Macon: Mercer Univ. Press, 1982).

The situation is complicated by the English humanists' links with Italy. While Colet corresponded with Ficino and actually visited Italy (though without meeting the philosopher), More admired Giovanni Pico and—at roughly the same time that he lectured on the *City of God*—translated Gianfrancesco Pico's *Life of Johan Picus*.¹³⁰ Starkey for his part spent much of the 1520s in Italy, where he received a thorough humanistic training. It would be deceptively easy to conclude that these early English humanists favored the views of the young Augustine, especially after Luther had made the anti-Pelagian bishop odious. When it comes to their views on reason and faith, however, this in fact was not the case. At this crucial juncture between Florentine neoplatonism and English humanism, it is rather the differences of perspective and temper that stand out.

More's and Colet's reactions to Ficino and Pico are significant, I believe, because they reflect the prevailing English mood throughout the Tudor period. Sears Jayne, after investigating Colet's contacts with Ficino, sums up their relationship: "Colet was interested in Platonism mainly in the Oxford years of his career, and almost exclusively as a source of material for his required theological lectures on the Bible. The marginalia [in Colet's copy of Ficino's *Letters*] emphasize his moral fervour, his Augustinian view of human frailty, and his acceptance of St. Paul as the pole star of his life."¹³¹ When we study Colet's views on the powers of the human intellect, the divergence from Ficino is most acutely felt.¹³² At his most uncompromising, Colet sounds much like Tertullian: "We ought to banquet with Christ alone, at the choice table of the Scriptures. . . . At other tables, even the books of heathen authors in which there is nothing that savours of Christ, nothing that does not savour of the Devil, . . . no Christian ought to sit, unless he chooses to be thought a guest of the Devil."¹³³ As with Luther, however, we must note carefully the context of such a pronouncement. When Colet does not fear intrusion into the sphere of faith, he can be more generous. It is a noteworthy fact, nevertheless, that this supposed arch-humanist leaves less room for heathen authors

¹³⁰ See Alistair Fox, *Thomas More: History and Providence* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 28–32, and Richard J. Schoek, "Humanism in England," *Renaissance Humanism*, 2: 13–14.

¹³¹ Sears Jayne, *John Colet and Marsilio Ficino* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 77–78. See also Leland Miles, *John Colet and the Platonic Tradition* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961).

¹³² "By comparison with Ficino," Jayne writes, "Colet had relatively little confidence in man's ability to reach God by intellectual means" (Colet, p. 78).

¹³³ John Colet, *Lectures on Corinthians*, as cited in Miles, p. 22.

at St. Paul's School than does Luther in his "Letter . . . in behalf of Christian Schools."¹³⁴

More's attitude towards Pico is equally fraught with problems. Which Pico is it that More celebrates in his *Life*, the writer of the *Oration* or the follower of Savonarola? A clue is provided when we note that More is translating (with some significant editing) Gianfrancesco Pico. While Gianfrancesco greatly admired his uncle, we know how little value he himself assigned to human reason, and this comes out clearly in his *Life*. Pico's famous theses, for example, prefaced by the *Oration* of twentieth-century fame, received short shrift: "Now had he ben .vii. yere conuersant in these [humane and deuyne] studies whan full of pryde & desyrous of glory and mannes prayse (for yet was he not kendl [kindled] in the loue of god) he went to rome" (*Life*, sig. Av^r; see also the subsection entitled "How moche he set more by deuocyon then connyng [knowledge]," sig. Bv^r). As Alistair Fox shows, More's translation had not just copied but strengthened these tensions between piety and haughty learning.¹³⁵ Like his friend Colet, More cannot be bracketed with the Florentine neoplatonists.¹³⁶

If we study More's views on the place of education, we find the mature Augustinian position expressed in *On Christian Doctrine*. Given the work's centrality in the Renaissance, this of course should not surprise us, in particular when we remember what importance More's good friend Erasmus had given it. In More's "Letter to Oxford" we find the clearest enunciation of the Augustinian program. Defending secular learning from the attacks of the "Trojans," More begins by admitting the validity of their main charge, that education is no guarantee of salvation: "Now then, as for secular learning, no one denies that a person can be saved without it, and indeed without learning of any sort."¹³⁷ He then turns around and explains what beneficial role learning does have:

¹³⁴ On Colet's intentions with St. Paul's, see Gleason, pp. 225–27.

¹³⁵ Fox, pp. 28–30.

¹³⁶ As did Ernst Cassirer in his influential study *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, trans. James P. Pettegrove (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1953), pp. 8–24. "In the intellectual life of England," claims Cassirer, "the fundamental philosophical tendency of the Florentine Academy hit upon a kindred atmosphere and kindred religious forces" (p. 11). While the "religious temper of the Florentine Circle . . . determined the direction and goal of [Colet's] humanism" (p. 15), More "maintains and promulgates . . . a religion within the bounds of reason" (p. 23). Unfortunately, pronouncements such as these still carry weight in some circles.

¹³⁷ Thomas More, "Letter to the University of Oxford," *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 15, ed. Daniel Kinney (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1986), p. 139.

Not everyone who comes to Oxford comes just to learn theology; some must also learn law. They must also learn prudence in human affairs, . . . And I doubt that any study contributes as richly to this practical skill as the study of poets, orators, and histories. Indeed, some plot their course, as it were, to the contemplation of celestial realities through the study of nature, and progress to theology by way of philosophy and the liberal arts . . . , thus despoiling the women of Egypt to grace their own queen [i.e., theology]. But since theology is the only subject he [i.e., the "Trojan"] seems to allow (if he actually allows even this), I do not see how he can pursue it without any skill in either Hebrew or Greek or Latin.¹³⁸

While progressing "to theology by way of philosophy and the liberal arts" echoes Giovanni Pico, the context shows that More is thinking rather of Augustine's Egyptian treasures: secular learning as a handmaiden to faith, in addition to its utility in earthly matters. What is most striking about More's views on education is how similar they are to those of the later Protestant Roger Ascham, or even to those of More's bugbear, Luther. This congruence is caused not so much by mutual influence (except perhaps from Luther to Ascham), but by the general acceptance of Augustine's synthesis of sacred and secular values. Even without a Luther, Tudor England would have hewn pretty close to the mature Augustine; yet there can be no doubt that the Reformation strengthened that inclination.

Starkey's *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, written sometime between 1529 and 1532, has received increasing attention from scholars of political history, renaissance humanism, and literary criticism.¹³⁹ The *Dialogue*, although remaining in a unique manuscript until 1878 and therefore exerting virtually no contemporary influence, has been called a schoolbook example of "Christian humanism" in England.¹⁴⁰ The work deserves its high reputation, written as it is in a time of political and religious upheaval by an unusually gifted humanist with close connections to the centers of power. A follower and friend of Reginald Pole, Starkey complemented his MA from Oxford with "a thorough grounding in civic humanism, rhetoric and dialectic" ac-

¹³⁸ More, pp. 139–41.

¹³⁹ Most important, T.F. Mayer has produced an authoritative edition of the *Dialogue* (Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, Camden fourth series, vol. 37 [London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1989]), complemented by a study of Starkey's life: *Thomas Starkey and the Commonwealth: Humanist Politics and Religion in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989).

¹⁴⁰ Robin Headlam Wells, *Spenser's "Faerie Queene" and the Cult of Elizabeth* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1983), p. 35.

quired on the Continent, mainly in Italy but also in France.¹⁴¹ But what does Starkey's humanism entail? More specifically, what is his view of human reason? Is he a follower of the Florentine Neoplatonists, or has he been formed more by the evangelical movements (not necessarily Lutheran) that flourished both in England and on the Continent?

For some, the answer has been simple: as close as possible to the Ficinian end.¹⁴² On the face of it, there is much to recommend such a judgment. The *Dialogue* abounds with references to the "excellent dyg-nyte" of man, reminiscent not only of Ficino but of Pico's *Oration*. Yet does Starkey's *Dialogue* really fit the Ficinian bill? First there are the biographical complications. Starkey showed evangelical interests, as T.F. Mayer points out: "Starkey may well have come under the religious shadow of Colet in Oxford as well as other Pauline Christians in Italy. Although evangelical religion would make only a brief appearance in the 'Dialogue,' it became Starkey's major preoccupation in the last years of his life."¹⁴³ Not that he was an outspoken or even crypto-Lutheran, but he was in favor of at least some of the ideas of the Reformation, such as the use of the vernacular in both liturgy and the Bible.¹⁴⁴ But if, as I will argue, Starkey had more in common with Luther's views on reason than with Ficino's, that can be explained as much by a general adherence to *On Christian Doctrine* as by any direct Lutheran influence.

Starkey's *Dialogue* is not strictly a work on reason, nor is it an encumbrance of humankind; it is a political discussion of the best way to govern the English commonwealth. The fictional dialogue between Starkey's friends Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset takes place over three days, where the first day is given to a discussion of the ideal commonwealth, the second enumerates the multitude of ills that afflict any real commonwealth, while the third day provides practical suggestions on how to alleviate the particular ills of the English commonwealth.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Mayer, Introduction to *A Dialogue*, p. vii.

¹⁴² According to Wells, for example, Starkey's work was "the most complete statement by an Englishman of the central tenets of Christian humanist thought" before Hooker. By "Christian humanism" Wells means something very close to the Ficinian position: "The Christian humanist asserts, at the same time, the potential dignity of man and claims that, with divine assistance, he is capable of realizing an ideal of perfection through virtuous self-discipline" (p. 35).

¹⁴³ Mayer, Introduction to *A Dialogue*, pp. vii–viii.

¹⁴⁴ See *A Dialogue*, pp. 88–91.

¹⁴⁵ See Mayer, Introduction to *A Dialogue*, pp. p. xv. For my purposes it will not be necessary to distinguish between the two fictional speakers (their positions are not really at variance), and I shall throughout refer to Starkey as the originator of the statements.

Starkey's views on "man" must therefore be extrapolated from a work that has a different focus; furthermore, only by limiting the discussion of the work to the first day can it be presented as an unqualified encomium. On the first day Starkey lets Pole and Lupset affirm mankind's "excellent dygnyte": "He hath in him a sparkul of dyvnyte, & ys surely of a celestyal & dyvnye nature" (*Dialogue* 9).¹⁴⁶ While Starkey is open to the possibility that God may permit an alternative route to salvation for Jews and Moslems, who live outside the pale of the Christian religion, the laws of a Christian commonwealth provide the superior way:

Our lawys & ordynancys be agreabul to the law of nature, seying they are al layd by chryst hymselfe & by hys holy spryte, we are sure they schal bryng us to our salvayon yf we gyve perfayt fayth & sure trust to the promys of god in them to us made, . . . let us be assuryd that our lawys by Chryst the sone of god, & by hys holy spryte incresyd & confyrmyd, schal bryng us to such perfectyon as accordyth to the dygnyte of the nature of man. (*Dialogue* 14)

While one must agree that Starkey seems to conflate religious with civic values in this passage, one also notes that provisions such as "yf we gyve perfayt fayth & sure trust to the promys of god in them" point to religious values beyond simply living a virtuous life. We should also note that the "dygnyty of the nature of man" in the last line acts as a *limit* on, rather than as a guarantee of, the perfectibility of humanity.

But more importantly, this picture of the *ideal* commonwealth must be balanced by the discussions of *actual* commonwealths found in the rest of the dialogue. When Starkey turns to "the state of chrystendome," he bluntly confesses that "hyt wantyth many thyngys requyryd to the most perfayt state" (*Dialogue* 40). He notes Plato's ideal commonwealth, conceding what orthodox Christians had always taught: if it had not been for the fall, humanity would indeed have been able to follow right reason, which is God-given: "gud hath made man of al creaturys in erth most perfayt gyvyn un to hym a sparkyl of hys owne dyvnyte that ys to say ryght reson" (*Dialogue* 109). From a pre-lapsarian perspective, the attainment of moral excellence would be easy enough: "Yf man wold folow ever ryght reson & the jugement therof[,] remembryng alway the excellence & dygnyty of hys nature, hyt schold be nothyng hard to bryng man wythout many lawys to true cyvylte, plato igitur in sua republica nullas tulit leges" (*Dialogue* 97). Yet our post-lapsarian experience tells a different story:

¹⁴⁶ Starkey is cited from Mayer's edition (but without its detailed scribal apparatus), with page numbers given in the text.

Thys hathen byn tryde by processe of thousandys of yerys, thys hath byn concludyd by the most wyse & polytyke men, that *man by instruction & general exhortation can not be brought to hys perfectyon*, wherfor hyt was necessary to descend to the instytutyon & ordynance of lawys cyvyl & polytyke that where as man blyndyd by affectys & vanytes therof wold not folow the trade of ryght reson, he schold at the lest by feare of punnysschment be constraynyd to occupy hymselfe & apply hys mynd to such thynges as were convenient to hys excellent nature & dygnyte, & so at the last by long custume be inducyd to folow & know that thyng for the love of vertue, wych befor he dyd only for fere of the punnysschment prescrybyd by the law, thys ys the end & vertue of al law, . . . but forbycause the multytude of men, be so corrupt frayle & blyndyd with pestylent affectys, we must consydur the imbecylyte of them & wekenes of mynd & apply our remedies accordyng thereto. (*Dialogue* 97–98; emphasis added)

As this passage shows, Starkey is apprehensive about the perfectibility of mankind. Plato had "imagynyd only & dremyd apon such a commonwele as never yet was found nor never I thynke schalbe" (*Dialogue* 108).

Significantly, Pole and Lupset begin their third day of discussion, dedicated to the *remedies* for a sick commonwealth, by asking God to send the Holy Spirit, "wythout the wych mannys hart ys blynd & ignorant of al vertue & truth," "to yllumynate & lyght our hartys & myndys" (*Dialogue* 95). The remedy turns out to be the traditional Augustinian answer (culled from Book 19 of the *City of God*): the job of the civil magistrate, and of the civil law, is to *restrain* the "pestylent affectys" caused by the fall. Starkey had earlier alluded to the equally traditional Augustinian topos of "usyng" the things of this life in preparation for the enjoyment of God (*Dialogue* 44). The law, accordingly, "ys the pedagoge of chryst" that "preparyth mannes mynd to the receiving of vertue" (*Dialogue* 137). Yet the law "ys not sufficyent to bryng man to hys perfectyon, but to that ys requyryd a nother more celestyal remedy, the wych our masur chryste cam to set & stablysch in the hartys of hys electe pepul, he cam to make perfayt man, & supply the defecte of the law, by hys celestyal & dyvnye doctryne" (*Dialogue* 138). Here we are surely much closer to the Lutheran/Augustinian distinction between law and gospel than to any Ficinian intellectualism. Starkey's use of the law, furthermore, is analogous to Augustine's (and Luther's) view of the liberal arts: they are needed for civil life and are preparatory for the gospel, yet they cannot take its place.

Starkey was a humanist with evangelical sympathies, even if we cannot class him as a Protestant. Yet when we consider the attitude toward faith and reason, no forced distinction between "humanist" and "Protestant" is tenable in Tudor England. In both groups, insofar as they

can even be distinguished from each other, the mature Augustinian vision predominated. Of course, there were a few exceptions, like John Dee in a later generation.¹⁴⁷ Yet they remained just that: exceptions that prove the rule.

XI

We shall end this chapter by looking at two Elizabethan writers: Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, and Edmund Spenser. At first glance the two seem to exemplify the extreme points of the spectrum we have delineated, with Greville leaning toward the sceptics and Spenser toward the neoplatonists. There is much truth to such a generalization, but the differences become less significant when we pay closer attention to their writings. Both should be situated closer to the mature Augustinianism of the Reformers than to either of the extremes.

Fulke Greville is mainly famous for being Philip Sidney's close friend and first official biographer. His London mansion had also the honor of being used as the setting for one of Giordano Bruno's philosophical dialogues, the *Ash-Wednesday Supper* (1584). This fictitious account has some relation to known facts, since Bruno made friends with both Sidney and Greville during his stay in England. Yet physical proximity did not translate into closeness of ideas. It is hard to find an Elizabethan writer with views further distant from Bruno's neoplatonic frenzies than Fulke Greville, one of England's first outspoken sceptics. His views shine through in his dramas and in his sonnet sequence *Caelica*, but are most clearly expressed in his long poem *A Treatise of Humane Learning*. Most of these works were not published until 1633; but as the title page of the first edition announces, some of them had been "written in his Youth, and familiar Exercise with Sir Philip Sidney."¹⁴⁸ While this is not true for the *Treatise*, written sometime in the first two decades of the seventeenth century,¹⁴⁹ its topic would almost certainly have been discussed by Sidney and Greville.

¹⁴⁷ On Dee, see Nicholas H. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy: Between Science and Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).

¹⁴⁸ I am quoting from Fulke Greville, *Certaine learned and elegant works* (London, 1633). STC 12361. References to the *Treatise* will be given in the text by stanza.

¹⁴⁹ While Ronald A. Rebholz places its composition as late as 1620–1622 (*The Life of Fulke Greville, First Lord Brooke* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971], pp. 336–38), Joan Rees thinks it not impossible that it "was written as a counterstatement to the *Advancement of Learning* . . . not long after the appearance of Bacon's book in 1605" (*Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, 1554–1628: A Critical Biography* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971], p. 194).

The treatise on learning seems to borrow much from both Gianfrancesco Pico and Cornelius Agrippa. The power and vaunting ambition of human knowledge is immediately portrayed: "This Knowledge is the same *forbidden tree*, / Which man lusts after to be made his Maker" (*Treatie* 3). Following Gianfrancesco Pico's lead, Greville then reveals the defects of each of the faculties of the mind, from the senses to the imagination, memory, and the understanding. He next turns to the liberal arts:

But all these naturall Defects perchance
May be supplied by Sciences, and Arts;
Which wee thirst after, study, admire, aduance,
As if to restore our fall, recure our smart
They could, bring in perfection, burne our rods;
With *Demades* to make us like our Gods.¹⁵⁰ (*Treatie* 21)

But as he goes through the arts one by one, as had Agrippa, all pretenses of perfection are demolished. He ends by repeating Agrippa's critique of the bland assumptions of the young Augustine:

What thing a right line is, the learned know;
But how auailles that him, who in the right
Of life, and manners doth desire to grow?
What then are all these humane Arts, and lights,
But Seas of errors? In whose depths who sound,
Of truth finde onely shadowes, and no ground.

Then if our Arts want power to make vs better,
What foole will thinke they can vs wiser make. (*Treatie* 34–35)

We are also reminded of Sidney's use of the same topos: "By the balance of experience it was found that the astronomer, looking to the stars, might fall in a ditch, that the inquiring philosopher might be blind in himself, and the mathematician might draw forth a straight line with a crooked heart" (*Defence* 82). For Sidney, however, the critique of abstract knowledge led to a praise of "the knowledge of a man's self, in the ethic and politic consideration, with the end of well-doing and not of well-knowing only." Greville's poem paints a bleaker picture, suggesting radical doubts about the arts.

Yet Greville stands actually quite close to Sidney's more positive view. From stanza 60 he ponders whether any good can be achieved

¹⁵⁰ The rhetorician Demades was fined for introducing Alexander the Great as a god.

from human learning. As it turns out, the benefits are plentiful as long as learning keeps within her ordained limits. Following Luther, Greville in effect looks at learning *coram mundo* and *coram Deo* (if without using these terms). The different arts and sciences are again scrutinized, but this time for their practical use "In Workes, and Arts of our Humanity" (*Treatie* 118):

For thus, these Arts passe, whence they came, to life,

Circle not round in self-imagination,

Begetting *Lines* upon an abstract wife,

As children borne for idle contemplation;

"But in the practise of mans wisdom give,

"Meanes, for the Worlds inhabitants to liue.

(*Treatie* 122)

Coram Deo, however, Christians must build on "A sound foundation, not on sandy parts / Of light Opinion, Selfnesse, Words of men, / But that *sure rocke of truth*[,] *Gods Word, or Penné*" (*Treatie* 145). But when they do, depending on the "gifts of Grace, and Faith" (*Treatie* 149), true learning can indeed take place:

Thus are true Learnings in the humble heart

A *Spirituell worke*, raising Gods Image, rased

By our transgression . . .

Hard Characters (I grant) to flesh and blood,

Which in the first perfection of creation

Freely resign'd the state of being good,

To know the euill, where it found priuation;

And lost her being, ere she vnderstood

Depth of this fall, paine of *Regeneration*:

"By which she yet must raise herselfe againe,

"Ere she can iudge all other knowledge vaine.

(*Treatie* 150–51)

By employing the technical term "priuation" of evil in a very precise Augustinian sense, Greville reveals the pedigree of his thought.¹⁵¹ The contrast is between the pre-lapsarian "perfection of creation" and the ambivalent state of post-lapsarian existence. Like Augustine before him, he concludes paradoxically that only by acknowledging the full effects of the fall and the vanity of human knowledge can mankind

¹⁵¹ The Augustinian basis for Greville's thought comes out even clearer in the final stanza of the *Treatise of Religion*, which hinges on Augustine's distinction between "use" and "enjoyment," and that perennial dictum from the *Conf.* 1.1.1, "our hearts find no peace until they rest in you [inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te]." The latter is also alluded to in stanza 7 of the same poem, as well as in *Caëlica* 86.

rise again through a "true learning in the humble heart," a "spirituall" rather than an intellectual work.

Greville and Sidney had been classmates from childhood, and remained close friends until Sidney's death in 1586. That they share common beliefs should not surprise us, therefore, especially since both aligned themselves with the Reformed wing at court. This congruence (if not identity) can also be felt in the area under investigation.¹⁵² Despite his indebtedness to Agrippa, Sidney never made himself a spokesman for Christian scepticism, yet in his *Defence of Poesie* we find a position that has much in common with that found in the *Treatie of Humane Learning*. The similarities are particularly striking when Greville discusses "Poesie and Musicke" in stanzas 111 to 115. It is indeed likely that Sidney's celebrated *Defence* was in Greville's mind, or even before his eyes, when he penned those lines. Yet we should not complacently assume a one-way influence. Greville, like Sidney, frames his treatment of poetry (and music) as a defence against the calumnies of Plato and others, who had seen it "Onely as pleasing sauce to dainty food," without the ability "either to enrich the Wit, / Or, which is lesse, to mend our states by it" (*Treatie* 111–12). Yet, contends Greville, "both these play noble parts": music "to outward *Church*-rites if applied, / Helps to move thoughts, while God may touch the hearts / With goodnesse," while poetry,

The other twinne, if to describe, or praise

Goodnesse, or God she her *Ideas* frame,

And like a Maker, her creations raise,

On lines of truth, it beautifies the same;

And while it seemeth onely but to please,

Teacheth vs order vnder pleasures name;

"Which in a glasse, shows Nature how to fashion

"Her selfe againe, by ballancing of passion.

(*Treatie* 114)

Although Sidney does not treat music separately, his discussion of the divine kind of poetry, typified by David's Psalms, hinges upon their being "nothing but songs," which "rightly applied, deserveth not to be scourged out of the Church of God" (*Defence* 77). More specifically, when Greville refers to the poet as a "Maker" who "her creations raise / On lines of truth" he undoubtedly has the *Defence* in mind: "give right honour to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works

¹⁵² For Sidney's views, see also my *The "Enabling of Judgement,"* pp. 53–57.

of that second nature" (*Defence* 79). While Greville's allusion to Horace's *utile et dulce* may sound conventional, we recognize many of the details from Sidney:

For these [poets] indeed do merely [i.e., wholly] make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach; and delight to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger; and teach, to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved—which being the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed, yet want there not idle tongues to bark at them. (*Defence* 81)

Specifically, both Sidney and Greville see ethics as the domain par excellence of poetry. Poetry, writes Greville, "shows Nature how to fashion / Her selfe againe, by ballancing of passion" (*Treatie* 114), while Sidney claims that "it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by" (*Defence* 81–82).

Sidney deals with the poet's role and mission with much greater subtlety and at much greater length than can Greville in his few stanzas, but Greville on the other hand provides the larger philosophical setting that Sidney only hints at in his treatise. After stanzas in praise of music and poetry, Greville ends with a word of caution:

Let therefore humane Wisedome vse both these,
As things not pretious in their proper kind;
The one [music] a harmony to moue, and please;
"If studied for it selfe, disease of mind:
The next [poetry] (like Nature) doth *Ideas* raise,
Teaches, and makes; but hath no power to binde:
Both, ornaments to life and other Arts,
Whiles they do serve, and not possesse our hearts. (*Treatie* 115)

Both music and poetry, like the other arts, occupy a clearly delimited area of operation: they should serve, but not "possesse our hearts." Again, we recognize Augustine's "use but not enjoy."

XII

The religious and philosophical thought of Edmund Spenser has always been harder to pin down than that of Sidney or Greville. This difficulty applies in particular to Spenser's attitudes to the early and late Augustinian perspectives under investigation. His views are harder to deduce not just because he left no theoretical essay (the

unreliable letter to Raleigh comes the closest), but because he at different times seem to waver between Ficino's intellectual neoplatonism and Calvin's anti-Pelagian theology, alluding in his works to everything from *De amore* to the *Institutes*. The conclusion that springs to many minds is that he is incorrigibly eclectic. While there have been dissenting voices that have stressed the Protestant (even Puritan) Spenser,¹⁵³ there seems to be a growing faction that wants to place him squarely within a neoplatonic tradition that subsumes all other intellectual movements. This view has recently and most forcefully been propagated by Elizabeth Bieman, who argues that "to be 'Neoplatonic' in the Renaissance, if one imaginatively reconstructs that thinking, is to be Pythagorean, Socratic-Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Middle Platonic, Philonic, Pauline, Augustinian, Ficinian, kabbalistic, and so forth. Spenser's mind had the elasticity to embrace that intertextual field."¹⁵⁴ I think we all agree that many renaissance minds, including Spenser's (as well as Sidney's and Greville's), were conversant with, and borrowed congenial parts of, most if not all of these differing traditions. But Bieman means something more than that. For her, as for the young Giovanni Pico, all these thinkers, including even St. Paul,¹⁵⁵ share the same all-embracing neoplatonic message. Indeed, she goes even further than Pico, who had reservations on several counts. To fit Spenser into this picture, she relies on "imaginative reconstructions" to such an extent that the poet's own words pale into insignificance when placed next to her imposing edifice.

Bieman's assumptions bring into acute focus the standing of neoplatonism in Elizabethan England, and the even larger issue of the period's ability to discriminate between competing world views. She gives the impression that Spenser, or even the Renaissance as a whole, was not equipped with the tools to sort out basic discrepancies (as well as points of convergence) between, say, Paul and Plotinus, or Calvin and Ficino. Yet as this and many other studies have demonstrated, the

¹⁵³ See in particular D. Douglas Waters, *Duessa as Theological Satire* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1970), Andrew D. Weiner, "Fierce Warres and Faithfull Loues": Pattern as Structure in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 37 (1973–74): 33–57, Anthea Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), and John N. King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990).

¹⁵⁴ Elizabeth Bieman, *Plato Baptized: Towards the Interpretation of Spenser's Mimetic Fictions* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 141.

¹⁵⁵ "Greek thinking contributes to many, if not most, of Paul's positions" (Bieman, p. 156).

Renaissance should rather be characterized by its strong need to interrogate the classical heritage, keeping what was felt to be good and useful, and discarding the rest. Exactly what and how much was kept of course varied, but even syncretists like Giovanni Pico did not swallow Plato whole. As for the Elizabethans, we simply cannot overlook the Reformation. It left its intellectual mark on Europe as a whole, and this regardless of whether one was an active participant or not. Or put differently: the Reformation was only one important manifestation of the growing need for discrimination that was felt in the sixteenth century. Humanism and scepticism were some of the other forces that took part in the same discussion, not necessarily coming up with the same answers but nevertheless engaged in the same project of sifting and sorting.

It has been claimed that the fresh synthesis between faith and reason accomplished by Ficino and Pico made the old patristic answers dated. The historical evidence, however, tells a different story. The authority of Augustine in particular remained steady throughout the sixteenth century; when Spenser matriculated at Cambridge in the late 'sixties, the bishop was one of the most commonly read authors at the university.¹⁵⁶ I am not claiming that Spenser did not know his Ficino; we know that he had read the *De amore* at the very least. What I am arguing is that Ficino was far overshadowed by Augustine, whom Spenser like all his university peers was compelled to study at great length. As this and the following two chapters will show, Spenser was deeply affected by Augustinian patterns of thought.¹⁵⁷

The work that forces itself into any discussion of Spenser's neoplatonism is the *Four Hymnes*, published in 1596 towards the end of his poetic career. The work clearly belongs to the tradition of the love treatise, and we find sustained references to Plotinian philosophy via Ficino's *De amore*. Yet it is also one of Spenser's most Pauline and late-Augustinian works. On the face of it, there seems to be some truth to

¹⁵⁶ See E.S. Leedham Green, *Books in Cambridge Inventories*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), together with note 6 in the Introduction above. The library catalogues at Cambridge underscore the Augustinian dominance; consult "Augustine" in H.M. Adams, *Catalogue of Books Printed on the Continent of Europe, 1501-1600 in Cambridge Libraries*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967).

¹⁵⁷ Like Harold L. Weatherby, in *Mirrors of Celestial Grace* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1994), I stress the patristic element in Spenser's fiction; yet while I think it likely that Spenser had come in contact with some of the Greek Fathers, a reading of *The Faerie Queene* that places the poet in opposition not only to Latin Fathers like Augustine but to both Protestant and Catholic dogma is a bit odd.

Biemann's syncretistic claims as these disparate authorities rub shoulders. The form of the poem—four interlocking parts, each carefully and symmetrically designed to interact with the others—certainly speak for organic unity and a holistic vision.¹⁵⁸ The debate about the genesis of the first two hymns, whether they were composed in Spenser's "greener times" of youth or were revised or newly written together with the heavenly hymns, is largely beside the point; regardless of their origin, we have to interpret all four hymns in the form in which Spenser saw fit to publish them. But a corollary of this decision is that we cannot arbitrarily slice off uncongenial parts of the poem or the dedicatory letter. Indeed the two go together, since the stanzas most often under attack, *HHL* 2-3 in particular, repeat the recantation of the letter. Precisely because the *Four Hymnes* form a carefully coordinated whole, we are not allowed to disrupt its delicate balance. If Spenser deliberately inserted faultlines into his edifice, they will have to be included in our interpretation of its totality. Even if his "greener youth" was a poetic fabrication, it was included in the poem for far weightier reasons than the fear of reprimands from some honorable and virtuous Ladies.

The most striking feature of the dedicatory letter is not its dismissal of the pleasures of youth, but its carefully contrived adherence to literary convention. Through the deliberate selection of vocabulary, Spenser places himself and his poem within an august tradition stretching beyond Benivieni and Petrarch (both of whom figure prominently in the hymns to follow) to Augustine:

But being unable [to call in the former two Hymnes], by reason that many copies thereof were formerly scattered abroad, I resolved at last to amend, and by way of retractation to reforme them, making in stead of those two Hymnes of earthly or naturall love and beautie, two others of heavenly and celestiall.¹⁵⁹

The first significant word is "scattered," ostensibly referring to the fate of the physical copies of the first two hymns, yet simultaneously bringing in the whole tradition of love poetry developed from Petrarch's

¹⁵⁸ For a discussion of the poem's form, see Einar Bjorvand, "Spenser's Defence of Poetry: Some Structural Aspects of the *Four Hymnes*," in *Fair Forms: Essays in English Literature from Spenser to Jane Austen*, ed. Maren-Sofie Røstvig (Cambridge: Brewer, 1975), pp. 13-53, and S.K. Heninger, Jr., *Sidney and Spenser: The Poet as Maker* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 339-45.

¹⁵⁹ *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William A. Oram et al. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1989), p. 690. References to the *Four Hymnes* will be given in the text by their standard abbreviations (*HLL*, *HB*, *HHL*, and *HHB*) and stanza.

"scattered rhymes," the *Rime sparse*.¹⁶⁰ The second carefully selected word is "retraction," a concept that can embrace the practice of Petrarch as well as Benivieni, but whose origin goes much further back. I am of course thinking of the work with the same title, Augustine's *Retractiones*. Spenser's use of the form "retraction" rather than the more common "retraction" is the clearest indication of a conscious allusion. While both forms were used in Elizabethan English, the longer version was more closely associated with the Augustinian work.¹⁶¹ It was Augustine who had set the pattern for literary recantations, a pattern that Petrarch consciously followed in his sonnet sequence (if not very successfully) as well as in his *Triumphs*, and that Benivieni and Spenser emulated when both decided to write a mature set of poems to counteract (or appearing to counteract) an earlier immature effort.

Both Petrarch's sonnet sequence and *Triumphs* inscribe a progression from earthly to heavenly love, hinging on the death of Laura, the poet's unreachable mistress. In both collections, the poet purportedly retracts his earlier human love for Laura, who has to die to quell the antipathy between eros and agape. But while the retraction in the *Rime* must be termed futile, the poet never being able to transform earthly to heavenly love, the one in the *Triumphs* proves more successful. The *Rime* is consciously divided into two sections, *in vita* and *in morte*. The first portrays the poet's frustrated efforts to master his own lust in order to be a worthy lover of the living Laura, while the latter describes his hardly more successful striving for spirituality, goaded by the transfigured vision of his now dead lady, who in the final poem is superseded by the Virgin Mary.¹⁶² The *Triumphs* describe a similar progression, but on a more abstract level and with greater idealism. While the *Rime* seems to suggest that Laura proves more an obstacle than an incentive to the poet's spiritual progress, the last of the *Triumphs* portrays her in a transfigured light.¹⁶³ Spenser's *HL* and *HB* have certain similarities with the *in vita* section of the *Rime sparse*, even if Spenser is

¹⁶⁰ For the Augustinian resonances of "scattered" (e.g., in *Conf.* 10.29.40), see chapter 1 above.

¹⁶¹ See both forms in the *OED*.

¹⁶² See Sara Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Laurels* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1992).

¹⁶³ Laura's death occurs after the second of the six triumphs. On the *Triumphs*, see Aldo S. Bernardo, *Petrarch, Laura, and the "Triumphs"* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1974), and Petrarch's *"Triumphs": Allegory and Spectacle*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler and Amilcare A. Iannucci (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1990).

more optimistic about the possibility of overcoming lust.¹⁶⁴ The first two hymns are much more "Petrarchan" than was Petrarch himself, coming as they do at the end of a tradition turned rigid, even fossilized. What for Petrarch were deeply felt tensions have in Spenser become hackneyed clichés.

When we compare the *in morte* section of the *Rime* with Spenser's two heavenly hymns, however, the similarities are much less evident. No Laura-figure is present; the progress no longer has love for a human woman as its starting point. The female Sapience of *HHB* 27-38 only underscores the differences with Petrarch's Laura. Spenser makes a point of stressing her divine transcendence: "For she the daughters of all wemens race, / And Angels eke, in beaute doth excell, / . . . That it doth farre exceed all humane thought, / Ne can on earth compared be to ought" (*HHB* 30). In *HB* 15 Spenser had sung the praises of "that faire lampe, . . . which kindleth lovers fire." Sapience, on the other hand, puts that light in the shade: "And that faire lampe, which useth to enflame / The hearts of men with selfe consuming fyre, / Thenceforth seemes fowle, and full of sinfull blame" (*HHB* 40). Spenser's "selfe consuming fyre" may echo Petrarch's laments over his own lust (it certainly functions as an ironic comment on Spenser's own facile treatment of lust in the first two hymns), yet Petrarch was not willing to give up Laura. To find a better model for Spenser's heavenly hymns we instead have to turn to Benivieni.

In Girolamo Benivieni (1453-1542) the retraction takes a form different from Petrarch. In his early *Canzone della Amore*, he uses Petrarchan language to summarize the neoplatonic ascent of Ficino's *De amore*. What made the canzone famous, however, was Giovanni Pico's *Commentary*, which encrusted the few stanzas of the poem with page upon page of abstruse philosophical glosses (often arguing against the Ficinian work that Benivieni based his poem upon). Yet Benivieni like Pico came under the spell of Savonarola. In his old age the poet was no longer happy about his youthful canzone or with its commentary:

¹⁶⁴ The correspondences between Spenser's earthly and heavenly *Hymns* may owe something to what Sturm-Maddox terms the "specular" correspondences between the *in vita* and *in morte* parts of the *Rime*. "These many correspondences strongly suggest that the structural relation between the two parts of the [*Rime*] is not linear but in a special sense specular. In both parts, groups of texts that may be characterized as intermediate structures between the micro- and the macrostructural levels . . . organize the carefully elaborated sets of correspondences" (p. 234).

Wishing to discuss the subject of divine love, I departed from the truth of Christian religion and dallied in the Academy of Plato, where, enticed by the apparent sweetness of that doctrine, I set out to compose a canzone on heavenly or divine love, following the interpretation and teaching of the Academy. To make my mistake even worse, this poem was later not only analyzed and explicated in a very learned commentary (by the illustrious Count Giovanni Pico . . .), but also disseminated in a thousand copies.¹⁶⁵

To remedy this state of affairs, Benivieni decided to write a new Christian canzone that would counteract the harmful effects of his youthful effort. Instead of Ficino's *De amore*, he now turned to the works of Augustine for guidance, in particular *On the Trinity*. What makes Benivieni's example so important for Spenser's *Four Hymnes* is that instead of simply publishing the new poem, Benivieni decided to print it together with the original. Furthermore, as Sears Jayne explains, he designed the new poem "to parallel the original Platonic canzone very closely. . . . But the purpose of these similarities is to heighten the central difference between the two poems. The old poem was Platonic; the new one is Christian."¹⁶⁶ If Petrarch poses the question (without clearly answering it) whether it is possible to progress from earthly to heavenly love, then Benivieni responds with a resounding No! His leader does not progress from the Platonic poem to the Christian, but attempts a clean start with the latter. This is true also for Spenser, if with a further Protestant twist.

The biggest difference between Spenser and the other two is that the first two *Hymnes*, for all their talk of ascending to "heaven," never leave the ground. If we look beyond their Petrarchan and Ficinian metaphors, we find that they, in the words of Spenser's dedication, are "two Hymnes of earthly or naturall love and beautie" (*Four Hymnes*, p. 690; emphasis added). Even when Spenser gleans from Ficino, he selects those aspects most congenial to his own purposes. He ignores the main drift of *De amore*, that man has to move beyond physical love in order to achieve union with the beauty of the One. Instead, he zeros in on the few and uncharacteristic passages that talk about the earthly Venus.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ As cited in Sears Jayne's edition of Pico's *Commentary*, p. 16. My discussion of Benivieni is largely based upon Jayne, pp. 3–20.

¹⁶⁶ Jayne, *Commentary*, pp. 16–17.

¹⁶⁷ I.e. *De amore* 2.7, 6.8 and 6.11 (in these stanzas Spenser is specifically echoing 6.11).

But man, that breathes a more immortal mynd,
Not for lusts sake, but for eternitie,
Seekes to enlarge his lasting progenie.

For having yet in his deducted spright,
Some sparks remaining of that heavenly fyre,
He is enlumind with that goodly light,
Unto like goodly semblant to aspyre:
Therefore in choice of love, he doth desyre
That seemes on earth most heavenly, to embrace,
That same is Beautie, born of heavenly race.

(HL 15–16)

For Spenser, the "lasting progenie" and "goodly semblant" that results from the love of beauty consists of children. Lust for him is not sexuality, as it seems to be for Petrarch, but the misuse of sexuality. When he "doth desyre . . . to embrace" the beauty "that seemes on earth most heavenly," he is not using metaphysical metaphors, but is sensuously literal.

Of course, like all Petrarchan poetry, the "heavens" and "enshrined saints" of Spenser's first two hymns are blasphemous if taken at face value. But not only as religious statements: the hymns are equally blasphemous when seen from a narrow Ficinian perspective. If the neoplatonist or the mystic transforms physical love into a metaphor of divine love, Spenser does the exact opposite. Like John Donne in "The Canonization," he is using metaphysical metaphors to describe sexual pleasure. The HL and the HB end up in a heaven of "earthly or naturall love and beautie," with no indication that there is any more to be had:

By these, ô Love, thou doest thy entrance make,
Unto thy heaven, . . .

There with thy daughter *Pleasure* they doe play
Their hurtlesse sports, without rebuke or blame,
And in her snowy bosome boldly lay
Their quiet heads, devoyd of guilty shame,
After full joyance of their gentle game.

(HL 40–42)

As William Nelson puts it, "Spenser's earthly and heavenly loves are sharply distinguished. His earthly lover learns to perceive the inward beauty of his lady, but climbs at last not to a perception of the essence which generated it but into bed. . . . The ascent of the lower slope may

be a reflection or a symbol of the higher, perhaps even a preparation for it; it is not part of the same expedition."¹⁶⁸

Spenser's emphasis should come as no surprise after the *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*, published the year before *Four Hymnes*. He had turned the Petrarchan assumptions upside-down by ending his sonnet sequence with the ceremonial marriage of the lovers. As many critics have noted, it was the Reformation that was responsible for the new perspective. More specifically, it was Luther's distinction between realms that had caused the change. The Catholic Church had always seen celibacy and female virginity, especially as practiced in the monasteries, as exalted and meritorious states. The former monk from Wittenberg, however, set a new practical pattern by marrying a former nun. Luther thereby exalted marriage and procreation, which like reason had their place *coram mundo*. Physical love was good and indeed necessary, but he refused to view it (any more than the absence thereof) as a rung within any pseudo-Dionysian ladder of salvation.

Luther's *coram mundo* and *coram Deo* were of course his terms for what Augustine had called the "two kingdoms," perhaps better known as the spheres of "nature" and "grace" after Thomas Aquinas had developed Augustine's original conception. And ever since A.S.P. Woodhouse's seminal essay "Nature and Grace in *The Faerie Queene*" we all know the importance of this dichotomy for Spenser's poetry, *The Faerie Queene* in particular.¹⁶⁹ More recently Sean Kane has demonstrated the Augustinian basis for the dichotomy within the poem.¹⁷⁰ I shall return to *The*

¹⁶⁸ *The Poetry of Edmund Spenser* (1963; rpt. New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1965), p. 110. Robert Ellrodt reaches the same conclusion in *Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser* (Geneva: Droz, 1960), pp. 141–70, and C.S. Lewis agrees: "In the 'heavenly' hymns we do not go through and beyond the love of woman; we make an absolutely fresh start from the ground floor with the beauties of nature" ("Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser," *Études Anglaises* 14 [1961]: 108).

¹⁶⁹ Woodhouse's 1949 article was reprinted in *Critical Essays on Spenser from "ELH"* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 24–58. Many have added to and refined Woodhouse's analysis, which was not always persuasive in details or emphasis; for a more recent survey of the debate see Darryl J. Gless's entry on "Nature and Grace" in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A.C. Hamilton et al. (Toronto and Buffalo: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1990).

¹⁷⁰ Sean Kane, *Spenser's Moral Allegory* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1989). See, for example, p. 21: "Augustine had asserted that the two orders of truth [i.e., nature and grace] are not ultimately opposed to each other. . . . Spenser's response is to confront the separability of classical and Christian values on its own terms, and in fact the two orders run concurrently in *The Faerie Queene*. Classical aspiration is associated with a naturalistic Elfin world, and Christian seeking is associated with a supernatural human one." Despite the many strengths of the study, I cannot agree with Kane's application of a modern "ecological" perspective, which among other things leads to a flattening of the complexities of Augustine's developing thought.

Faerie Queene in the last two chapters, investigating the linguistic and political ramifications of Augustine's thought. Here it is sufficient to point out that Spenser also in *Four Hymnes* makes use of the Augustinian distinction. While the first two hymns move within the earthly realm, the latter two, in Spenser's own words, are "heavenly and celestial."

But what does that distinction mean? If we interpret Spenser's first two *Hymnes* at least in part as a Protestant inversion of the Petrarchan/Ficinian love tradition, what are we to make of the heavenly counterparts? The latter two *Hymnes* are obviously intended as serious paeans to heavenly love and heavenly beauty. On the face of it, the *HHL* in particular seems to fall within the scope of a neoplatonic cult of beauty, reminiscent not only of Ficino but of the young Augustine. But as Benivieni had shown, the old Petrarchan wineskins could hold new wine. Spenser was well aware of Benivieni's example. Not only does the *HHL* begin by echoing the initial stanza of Benivieni's youthful canzone, but when Spenser comes to the *HHL*, he emulates Benivieni's mature description of the origin of love within the Trinity, drawn from Augustine's *On the Trinity*.¹⁷¹

Spenser's emulation of Benivieni's two canzoni is of crucial importance to our interpretation of the structure of the *Four Hymnes*. Much has been made of the fact that Spenser scrupulously parallels the latter two hymns with the earlier pair. The conclusion to be drawn from this is not so obvious as syncretizing scholars would have us believe, however. There is a strong likelihood that Spenser, like Benivieni, cross-referenced the two pairs with the intention not of assimilating but of *contrasting* them.¹⁷² Those that see the series of parallels as proofs of "a forward and upward movement in the series by which the earlier pair leads into the later"¹⁷³ have not considered the full implications of Benivieni's example. They have also to dismiss Spenser's own words. To say with Bieman that the *HHL* "is fully congruent with the Platonism of the first two hymns"¹⁷⁴ is to sweep whole stanzas un-

¹⁷¹ *HHL* 4–7 as compared to stanza 3 of Benivieni's "Amor sotto cui." Both poems then go on to discuss the angels (*HHL* 8–11 and "Amor" 4).

¹⁷² See Frederick Morgan Padelford, in the *Variorum Edition of The Works of Edmund Spenser, The Minor Poems*, vol. 1, ed. Charles Grosvenor Osgood and Henry Gibbons Lot-speich (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1943), p. 672. I join those who like Padelford, Ellrodt and Lewis stress the dichotomy between the two pairs (without necessarily agreeing with them on all points); of recent scholarship I particularly like Einar Bjorvand and Richard Schell's carefully considered distinctions in their introduction to and commentary on the *Four Hymnes* (*Yale Edition*, pp. 683–752).

¹⁷³ and ¹⁷⁴, see next page.

der the carpet. In the introduction to the *HHL*, for example, Spenser conforms to the example of both Augustine and Benivieni when he retracts the "lewd layes" composed "in th'heat of youth" (*HHL* 2). Completing the frame around the two heavenly *Hymnes*, Spenser once more distances himself from the "false beauties" that "enflame / The hearts of men with selfe consuming fyre" (*HHL* 40–42). What this frame encloses is obviously meant not as a simple continuation of the earlier hymns but as something new and different. Like Benivieni, Spenser draws that different approach from the mature Augustine, especially as expressed in the *City of God* and *On the Trinity*.

After the introductory recantation Spenser begins the *HHL* with a meditation on the origin of love within the Trinity, culled from *On the Trinity*.¹⁷⁵ This is followed by a lengthy discussion of the creation and fall of the angels and of mankind (*HHL* 8–18). While most of the hymn is ultimately based on the Scriptures, the more immediate source for these stanzas is Books 12 and 13 of the *City of God*. In 1920 Edwin Greenlaw realized that the third *Hymne* explicates "the complete statement of the scheme of salvation, the theme that Milton was afterwards to develop."¹⁷⁶ What was not clear before C.S. Lewis, however, was the common denominator in Augustine, the source of so much of the doctrine behind *Paradise Lost*.¹⁷⁷ If it can be said that Spenser in the first two hymns plays around with later Ficinian developments of the thought of the young Augustine, in this *Hymne* he has moved on to the mature Augustinian perspective, centering not on the human ascent but on the *descent* of the incarnate Christ:

¹⁷⁵ Elizabeth Bieman, "Four Hymnes," *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 316. Bieman is much influenced by Bennett. Other recent examples of Bennett's approach are Heninger, pp. 327–41, and Terry Comito, "A Dialectic of Images in Spenser's *Four Hymnes*," *Studies in Philology* 74 (1977): 301–21. Despite my disagreement with their overall reading, I nevertheless depend on these and many other prominent interpreters of the *Hymnes* for specific details of Spenser's allusions and borrowings. I do not claim any originality in pointing out the influences from Augustine, Ficino or Benivieni. Where I may have something new to contribute is in the way I put these pieces together in light of my specific theme.

¹⁷⁶ Bieman, "Four Hymnes," p. 316.

¹⁷⁷ See Ellrodt, pp. 179–82.

¹⁷⁸ Edwin Greenlaw, "Spenser's Influence on *Paradise Lost*," *Studies in Philology* 17 (1920): 345. It was Greenlaw who also started the influential trend of seeing the four *Hymnes* as a continuous ladder of neoplatonic ascent (pp. 345–51).

¹⁷⁹ C.S. Lewis, *A Preface to "Paradise Lost"* (1942; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 66–72; see also Peter A. Fiore, *Milton and Augustine: Patterns of Augustinian Thought in "Paradise Lost"* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1981).

Out of the bosome of eternall blisse,
In which he reigned with his glorious syre,
He downe descended, like a most demisse
And abject thrall, in fleshes fraile atyre,
That he for him might pay sinnes deadly hyre,
And him restore unto that happie state,
In which he stood before his haplesse fate.
(*HHL* 20)

The Incarnation forms the thematic and structural centerpiece of the hymn. It is here, in *HHL* 19–24, rather than in the introductory retraction that we find the real rupture between the two sets of hymns. The starting point for the *HHL* is not human beauty but God's love, first within the Trinity and then for mankind. It is true that the object of this love, like its counterpart in the earthly *Hymnes*, is beauty: "It [the Trinity] lov'd itself, because it selfe was faire" (*HHL* 5). Stressing the ethical aspect of the divine beauty, Spenser sees sin as a disfigurement of that beauty. While the Son is "voide of sinfull blot" (my emphasis), some of the angels originally created "full of beautie" (*HHL* 8) became tarnished by pride.¹⁷⁸ Mankind follows suit: "How then can sinfull flesh it selfe assure," asks Spenser, "Sith purest Angels fell to be impure?" (*HHL* 14). It is the Incarnation, however, which most decisively breaks with a Plotinian cult that can love only what is beautiful. Christ exchanges his beauty for "vileness" in order to restore the original beauty of mankind:

And that most blessed bodie, which was borne
Without all blemish or reproachfull blame,
He freely gave to be both rent and torne
Of cruell hands, who with despightfull shame
Reyling him, that them most vile became,¹⁷⁹
At length him nayled on a gallow tree,
And slew the just, by most unjust decree.
(*HHL* 22)

¹⁷⁸ From Augustine on, Christianity had singled out pride as the cardinal sin responsible for the fall of both angels and humanity. This should be contrasted with the Plotinian perspective, in which the "fall" of the pure soul is caused by the entanglement with matter, the *hyle* of Platonic thought (cf. *HB* 23: "the soul is faire and beauteous still, / How ever fleshes fault it filthy make."). For the mature Augustine, the sinful soul contaminated the body, not the other way around: "nec caro corruptibilis animam peccatricem, sed anima peccatrix fecit esse corruptibilem carnem [Moreover, it was not the corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful; on the contrary, it was the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible]" (*De Civ. Dei* 14.3).

¹⁷⁹ The scriptural analog here is Isaiah 53:2–3: "He hath the nether forme nor beautie: when we shal se him, there shalbe no forme that we shulde desire him. He is despised and relected of men."

Spenser here follows traditional Augustinianism. In a recent study Carol Harrison explains how the bishop had made the Incarnation the cornerstone of his mature theory of beauty.¹⁸⁰ On the one hand he saw Christ as the supreme beauty of God. Yet Augustine came to believe that to redeem a mankind made ugly by sin Christ had to become ugly. The change of perspective from the neoplatonic perspective is obvious. While beauty is the goal in both instances, the thought that God should become deformed in order to restore the beauty of mankind would have been unthinkable to Plotinus.

Human love in the *HHL* is therefore a response not to female beauty, but to the love of God. When Spenser in *HHL* 26 turns to that response, he consciously echoes the message of the First Epistle of John: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his sonne to be a reconciliation for our sinnes. Beloued, if God so loved vs, we ought also to loue one another. . . . We loue him, because he loved vs first" (4: 10, 11, and 19).¹⁸¹ Commenting on these verses, Augustine provides an apt gloss on Spenser's hymn as well:

"Let us love, because He first loved us." We did not yet love Him: by loving we are made beautiful . . . our soul, my brethren, is ugly because of sin: by loving God it becomes beautiful . . . He first loved us, Who is always beautiful; and what were we when He loved us, but foul and ugly? But not to leave us foul; but to change us, and from deformity make us beautiful. How shall we become beautiful? By loving him who is always beautiful. Inasmuch as love grows in you, in so much beauty grows; for love is itself the beauty of the soul.¹⁸²

Spenser's continuation (*HHL* 27–31) is therefore a scriptural meditation on what Augustine saw as a central message of the Bible, Christ's exhortation in Matthew 22: 27–29 that we should love God above everything and our neighbor as ourselves.¹⁸³ In *HHL* 30 Spenser adds a reference to Christ's "new commandment" of love in John 13: 34–35, and then once more paraphrases 1 John 4: "[we should] love our brethren; thereby to approve, / How much himselfe that loved us, we love" (*HHL* 31). Before wrapping up the hymn by again referring to Matthew 22 (*HHL* 38), he returns to a prolonged meditation on

¹⁸⁰ Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); I am especially indebted to the sub-chapter "The Incarnation as Revelation of Divine Beauty," pp. 230–38.

¹⁸¹ The scriptural references in *HHL* are noted by the *Variorum*, pp. 544–45.

¹⁸² Augustine, *Homilies on the Epistle of John* 9.9, as cited in Harrison, p. 232.

¹⁸³ For Augustine's strong endorsement of Matthew 22: 37–39, see *De Doct. Chr.* 1.22.21, 1.26.27, and *De Trin.* 8.7.10.

Christ's humility, leading up to a repugnant description of His "torn and mangled" corpse (*HHL* 36). Love, in this hymn, sacrifices His divine beauty on behalf of the ugly Christ, as Augustine had put it at his most succinct, "made Himself ugly for the sake of the ugly Bride [the Church, or the individual Christian], in order to make her beautiful."¹⁸⁴

We must keep in mind this agape when we now turn to the *HHB* by way of the final stanza of the *HHL*:

Then shall thy ravished soule inspired bee
With heavenly thoughts, farre above humane skil,
And thy bright radiant eyes shall plainly see
Th' Idee of his pure glorie present still,
Before thy face, that all thy spirits shall fill
With sweete enragment of celestiall love,
Kindled through sight of those faire things above. (*HHL* 41)

The first thing to note is the initial "then." All that follows, Spenser stresses, is based upon the message of *HHL*, the redemptive love of the incarnate Christ. There can be no talk of going back to an intellectual ascent based on our own perfectibility: the soul is "ravish'd" with heavenly thoughts "farre above humane skill." Our eyes become "bright radiant" because of the "Lambes integrity" (*HHB* 22) and the omnipotent will that "Vouchsafeth to her presence to receive, / And letteth them her lovely face to see" (*HHB* 37). The object of contemplation, "Th' Idee of his pure glorie," is the Godhead, but more specifically the glorified Christ that can reveal what the Father is really like. A large part of *HHB* hinges on the fact that frail mankind cannot view the undimmed glory of the hidden God without the refracting mirrors provided by the created universe, and in particular by the Logos, the incarnate Word.

After three initial stanzas where the poet asks for divine illumination, *HHB* begins by a contemplative ascent up the chain of the created universe, "mount[ing] aloft by order dew, / To contemplation of th' immortal sky" (*HHB* 4). Yet when the poet approaches "that Highest farre beyond all telling" (*HHB* 15), he turns dumb, since the Creator is ultimately beyond his creation and cannot be fully understood by means of it:

¹⁸⁴ Augustine, *Sermon* 95.4, as cited in Harrison, p. 234.

Cease then my tongue, and lend unto my mynd
 I leave to bethinke how great that beautie is,
 Whose utmost parts so beautifull I fynd,
 How much more those essential parts of his,
 His truth, his love, his wisdom, and his blis,
 His grace, his doome, his mercy and his might,
 By which he lends us of himself a sight.

(HHB 16)

The parallel here is with Psalm 19. The first half of the psalm, proclaiming how "the heauens declare the glorie of God," prepares the way for the second half, dedicated to God's written word, "the Law of the Lord." Only in the word do we find revealed what Spenser terms God's "essential parts," the divine characteristics. But even more revealing than God's written word is the living Word, the Logos of John 1:

Those [essential parts] unto all he daily doth display,
 And shew himselfe in th' image of his grace,
 As in a looking glasse, through which he may
 Be seene, of all his creatures vile and base,
 That are unable else to see his face,
 His glorious face which glistereth else so bright,
 That th' Angels selves can not endure his sight.

(HHB 17)

God, says Spenser, reveals himself through "the image of his grace." And as St. Paul had explained, Christ was "the image of the inuisible God" (Colossians 1: 15). Spenser alludes not just here but throughout the rest of the *Hymne* to Colossians 1 and especially to the Prologue of St. John's Gospel:

In the beginning was the Worde, and the Worde was with God and that Worde was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by it, & without it was made nothing that was made. In it was life, and the life was the light of men. . . . And the Worde was made flesh, and dwelt among vs (and we sawe the glorie thereof, as the glorie of the onely begotten Sonne of the Father) ful of grace and trueth. . . . And of his fulnes haue all we receiued, and grace for grace. . . . No man hath seene God at any time: the onely begotten Sonne, which is in the bosome of the Father; he hath declared him. (John 1: 1-18; emphasis added)

As Spenser had put it in *HHL* 20, the incarnate Christ had come "out of the bosome of eternall blisse." This is again repeated when he introduces Sapience ("Wisdom") as sitting "in [God's] bosome" (*HHB* 27).

In the figure of Sapience, female both in deference to the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament and to function as a contrast to the

Venus of *HB*, Spenser continues his preoccupation with the Logos. As Augustine had written in *On the Trinity*: "The Son is the Word of the Father, which is also called His wisdom" (*De Trin.* 4.20.27).¹⁸⁵ While *HHL* had emphasized the sacrificial aspect of the incarnate Word, *HHB* praises the glorified Christ. Even stanzas that at first sound narrowly neoplatonic turn out to have specific scriptural analogs. Take *HHB* 29 for example:

Both heaven and earth obey unto her [Sapience's] will,
 And all the creatures which they both containe:
 For of her fulnesse which the world doth fill,
 They all partake, and do in state remaine,
 As their great Maker did at first ordaine,
 Through observation of her high beheast,
 By which they first were made, and still increast.

The "fulnesse" of line 3 may at first remind us of some Plotinian plenitude,¹⁸⁶ but the whole stanza is actually a loose paraphrase of Colossians 1, starting from the verse we have already referred to:

[Christ] is the image of the inuisible God, the first borne of euerie creature. For by him were all things created, which are in heauen, and which are in earth, things visible and inuisible: whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers, all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things consist. . . . For it pleased the Father, that in him shulde all fulnes dwell. (verses 15-19)¹⁸⁷

In both passages there is the contrast between the creatures of the earth and the angels of the heavens. And in both, Christ/Sapience is described as creator and sustainer of the created universe.

This analysis has brought us beyond Augustine to the scriptural archetypes that inform Spenser's heavenly *Hymnes*. The contemplative mode of these hymns, however, is infused with mature Augustinian spirituality. Where the young Augustine had relied on the intellectual ascent of Plotinus, the old bishop penned classics of visionary literature that were centered on the Incarnation. As Harrison writes: "It is

¹⁸⁵ "Verbum enim patris est filius, quod et sapientia eius dicitur." On Sapience as Christ see also Ellrodt, pp. 164-66.

¹⁸⁶ Bennett, for example, claims that Sapience's "metaphysical function, as outlined in stanza 29, is Neo-Platonic, not Hebraic" (p. 141). It may or may not be "Hebraic" but it certainly is Pauline.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. John 1: 16: "And of his fulnes haue all we receiued, and grace for grace."

Christ, in the union of his divinity and humanity, who defines and gives meaning to Augustine's ideas on beauty."¹⁸⁸

It is in expounding the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Word of God . . . who, in assuming flesh, humbled himself to become part of the sensible realm and to share human temporality, so that fallen man might have faith in his earthly acts and teachings (since darkened reason could not otherwise grasp him) that Augustine can be seen as his most critical in respect of Platonism. Against the Platonist's and his own former "presumptions" in relying upon reason in order to attain truth, against their devaluation of the body, and their doctrine of daemonic mediators, Augustine sets his "confession" of the grace of the humility of the Word made flesh for fallen man as he found it recounted in Scripture and of his faith in the Word as the unique mediator, who calls for a humble following of his death and resurrection in the flesh, as the only way for man to reach God.¹⁸⁹

This Augustinian tradition even Luther was not averse to, as long as it was centered on the humanity of Christ, who "is the sacred ladder by which we ascend to the knowledge of God."¹⁹⁰ Although this Christocentric mysticism has affinities with the neoplatonic ascent to the One, there are very real differences between the two ascents, differences that boil down to the Incarnation. Where the one tradition leaves all "horizontal" earthly values behind, the other stresses that "God so loved the world" that He took on bodily form and chose to live in time and history.

¹⁸⁸ Harrison, p. 192. The seminal text for Augustine's mature view of the ascent towards the beauty of God is *De Trin.*, Books 4 and 13 in particular. Augustine also turned to "De videndo deo [the Vision of God]" in Letter 147, which uses the same language as Spenser's heavenly *Hymns*. Quoting Ambrose, Augustine comments: "Beauty is seen, but virtue is declared; for the former is grasped by the eyes, the latter by the mind." Thus, when the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, declares Him with an indescribable utterance, the rational being, pure and holy, is filled with the indescribable vision of God, which we shall attain when we have become like the angels! ("Species videtur, virtus vero narratur; illa oculis, haec mente comprehenditur". Proinde narrante unigenito, qui est in sinu patris, narratione ineffabili creatura rationalis munda et sancta impletur dei visione ineffabili, quam tunc consequemur, cum aequales angelis facti fuerimus]" (*Epist.* 147:9:22).

¹⁸⁹ Harrison, pp. 194–95.

¹⁹⁰ Luther, *Lectures on Hebrews* (1517), as cited in Steinmetz, *Luther and Staupitz*, p. 139. For a Catholic example of an Augustinian and Christ-centered mysticism, see Robert Bellarmine, *The Mind's Ascent to God by the Ladder of Created Things*, in *Spiritual Writings*, trans. and ed. John Patrick Donnelly, S.J., and Roland J. Teske, S.J. (New York: Paulist Press, 1989). Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1954), investigates both Catholic and Protestant traditions of meditation stemming from *De Trin.*

CHAPTER 3

Semiology

Formal and Verbal Logocentrism

"In the beginning was the Word." The Greek word *logos* signifies in Latin both "reason" and "word." However, in this verse [John 1:1] the better translation is "word," so that not only the relation to the Father is indicated, but also the efficacious power with respect to those things which are made by the Word. Reason, however, is correctly called reason even if nothing is made by it.

—Augustine¹

I

Early modern literature was logocentric, grounded in Christ the *logos*.² Logocentric imperatives explain much of renaissance epistemology (discussed in chapter 2), but permeated also its semiology, including its poetic practice. The seminal inspiration came from Augustine.³ While Pythagoras and Plato remained the revered founders of this tradition, it was the Church Father who provided the sanctioned for-

¹ "In principio erat verbum. Quod Graece logos dicitur Latine et rationem et verbum significat. Sed hoc loco melius verbum interpretatur, ut significetur non solum ad patrem respectus, sed ad illa etiam quae per verbum facta sunt operativa potentia. Ratio autem, et si nihil per illam fiat, recte ratio dicitur" (*De Div. Q.* 63.) Written between 389 and 396, *De Div. Q.* reflects Augustine's gradual change from a Plotinian to a more Pauline perspective during these years.

² I am aligning myself with S.K. Heninger, Jr.: "England throughout the sixteenth century was essentially a logocentric culture" ("Spenser, Sidney, and Poetic Form," *Studies in Philology* 88:2 [1991]: 141); see also Heninger's *The Subtext of Form in the English Renaissance: Proportion Poetical* (University Park: Penn State Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 22–27. There are differences of emphasis, however, between my approach and Heninger's. While *The Subtext of Form* contrasts logocentrism with a more forward-looking "hylecentric" paradigm, grounded in matter, my approach will be to distinguish further nuances within the logocentric paradigm.

³ In addition to Heninger's *Subtext of Form*, pp. 34, 77, and 126–27, see William H. Pahlka, *Saint Augustine's Meter and George Herbert's Will* (Kent, Ohio and London: Kent State Univ. Press, 1987), and Maren-Sofie Røstvig, *Configurations: A Topomorphical Approach to Renaissance Poetry* (Oslo: Scandinavian Univ. Press & Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994).

mulations most useful for the Christian writers of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Of course, despite Augustine's humanist training it was not the study of fiction but of biblical texts that had interested him: "Putting aside, therefore, all theatrical and poetic trifling, let us by the diligent study of the divine Scriptures, find food and drink for our minds" (*De Ver. Rel.* 51.100).⁴ But as is well known, Augustine's esthetics and biblical hermeneutics proved immensely important for humanist poetics.⁵ Research on logocentrism so far, however, has been preoccupied almost exclusively with the structural and proportional aspects of renaissance poetry. My contribution in this chapter will be to distinguish between the *formal* logocentrism of these investigations, centering on mathematical ratios, and a *verbal* logocentrism that finds its governing metaphor in language rather than in number. Augustine's thoughts on the translation of the *logos* of the first verse of the Gospel of St. John, quoted in the epigraph above, form the starting point for my distinction and for my chapter.

In line with Augustine's shift from a vertical to a horizontal perspective, both his theoretical and hermeneutical writings moved from a predominantly formal to an increasingly verbal paradigm. The decade following his conversion saw significant changes in his views not only on human reason but also on semiology.⁶ In the early years the fine arts were enlisted in a Pythagorean and Plotinian progression towards pure number.⁷ *On Music* provided the theoretical foundation for music and versification, both being grounded in mathematical proportion, the *ratio* of the epigraph above. No treatise was written specifically for the pictorial and plastic arts, yet they were briefly but suggestively treated in *On Free Choice of the Will*. In later works, however, *On Christian Doctrine* in particular, Augustine's changing perspective resulted in interpretive strategies based not on number but on language.

The Incarnation formed the wedge between the two logocentric

⁴ "Omissis igitur et repudiatis nugis theatricis et poeticis divinarum scripturarum consideratione et tractatione pascamus animum . . ."

⁵ For recent studies, see Robert J. Forman, *Augustine and the Making of a Christian Literature: Classical Tradition and Augustinian Aesthetics* (Leuven: Edwin Mellen, 1995), and Robert J. O'Connell, S.J., *Soundings in St. Augustine's Imagination* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1994).

⁶ Following Augustine's own example in *De Doct. Chr.*, I treat numerology and linguistics, i.e., both number and language, as subcategories of a general theory of signs.

⁷ On the Pythagorean basis for subsequent Platonic and Christian theorizing about numbers, see S.K. Heninger, Jr., *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1974).

paradigms.⁸ As a young convert, he viewed language with suspicion, much preferring the certainty of number. Yet he at length came to realize that, although the mutability of human language had originated as a consequence of the Fall, salvation could be achieved only through language. Mathematical purity was all right in theory, but did not work in practice. Instead, Christ the living Word had to enter the vicissitudes of human history, and inscribe a redemptive path by means of the written word of Scripture. The divine message, as Augustine explains in *83 Different Questions*, had become incarnated in our everyday language: "To raise us from the earthly and human meaning up to the divine and heavenly, the divine Scriptures have come down to those words which even the most simple customarily use among themselves" (*De Div. Q.* 52).⁹ The body of the text, with its mutable language structures, had become the locus for the redemptive *logos*.

This paradigm shift provided the next millennium with two separate yet easily confused logocentric models. For Edmund Spenser, as for Petrarch before him, both were viable options. The formal aspects of Spenser's verse have received a great deal of attention in recent decades. *The Shepheardes Calender*, the *Epithalamion*, *Four Hymnes*, and, above all, *The Faerie Queene* have all undergone intensive scrutiny, from Kent Hiatt and Alastair Fowler to S.K. Heninger, Jr. and Maren-Sofie Røstvig.¹⁰ These studies share an interest in the underlying numerical properties of the verse, properties that invoke a Pythagorean or a Platonic matrix that places the ontological value of a literary work not in the body of the text but in the eternal mathematical forms embodied or shadowed forth in its verbal structures. The vestiges of these forms

⁸ On the Incarnation in Augustine's thinking, see Robert J. O'Connell, *Art and the Christian Intelligence in St. Augustine* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978), esp. pp. 3, 47-49, and 133-41, and Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). Both scholars trace the growing importance of the Incarnation, but O'Connell's Augustine never allows a "sacramental" view of the universe to fully shape his thought (see p. 59), while Harrison claims that "what O'Connell sees glimmering on the horizon of Augustine's thought is, I would maintain, actually at the centre: an 'incarnate aesthetic'" (p. 35). I think O'Connell is right about the disincarnate views of the early Augustine, while Harrison is more faithful to the thought of the mature bishop.

⁹ "Divinae scripturae a terreno et humano sensu ad divinum et caelestem nos erigentes usque ad ea verba descenderunt, quibus inter se subtilissimum etiam utitur consuetudo."

¹⁰ Kent A. Hiatt, *Short Time's Endless Monument: The Symbolism of Numbers in Edmund Spenser's "Epithalamion"* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960); Alastair Fowler, *Spenser and the Numbers of Time* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1964); S.K. Heninger, Jr., *Sidney and Spenser: The Poet as Maker* (University Park: Penn State Univ. Press, 1989), and *Touches of Sweet Harmony*, Maren-Sofie Røstvig, "The Shepheardes Calender: A Structural Analysis," *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 13 (1969): 49-75, and *Configurations*, pp. 267-371.

have been found at all structural levels of *The Faerie Queene*: in the placement of words within a line or of lines within individual stanzas; in the precise location of stanzas within individual books and in relation to other stanzas in other books; in the symmetry and numerological semantics of the seven books within the totality of the poem.

Heninger makes perhaps the most radical claim when he wonders why we do not easily recollect stanzas or even individual lines from *The Faerie Queene* the way we remember whole passages from Shakespeare. The reason for this, he suggests, is that the words on the page are for Spenser ultimately unimportant in comparison with the eternal verities to which the words are meant to point: "The verbal system is a disposable husk of no value in itself, to be thrown away as soon as possible in the construal of a poem."¹¹ In this Heninger gets backing from unsuspected quarters: Graham Greene has the male protagonist of the short story "Mortmain" effortlessly rattle off chunks of Shakespeare from memory, but makes him stumble when it comes to a single line from *The Faerie Queene*.¹² For Spenser, it seems, *logos* means *ratio*, not *verbum*.

In this chapter, however, I shall broaden the discussion by arguing from a contrary position, that Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* is as much about language, its use and misuse, its potential and its limitations. And I shall enlist Augustine to buttress my argument for a reading that is squarely grounded in the *verbum* of the text. If the formal version of logocentrism depicts the Deity as the One, subsuming all numerical multiplicity, I shall investigate a verbal paradigm that portrays God as the transcendental Sign: "In the beginning was the Word." But how can this be squared with the overwhelming weight of earlier research (which I do not wish to deny or sidestep)? Perhaps the two paradigms—based on number and language, *ratio* and *verbum*—are simply two sides of the same coin? Representing traditions that in the final analysis may be irreconcilable, they were nevertheless intermingled in Augustine's mind. For a poet like Spenser, trying to follow the divergent Augustinian patterns set down in *On Music* and *On Christian Doctrine*, this meant that while numerology formed one possible escape from the mutability of language, the redemptive power was also available within and through language itself. If *The Faerie Queene* can be

¹¹ S.K. Heninger, Jr., "Words and Meter in Spenser and Scaliger," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 50:3 (1987): 310.

¹² "Mortmain" was first published in the collection *May We Borrow Your Husband and Other Comedies of the Sexual Life* (London: Heinemann, 1967).

interpreted from the vantage point of either paradigm, that, I would suggest, is because Augustine had supplied two models, models that were not necessarily distinct in Spenser's mind.

II

My study of the *ratio* is based not upon *On Music* (which William Pahlka has already investigated in detail),¹³ but upon *On Free Choice of the Will* (*De Libero Arbitrio*), begun in 388 and finished in 395.¹⁴ In the work we find the theory behind Augustine's formal logocentrism. The Platonic assumption underlying *On Free Choice* is that the soul, "free of all inclination towards the things of time and space," should want to "grasp that which is one, the same, and eternal" (*De Lib. Arb.* 2.16.41).¹⁵ The soul reaches this transcendent goal, however, through the immanent manifestations of beauty:

Wherever you turn, wisdom speaks to you through the imprint it has stamped upon its works. When you begin to slip toward outward things, wisdom calls you back, by means of their very forms, so that when something delights you in the body and entices you through the bodily senses, you may see that it has number and may ask whence it comes. Thus you return to yourself: you know that you cannot approve or disapprove of what you touch with the bodily senses, unless you have within you certain laws of beauty to which you refer the beautiful objects that you perceive outside of you.

Look at the sky, the earth, and the sea, and at whatever in them shines from above or crawls, flies, or swims below. These have form because they have number. Take away these forms and there will be nothing. Whence are these except from number? Indeed, they exist only insofar as they have number. (*De Lib. Arb.* 2.16.41–42)¹⁶

¹³ See note 3 above; Forman also analyzes *De Mus.* on pp. 15–40.

¹⁴ In *Retr.* 1.9.1 Augustine writes that he had started the work in Rome, but "completed [terminavi]" books 2 and 3 in Africa after his ordination.

¹⁵ "... exuta omnibus temporum et locorum adfectionibus apprehendat id quod unum atque idem semper est." As Robert O'Connell argues, "Augustine's view at Cassiciacum [where the early Platonic dialogues were conceived] is more spiritual than Christianity would require, indeed, far more spiritual than it will allow" (p. 44).

¹⁶ "Quoquo enim te verteris, vestigiis quibusdam quae operibus suis inpressis loquuntur [sapientia] tibi et te in exteriora relabentem ipsis exteriorum formis intro revocat, ut, quidquid te delectat in corpore et per corporeos incit sensus, videas esse numerosum et quaeras unde sit et in te ipsum redeas atque intellegas te id quod adtingis sensibus corporis probare aut inprobare non posse, nisi apud te habeas quasdam pulchritudinis leges ad quas referas quaecumque pulchra sentis exterius.

Innuere caelum et terram et quaecumque in eis vel desuper fulgent vel deorsum repunt vel volant vel natant. Formas habent quia numeros habent; adime illis haec, nihil erunt. A quo ergo sunt nisi a quo numerus? quandoquidem in tantum illis est esse in quantum numerosa esse."

This is a process of abstraction and sublimation; once the smallest common denominator, number, has been reached, there is no longer any need for its temporal manifestation. The telos of life, put concisely, is an equation whose solution is the unity of the eternal One.

Augustine then turns to the human artist, whose work illustrates and embodies the divine artistry:

In art, the makers of all bodily forms have numbers by which they organize their works. They move their hands and instruments in producing their work until what has been formed externally achieves completion by corresponding as closely as possible to the inward light; and when it has been communicated by the intermediaries of the senses, it delights the inner judge who gazes upward upon numbers. (*De Lib. Arb.* 2.16.42)¹⁷

The artistic process imitates the emanation from and return to the Plotinian One. The Deity bases His creation on the eternal numbers; likewise "the skill of each artificer," to quote Philip Sidney's application of the same Platonic theory, "standeth in that *idea* or fore-conceit of the work."¹⁸ The beholder of the sculpture or the picture, the listener to the piece of music, or the reader of the poem, in turn needs "only" backtrack the creative process to reach the fore-conceit of the artist. For the young Augustine, if not for Sidney, that fore-conceit by definition had to be the same thing in each case: number.

The inherent paradox of this model is that although number, and by extension the Deity, transcends space and time, humans can experience number only *in* space and time:

Look closely at the beauty of the graceful body and you will see that numbers are held in space. Then look closely at the beauty of motion in a body and you will see that numbers are involved in time. Enter into the art from which the numbers come, and ask there for time and space. Neither will exist; yet number lives there. Number has no location in space, no duration of time. (*De Lib. Arb.* 2.16.42)¹⁹

¹⁷ "Et omnium quidem formarum corporearum artifices homines in arte habent numeros quibus coapiant opera sua, et tamdiu manus atque instrumenta in fabricando movent, donec illud quod formatur foris ad eam quae intus est lucem numerorum relationum, quantum potest, impetret absolutionem placeatque per interpretem sensum interno iudici supernos numeros intuenti." See also *De Div. Q.* 78.

¹⁸ *Defence of Poesie*, in *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 79.

¹⁹ "...inspice iam pulchritudinem formati corporis: numeri tenentur in loco; inspicere pulchritudinem mobilitatis in corpore: numeri versantur in tempore; intra ad artem unde isti procedunt, quare in ea tempus et locum: nunquam erit, nusquam erit, vivit in ea tamen numerus nec eius regio spatiorum est nec aetas dierum."

One could say that number has to be incarnated into space and time in order to draw the souls from their incarceration in matter back into the original perfection of pure number. I am intentionally using the word "incarnated." When Augustine later in the same work turns to the Incarnation of Christ, we find striking structural similarities:

From this [i.e., the Fall] it has come about that the Word of God, "through which all things were made" [John 1:3], and of which all angelic natures partake, extended His mercy toward our unhappiness, and "the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us" [John 1:14]. Thus man, who was not yet equal to angels, was able to eat the Bread of angels [i.e., Christ], if the Bread of angels designed to become equal to men. . . .

For the rational creature is fed by the Word, which is, as it were, the best Food. The human soul, moreover, is rational, though it is bound by the mortal chains of the punishment of sin. Its rationality is reduced, however, to the point that it must struggle by conjecture about visible things toward an understanding of invisible ones. The Food of the rational creature was made visible not through a change in its own nature, but by its being attired in the clothing of our nature, so that it recalls us to invisible things even as we pursue visible ones. In this way, the soul finds Him whom it forsook in pride, outwardly humble, and will imitate His visible humility and return to His invisible height. (*De Lib. Arb.* 3.10.30)²⁰

Like number, Christ the Word was originally "invisible," but became "attired in the clothing of our nature," thereby becoming a bridge between the "invisible height" and the space and time continuum. Even more striking is the similarity between the two modes of ascent. Just as we are supposed to abstract the transcendent qualities of number from its earthly manifestations, so Christ the Word "recalls us to invisible things even as we pursue visible ones." Using Augustine's own terminology from his explication of John 1:1, both "reason" and "word" are viable translations of the *logos*. For the young convert, standing in the shadow of Plotinus, the first term (*ratio*) exerted a strong pull on the second (*verbum*), to the point of blurring the dis-

²⁰ "Ex quo [i.e., the Fall] factum est ut illud dei verbum, per quod facta sunt omnia et quo fruitor omnis angelica beatitudo, usque ad miseriam nostram clementiam suam porrigeret et verbum caro fieret et habitaret in nobis. Sic enim posset panem angelorum [i.e., Christ] homo manducare, nondum angelis adaequatus, si panis ipse angelorum hominibus dignaretur aequari. . . . Quia enim rationalis creatura verbo illo tanquam optimo cibo suo pascitur, humana autem anima rationalis est—quae mortalibus vinculis peccati poena tenebatur, ad hoc diminutionis redacta, ut per coniecturas rerum visibilium ad intellegendam invisibilia niteretur—, cibis rationalis creaturae factus est visibilis, non commutatae naturae suae sed habitu nostrae, ut visibilia sectantes ad se invisibilem revocaret. Sic eum anima quam superbians intus reliquerat foris humilem invenit, imitatura eius humilitatem visibilem ed ad invisibilem altitudinem reditura."

inction between the two, making Christ almost a neoplatonic intermediary.

Almost, but not quite. Even in this early work Augustine is aware of some of the ruptures between the two traditions. In his exposition of *ratio* in book 2, the ascent seems fairly unhampered. The body may entice, but the soul can become "free of all inclination towards the things of time and space." In dealing with the *verbum* in book 3, however, the context is the devil and the Fall, and Augustine concedes that the rationality of the human soul is reduced "to the point that it must struggle by conjecture about visible things towards an understanding of invisible ones." Indeed, the return to the invisible heights is not possible unless Christ "recalls us." Behind the distinction of visible and invisible stands the familiar passage from Romans 1: 20: "For the invisible things of him, that is, his eternal power and Godhead, are seen by the creation of the world, being considered in his works" (Geneva Bible). Here we have the scriptural warrant both for the passage about number in book 2 and that about the Word in book 3: God's invisible power can be seen through His created works (as well as through His Word).

Yet there was a hitch. To St. Paul this fact did not justify the ancient philosophers, but condemned them:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all vngodlines, and vnrightheousnes of men, which withhold the trueth in vnrighteousnes, Forasmuche as that, which may be known of God, is manifest in them: for God hathe shewed it vnto them. For the inuisible things of him, that is, his eternal power and Godhead, are sene by the creation of the worlde, being considered in his workes, to the intent that they shulde be without excuse: Because that when they knewe God, they glorified him not as God, nether were thankful, but became vaine in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was ful of darkenes. (Romans 1:18-21)

When Augustine, forced by his new preaching duties, began to study the Scriptures in greater depth, the cleavage between the Plotinian and the Pauline perspective was brought home to him, and the passage in Romans 1 took on a new meaning. A study of his use of these verses from Romans 1 shows that the stress was increasingly placed on the latter part of the quotation.²¹ This did not mean that he gave up

Pythagoras altogether. The universe was still created according to "number, weight, and measure," and revealed an underlying *ratio* that pointed to the Creator. Yet original sin no longer permitted the human intellect to ascend unhampered along the route of number. A redemptive intermediary was needed. Christ, the Word, had instead become the operative concept.

The process from *ratio* to *verbum* can be followed in some detail through a series of commentaries on Genesis that Augustine attempted between 388 and 414. The first of these, *Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees*, written only two years after his conversion, was also his first hermeneutical effort. Its neoplatonic content reveals the preoccupations of the young convert. Roland J. Teske explains: "Perhaps no other work of Augustine's provides such a clear insight into his early view of man as a soul fallen into a mortal body. The second book provides us with an extraordinary view of man as an incorporeal creature created in a spiritual paradise and nourished by the font of truth with no need for human words that sound and pass away."²² Language, in this work, is only an impediment caused by the Fall: "For with God there is pure intellect, without the noise and diversity of languages" (*De Gen. c. M. 1.9.15*).²³ This suspicion of language is also reflected in the actual exegesis of the three first chapters of Genesis. Through "a spiritual, highly figurative, almost ahistorical interpretation of the text,"²⁴ Augustine at all costs avoids the literal in his search for a higher transcendental meaning. This can be seen, for example, in his exposition of an innocent line in Genesis 2:5 that talks about "all the green of the field before it was upon the earth."²⁵ The "green" cannot simply be shrubs and trees, Augustine concludes; rather it must mean "the spiritual and invisible creature [i.e., the disembodied soul]," while "before they were upon the earth" means "before the soul sinned" (*De Gen. c. M. 2.3.4-5*).²⁶ Following the example of Origen, he is with these ingenious means able to read Plotinian emanation into the Genesis account. Indeed, the hermeneutics itself follows logically from the Plotinian perspective. Like time and space, history or the physical body, language too is

²² Introduction to Augustine, *On Genesis, The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 84 (Washington: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1991), p. 38.

²³ "Sed apud deum purus intellectus est sine strepitu et diversitate linguarum."

²⁴ Teske, p. 38.

²⁵ "... omnia viridia agri, antequam essent super terram..."

²⁶ "... spiritalem atque invisibilem creaturam ... antequam anima peccaret..."

²¹ See Goulven Madec, "Connaissance de Dieu et action de grâces: Essai sur les citations de l'Épître aux Romains 1: 18-25 dans l'œuvre de saint Augustin," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 2 (1962): 273-309, and Harrison, pp. 16, 113, and 195-97.

tainted with becoming and should therefore be transcended and discarded. It is the form that counts, the hidden meaning that leads to the haven of being.

Augustine, however, was not satisfied for long with this method. In 393 he set out to write a new commentary on Genesis, this time "according to [its] historical signification" (*Retr.* 1.18.1).²⁷ Yet, as he went on to admit in the *Retractations*, to take the text at face value was more difficult than the allegorical flights of the earlier commentary: "but in explaining the Scriptures, my inexperience collapsed under the weight of so heavy a load and, before I had finished one book, I rested from this labor which I could not endure" (*Retr.* 1.18.1).²⁸ It took another eight years of intensive Bible study before he dared approach Genesis again, and this time his efforts bore fruit in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, a massive work completed only in 414. The title says it all. This time Genesis was interpreted, in Augustine's own words, "not according to allegorical meaning but according to the proper historical sense" (*Retr.* 2.24.1).²⁹ The shifting perspective is symptomatic of a wider change. History had become important because earthly existence as such had become important. It all stemmed from a growing realization that God, through the Incarnation of Christ, had not only created the physical universe, but also had assumed a human body and had entered human history.³⁰ And since Christ was the Word, the body of the sacred text could be discarded no more than the physical body. Augustine did not lose his interest in allegory, but it had to be anchored in the historical and literal dimension of the text, which was not to be dismissed.³¹ This new interest in language comes to the fore in a work written between the allegorical and the literal interpretations of Genesis: *On Christian Doctrine*, which sets out a hermeneutics centered on Christ the Word, and located in the text of the Scriptures.

²⁷ "... secundum historicam proprietatem ..."

²⁸ "sed in scripturis exponendis tirocinium meum sub tanta sarcinae mole succubuit, et nondum perfectio uno libro ab eo quem sustinere non poteram labore conquievi."

²⁹ "... non secundum allegoricas significationes, sed secundum rerum gestarum proprietatem."

³⁰ As O'Connell comments: *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* "is so much more 'incarnate' than [*De Gen. c. M.*] as almost to negate the 'spiritualist' tendencies of the earlier work at important points" (p. 140, n. 64).

³¹ Augustine's mature evaluation of allegory is found in *De Civ. Dei* 17.3.

III

But before we investigate the assumptions of verbal logocentrism, it remains to see what uses the mature Augustine found for the *formal* paradigm. This can be traced not only in *On Christian Doctrine*, but also in *On the Trinity* and the *City of God*. As we saw in the previous chapter, *On Christian Doctrine* reveals Augustine's mature views on the place and function of the liberal arts. Of these arts, the science of number no longer serves as a ladder to God. Instead it helps us understand the scriptures: "An unfamiliarity with numbers makes unintelligible many things that are said figuratively and mystically in scripture" (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.16.25).³² Indeed, the usefulness of this science is restricted to such a study: "It might also be possible to put together an explanatory account of numbers, confined to the numbers mentioned in the divine scripture" (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.39.59).³³ If the "early" Augustine tended to subsume *verbum* under *ratio*, the bishop did the opposite: number had to serve the Word.

On the Trinity gives us an example of the mature Augustine's practical application of number. In Book 4, dedicated to the Incarnation of the Word of God, Augustine shows how Christ becomes the mediator between God and mankind. In what appears to be a sudden insight, he connects this with Pythagorean numerology: "his single answers to our double" (*De Trin.* 4.2.4).³⁴ This obscure statement leads to a prolonged explication of how Christ's single death and resurrection corresponds to the double death and resurrection of mankind, "double" because it affects both the soul and the body. The numerical speculations, however, form no neoplatonic ladder of ascent but lead instead *down* into space and time in the form of the historical stages we find repeatedly in the mature Augustine.³⁵

And the Holy Scripture commends to us the perfection of this number [6], especially in this, that God finished His works in six days, and on the sixth day man was made in the image of God. And the Son of God came and was made

³² "Numerorum etiam imperitia multa facit non intellegi translate ac mystice posita in scripturis."

³³ "Potest etiam de numeris fieri, ut eorum tantummodo numerorum exposita ratio conscribatur, quos divina scriptura meminit." The same strictures apply to music: "we should not avoid music because of the associated pagan superstitions if there is a possibility of gleaming from it something of value for understanding holy scripture [nos tamen non propter superstitionem profanorum debemus musicam fugere, si quid inde utile ad intellegendas sanctas scripturas rapere poterimus, ...]" (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.18.28).

³⁴ "... simplum eius congruit duplo nostro."

³⁵ See the Introduction above for further examples.

the Son of man, that He might recreate us after the image of God, in the sixth age of the human race. . . . We recognize also in this senary number a kind of figure of time, in that threefold mode of division, by which we compute one portion of time before the Law; a second, under the Law; a third, under grace. (*De Trin.* 4.4.7)³⁶

The Incarnation, forming the hub of these historical periods, means not only that the Word becomes flesh, but that through Him all flesh may reach God without forfeiting its fleshly nature:

But cleansed we could not be, so as to be tempered together with things eternal, except it were through things temporal. . . . The truth itself, coeternal with the Father, took a beginning from earth, when the Son of God so came as to become the Son of man. (*De Trin.* 4.18.24)³⁷

While it took the bishop a lifetime to come to grips with this truth, so uncongenial to Plotinian thought, *On the Trinity* shows how he is able to harness the useful parts of the neoplatonic heritage in the service of a new scriptural vision.

Augustine no longer sees number in itself as a viable road to salvation. Indeed, a neoplatonic ascent without Christ has become the height of presumption: "There are, however, some who think themselves capable of being cleansed by their own righteousness, so as to contemplate God, and to dwell in God; whom their very pride itself stains above all others" (*De Trin.* 4.15.20).³⁸ As in *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine bases his judgment of the pagan philosophers on Romans 1:19–21 (*De Trin.* 4.16.21–17.23). They may well have seen the Fatherland through intellectual contemplation, yet like Moses they are unable to reach it.³⁹

³⁶ "Cuius [sc. senarii numeri] perfectionem nobis sancta scriptura commendat in eo maxime quod deus sex diebus perfecit opera sua, et sexto die factus est homo ad imaginem dei. Et sexta aetate generis humani filius dei venit et factus est filius hominis ut nos reformaret ad imaginem dei. . . . Hunc senarium numerum quandam temporis gerere figuram etiam in illa ratione tripartitae distributionis agnoscimus qua unum tempus computamus ante legem, alterum sub lege, tertium sub gratia."

³⁷ "Purgari autem ut contemperemur aeternis non nisi per temporalia . . . ipsa veritas patri coaeterna de terra orta est cum filius dei sic venit ut fieret filius hominis . . ."

³⁸ "Sunt autem quidam qui se putant ad contemplandum deum et inhaerendum deo virtute propria posse purgari, quos ipsa superbia maxime maculat."

³⁹ See also *Retr.* 1.11.1, where Augustine at the end of his life still considers numbers worthy of investigation and justifies it, characteristically, by quoting Romans 1:20. The continuation, however, reveals the changed perspectives: alluding to the larger context of Romans 1 he now stresses that those who climb the intellectual ladder without faith in Christ "perish with all their wisdom [cum tota sapientia sua pereunt]," while the simple Christian will perceive the numerology of music "assuredly and happily after this life [certius atque feliciter . . . post hanc vitam]." As in *De Trin.*, the progression as such is still valid, but cannot be accomplished through philosophy.

The final blending of Platonism with biblical terminology comes in the last chapter of the *City of God*, in which Augustine celebrates the coming joys of heaven:

Every fiber and organ of our imperishable body will play its part in the praising of God. On earth these varied organs have each a special function, but in heaven, function will be swallowed up in felicity, in the perfect certainty of an untroubled everlastingness of joy. . . . These movements of our bodies will be of such unimaginable beauty that I dare not say more than this: There will be such poise, such grace, such beauty as become a place where nothing unbecoming can be found. (*De Civ. Dei* 22.30)⁴⁰

Here spiritual beauty and physical reality have truly merged in a "marvelous Order," uniting a transformed Platonism with a thoroughly biblical vision. The body is no longer a husk to be discarded,⁴¹ but takes its honored place praising a Creator who Himself had assumed a human body.⁴²

Although the young Augustine, in works like *On Music* and *On the Free Choice of the Will*, had elaborated the theory behind the formal paradigm, it was the strictures of the mature bishop that defined the response of the succeeding ages to that theory. The limiting admonition of *On Christian Doctrine* was not forgotten: as we saw earlier in this chapter, the study should be "confined to numbers mentioned in the divine scripture" (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.39.59; emphasis added).⁴³ Even those who went directly to *On Music* found its climactic sixth book framed by a preface and an afterword (added by Augustine some 15–20 years after the rest of the book was written) that substituted the Scriptures for the vanities of secular letters, and sounded a warning against the pride of human reasoning: "For they are purified, not by flashing human reasoning, but by the effective and burning fire of charity" (*De Mus.* 6.17.59).⁴⁴ Consequently, when formal logocentrism informs me-

⁴⁰ "Omnia membra et viscera incorruptibilis corporis, quae nunc videmus per usus necessitatis varios distributa, quoniam tunc non erit ipsa necessitas, sed plena certa, securam sempiterna felicitas, proficiente laudibus Dei. . . . Qui motus illic talium corporum sint futuri, temere definire non audeo, quod excogitare non valeo; tamen et motus et status, sicut ipsa species, decens erit, quicumque erit, ubi quod non decebit non erit."

⁴¹ Elsewhere in *De Civ. Dei* Augustine writes scathingly of the Platonists making the body into a prison (see 12.27 and 14.3–5).

⁴² See Harrison, pp. 152–62.

⁴³ Cf. Forman 118–20.

⁴⁴ "Hi [i.e., qui unus Dei Trinitatem, duorum Testamentorum auctoritatem secuti, venerantur] enim non scintillantibus humanis ratiocinationibus, sed validissimo et flagrantissimo charitatis igne purgantur."

dieval or renaissance poetics, it is almost always number mediated through a Scriptural matrix. It is surely no coincidence that Dante's *Vita nuova* and *Divina commedia* reverberate with the divine Trinity, or that the 365 poems of Petrarch's *Rime sparse* are sequenced according to the liturgical year.⁴⁵ As the first of a long line of renaissance poets, Petrarch struggles in the *Rime sparse* to accommodate the formal paradigm to the realities of a fallen world. The Reformation, inspired largely by Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings, resolves Petrarch's tensions by denying the power of number altogether, insisting on the words of Scripture as the only means of salvation. When a Protestant sonneteer like Philip Sidney widens the gap in *Astrophel and Stella* between optimistic form and pessimistic content beyond the breaking point, this is the logical outcome of attitudes that had been anticipated by Petrarch.⁴⁶

With Spenser the situation is somewhat different. Being of a more conservative bent than Sidney, he found the formal paradigm alluring. Yet no more than Dante or Petrarch could he perceive it without the corrective lenses provided by the mature Augustine: the *ratio* had to be subject to the scriptural *verbum*. His solution in the *Amoretti* was to resolve the Petrarchan tension between form and content into a Protestant marriage hymn, the *Epithalamion*.⁴⁷ The twelve eclogues of *The Shepheardes Calender* or the projected 12 books of *The Faerie Queene*, on the other hand, realize "Augustine's aesthetic of *concordia discors*, of the reconciliation of opposites."⁴⁸ Their form—the revolving year or Gloriana's twelve-day feast—therefore points to eternity, but in both poems—as in Petrarch's sonnets—the verbal content depicts a fallen world, thereby undercutting any final and formal resolution. It is perhaps symptomatic that the symmetry of Spenser's original plan for *The Faerie Queene* was collapsed into six finished books. The number six traditionally represents the world as well as humanity (six days of creation, with Adam and Eve created on the sixth day),⁴⁹ but also sin (six

⁴⁵ See Thomas P. Roche, Jr., *Petrarch and the English Sonnet Sequences* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), pp. 32–69, and the end of chapter 1 above.

⁴⁶ See my discussion of Petrarch in chapter 1 above. On Petrarch and the Reformers, see Charles Trinkaus, "The Religious Thought of the Italian Humanists, and the Reformers: Anticipation or Autonomy?", in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. Charles Trinkaus and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1974): 223–66.

⁴⁷ For Spenser's re-vision of Petrarch, see William J. Kennedy, *Authorizing Petrarch* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 195–280.

⁴⁸ Heninger, *Sidney and Spenser*, pp. 319–20.

⁴⁹ See Augustine's explication of the number six in *De Trin.* 4.4, cited in the text above.

being one short of the perfect number seven). Only in the Mutability Cantos, the broken remnants of a seventh book that would complete the perfection of the heptameron, are we given the poet's prayer for "that Sabaoth's sight" (*FQ* 7.8.2),⁵⁰ an eternal rest that lies outside a poem characterized by mutability.⁵¹ The six books as we have them speak therefore of the created world in all its varied beauty. Yet the six books also speak of the impossibility of reaching that final rest by means of the beautiful forms of this world, unaided by the divine Word (the topic of Book 1): "And in the sixth age of the human race the Son of God came and was made the Son of man, that He might recreate us after the image of God" (*De Trin.* 4.4.7).⁵² Or as Spenser himself put it in an eerie premonition penned in the first book of *The Faerie Queene* (12.17–18; my emphasis) long before the Mutability Cantos: Redcrosse, clothed in the armor of the Word, instead of immediately enjoying the "ease and everlasting rest" envisioned by Una's aged father, "must returne to that great Faerie Queene, / And her to serue six yeares in warlike wise."

IV

Now for the verbal paradigm. The early dialogue *The Teacher* (*De magistro*) (389) records an actual conversation between Augustine and his then 16 year old son Adeodatus on the use of words. The give and take of actual dialogue give way to the father lecturing his son on a modified version of a platonic theory of remembrance (*De Mag.* 1.2). The dialogue examines the linguistic sign (without, however, reaching the semiological sophistication of *De doctrina*), but Augustine views language per se as strangely powerless:

The utmost value I can attribute to words is this. They bid us look for things, but they do not show them to us so that we may know them. . . . From words we can learn only words. Indeed we can learn only their sound and noise. (*De Mag.* 11.36)⁵³

⁵⁰ I am quoting from Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr., and C. Patrick O'Donnell, Jr. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).

⁵¹ Cf. Joseph Wittreich in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A.C. Hamilton et al. (Toronto and Buffalo: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 47.

⁵² "Et sexta aetate generis humani filius dei venit et factus est filius hominis ut nos reformaret ad imaginem dei." Translation emended.

⁵³ "Hactenus verba valuerunt, quibus ut plurimum tribuam, admonent tantum, ut quaeramus res, non exhibent, ut norimus. . . . Verbis igitur nisi verba non discimus, immo sonitum strepitumque verborum."

Taken out of context, the last sentence sounds almost like an early version of the linguistic slippage envisioned by the poststructuralists. The fundamental difference between these moderns and Augustine, of course, is that the Father counts on the inner illumination of the divine Logos: "Our real Teacher is he who is listened to, who is said to dwell in the inner man, namely Christ, that is, the unchangeable power and eternal wisdom of God" (*De Mag.* 11.38).⁵⁴ Yet despite the example of Christ the Word, the favoured metaphors are those of light rather than of language: listening to a voice is transformed into seeing the inner light:

But when we have to do with things which we behold with the mind, that is, with the intelligence and with reason, we speak of things which we look upon directly in the inner light of truth which illumines the inner man and is inwardly enjoyed. There again if my hearer sees these things himself with his inward eye, he comes to know what I say, not as a result of my words but as a result of his own contemplation. (*De Mag.* 12.40)⁵⁵

As a consequence, Augustine had begun the dialogue by claiming that when praying "there is no need of speech" (*De Mag.* 1.2).⁵⁶ since the inner communication with God is not only non-vocal but non-linguistic. In this early work, purportedly dedicated to the linguistic sign, the young convert shows little or no faith in the communicative power of language.

While Augustine was to retain his belief in the non-linguistic nature of the inner illumination, *On Christian Doctrine* evinces a much more constructive attitude to language, and his favoured metaphor has now become the divine speech. Considering that the work was written by a former (highly successful) rhetor, it perhaps should not surprise us that it is permeated by language theory. The work contains four books: the first three are a help to the understanding of the Scriptures, while the fourth, added in 426 towards the end of Augustine's life, explains how to present what has been understood.⁵⁷ Book 4 is the first Christian rhetorics, and became a seminal medieval and ren-

⁵⁴ "Ille autem, qui consulitur, docet, qui in interiore homine habitare dictus est Christus, id est incommutabilis dei virtus atque sempiterna sapientia, . . ."

⁵⁵ "Cum vero de his agitur, quae mente conspicimus, id est intellectu atque ratione, ea quidem loquimur, quae praesentia contuemur in illa interiore luce veritatis, qua ipse, qui dicitur homo interior, illustratur et fruitur; sed tum quoque noster auditor, si et ipse illa secreto ac simplici oculo videt, novit quod dico sua contemplatione, non verbis meis."
⁵⁶ " . . . non opus est locutione, . . ."

aissance textbook on preaching (entitled *De arte praedicandi*, it achieved the distinction of being the first printed Augustinian text). The first three books contain a carefully argued and philosophically profound exposition of sign theory that provided a pattern for early modern textual study: "It is a book about literacy, about how to find out, through careful, critical patience, what a piece of discourse, written or spoken, says and means."⁵⁸ The three books are subdivided into two parts, the first book dealing with the "thing [*res*]," the message contained in the Scriptures,⁵⁹ and books two and three with the "signs" that express the *res*. It is in Book 1 that we find the hugely influential distinction between "things to be enjoyed" and "things to be used" (to which we shall return below). Augustine in the following book goes on to distinguish between "natural" signs (such as smoke) and "conventional" signs (such as language); it is the latter that really interests him, and he proceeds to treat two sources of confusion for the correct interpretation of conventional signs: "unknown" signs (covered in Book 2) and "ambiguous" signs (covered in Book 3). While Book 3, dedicated to resolving the niceties of textual ambiguity, was appreciated for its hands-on advice, Book 2 proved even more useful to the humanists (and even to a reformer like Luther, as we saw in chapter 2 above) since it advocated the study of classical languages and literature in order to remedy ignorance about the meaning of unknown signs.

Part of Augustine's language theory is strikingly modern; only with Ferdinand de Saussure did linguistics catch up with it. In contrast to earlier simplistic descriptions of a two-way relationship between *res*, the thing, and *verba*, the spoken word that points to the *res*, Augustine

⁵⁷ One possible reason for putting off the 4th Book for so long was the writing of *The Catechising of the Uninstructed* (*De catechizandis rudibus*) in 399, which became something of a stop-gap. Trying to help a fellow clergyman who experienced problems teaching Christian fundamentals to potential converts, Augustine provides detailed hands-on instructional process, including two sample speeches, on how to minimize disruptions in the communicative process, whether caused by the speaker, the listener or the message.

⁵⁸ W.R. Johnson, "Isocrates Flowering: The Rhetoric of Augustine," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 9 (1976): 220. On *De Doc. Chr.*, see also "De doctrina christiana": A *Classic of Western Culture*, ed. Duane W.H. Arnold and Pamela Bright (Notre Dame and London: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1995); *Reading and Wisdom: The "De Doctrina Christiana" of Augustine in the Middle Ages*, ed. Edward D. English (Notre Dame and London: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1995); and Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1996), pp. 190–206.

⁵⁹ There is some slippage in Augustine's use of the term *res*. In a rhetorical context the *res* is conceptual, the thought to be clothed in words, not physical as here (for the latter usage see *De Doct. Chr.* 1.2.2 or *De Dial.* 5.8).

introduced a third factor: the human subject.⁶⁰ The human mind forms a mental concept of the *res*, which it then translates into *verba*. Augustine's sign, like Saussure's, therefore contained two parts: a signifier that is primarily the *spoken word*,⁶¹ and a signified that is not the thing itself but a mental concept of the thing.⁶² Along with the human subject, Augustine also posited speech communities and the conventionality of the sign:

All these meanings, then, derive their effects on the mind from each individual's agreement with a particular convention. As this agreement varies in extent, so do their effects. People did not agree to use them because they were already meaningful; rather they became meaningful because people agreed to use them. (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.24.37)⁶³

⁶⁰ Augustine, however, did not start from scratch but leaned on stoic theory. On the Augustinian sign theory, see two articles by R.A. Markus, "St. Augustine on Signs," *Phronesis* 2 (1957): 72, and "Signs, Communication, and Communities in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*," in Arnold and Bright, pp. 97–108; B. Darrell Jackson, "The Theory of Signs in St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*," *REA* 15 (1969): 22–23; and John M. Rist's recent survey of Augustine's thought, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 23–40.

⁶¹ Saussure, however, further distinguishes between the spoken word and its mental sound-image, which together with the concept form the sign. The *written* word Augustine, following Aristotle, saw as a sign of a sign. The priority of spoken over written language is, *pace* Derrida, not hard to establish (see John M. Ellis, *Against Deconstruction* [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989], pp. 18–25). Saussure agrees with Augustine: "Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first" (*Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, trans. Wade Baskin [1959; rpt. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966], p. 23).

⁶² See Saussure, pp. 65–70 and 111–22. Charles Sanders Peirce and Edmund Husserl made analogous distinctions. Augustine's terms were *dicibile* and *dictio*: "Now that which the mind not the ears perceives from the word and which is held within the mind itself is called a *dicibile*. When a word is spoken not for its own sake but for the sake of signifying something else, it is called a *dictio*. The thing itself which is neither a word nor the conception of a word in the mind, whether or not it has a word by which it can be signified, is called nothing but a *res* in the proper sense of the name [Quidquid autem ex verbo non aures sed animus sentit et ipso animo tenetur inclusum, dicibile vocatur. Cum vero verbum procedit non propter se sed propter aliud aliquid significandum, dictio vocatur. Res autem ipsa, quae iam verbum non est neque verbi in mente conceptio, sive habeat verbum quo significari possit, sive non habeat, nihil aliud quam res vocatur proprio iam nomine]" (*De Dial.* 5.8). Augustine's authorship has been questioned, but Jackson proves the attribution convincingly. *De Dial.*, furthermore, was included among the authentic works in the great renaissance editions of Augustine's *Opera omnia*. See also Stock, pp. 138–45.

⁶³ "... ergo hae omnes significationes pro suae cuiusque societatis consensione animos movent et, quia diversa consensio est, diverse movent, nec ideo consenserunt in eas homines, quia iam valebant ad significationem, sed ideo valent, quia consenserunt in eas, ..."

Although Augustine does not discuss the arbitrariness of the sign in terms of Saussure's *différence*—i.e., that all signs are defined by their differences from other signs within a self-consistent system—he is aware of the practical implications of such a view. "There are certain words in particular languages," he concedes, "which just cannot be translated into the idioms of another language" (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.11.16).⁶⁴ Translation, because two different speech communities are involved, is therefore no simple one-to-one equation.⁶⁵

Induced by Plato's *Cratylus*, classical thinkers had debated the meaning and origin of words. Plato not only initiated the debate but set its boundaries by letting Cratylus argue for the naturalness and Hermogenes for the conventionality of language. Although Socrates does not give his full imprimatur to either of the speakers, the opinions of Cratylus were often taken as Platonic dogma (the name of the dialogue seemed to confirm this assumption). Socrates' own summing up, however—that while the Ideas are permanent, the words that express them are not—comes close to Augustine's position.⁶⁶ By late classical times the Cratylan view had become a commonplace. Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights*, a second-century collection of geographical and humanist trivia (read by Augustine), touches on the nature of words, "a subject very popular in the discussion of the philosophers." Gellius voices both neoplatonic and stoic opinion when he explains that "nouns and verbs were formed, not by chance use, but by a certain power and design of nature."⁶⁷ Augustine's conviction that the sign is conventional was therefore not uncontested. Many Christian (and Jewish) writers asserted that when creating the world God had devised an immutable link between *res* and *verba*. As proof-text they took the Genesis account of Adam naming the animals. Since Adam (they thought) had spoken Hebrew, they saw in this primitive language a natural connection to the *res*, even after the pride of Babel had multiplied the languages of the world.⁶⁸ In the Renais-

⁶⁴ "Sunt enim quaedam verba certarum linguarum, quae in usum alterius linguae per interpretationem transire non possunt."

⁶⁵ See Eugene Vance's important *Merculous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages* (Lincoln, NE: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1986), pp. 34–50. Vance's "metaphysics of the Word" (p. 39) corresponds to my "theology of the sign."

⁶⁶ Marcia L. Colish believes Augustine was familiar with the dialogue; see *The Mirror of Language* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), p. 66.

⁶⁷ Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights*, trans. John C. Rolfe, 3 vols. (London: Loeb, 1927), 2: 229.

⁶⁸ See Heninger, *Sidney and Spenser*, pp. 116–19.

sance these neoplatonic theories, mixed with Hermeticism and the Jewish Kabbala, were embraced enthusiastically by Marsilio Ficino and his followers.⁶⁹ Augustine also has at times been put in this camp. Yet he did not believe that etymology leads anywhere: "Discerning the origin of words is like the interpretation of dreams; it is a matter of each man's ingenuity" (*De Dial.* 6.9).⁷⁰ Even if the prelapsarian sign had once possessed the stable function described by Cratylus, he believed that Hermogenes was more in step with postlapsarian reality. Hebrew, he thought, survived Babel as the primitive and common language (see *De Civ. Dei* 16.11), yet he did not give it any preeminence in his theory of signs. It is true that writers in the Augustinian tradition did not always follow the Father on this point. Yet whenever the humanists turned to the original sources—and during the Renaissance, this happened increasingly—the effect was felt. Some of the linguistic advances made by Lorenzo Valla, for example, can be traced back to Augustine.

Yet if Augustine agrees with Saussure on the conventional nature of the human sign, his emphasis is very different from the acknowledged aim of modern linguistics, determined as it has been to view language in splendid isolation. To Augustine, linguistics is theology; and theology, linguistics. At the center of both stands the transcendental Sign that gives validity to all conventional human signs. Jacques Derrida has perceived the issues clearly by showing that Saussurian language theory is actually closer to Augustine than Saussure cared to admit:

[Saussure] accedes to the classical exigency of what I have proposed to call a "transcendental signified," which in and of itself, in its essence, would refer to no signifier, would exceed the chain of signs, and would no longer function as a signifier.⁷¹

⁶⁹ See Allison Coudert, "Some Theories of a Natural Language from the Renaissance to the Seventeenth Century," in *Magia Naturalis und die Entstehung der Modernen Naturwissenschaften*, ed. Albert Heinekamp and Dieter Mettler (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1978), pp. 56–118. Ficino, for example, taught that "a name, as the Platonists say, is nothing else than a certain power of the thing itself" (Coudert, p. 75), while for Johannes Reuchlin "the speech of the Hebrews is simple, pure, uncorrupted, holy, brief and constant," and therefore discloses "the innate property of every word" (Coudert, p. 80). And John Dee in the *Monas hieroglyphica* (1564) purported to describe a "holy language" that set forth "that which is" rather than merely "that which is said" (Nicholas H. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy* [London: Routledge, 1988], p. 86).

⁷⁰ " . . . ut somniorum interpretatio ita verborum origo pro cuiusque ingenio iudicatur."

⁷¹ Jacques Derrida, "Semiology and Grammatology: Interview with Julia Kristeva," in *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1981), pp. 19–20.

Where Saussure seems unaware of the ramifications, Derrida knows what is at stake: "The sign and divinity have the same place and time of birth. The age of the sign is essentially theological."⁷² Augustine and Derrida thus agree on the underlying issues even as Derrida point by point tries to expose and sidestep what the Church Father posits. The French iconoclast, seeking to deconstruct the effects of a logocentric semiology based on a "transcendental signified," can allow no signifier to exceed the chain of signs, and consequently finds no referential "meaning" outside the text. Augustine, on the other hand, consciously and deliberately builds his system upon the transcendental Sign: it is God who validates the meaning of human discourse. For them both, in their opposing ways, the bond between *verba* and *res* is problematic. But while Derrida, unable to accept metaphysics, must deny the possibility of such a bond, Augustine is free to explore its complex status.

Augustine's basic query is how signs can have epistemological validity, and his famous solution, developed already in *The Teacher*, is the theory of divine illumination. Through "the inner light of truth" (*De Mag.* 12.40)⁷³ God provides the human mind with the epistemological foundation for making judgments about propositions and sense impressions. The non-linguistic nature of the divine illumination is the reason Augustine can be so casual about the conventional nature of the vocal sign:

A thought that is formed from a thing that we know is a word that we say in the heart. It is neither Greek nor Latin nor any other language, but when we need to bring it to the notice of those to whom we speak, a sign is picked with which to signify it. (*De Trin.* 15.10.19)⁷⁴

The inner word transcends all language, and cannot be recovered through a search for linguistic origins. The prelapsarian Adam had had direct access to the divine speech and had not needed Hebrew or any other human language in order to communicate.

Indeed, language as we know it is a divine concession to our fallen nature:

⁷² Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), p. 14.

⁷³ " . . . illa interiore luce veritatis, . . . "

⁷⁴ "Formata quippe cogitatio ab ea re quam scimus verbum est quod in corde dicimus, quod nec graecum est nec latinum nec linguae alicuius alterius, sed cum id opus est in eorum quibus loquimur perferre notitiam aliquod signum quo significetur assumitur." English trans. by Christopher Kirwan, *Augustine* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 56. See also Vance, pp. 43–44.

God alone can operate on rational souls, not through a body, but through Himself. But such is the state of sin that souls are allowed to act upon souls, moving them by signifying by one or the other body, or by natural signs as look or nod, or by conventional signs as words. (*De Mus.* 6.13.41)⁷⁵

An attentive reader might object to my quoting here from *On Music*, a work I have previously associated with the *formal* paradigm. The non-vocal nature of God's speech, however, Augustine retained in his mature works as well; see, for example, the *City of God*:

For the speaking of God antecedent and superior to all His works, is the immutable reason of His work: it has no noisy and passing sound, but an energy eternally abiding and producing results in time. Thus he speaks to the holy angels; but to us, who are far off, He speaks otherwise. When, however, we hear with the inner ear some part of the speech of God, we approximate to the angels. (*De Civ. Dei* 16.6)⁷⁶

It is God speaking "otherwise," however, that concerns Augustine in *On Christian Doctrine*. Precisely because of the Fall the formal, nonvocal paradigm no longer works, leaving the Incarnation of the Word as the only viable option.

Humanity may be vitiated not only spiritually but intellectually, with linguistic and moral error going hand in hand (as the serpent's use of words to deceive our first parents had made abundantly clear). Language, originating at the Fall, is subject to "the shifting nature of the present time, in which there is nothing substantial, nothing lasting" (*De Civ. Dei* 20.3).⁷⁷ Yet if Augustine acknowledges the theological roots for the deficiencies of human language, such is his holistic vision that he also turns the tables, describing the redemptive drama in linguistic categories. At the center of this drama stands the transcendent tal Sign, the subject of *On Christian Doctrine*.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ "Sed operari de animis rationalibus, non per corpus, sed per seipsum, solus Deus potest. Peccatorum tamen condicione fit, ut permittantur animae de animis aliquid agere, significando eas moventes per alterutra corpora, vel naturalibus signis, sicut est vultus vel nutus, vel placitis, sicut sunt verba."

⁷⁶ "Dei quippe sublimior ante suum factum locutio ipsius sui facti est immutabilis ratio, quae non habet sonum strepitum atque transeuntem, sed vim sempiternae manentem et temporaliter operantem. Hac loquitur angelis sanctis, nobis autem aliter longe positis. Quando autem etiam nos aliquid talis locutionis interioribus auribus capimus, angelis propinquamus."

⁷⁷ "... vanescentes interea temporum lapsus, ubi nihil solidum, nihil stabile retinetur."
⁷⁸ See David Lawson, "Sign Theory, Allegorical Reading, and the Motions of the Soul in *De doctrina christiana*," in Arnold and Bright, pp. 123–41.

Book 1 deals with "things," the *res* of the Scriptures. Yet the *res* is not just a compendium of Christian dogma: it is God himself. And more is at stake in the effort to get to the *res* through the *verba* than simply to understand the words of the Scriptures. The goal is nothing less than humankind's union with God. Augustine begins by dividing the *res* into three sub-categories: "There are some things which are to be enjoyed, some which are to be used, and some [i.e., humans] whose function is both to enjoy and use" (*De Doct. Chr.* 1.3.3).⁷⁹

The human subject, able to enjoy or use the things of the two other categories, itself constitutes the third category. The distinction between "enjoyment" and "use" refers to the fundamental Augustinian tenet that only in God does all human desire find its ultimate satisfaction ("enjoyment"). Our love ("use") of all aspects of God's creation, however necessary and laudable, must not become an end in itself. By "things to be used," Augustine therefore means all created things, while the category of "things to be enjoyed" contains only one member: God. All other things, signs included, should be only a means of enjoying God. The whole category of things to be used should function as signs pointing to the one member of the other category. Human life, in short, consists in the quest for the transcendent referent in a world of slippery signifiers.

Yet how can any human sign even attempt to express this ultimate *res*? Augustine's initial efforts peter out in silence:

Have I spoken something, have I uttered something, worthy of God? No, I feel that all I have done is to wish to speak; if I did say something, it is not what I wanted to say. How do I know this? Simply because God is unspeakable. . . . It is better to evade this verbal conflict silently than to quell it disputatiously. (*De Doct. Chr.* 1.6.6)⁸⁰

What signifier can express the unspeakable? We seem to be back to the fundamental distrust of language seen in *The Teacher*. If God is unspeakable, and all signs are made to point to Him, then no sign is possible: only silence remains. Yet the impasse is only temporary. If human signs are powerless to reach the absolute *res*, Augustine rests on the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was

⁷⁹ "Res ergo aliae sunt, quibus fruendum est, aliae quibus utendum, aliae quae fruuntur et utuntur."

⁸⁰ "Diximusne aliquid et sonimus aliquid dignum deo? Immo vero nihil me aliud quam dicere voluisse sentio; si autem dixi, non hoc est quod dicere volui. Hoc unde scio, nisi quia deus ineffabilis est? . . . Quae pugna verborum silentio cavenda potius quam voce pacanda est."

with God and the Worde was God The Worde was made flesh, and dwelt among vs" (John 1: 1). Since human words could not reach the unspeakable, the unspeakable reached down and spoke with human voice:

All other things may be expressed in some way; He alone is ineffable, Who spoke and all things were made. He spoke, and we were made; but we are unable to speak of Him. His Word, by Whom we were spoken, is His Son. He was made weak, so that He might be spoken by us, despite our weakness. (*En. in Ps.* 99.6)⁸¹

To describe the Incarnation, Augustine uses a bold linguistic metaphor:

And what was the manner of his coming, if not this: "The word was made flesh and lived among us" [John 1: 14]? When we speak, the word which we hold in our mind becomes a sound in order that what we have in our mind may pass through ears of flesh into the listener's mind: this is called speech. Our thought, however, is not converted into the same sound, but remains intact in its own home, suffering no diminution from its change as it takes the form of a word in order to make its way into the ears. In the same way the word of God became flesh in order to live in us but was unchanged. (*De Doct. Chr.* 1.13.12)⁸²

The radical nature of this pronouncement may at first elude us. We need to be reminded of the classical view of the *logos*. Heninger explains it well: "The Greek *logos* does not mean the uttered word, but rather the *idea* that the word *signifies*. To use the familiar terminology of Saussure, the *logos* is the 'signified,' not the 'signifier.'"⁸³ Yet let us follow the analogy of Augustine's comparison: If God the Father is the transcendental signified, the divine *res*, then Christ is the transcenden-

⁸¹ "Postremo cetera dici possunt utcumque; ille solus est ineffabilis, qui dixit, et facta sunt omnia. Dixit, et facti sumus: sed nos eum dicere non possumus. Verbum eius quo dicti sumus, Filius eius est; ut a nobis utcumque infirmis diceretur, factus est infirmus." English translation in Colish, p. 35.

⁸² "Quomodo venit, nisi quod *verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis*? Sicuti cum loquimur, ut id, quod animo gerimus, in audientis animum per aures carnes inlabatur, fit *sonus* verbum quod corde gestamus, et locutio vocatur, nec tamen in eundem sonum cogitatio nostra convertitur, sed apud se manens integra, formam vocis qua se insinuat auribus, sine aliqua labe suae mutationis adsumit: ita *verbum dei non commutatum caro tamen factum est, ut habitaret in nobis*." *De Doct. Chr.* is not the only work in which Augustine uses this illustration. For a more detailed investigation of this favored comparison, see chap. 3 of *Faith and the Creed* (*De fide et symbolo*).

⁸³ Heninger, "Spenser, Sidney, and Poetic Form," p. 146, and repeated in *Subtext of Form*, p. 44.

tal *signifier*, the *verbum*⁸⁴ which translates God's unspeakable essence into human speech (and action). Through the Incarnation, God has privileged not only the human body, but also human language (through the *uttered* word of Christ, and the *written* word of Scripture).⁸⁵ It is the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, that communicates this Sign to humankind, both through the general illumination of the human mind and, as a special instance of this illumination, through the written Word. In this divine Sign there is no arbitrariness or slippage, and in it all human signs have their referent.

So the Word is both Christ and the Holy Scriptures. The relationship between the two, set out by the hermeneutics of *On Christian Doctrine*, is far from casual. The chain of signifiers within the written Word lead to Christ, the living Word and the transcendental signifier. Not only is he the obvious focus of the New Testament (NT), but the Old Testament (OT) anticipates and prepares for his coming. Augustine sees the historical panorama delineated in the Bible as centering on Christ. In the OT the stage is set by the Fall—the reason for His coming—and continues with the history of the people chosen to give birth to Him, while in the NT the focus is on Christ's words and actions, and on the Church, which is His body and therefore "the corporate extension of the Word into the present."⁸⁶ The forward-looking signs of the OT include typological signs foreshadowing His mission, the elucidation of which takes up so much of Augustine's hermeneutical effort, while the NT Church is augmented by two powerful "super-signs" that look back to Christ's death and resurrection: baptism and communion.⁸⁷ All these signs, on their various levels, have the *Logos* as their Signifier; and through Him, God the Father as their Signified.

The essence of the scriptural message, according to Augustine's continued exploration of the *res* in *On Christian Doctrine*, can be re-

⁸⁴ Or *sermo* (speech), as Erasmus, stirring up the learned community of the early 16th century, translated the *logos* of John 1. See Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1977). Erasmus, according to Boyle, built his "theological methodology" on the Word.

⁸⁵ See Andrew Louth, "Augustine on Language," *Journal of Literature & Theology* 3:2 (1989): 151–58.

⁸⁶ Colish, p. 60.

⁸⁷ In *De Doct. Chr.* 3.9.13 Augustine argues that while the typological and ritual signs of the OT (such as the law and the offerings) spoke to the patriarchs and prophets about Christ, the present-day Christian, living *after* Christ's death and resurrection, needs only a few easy signs, such as baptism and communion. (In this wider discussion of signs, we should remember that the *linguistic* sign was for Augustine just a special category within semiology.)

duced to Christ's words: "you shall love your neighbour as yourself" but God 'with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind' (Matthew 22: 37-39, quoted in *De Doct. Chr.* 1.22.21). For Augustine the message of the Word, not surprisingly, boils down to the quest for the transcendental signified. Human love parallels (or is simply a different name for) the use of signs: only the Creator is to be enjoyed/loved for his own sake, while creation should be used/loved for the Creator's sake:

Someone who attends to and worships a thing which is meaningful but remains unaware of its meaning is a slave to a sign. But the person who attends to or worships a useful sign, one divinely instituted, and does realize its force and significance, does not worship a thing which is only apparent and transitory but rather the thing to which all such things are to be related [i.e., God]. (*De Doct. Chr.* 3.9.13)⁸⁸

Sin, in this system, is to be "a slave to a sign," to find the final meaning in one of the lesser signifiers by loving it for its own sake. When this linguistic fall takes place, lust replaces our love for God:

By love I mean the impulse of one's mind to enjoy God on his own account and to enjoy oneself and one's neighbour on account of God; and by lust I mean the impulse of one's mind to enjoy oneself and one's neighbour and any corporeal thing not on account of God. (*De Doct. Chr.* 3.10.16)⁸⁹

The existential quest for the transcendental sign, as Augustine establishes at great length in *The City of God*, has far-reaching ethical and political ramifications. The two loves of *On Christian Doctrine* create two cities, the city of man and the city of God, the former containing those lost among the signifiers and the latter those whose quest leads them towards the transcendent signified. In the final analysis, both ethics and politics are simply adjuncts to Augustine's theology of the sign.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ "Sub signo enim servit, qui operatur aut veneratur aliquam rem significantem, nesciens, quid significet: qui vero aut operatur aut veneratur utile signum divinitus institutum, cuius vim significationemque intellegit, non hoc veneratur, quod videtur et transit, sed illud potius, quo talia cuncta referenda sunt." The context of this quotation is Augustine's discussion of the sacraments.

⁸⁹ "Caritatem voco motum animi ad fruendum deo propter ipsum et se atque proximo propter deum; cupiditatem autem motum animi ad fruendum se et proximo et quolibet corpore non propter deum."

⁹⁰ See William S. Babcock, "Caritas and Signification in *De doctrina christiana* 1-3," in Arnold and Bright, p. 157.

V

If Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* is preeminently about language, then it is not inappropriate to study the text from the perspective of modern linguistic theory. Jonathan Goldberg in one such study points out that Redcrosse is named "only through a sign."⁹¹ I shall even go further and argue that Redcrosse *forms* a sign. Yet what does this explicit semiology mean for our interpretation of the Legend of Holiness? For Goldberg it carries clear poststructuralist implications. Following Derrida's lead, he draws the conclusion that any meaning in the text is dogged by difference and therefore "endlessly deferred." I believe Goldberg's analysis captures certain aspects of Book 1, but Spenser's own vantage point is forgotten in the process. The poem was after all composed within a context of patristic and humanistic speculation about words and the Word. That context can incorporate certain of Derrida's insights, yet within a completely different framework. Our seminal subtext will instead remain *On Christian Doctrine*.

Augustine's *City of God*, as we shall see in the next chapter, provides an overt pattern for The Legend of Holiness, yet *On Christian Doctrine* is of equal, if more subtle importance.⁹² The opposing cities of the *City of God*, Jerusalem and Babylon, furnish the book's structural poles, yet it is Redcrosse's love for the two ladies that creates the momentum of the plot. In Augustine we find the link between structure and plot: "These two cities are caused by two kinds of love: Jerusalem is caused by the love of God; Babylon is caused by the love of the world" (*En. in Ps.* 64.2).⁹³ Redcrosse's changing loves propel the plot towards the structural centers: love of Una towards the new Jerusalem, love of Duessa towards the House of Pride. Yet Redcrosse's choices involve more than plot. As we have seen, the two loves were for Augustine intimately connected with his theory of signs. Misdirected love, or lust, is equated with bondage to lower signs. Redcrosse's loss of Una and

⁹¹ Jonathan Goldberg, *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1981), p. 7.

⁹² Patrick Grant, in *Images and Ideas in Literature of the English Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1979), also uses *De Doct. Chr.* (together with *Conf.*) as the starting point for a study of Redcrosse's shield (pp. 33-60). We approach Book 1 with similar aims, but while Grant focuses on the *image* of the cross, I will look at "Redcrosse" as a *sign*. For additional support of the linking of Augustinian semiology to Redcrosse's quest, see John N. King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990), p. 212.

⁹³ "Duas istas ciuitates faciunt duo amores: Ierusalem facit amor Dei; Babyloniam facit amor saeculi." My translation. See also *De Civ. Dei* 14.28.

willful attachment to Duesse ("Will was his guide" [FQ 1.2.12]) demonstrate his fall from *caritas* to *cupiditas*,⁹⁴ from the city of God to the city of man. Yet it also indicates his separation from the *Unity* of the transcendental sign and his bondage to the *Duplicity* of postlapsarian language. The larger part of the Legend of Holiness is therefore an investigation of the linguistic havoc created by the Fall. It is no coincidence that the allusions to the Fall and to Babel, glossing Redcrosse's moral and spiritual deterioration, are also key texts in medieval or renaissance discussions of language. The serpent's successful temptation of Adam and Eve not only damaged their relationship with God, but also undid the natural and unified sign. And the building of the prideful tower led not only to the scattering abroad of its inhabitants, but to further linguistic confusion.

Goldberg claims that Redcrosse "enters the poem clothed as another; the 'blondie Crosse he bore' (2.1) names him only through a sign." I would argue, however, that he is not simply "a sign of someone else,"⁹⁵ but that the young man and the "mightie armes" together form the two halves of the sign "Redcrosse." I also would suggest that it is Una, as "Truth," that holds the sign together, vouching for its epistemological validity. It is she who unites the "clownishe young man,"⁹⁶ an untried and therefore empty signifier, with the armor, an exacting signified. The young knight initially views himself a *natural* sign, a signifier immutably united with its concept, but his quest shows that a signifier in a fallen world remains a vagrant thing. Even with Una by his side, he faces difficulties. Within a few stanzas of the first canto the two stray among "loftie trees yclad with sommers pride" (FQ 1.1.7), a first oblique allusion to Babel. Redcrosse soon fights an uneven battle with Error, whose vomit is "full of bookes and papers" (FQ 1.1.20), the dregs of language. Although Una rescues him for the moment, she is no guarantor of Redcrosse's linguistic and existential unity. A veil, which she has worn ever since her parents lost Eden, dims the brightness of her radiance. An emblem of her fallen condition, the veil will not be removed before the celebration of her apocalyptic

⁹⁴ See Zailig Pollock, "The Dragon, the Lady and the Dragon Lady in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*," *ESQ* 7:3 (Fall 1981): 270–81. On the connection between the divided self and the two cities, see Patricia L. MacKinnon, "Augustine's *City of God*: The Divided Self/The Divided *Civitas*," in *The City of God: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Dorothy F. Donald (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), pp. 319–52.

⁹⁵ Goldberg, p. 7. As we shall see at the end of this study, Goldberg is correct about the other; if in ways he has not anticipated.

⁹⁶ As Spenser describes him in the Letter to Raleigh.

marriage to Redcrosse. Even if that marriage is not "endlessly deferred," as Goldberg would have it,⁹⁷ its consummation will not take place until all lower signs have found rest in the transcendental Sign. Till then the world of *The Faerie Queene* remains one "of fissures, of losses, of disconnections,"⁹⁸ and Una herself, like T. S. Eliot's "Word in the desert," will be assailed by "Shrieking voices / Scoldings, mocking, or merely chattering."⁹⁹

If Una's veil is an emblem of the intellectual fog brought about by the Fall, at Archimago's hermitage Redcrosse experiences his own personal fall. Archimago, hating Una "as the hissing snake" (FQ 1.2.9), acts the archetypal tempter when he separates Redcrosse from her:

The guilefull great Enchaunter parts
The Redcrosse Knight from Truth:
Into whose stead faire falshood steps,
And workes him wofull ruth. (1.2.argument)

From now on Redcrosse, and the narrative with him, is jostled along slipping signifiers, a postlapsarian (even poststructuralist) world where nothing is what it *seems* (a favorite Spenserian expression). Words of deception play an increasingly important function, leading up to Despair's devilish rhetoric.¹⁰⁰ Verbal labels no longer have stable meanings as Duesse masquerades as Fidesse, Archimago as Redcrosse, and—most crucial—Redcrosse himself step by step severs the (never very stable) connection with his name. At his nadir in Orgoglio's dungeon the sign is finally broken as the knight, in exchange for Duesse's cares, has lost not only Una, but also his armor. As an abandoned signifier, he is contained in the prison house until Una and Arthur return the armor and reconstitute him as a sign.

United to Duesse, Redcrosse not only becomes a false sign himself, but also he simultaneously forfeits his ability to interpret other signs. Meeting his *doppelgänger* Fradubio, he is blind to the pointed references to his own situation, even after the true name and nature of his consort have been revealed.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Goldberg, p. 7.

⁹⁸ Goldberg, p. 173.

⁹⁹ "Burnt Norton," lines 153–55. Cf. Abessa's "hollow howling, and lamenting cry, / Shamefully at her [i.e., Una] rayling all the way" (FQ 1.3.23).

¹⁰⁰ Despair, writes James Nohrberg, is "a manipulator of words unmatched anywhere else in the poem" (*The Analogy of "The Faerie Queene"*, 2nd edn. [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980], p. 152).

¹⁰¹ On Redcrosse (and Fradubio) as a second Adam, see Nohrberg, pp. 159–66.

Increasingly misjudging the words and labels of those around him, Redcrosse is drawn deeper into the vortex of Babel, and at the House of Pride its curse fully enters the Spenserian discourse. Babel, as Genesis taught and Augustine noted, means linguistic confusion (*De Civ. Dei* 16.4). The confusion of signs and minds was a punishment for the building of the “famous tower”:

These signs could not be shared by all nations, because of the sin of human disunity by which each one sought hegemony for itself. This pride is signified by the famous tower raised towards heaven at the time when wicked men justly received incompatible languages to match their incompatible minds. (*De Doct. Chr.* 2.4.5)¹⁰²

This pandemic confusion implicates not only the protagonists within Spenser’s fiction, but also us as readers of the fiction. When the poet sounds a warning at the start of canto 7, it is directed not just at Redcrosse, but also at us:

What man so wise, what earthly wit so ware,
As to descry the crafty cunning traine,
By which deceit doth maske in visour faire,
And cast her colours dyed deepe in graine,
To seeme like Truth, whose shape she well can faine,
And fitting gestures to her purpose frame,
The guillesse man with guile to entertain?
Great maistresse of her art was that false Dame,
The false *Duessa*, cloked with *Fidessaes* name. (FQ 1.7.1)

The Duessan deceit is ever-present in the language of the poem, as indeed in all human discourse.

All along, the reader to an extent has shared the hero’s interpretative difficulties. We no more than Redcrosse are led initially to suspect the “aged Sire” of the “little lowly Hermitage,” lovingly situated next to “a Cristall streame” (FQ 1.1.29,34). Yet Spenser in the next stanza separates the reader from the hero’s limited perspective by hinting that things are not what they appear. A hermit that can “file his tongue as smooth as glas” is not to be trusted; and when the hermit begins to tell “of Saintes and Popes,” Spenser’s Protestant readers have their suspicions aroused, and then confirmed when Archimago’s true self is re-

¹⁰² “Ista signa igitur non potuerunt communia esse omnibus gentibus peccato quodam dissensionis humanae, cum ad se quisque principatum rapit. Cuius superbiae signum est erecta illa turris in caelum, ubi homines impii non solum animos, sed etiam voces dissinas habere meruerunt.”

vealed. For a while the dramatic irony is maintained. Redcrosse misreads his signs, while we are given enough authorial guidance to reach sounder conclusions. This double perspective, however, becomes blurred as we get closer to the House of Pride; and once inside, we are as likely to be fooled by fair-seeming words, including those of the narrator, as Redcrosse himself. Both poem and reader, Spenser pointedly demonstrates, share the effects of the Fall.

The interpretative confusion comes to a head with the first stanza of canto 5:

The noble hart, that harbours vertuous thought,
And is with child of glorious great intent,
Can neuer rest, untill it forth haue brought
Th’eternall brood of glorie excellent:
Such restlesse passion did all night torment
The flaming corage of that Faery knight,
Deuizing, how that doughtie turnament
With greatest honour he atchieuen might;
Still did he wake, and still did watch for dawning light.

The first four lines might possibly be construed as voicing Redcrosse’s “restlesse passion,” but this cannot be maintained for the stanza as a whole. Rather, the voice of the narrator blends with Redcrosse’s in praise of the “glorie excellent” to be achieved in the “doughty” fight against Sansjoy. A number of critics have joined the chorus of praise; but surely, are they not as misled as Redcrosse and the narrator? To say with the narrator, “So th’one for wrong, the other strues for right” (FQ 1.5.8 and 9), is clearly to be afflicted with Redcrosse’s myopia. Let us not forget that Redcrosse is still within the House of Pride, which he should never have entered in the first place. As Douglas Brooks-Davies stresses: “What Lucifera and her palace signify for Redcrosse is summed up in his fight there with Sansjoy for the shield of Sansfoy.”¹⁰³ The “victors glory” (FQ 1.4.39) he fights for is not the shield of faith, but that of Sansfoy, its very opposite. It is symptomatic that he wins the battle because he misconstrues Duessa’s call of encouragement, aimed at Sansjoy: “The conquest yours, I yours, the shield, and glory yours” (FQ 1.5.14). The glory may be his, but it comes at the cost of a continuing fealty to Duessa.

The confusion of Babel, particularized through Redcrosse’s inter-

¹⁰³ Douglas Brooks-Davies, in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A.C. Hamilton et al. (Toronto and Buffalo: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 441.

pretative blindness, manifests itself in the devious use of the word "glory," so central to *The Faerie Queene* as a whole.¹⁰⁴ Again, the Augustinian context provides a clue. "The City of God," explains Peter Brown, "is a book about 'glory.' In it, Augustine drains the glory from the Roman past in order to project it far beyond the reach of men, into the 'Most glorious City of God'."¹⁰⁵ The city of man, like Redcrosse in the House of Pride, "seeks the praise of men" and "lifts up its head in its own boasting," while the heavenly city glories in God (*De Civ. Dei* 14.28).¹⁰⁶ When we overhear Redcrosse's confession during his vision of the New Jerusalem, we know a radical change has taken place: "Worthy wretch (quoth he) of so great grace, / How dare I thinke such glory to attaine?" (*FQ* 1.10.62). This clearly is not the glory of Duessa. The change in Redcrosse, of course, has taken place within the House of Holiness, and it is here that we find Spenser's (and the traditional Christian) response to the curse of Babel.

After Una, once again united with her knight, has rescued Redcrosse from Despair's "vaine words" (*FQ* 1.9.53), she takes him to Caelia, the heavenly guardian of "an auntient house," "Renownd throughout the world for sacred lore, / And pure vnspotted life" (*FQ* 1.10.3). Caelia together with her two sisters Speranza and Charissa embody the three theological virtues, the "faith, hope and charity" of 1 Corinthians 13 that also provided the structure for countless catechisms, going back to Augustine's influential *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love*.¹⁰⁷ What is immediately striking is how the erratic signs we have met earlier in the book have their true counterparts within the house. While Abessa represents false piety, Caelia's "bidding of her bedes" is a true emblem of her "good and godly deedes" (*FQ* 1.10.3). Similarly, the old hermit who resides on the Mount of Contemplation is a sign in which signifier and signified form a meaningful unity, in contradistinction to Archimago's hypocritical hermit. And most important, while Fidessa was a cover-up for Duessa, the very symbol of linguistic duplicity, Fidelia ("Faith") shows Redcrosse a way out of the labyrinth. Duessa had deceived the knight through the mis-

¹⁰⁴ Spenser in the Letter to Raleigh states that by Queen Gloriana, and thus metonymically *The Faerie Queene* as a whole, "I meane glory in my generall intention."

¹⁰⁵ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (London: Faber, 1967), p. 311. See also Louis J. Swift, "Defining Gloria in Augustine's *City of God*," in Donnelly, pp. 277–88.

¹⁰⁶ "... quærit ab hominibus gloriam . . . in gloria sua exaltat caput suum."

¹⁰⁷ The first edition of Calvin's *Institutes*, for example, was structured around the three theological virtues. The *Enchiridion* proved important to the Legend of Holiness in other ways as well, as we shall see in the next chapter.

use of words; Fidelia now restores him through the right use of the Word.¹⁰⁸

Spenser operates within a tradition stretching beyond Augustine back to the NT when he makes Fidelia enter with "a booke, that was both signd and seald with blood" (*FQ* 1.10.13). The two theological meanings of the Logos—Christ and the Scriptures—are here conflated. Fidelia's book contains the written Word of God, which is "both signd and seald" by the blood of the Son of God, the living Word. Human intellect and language being confused, the words of the book are "darke" and "hard to be vnderstood," but solving this difficulty is Fidelia's role. What the "weaker wit of man" can "neuer reach," her "words diuine" reveal: "she him taught celestiall discipline, / And opened his dull eyes, that light mote in them shine" (*FQ* 1.10.18–19). Just as Christ the Savior is the theological bridge from alienation to wholeness, so Christ the Word, dispensed by Fidelia, is the linguistic bridge from confusion to comprehension. Or seen from the human perspective, Redcrosse's understanding of the words of the Scriptures leads him to the Word, the transcendent Signifier, which in turn provides the basis for his deciphering other linguistic and existential signs.¹⁰⁹

Of Fidelia's four (very Augustinian) themes, "Of God, of grace, of iustice, of free will," Spenser has already given allegorical prominence to the second. Prince Arthur, and in particular the shield he carries, is a vehicle for the saving grace needed to free Redcrosse from Orgoglio, the overt manifestation of the knight's own *cupiditas*. The shield, sharing important features with Una, carries linguistic significance. Its chief stone shines as brightly as Una's countenance, and like her face it "all closely couer'd was, / Ne might of mortall eye be euer seene" (*FQ* 1.7.33).¹¹⁰ Both represent God's illuminating light, burning away the fog of confusion. Una's presence, even when she is covered with the veil, saves Redcrosse from his worst interpretative blunders, while the shield exposes even the "bloudie wordes" of Archimagean deceit:

¹⁰⁸ To these examples we may add John King's observation that "Errour's 'bookes and papers' parody the Bible carried by Fidelia, a figure for true faith," while Fidelia's sacramental cup filled with "wine and water" has its counterpart in Duessa's cup of "secret poison" (*Spenser's Poetry*, pp. 85 and 92; see also pp. 130–31).

¹⁰⁹ See *De Doct. Chr.* 2.5.6.

¹¹⁰ The radiance from both is compared to the sun (cf. 1.3.4 with 1.7.34), and both Arthur and Una are associated with grace. In the first stanza of canto 8 it is not clear whether the "heavenly grace" of line 3 refers to Una (mentioned in lines 5–9) or to Arthur (mentioned in line 9).

No magicke arts hereof had any might,

Nor bloudie wordes of bold Enchaunters call,

But all that was not such, as seemd in sight,

Before that shield did fade, and suddaine fall.

(FQ 1.7.35)

All through the poem Spenser has warned the reader that in a fallen world many signs are not what they seem. The divine Word, however, exposes false significations and establishes interpretative bearings.

The key lesson Redcrosse learns from his encounter with the Word is self-knowledge. He began his quest with a grandiose opinion of himself as a natural sign, but the House of Holiness teaches him humility. The sign "Redcrosse" has validity only to the extent that its meaning is provided by an *other*: the divine Logos, who alone is worthy to carry the name and the armor. This is the crowning lesson. *Contemplation* teaches the "man of earth" (FQ 1.10.52), as the young knight's real name is revealed to be:

Thence she [a fairy] thee brought into this Faerie lond,

And in an heaped furrow did thee hyde,

Where thee a Ploughman all vnweeting fond,

As he his toylesome teme that way did guyde,

And brought thee vp in ploughmans state to byde,

Whereof *Georgos* he thee gaue to name.

(FQ 1.10.66)

It is true that as the dragon-slayer he is *Saint George*, but that is still in the future. For now he is reduced to earth, a Piers Plowman or an Adam, needing to "put . . . on the Lord IESVS CHRIST" (Romans 13:14). My use of Pauline language is deliberate. The biblical passage provides the key to our interpretation of the knight's armor and to the last cantos of the book.¹¹¹ Only when George puts on the armor of Christ can he defeat the dragon and deliver Una's parents. Only when the sign "Redcrosse" is anchored in the transcendental Logos does it have the necessary validity.

The "putting on of Christ" also carries clear sacramental connotations. The sacraments of baptism and communion are intimately connected with Redcrosse's quest; it is not by coincidence that the knight is strengthened by the well of life and the balm from the tree of life during his dragon-fight.¹¹² And as we saw earlier, the sacraments were

¹¹¹ Cf. Darryl J. Gless's entry on "armor of God" in the *Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 62, as well as his *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 44–47, and 52–57.

¹¹² See John King's entry on "sacraments" in the *Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 623.

for Augustine "supersigns" that linked the believer to the Logos. This was indeed the context in which most Elizabethans encountered discussions about signs. "Concerninge that whiche wee call signe," Theodore Beza commented on the communion, "wee meane not by that word a bare signe, naked and emptie, . . . but wee vnderstande of signes which represente to vs most great and excellent thinges, declared effectuallye in the liuely word of God."¹¹³ Protracted altercations between Catholics and Protestants (or within the Protestant fold) on how to view the "signs" of bread and wine ensured the topic's perennial interest. That Redcrosse initially views himself as a natural sign takes on new significance if seen from a Reformed vantage-point. Unlike the papists (argued Beza) who confuse the bread and wine with Christ, "wee confound not the signes with the thing signified, nor abolish the substaunce of the signes, but make a distinction of that which is conioyned."¹¹⁴ Beza's point is analogous to the lesson learned on the Mount of Contemplation: Redcrosse is an earthly signifier "conioyned" to a heavenly Signified, while what Beza considered theapist view of the sign parallels Redcrosse's initial sacrilege. Obliterating the distinction between the earthly and the heavenly components of the sign, the proud knight becomes an easy prey to the wiles of the Roman Duesse.¹¹⁵

If readers are implicated in Redcrosse's linguistic alienation, they are also urged to follow him in his pursuit of wholeness, or holiness. Words, the confused reminders of the Fall, are at the same time the only road to the Word.¹¹⁶ Spenser's allegorical method is simply an extension of the basic reading of signs. As the signifier "indicates" the signified, so the allegorical figures indicate mental constructions, and the two halves form the allegorical sign, a "*signum translatum*," to use Augustinian vocabulary.¹¹⁷ As we have seen in the case of Fidesse, these signs, like the ordinary verbal sign, may be erratic. Yet, as August-

¹¹³ Theodore Beza, *A briefe and pithie Summe of the Christian faith*, trans. Robert Fyll (London: 1572), sig. 57r. The Augustinian context of the section on the sacraments is underlined by numerous marginal references to the Father's works.

¹¹⁴ Beza, sig. 60r.

¹¹⁵ For further explorations of the theological dangers of the "natural sign," see King, *Spenser's Poetry*, p. 68, and David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 35–36. See also Ernest B. Gilman, *Iconoclasm and Poetry in the English Reformation* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 38–39.

¹¹⁶ See Michael Edwards, *Towards a Christian Poetics* (London: Macmillan, 1984), which has been a general influence throughout this chapter.

¹¹⁷ Colish, p. 60.

tine takes pains to demonstrate in *On Christian Doctrine*, allegory and typology are important hermeneutical tools. There can be no doubt that Spenser designed the Legend of Holiness, immersed as it is in biblical allusions,¹¹⁸ to be a vessel for the Word. He urges the reader to join Redcrosse in the quest for the transcendental Sign.

CHAPTER 4

Politics

The Two Kingdoms

This doth S. Augustyne proue in these wordes. Seyng that we be made of soule and of boddy / as longe as we do lyve in this temporalle lyffe we must vse / to the norysheyng of this lyffe / these temporalle goodes[.] Therfore muste we of that parte that belongthe to this liffe be subiect vn to powers / that is / vn to men that do minister worldly thynges with some honour / but as conseryng that parte / wherby we beleue in god and be callyd vn to his kyngdum we ought not to be subiect vn to any man that wille peruerse that same thyng in vs / that hath plesyd god to geue vs eternalle liffe.
—Robert Barnes¹

So far we have investigated how the vertical and horizontal Augustinian perspectives affected renaissance views on psychology, epistemology and semiology. In this final chapter we shall move out into the larger world of politics, specifically into the contentious area of the political power of the “city of God,” whether seen as official Church or the communion of saints, and the “city of man,” the secular society to which every Christian must relate. This topic may appear tangential to a discussion about politics, yet it focuses on one of the hottest political controversies in sixteenth-century Europe. My strategy will be slightly different from the earlier chapters in that the political position of the young Augustine, due to his reticence on the subject, will be explained largely through the writings of another Church Father, Eusebius of Caesarea, who influenced the thinking of both Augustine and his spiritual mentor Ambrose. The mature Augustine, on the other hand, wrote copiously on the topic in the *City of God*, Book 19 of which will provide our basic proof text.

In 1522 Juan Luis Vives, the Spanish humanist who later tutored Princess Mary, after long labors dedicated a new Latin edition of the

¹ Robert Barnes, *A supplication . . . unto Henry VIII* (n.p., 1531), fol. 121v. STC 1470.

¹¹⁸ See Naseeb Shaheen, *Biblical References in “The Faerie Queene”* (Memphis: Memphis State Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 61–100.

City of God to Henry VIII.² The dedication reveals what standing the bishop of Hippo had reached by the 1520s: Augustine, Vives writes the king, is "a writer knowne of all, and familiar to you."³ The message of the *City of God* was timely, Vives intimates in his dedication, since Augustine had been involved in a task similar to that of King Henry, the "Defender of the Faith": "You and Saint Augustines point and purpose in writing, seeme almost to intend and attaine the same end. For as you wrote for that better Rome against Babilon, so Saint Augustine against Babilon defended that ancient, Christian and holier Rome." The writing "against Babilon" on behalf of the papacy ("that better Rome") was of course the king's celebrated refutation of Luther, the *Assertio* of 1521.⁴ In typical medieval fashion Vives has identified the city of God with the papacy, yet his association of Babylon with Lutheran heresies is obviously a new twist. But by one of the many ironies of history, within a decade the political theories of the "Babylonian" Luther were shaping Henry VIII's official policy. And by another twist, that policy was based on Luther's reinterpretation of the political theory of the *City of God*. However, Eusebius of Caesarea had provided a different, highly influential pattern for Tudor political thinking, a position initially embraced also by the young Augustine before changing circumstances forced him to reformulate his views in the *City of God*. This chapter will investigate the history of these competing ideologies and their Tudor pedigrees before trying them out on Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, a work that seems caught in the crossfire between two incompatible views.

I

During its first three centuries Christianity had been of marginal political importance. Indeed, because of long periods of intense persecution the early Christians had often perceived Roman society as an un-

² Vives' edition, which included his own copious commentary, became part of Erasmus' edition of Augustine's *Opera omnia*, published by Froben in 1528–1529.

³ Augustine, *The city of God: with the learned comments of Io. Lodericus Vives*, trans. John Healey, 2nd ed. (London, 1620). STC 917. Vives' dedicatory letter and Henry VIII's reply are printed immediately after the title page on unnumbered pages. I am citing the second rather than the first edition of 1610 since it has been "compared with the Latine Originall, and in very many places corrected and amended" (title page).

⁴ *Assertio septem sacramentorum aduersus M. Lutherum* (London, 1521). STC 13078. It has been questioned whether Henry actually wrote the work himself, but the papacy rewarded him for it by making him *fidei defensor* in 1524.

mitigated evil. Using the vocabulary of Revelation, early Fathers like Tertullian not seldom delineated church and state in stark apocalyptic terms as the New Jerusalem and Babylon.⁵ All of this had changed, however, with the deathbed conversion of Constantine in 337. Earlier apprehensions about political interference in the affairs of the church were suddenly replaced by a much more optimistic view of the secular powers. The empire was no longer an enemy of the church, but an ally in the fight against pagan surroundings.

Eusebius of Caesarea, whose thought was deeply indebted to Origen and through him to Middle Platonism,⁶ became the spokesman for a new imperial theology in which "the monarch represents God on earth, he is God's image as his monarchy is the image of God's kingdom."⁷ After recording the history of Roman persecution against the early church in his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius could end the work on a note of praise "to the pious emperor with his sons, so dear to God."⁸ He proclaimed the new ideology in two orations presented before the emperor in 335 and 336, and later appended to his *Life of Constantine*.⁹ Timothy Barnes explains the purpose of one of the orations: "The greater part of the *Panegyric* consists of variations and elaborations on a single theme: the similarity of Constantine to Christ. The empire of Constantine is a replica of the kingdom of heaven, the manifestation on earth of that ideal monarchy which exists in the celestial realm. Constantine governs with his eyes ever gazing upward, patterning himself on the divine model of monarchical rule."¹⁰ According to Eusebius, Christ's mission and the Roman Empire had a single divine origin: "Together, at the same critical moment, as if from a single divine will, two beneficial shoots were produced for mankind:

⁵ See Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's "City of God" and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), pp. 295–301.

⁶ Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 99–100. My brief account of Eusebius is based largely on this seminal work.

⁷ R.A. Markus, *From Augustine to Gregory the Great* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1983), IV: 344. On Eusebius' appropriation of Hellenistic political theory, see also Glenn F. Chesnut, "Eusebius, Augustine, Orosius, and the Later Patristic and Medieval Christian Historians," in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1992), pp. 701–02.

⁸ Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, trans. G.A. Williamson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 414.

⁹ Constantine himself had set the tone in the *Speech to the Assembly of the Saints*, presented to a Christian audience sometime between 321 and 324 (see Barnes, pp. 73–76).

¹⁰ Barnes, p. 254.

the empire of the Romans and the teachings of true worship."¹¹ The emperor ("God's friend") plays a crucial role in bringing mankind to the heavenly kingdom:

And in this God's friend henceforth shall participate, having been furnished by God with natural virtues and having received in his soul the emanations from that place. His ability to reason has come from the Universal Logos, his wisdom from communion with Wisdom, goodness from contact with the Good, and justness from his association with Justice. (*In Praise*, p. 89)

Indeed, the emperor is almost divine in his mission. As Barnes writes, "like the Savior of the world, Constantine prepares men for the kingdom of God."¹² Or as Eusebius himself puts it: "As the Universal Savior renders the entire heaven and earth and highest kingdom fit for His Father, so his friend, leading his subjects on earth to the Only-Begotten and Savior Logos, makes them suitable for His kingdom" (*In Praise*, p. 85). In Eusebius' ordered and vertical universe, the Christian emperor is head not only of the state but of the state religion, leading the human kingdom towards the heavenly kingdom, different from each other only in degree.

Ambrose, bishop of Milan (then the capital of the western part of the empire) and Augustine's spiritual mentor, had incorporated Eusebian imperialism into his neoplatonic theology, and his North-African convert was duly influenced. Not that the young Augustine was very much interested in politics per se; he saw society rather as a means of reaching beyond the temporal. As R.A. Markus explains,

Being part of the all-embracing order in the world, human society is one of the stages of man's advance towards God. Hence the importance of ensuring that the social order really does conform to the divinely established order of the universe. Like Plato long ago, Augustine seemed to think, at this stage of his career, that this would be secured by making sure of the perfection of the ruler. . . . Thus under the guidance of the wise ruler emancipated from the appeal of what is temporary and partial, the social order assists men in advancing towards their goal. This advance is accomplished by reason, within a universe conceived as substantially accessible to human comprehension.¹³

¹¹ Eusebius, *In Praise of Constantine*, trans. H.A. Drake (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1976), p. 120. This translation comprises Eusebius' two orations: *Panegyric to Constantine* and *Treatise on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher*, which are often added as an appendix to the *Life of Constantine*. References to the orations will be given in the text by page.

¹² Barnes, p. 254.

¹³ R.A. Markus, *Saculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), p. 78. Disagreeing with Markus, van Oort (pp. 154-63) believes that even the young Augustine never adhered to an Eusebian vision of the Roman Empire as a Christian state.

Augustine was rather slow to draw the political conclusions from his philosophy, and he did not give it much space in his early writings. His adherence to a Eusebian "Christian Empire" reached its zenith about the turn of the fifth century, but it proved a short-lived infatuation.¹⁴ When Rome was sacked by Germanic tribes in 410, his civic optimism was shattered. The shock waves from this blow to Roman civic pride spread throughout the Empire and led him to construct a new and hugely influential political synthesis, expressed in the *City of God* (written between ca. 416-426).¹⁵ The work, as Markus explains, "is a radical and sustained rejection of the Eusebian type of view of the Empire".¹⁶

Like the ancients, Augustine believed that the life of the wise man is a social life; what must be rejected, he thought, is the claim that felicity can be found in it, that the *polis* can be the means of securing perfection. More fundamentally, what is being repudiated is the idea of a final end within the range of human achievement.¹⁷

Even without the sack of Rome it is likely that Augustine would have revised his political theory. The outward events shaking the Roman Empire had gone hand in hand with his changed theological and philosophical outlook. "Perfection" was no longer tenable—not just in the political sphere, but as a viable human possibility generally. His Pauline insights on sin and the fall, sharpened by his duels with Manicheans and Pelagians, had seen to that. Taking a new path, Augustine sought to avoid both early Christian distrust and more recent adulation of the state. In Frederick H. Russell's words, "Augustine emancipated Christianity from the unstable amalgam of the Roman yoke by pursuing a middle way, the way of ambivalence, between the earlier Christians who had seen themselves as a righteous but persecuted sect beset by a wicked Rome, and the Eusebian (and Ambrosian) apotheosis of the Roman Empire."¹⁸

¹⁴ In addition to Markus, p. 78, see John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 203-10.

¹⁵ If Augustine rejected some of the Eusebian heritage, he made good use of other parts. According to Chesnut, "Augustine was using the overview of history drawn from Eusebius' *Chronicle*," which had outlined the twin history of the Roman Empire and the Christian Church, "to attack the kind of theology of history that had appeared in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History and Life of Constantine*" (pp. 691-92).

¹⁶ Markus, *From Augustine*, p. 347.

¹⁷ Markus, *Saculum*, p. 83.

¹⁸ Frederick H. Russell, "Only Something Good Can Be Evil": The Genesis of Augustine's Secular Ambivalence," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 715. See also "The Political Thought of St. Augustine" in Ernest L. Fortin, *Classical Christianity and the Political Order*, ed. J. Brian Benestad (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), pp. 1-29.

We find Augustine's most influential discussion of the secular order in Book 19 of the *City of God*, which expounds the relationship between the heavenly and the earthly cities. The central passage of the book provides his mature definition of order.¹⁹ The context is a discussion of different types of peace:

The peace, then, of the body lies in the ordered equilibrium of all its parts; the peace of the irrational soul, in the balanced adjustment of its appetites; the peace of the reasoning soul, in the harmonious correspondence of conduct and conviction; the peace of the body and soul taken together, in the well-ordered life and health of the living whole. Peace between a mortal man and his Maker consists in ordered obedience, guided by faith, under God's eternal law; peace between man and man consists in regulated fellowship. The peace of a home lies in the ordered harmony of authority and obedience between the members of a family living together. The peace of the political community is an ordered harmony of authority and obedience between citizens. The peace of the heavenly City lies in a perfectly ordered and harmonious communion of those who find their joy in God and in one another in God. Peace, in its final sense, is the calm that comes of order. Order is an arrangement of like and unlike things whereby each of them is disposed in its proper place. (*De Civ. Dei* 19.13)²⁰

At first glance this may appear a simple restatement of Augustine's earlier position, yet there are fundamental differences. Instead of a single peace and a single vertical order, we have horizontal slices each defined by its own kind of peace and its own kind of order, with only the peace of the heavenly City "perfectly ordered." The preceding chapters had shown how little real peace and felicity there is to be found in the different human spheres. The life of virtue that according to Augustine's earlier philosophy was to come with education is now reduced to an unending war against temptation (*De Civ. Dei* 19.4), while in chapters 5 through 7 the different communities—family, city, world—are described in terms of their shortcomings: "the bigger it is, the fuller it is of dangers" (*De Civ. Dei* 19.7).²¹ The chapters following

¹⁹ On the doctrine of *ordo*, see Miikka Roukanen, *Theology of Social Life in Augustine's "De civitate Dei"* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), pp. 29–111.

²⁰ "Pax itaque corporis est ordinata temperatura partium, pax animae irrationalis ordinata requies appetitionum, pax animae rationalis ordinata cognitionis actionisque consensio, pax corporis et animae ordinata vita et salus animantis, pax hominis mortalis et Dei ordinata in fide sub aeterna lege obediencia, pax hominum ordinata concordia, pax domus ordinata imperandi atque obediendi concordia cohabitantium, pax civitatis ordinata imperandi atque obediendi concordia civium, pax caelestis civitatis ordinatissima et concordissima societas fruendi Deo et invicem in Deo, pax omnium rerum tranquillitas ordinis. Ordo est partium dispariumque rerum sua cuique loca tribuens dispositio."

²¹ "... quanto maior est, tanto periculis plenior."

the definition of peace quoted above do erect a progression of sorts from earthly to heavenly peace, but it turns out to be the fundamental distinction of the mature Augustine between *use* and *enjoyment*. The Christian, already saved by God's grace, is to use the earthly peace for a higher end:

In the earthly city, then, temporal goods are to be used with a view to the enjoyment of earthly peace, whereas in the heavenly City, they are used with a view to the enjoyment of eternal peace. . . . And because, so long as man lives in his mortal body and is a pilgrim far from the Lord, he walks, not by vision, but by faith. Consequently, he refers all peace of body and soul, or their combination, to that higher peace which unites a mortal man with the immortal God." (*De Civ. Dei* 19.14)²²

So while the vertical order has been ruptured by the Fall, and while no perfection is possible in this life—"Any peace we have on earth, whether the peace we share with Babylon or our own peace through faith, is more like a solace for unhappiness than the joy of beatitude" (*De Civ. Dei* 19.27)²³—Augustine nevertheless posits a positive space for the human city in his theology. In doing so he steers a hugely influential middle course between the withdrawal from society of the early Christians and the Christian imperialism of Eusebius.

Let us take a closer look at Augustine's middle way. Book 19 makes a basic differentiation between the city of God, which deals with humankind's eternal well-being, and the city of man, which deals with its civic well-being. Yet we have to make further discriminations in Augustine's use of terms. Sometimes the city of man (or "Babylon") represents the evil empire of the devil and his followers, including all those humans that are not citizens of the city of God. This indeed is the normal meaning in the *City of God*. Yet at other times, as here in Book 19, it stands for the civil state (in Augustine's time, the Roman), hovering between the "earthly" and the "heavenly" cities. As Markus explains, "Babylon" is both the city of the impious, and the secular sphere in which good pious Christians may discharge important functions.²⁴ The secular state is part of a divine plan, yet its purpose is not

²² "Omnis igitur usus rerum temporalium refertur ad fructum pacis terrenaе in terrenā civitate; in caelesti autem civitate refertur ad fructum pacis aeternae. . . . Et quoniam, quamdiu est in isto mortali corpore, peregrinatur a Domino: ambulat per fidem, non per speciem; ac per hoc omnem pacem vel corporis vel animae vel simul corporis et animae refert ad illam pacem, quae homini mortali est cum immortali Deo. . . ."

²³ "Sed hic sive illa communis sive nostra propria talis est pax, ut solacium miseriae sit potius quam beatitudinis gaudium."

²⁴ Markus, *Saeculum*, p. 59.

to lead mankind to eternal felicity, but "to deal with the disorganisation and conflict resulting from the Fall."²⁵ If it is not autonomous in relation to the city of God, it nevertheless has its own sphere of operation and its own more limited telos:

The earthly city which does not live by faith seeks only an earthly peace, and limits the goal of its peace, of its harmony of authority and obedience among its citizens, to the voluntary and collective attainment of objectives necessary to mortal existence. The heavenly City . . . must use this earthly peace. (*De Civ. Dei* 19.17)²⁶

Unlike Eusebius, Augustine no longer sees the rulers of the earthly city as a means of reaching God.²⁷ Yet their office is still part of a God-given order of a lesser magnitude, and the members of the city of God must obey their laws as long as they do not militate against a higher loyalty: the city of God

has no hesitation about keeping in step with the civil law which governs matters pertaining to our existence here below. For, as mortal life is the same for all, there ought to be a common cause between the two cities in what concerns our purely human living. (*De Civ. Dei* 19.17)²⁸

In other words, the Christian has dual citizenship and is expected to be an active member of both the earthly and the heavenly cities.

Yet if Augustine distanced himself from his earlier conflation of the two kingdoms into a Christian empire, as a Catholic bishop he soon became involved with combating the opposite challenge in the form of Donatism. The Donatists advocated a distinctly North-African church that was independent from both the Roman empire and the hierarchy of the established church (which they felt had compromised itself during earlier persecutions), and therefore fell back on the old isolationist dichotomy between Jerusalem (themselves) and Babylon

²⁵ Markus, *Saeculum*, p. 84.

²⁶ "Ita etiam terrena civitas, quae non vivit ex fide, terrenam pacem appetit in eoque defigit imperandi obediendique concordiam civium, ut sit eis de rebus ad mortalem vitam pertinentibus humanarum quaedam compositio, voluntatum. Civitas autem caelestis . . . etiam ista pace necesse est utatur."

²⁷ Augustine discusses the role of the Roman emperor in Book 5 of the *City of God*. See Richard J. Dougherty, "Christian and Citizen: The Tension in St. Augustine's *De civitate Dei*," in *Augustine: "Second Founder of the Faith"*, ed. Joseph C. Schnaubelt and Frederick Van Fleteren (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), pp. 205–24, esp. pp. 211–13.

²⁸ " . . . legibus terrenae civitatis, quibus haec administrantur, quae sustentandae mortali vitae accommodata sunt, obtemperare non dubitat, ut, quoniam communis est ipsa mortalitas, servetur in rebus ad eam pertinentibus inter civitatem utramque concordia."

(the rest of society, including the Catholic church).²⁹ Augustine fought hard against this view, and in his many anti-Donatist works increasingly he was forced to defend the active cooperation of church and state, even to the point of condoning governmental compulsion in the implementation of the edicts of the church. The Donatist challenge was in effect neutralized through state intervention. The ecclesiastical use of secular force is a less savory aspect of the Augustinian heritage that has earned the bishop the epithet "Father of the Inquisition," and it clearly strains his own distinction between the two kingdoms (without, however, conflating them into Eusebianism).³⁰ What can be said is that Augustine never envisioned a radically secular state; he saw the cooperation between the two kingdoms as part of the control of the wicked within the bonds of the *saeculum*.³¹

II

The millennium separating Augustine and Luther saw developments unforeseen by the bishop of Hippo. Yet as Walter Ullmann has explained, the age of Augustine set the tone: "It was in the late Roman period from the fourth to the fifth century that the foundations were laid for the basic conceptions and ideas relating to government."³² Christian imperialism acquired a rival when Pope Leo I (440–61) in the generation after Augustine propagated a papal-hierocratic political system based on the pope's supposed "plenitude of power"—that is, the claim of both spiritual and temporal power through the reduction of the political realm to the theological. Both papal and imperial theory, in Ullmann's terms, adhered to "descending" theocratic sys-

²⁹ Tyconius, a gifted Donatist theologian, propagated the dichotomy of Jerusalem and Babylon in a *Commentary on Revelation* (now lost). Tyconius' two cities provided Augustine with the framework for his own *City of God*. Yet while the Donatist view is truly "one-dimensional," Augustine's vision is multi-faceted and complex in its distinctions. It is unsettling, however, to see how often modern scholars collapse Augustine's political vision into Tyconian dichotomies.

³⁰ For good discussions of these strains, see ch. 6 of Markus, *Saeculum*, Rist, pp. 239–45, and Peter Iver Kaufman, "Redeeming Politics: Augustine's Cities of God," in *The City of God: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Dorothy F. Donnelly (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), pp. 75–91. On Augustine's juridical duties as Bishop of Hippo Regius, see Kauko K. Raikas, "St. Augustine on Juridical Duties: Some Aspects of the Episcopal Office in Late Antiquity," in Schnaubelt and Van Fleteren, pp. 467–83.

³¹ See *De Genesi ad litteram* 9.9.14.

³² Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Political Thought* (1965; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 19. This paragraph is in part based on Ullmann's account, esp. pp. 19–44.

tems influenced by neoplatonic ideas.³³ When the papacy lost contact with the Byzantine Emperors in the 8th century, the Franks filled the gap. The Donation of Pepin (754) inaugurated the temporal power of the popes through the grant of what was to become the Papal States, while the pope crowned Charlemagne Emperor of the West in 800. Meanwhile, the Donation of Constantine, a forgery finally exploded by Lorenzo Valla in the 15th century, granted the papacy even more: Constantine had purportedly given to the bishop of Rome the dominion formerly exercised by the Empire in Italy.

In between these papal and imperial extremes we can position the Augustinian vision as described in the *City of God*. Yet while the Augustinian terminology was retained, its meaning was diluted. As medieval society became permeated by Christianity, the distinction between the two cities became blurred. Finally, in the twelfth century—at about the time Frederick Barbarossa named his German kingdom the “Holy Roman Empire”—the writer of universal history Otto of Friesing felt that he had “been writing the history not of two cities but, almost, of one, which I call ‘Christendom.’”³⁴ But with only one “city” to rule, pope and emperor kept quarreling about their respective jurisdiction.³⁵

Some writers, however, such as William of Ockham returned to Augustine for support of the position that church and state had to be separated again. Objecting to papal jurisdiction in worldly matters, Ockham wanted to reinstate the secular state. He therefore cites the *City of God* to distinguish between an eternal and a temporal lord,³⁶

³³ Alan Gerwirth, ed., *The Defender of Peace*, by Marsilius of Padua, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1951), I: 14–16, shows how the papalist doctrine of plenitude of power was influenced by the ideas of “order” as expressed by the young Augustine. And the later opposition to the papalist theory, according to Gerwirth, took the form of the distinction between different forms of order that we recognize from the thought of the mature Augustine: “The papalist arguments from ‘order’ were answered by emphasizing that the situation is more complex than is indicated in their simple analogies: an order of dignity does not necessarily involve an order of power or jurisdiction; temporal and spiritual affairs are ‘of diverse order or genus’ [John of Paris, *De potestate regia et papali*, cap. 17], so that one must not be placed under the other” (p. 17).

³⁴ As quoted in Markus, *Saeculum*, p. 164.

³⁵ A quarrel exemplified by the Investiture Controversy of the 11th century; see *Medieval Europe*, ed. William H. McNeill and Schuyler O. Houser (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 165–89. As Ullmann explains, “There was no basic difference between the concept of the monarchic function of the pope and that of the emperor” (p. 22).

³⁶ See William of Ockham, *A Short Discourse on the Tyrannical Government Over Things Divine and Human, but Especially Over the Empire and Those Subject to the Empire, Usurped by Some Who Are Called Highest Pontiffs*, ed. Arthur Stephen McGraide, trans. John Kilcullen (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), pp. 81 and 83.

from which he deduces a clear separation of spiritual and temporal realms.³⁷ The swing of the political pendulum can be simplified into a figure:

The unitary vision of the extreme points, whether papalist or imperialist (with Dante as a good example of the latter),³⁸ tended to adhere to a vertical order reminiscent of the young Augustine, while the middle ground was occupied by followers of the mature Augustinian vision of dual secular and sacred spheres.³⁹

These medieval thinkers had been inspired by the political vision of the *City of God*, yet only with the Reformation did a return *ad fontes* take place on a larger scale and with clearer practical results. Luther knew of Ockham's writings, but he was more at home with the *City of God* itself. In polemical struggle with the papacy he could play the same

³⁷ See III *Dialogus* II, 2, iv, in Arthur Stephen McGraide, *The Political Thought of William of Ockham* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1974), p. 134. McGraide provides a solid exposition of Ockham's political views, without, however, dealing with his sources, Augustinian or otherwise.

³⁸ See Charles Till Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), and Peter S. Hawkins, “Divide and Conquer: Augustine in the *Divine Comedy*,” *PMLA* 106 (1991): 471–82, who shows how Dante appropriated the *City of God* for his own imperialist ends.

³⁹ The pendulum also has a *forensic* extension (worth a study of its own), with the papalist claims encoded in the canon laws and the imperialist claims in the Justinian Code. In the common laws that developed in England (for practical rather than Augustinian reasons) we find an analog to the middle position. Another development that strengthened the middle ground was the introduction of Aristotelian political theory in the later Middle Ages (see Ullmann, pp. 159–73). Yet Aristotle was often fitted into an Augustinian framework as the bishop's earthly city absorbed Aristotelian features.

game as Vives, by reducing the Augustinian cities in rather simplistic fashion to a struggle between the true (i.e., Protestant) church and the false (i.e., Roman) church: "There be two maner of churches, from the beginning of the world vntill the end, the which s. Augustyn calleth Cayn, & Abel."⁴⁰ Yet Luther is normally much closer to the mature Augustine in his differentiation between spheres.⁴¹ Chapter 2 investigated the reformer's fundamental distinction between the Christian's two positions: towards God (*coram Deo*) and towards the world (*coram mundo*). In the political sphere this distinction is expressed as the two kingdoms, or "regiments" (to use the term widely used in both Germany and Tudor England). Luther's political creed is expressed most clearly in a hugely influential pamphlet written in 1528, *Secular Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed*. In it Luther establishes that "God has ordained the two governments; the spiritual, which by the Holy Spirit under Christ makes Christians and pious people, and the secular, which restrains the unchristian and wicked so that they must needs keep the peace outwardly, even against their will."⁴² Recognizing that "the masses are and always will be unchristian" (371), he did not believe in any blurring of the two spheres into a theocratic

⁴⁰ Martin Luther, *The chief and princypall articles of the Christen foythe* (London, 1548), sig. G iii^r. STC 16964.

⁴¹ As John Headley explains in a recent article: "Ravaging the Pseudo-Dionysian/Theistic hierarchy [which is based on similar premises as the philosophy of the young Augustine] that arises from earth heavenward, Luther withdrew the secular authority, or what a later age would recognize as the state, from his impressive theoretical structure and set it up in his worldly *Regiment* as coextensive and cooperating with the church in its spiritual *Regiment*. Luther boasted that not since Augustine . . . had there been anyone who had so promoted the secular authority as had he" ("Luther and the Problem of Secularization," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 55.1 [1987]: p. 23). Many other Luther scholars, however, while seeing the Augustinian connection, make too little of the rapprochement between Augustine's and Luther's political ideas. Eric W. Gritsch is fairly typical with his claim that "Luther went far beyond Augustine" ("Luther and the State: Post-Reformation Ramifications," in *Luther and Modern State in Germany*, ed. James D. Tracy, Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies, vol. 7 [Kirkville: SCJ Publishers, 1986]: 48). Gritsch acknowledges his debt to Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luthers Lehre von den zwei Reichen im Zusammenhang seiner Theologie* (Gütersloh: Carl Bertelsmann, 1958), who distinguishes between Augustine's "one-dimensional" and Luther's "three-dimensional" view of the two kingdoms (p. 16). Bornkamm's view of Augustine, however, is untenable after R.A. Markus's *Saeculum*, which describes an Augustine of much greater complexity, with a "three-dimensional" political theory that in its fundamentals is congruent with Luther's. This is not to deny of course that Luther was writing in a different time and under different circumstances.

⁴² *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (Garden City: Doubleday-Anchor, 1961), p. 370. See also Luther's "Sermon on the Duty of Sending Children to School," trans. F.V.N. Painter, in *Early Protestant Educators* (1931; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1971), pp. 127-28.

society.⁴³ Instead, "these two kingdoms must be sharply distinguished, and both be permitted to remain; the one to produce piety, the other to bring about external peace and prevent evil deeds; neither is sufficient in the world without the other" (371). Luther, however, no more than Augustine, envisioned a society that is radically secular in the modern sense (even if his theory clearly is a step in that direction). In a dictum that was to be echoed by Elizabethan propagandists,⁴⁴ Luther stresses that the secular ruler is responsible for the enforcement of both tablets of the Mosaic law—not just the second dealing with social mores, but also the first dealing with the relationship to God. Augustine's anti-Donatist writings were therefore used by virtually all mainline Protestants against the Anabaptists and other members of the radical reformation who wanted to separate themselves from society.⁴⁵

So while the non-Christians have a single citizenship and "belong to the kingdom of the world and are under the law" (370), the believer is not restricted to the heavenly kingdom, but has civic obligations as well: "Because the sword [i.e., the civil government] is a very great benefit and necessary to the whole world, to preserve peace, to punish sin and to prevent evil, [the Christian] submits most willingly to the rule of the sword, pays tax, honors those in authority, serves, helps, and does all he can to further the government, that it may be sustained and held in honor and fear" (373). Having both secular and religious obligation, the Christian is consequently a member of both kingdoms. Luther saw his distinction between the two kingdoms as a necessary correction of the medieval distinction between secular and spiritual that had separated the Christian community into two halves: the ordinary laity and, on a higher level, the "professional" estates of priest, friar, and nun. The former monk instead abolished convent and priory, and taught the priesthood of every believer. All Christians

⁴³ As he perceived both the papacy, with its conflation of spiritual and worldly power, and some of the Anabaptist sects, with their saintly societies. Also some of the Swiss Reformers (e.g., Zwingli and Bullinger in Zurich) advocated a more theocratic system in which church and society commingled.

⁴⁴ See, e.g., John Jewel, *The Apologie of the Church of Englande* (London, 1562), fol. 57^{r-v}. "God hath committed vnto every faithfull Prince the charge of both the tables, to the extent he shoulde vnderstande that not only Ciuile matters, but also religious & Ecclesiastical causes appertained to his office." STC 14590.

⁴⁵ As the Protestants themselves were accused of Donatism by the Catholics. In general it is remarkable to see to what a large extent the Augustinian bugbears were appropriated by everyone along the confessional spectrum: the Protestants habitually accused the Catholics of Pelagianism while the Catholics saw the Protestants as Manichees (as well as Donatists). It is as if they all relived the turmoil of the third and fourth centuries A.D.

had the same relationship to God, and the demarcation between secular and spiritual was not external but internal. For the same reasons Luther objected to the papalist doctrine of plenitude of power. In the long struggle between emperor and pope, Luther therefore joined Ockham in his critique of the papacy for confusing the heavenly with the earthly kingdom and for denying the existence of a legitimate civil society outside the church.

If Luther followed earlier thinkers, he soon inspired others to follow suit. His humanist co-worker at Wittenberg, Philip Melancthon, immediately transferred the theory to the educational sphere, where the relationship between the "twofold government" became a topic of academic debate and was incorporated into the curriculum of the Protestant schools and universities.⁴⁶ And among second-generation reformers, John Calvin echoed Luther's distinctions, stressing that humanity is under a twofold government (see *Institutes* 4.20.1, 2.2.13, 3.19.15, and 4.11.1).⁴⁷ While these reformers may differ in detail, they nevertheless share a similar Augustinian emphasis: the civil government, in the words of Melancthon, has its legitimate sphere, the "external matters which even the saints use," while its main job is the "coercion of the bodies of those who are without the Spirit of God."⁴⁸ This congruence of ideas had repercussions not just within the religious sphere but for society at large: "The social and political doctrines associated with the Reformation," writes Quentin Skinner, one of our most respected historians of renaissance political theory, "came to be officially recognised by the secular rulers of Germany, England and Scandinavia."⁴⁹ We, however, shall limit ourselves to the English context.

III

But how could the political theory of Luther, whom Henry VIII had recently decried as a heretic, become official English policy? The an-

⁴⁶ See "Themes for the Sixth Holiday" (1522), in *Melancthon: Selected Writings*, trans. Charles Leander Hill (1962; rpt. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), pp. 89–90. In the same collection see also the "Summary of Doctrine," written on the behest of Landgrave Philip of Hesse in 1524, in which Melancthon further explains the differences between the "Christian" saving righteousness and the "human" or "political" righteousness, "by which the wicked should be coerced" (p. 97).

⁴⁷ In addition to Skinner's account (see note 49), a good exposition of Calvin's distinctions is provided by Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1961), pp. 179–85.

⁴⁸ Melancthon, p. 91.

swer is, of course, "the King's matter," Henry's divorce and the subsequent split with Rome. The king desperately needed authoritative backing for his moves, and what could be better than the distinctions between secular and sacred jurisdiction culled from the most prestigious of the Church Fathers, St. Augustine? Luther supplied the Tudor propagandists with a blueprint of the Augustinian theory.⁵⁰ In addition to the direct influence of Lutheran pamphlets and books surreptitiously imported from the Continent even before the break with Rome, William Tyndale and Robert Barnes provided the first and most important bridge between Wittenberg and London. "Both Tyndale and Barnes studied at Wittenberg University," Carl R. Trueman explains, "and . . . used Luther's writings as the textual basis for significant portions of their own literary output."⁵¹ In *The obedience of a Christian man* (1528) Tyndale first enunciated the Augustinian/Lutheran distinction between "the kyngdome of god and of Christe" and "the temporall regimete."⁵² Barnes then added *A supplicacyon*

⁴⁹ Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978) 2: 65. A large section of the second volume is given to a description of Luther's theory, and to its dissemination. The most important study dedicated to Luther is otherwise W.D.J. Cargill Thompson, *The Political Thought of Martin Luther*, ed. Philip Broadhead (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1984), which incorporates his earlier article "The 'Two Kingdoms' and the 'Two Regiments': Some Problems of Luther's *Zwei-Reiche-Lehre*," *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S. 20.1 (April 1969): 164–85. See also John M. Headley, *Luther's View of Church History* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1963), and John Tonkin, *The Church and the Secular Order in Reformation Thought* (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1971). On England, see James Edward McGoldrick, *Luther's English Connection: The Reformation Thought of Robert Barnes and William Tyndale* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1979), and Carl R. Trueman, *Luther's Legacy: Salvation and English Reformers, 1525–1556* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994).

⁵⁰ Not that the Augustinian influence was new. According to Thomas Renna, "Virtually all English authors after 1300 who wrote about the nature of the Church claimed to be followers of the Bishop of Hippo. They were especially attracted to Augustine's *De civitate dei*" ("Augustine's 'City of God' in John Wyclif and Thomas More," in Schnaubelt and Van Fleteren, p. 261).

⁵¹ Trueman, p. 54. None of Luther's political tracts were translated into English during the sixteenth century, but Melancthon played a more active role in "the King's matter" and some of his works appeared in English dress—e.g., *A civile nosgoy wherin is conteyned not onely the office and dewty of all magistrates and judges but also of all subiectes*, trans. John Goodale (London, 1550?). STC 17788.

⁵² William Tyndale, *The obedience of a Christian man and how Christen rulers ought to gouverne* (Antwerp, 1528), fol. 51^v. STC 24446. On Tyndale and Augustine, see Trueman, pp. 31–32, and J.K. Yost, "Tyndale's Use of the Fathers: a Note on His Connections to Northern Humanism," *Moreana* 6 (1969): 5–13; on Tyndale and Luther, see W.D.J. Cargill Thompson, "The Two Regiments: the Continental Setting of William Tyndale's Political Thought," in *Reform and Reformation: England and the Continent c. 1500–c. 1750*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979): 17–33; for Tyndale's life, see David Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1994).

... unto Henry VIII (1531), in which he makes the Augustinian connection very clear, as can be seen in the opening epigraph of this chapter.⁵³

In an exposition of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), Tyndale comprehensively sets forth the theory: "Ye must understand that there be two states or degrees in this world: the kingdom of heaven, which is the regiment of the gospel; and the kingdom of this world, which is the temporal regiment."⁵⁴ Tyndale spells out the believer's twofold responsibilities and in the process prescribes the extent and limits of the jurisdiction of the king on the one hand and of the preachers and bishops on the other:

Moreover when I say, there be two regiments, the spiritual and the temporal; even so I say that every person, baptized to keep the law of God and to believe in Christ, is under both the regiments, and is both a spiritual person and also a temporal, and under the officers of both the regiments; so that the king is as deep under the spiritual officer, to hear out of God's word what he ought to believe, and how to live, and how to rule, as is the poorest beggar in the realm. And even so the spiritual officer, if he sin against his neighbour, or teach false doctrine, is under the king's or temporal correction, how high soever he be.⁵⁵

The pope has lost all authority and has been replaced by the reformed clergy as representatives of the heavenly kingdom—not as intermediaries between God and the Christian, but as stewards and dispensers of the Word. But as Luther already had made clear, it was part of the temporal ruler's job to ensure that the church and its ministers de facto followed the Word.⁵⁶ The ruler, on the other hand, was not free

⁵³ Trueman writes: "The influence of patristic writers upon the work of Robert Barnes can scarcely be overestimated. His earliest work consists of a collection of quotations from early Christian writers in support of a series of Reformation propositions His later work, *A Supplication*, is essentially an expansion of this collection" (p. 33). In an appendix to *A Supplication* Barnes gathers the citations from the Church Fathers used in the work. Of its 21 pages, Augustinian citations take up 9, while the remaining 11 pages are divided between ten other writers.

⁵⁴ William Tyndale, *An Exposition upon the V, VI, VII chapters of Matthew* (1533), in *Expositions and Notes* (Cambridge, 1849), p. 60. As Tyndale followed Luther in his *Introduction to Romans*, so here he hews very close to Luther's own *Commentary on Matthew* 5–7, published in the fall of 1532.

⁵⁵ Tyndale, *Exposition*, p. 67.

⁵⁶ The problem of what actually constituted the teaching of the Scriptures did not trouble the reformers overmuch, since they saw their own brand of Christianity as a return to the primitive church, the unsullied fountainhead of pure doctrine. It was therefore understood that it was the Protestant faith that needed protection.

to live and rule as he or she pleased, but was to be guided by the moral and doctrinal teaching of the Scriptures. Theoretically the church had the right—indeed, the obligation—to correct an errant ruler; but there is no doubt that Tyndale came down much heavier on the side of the obligations of a Christian towards the ruler, as *The obedience of a Christian man* made abundantly clear. And this is why Henry found the book so useful.⁵⁷

Here is where we find the greatest dissimilarities with Luther's views. Where Luther distinguished clearly between the two regiments and thereby provided a certain space for secular society, in Tudor polemics this distinction is blurred because the king or queen is not only the ruler of the political commonwealth, but also the head of the Church of England. Right from the start there was therefore more room for absolutist tendencies than in Luther's own thought. The shifting emphasis is clearly connected with the *realpolitik* of each country. As long as the reformers (whether Continental or English) saw the rulers as God's instrument for the reformation of the church, they supported their regal claims. Yet, if a ruler upheld the opposing faction, his or her authority became disputed.⁵⁸ While Luther had his princely protectors, he nevertheless had to deal with a Holy Roman Emperor who turned out to be resistant to the lures of Lutheranism. As a result, in his old age Luther came to condone the active resistance to the ruler if he (like Charles V) proved unyielding to the Gospel. The English reformers and apologists, on the other hand, saw Henry (and, after him, Edward and Elizabeth) as the guarantor of the break with Rome. Any theoretical subservience to the ruler was preferable to the greater tyranny of the papacy.

⁵⁷ Soon the Tudor propaganda machinery had produced their own officially sanctioned defenses of the break with Rome, such as Edward Fox's *De vera differentia regiae potestatis et ecclesiasticae* (London, 1534), published for a larger audience under Edward VI as *The true differences between the regal power and the Ecclesiasticall power*, trans. Henry Lord Stafford (London, 1548). STC 11220. And by another twist of fate, Stephen Gardiner, who as Queen Mary's Chancellor was to become the nemesis of the Protestants, had earlier followed Tyndale's lead with his *De vera obedientia oratio* (London, 1535). This work was to harry him under Mary since an anonymous translator (most likely John Bale), who also added a lengthy and tendentious preface and a conclusion, published the work in English under the title *De vera obedientia an oration* (Roane [London?], 1553). STC 11585.

⁵⁸ As was the case under Mary Tudor. Some of the English Protestants in exile put clear limits on a Christian's obedience to a recalcitrant regent and accused Mary of confusing the two regiments (in much the same way as the Catholics were to complain under Elizabeth); see John Poynt, *A shorte treatise of politike power* (Strasbourg?, 1556). STC 20178.

These absolutist tendencies were increased by the propagandistic use of Eusebius,⁵⁹ whose political ideology was to compete with the Augustinian vision. It was natural for Charles V as the latest of a long line of Holy Roman Emperors to appropriate the Cult of Constantine in his battles against the papacy, and as Frances Yates and others have shown, the same strategy was employed (with however lessened justification) by the emerging national states of Europe, England not the least.⁶⁰ Henry VIII saw himself as a new Constantine, but under Elizabeth I the imperialist propaganda rose to an even higher pitch. Eusebius was widely read,⁶¹ and his support was enlisted by the Elizabethan propaganda machinery.⁶² The main benefit of the imperial claims was to safeguard English autonomy by allowing the English regents to sidestep both papal power and Spanish imperial claims. Being Europe's only super-power, Spain was ruled by a bona fide Emperor until

⁵⁹ To clarify, by "Eusebius" I mean the imperialist use of Constantine inspired by the writings of the Father, in particular the *Life of Constantine* with the appended orations. Eusebius was regarded as the authority on the first Christian emperor even if his name was not always mentioned as a source. This imperial "Eusebianism" sometimes merged with the thought of Thomas Erasmus (1524–1583), and the Eusebian and Erastian strands cannot always be disentangled. For my purposes I shall have to disregard these further distinctions, well aware that "Eusebian" will sometimes function metonymically for larger forces.

⁶⁰ See Frances A. Yates, *Astrea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975). On Elizabeth I, see also Roy Strong's two iconographical studies, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963) and *The Cult of Elizabeth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), as well as Helen Hackett's recent *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Macmillan, 1994).

⁶¹ A gauge of Eusebius' provenance in Tudor England is provided by E.S. Leedham Green, *Books in Cambridge Inventories*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986). Leedham Green has transcribed and compiled the 200 inventories (largely consisting of book-lists) made for deceased persons within the jurisdiction of Cambridge university between 1585 and 1760. For my part I have studied the 176 inventories made in the sixteenth century in order to see which authors were the most widely owned (and presumably read). Of these 176 inventories, 25% contained at least one copy of Eusebius. This places him fourth among the Church Fathers, almost shoulder to shoulder with Jerome (at 28%) and trailing only Augustine and Chrysostom (both just over 40%). Of Eusebius' works, the *Ecclesiastical History* was by far the most widely owned (33 out of the 44 inventories that included Eusebius). The *Ecclesiastical History* was "englished" by M. Hamner as *The ancient ecclesiastical histories* (London, 1577). STC 10572. New editions followed in 1585, 1607, 1615, and 1636, the last of which also included a new translation of the *Life of Constantine*.

⁶² By Thomas Bilson, e.g., when he argues for the queen's right to be the head of the Church of England in *The true difference between Christian subjection and unchristian rebellion: wherein the princes lawfull power to command for truth, and indeprivable right to beare the sword are defended against the Popes censures and the Iesuits sophismes uttered in their Apologie and Defence of English Catholics* (Oxford, 1585), pp. 134–37. STC 3071. Bilson refers in these pages to Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* as well as to the *Ecclesiastical History*. Further references to Bilson will be given in the text by page.

Charles V abdicated in 1556, and remained a real threat to English sovereignty until the 1588 Armada. Symptomatically, only under Queen Mary, married to Philip II of Spain, does the Tudor imperial propaganda remain comparatively silent.

Nowhere is the propaganda as blatant as in the *Acts and Monuments*, where as Yates points out, John Foxe blazons Elizabeth as the incarnation of the first Christian emperor and in the process makes himself the new Eusebius.⁶³ Christianity had come to England through the efforts of Constantine, explains Foxe, but the queen is not to be outdone: "Let Constantine be never so great, yet wherein is your noble grace to him inferiour?"⁶⁴ To underline the connection, Foxe encloses a portrait of the queen within the capital C of "Constantine." As several scholars have argued, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* was another influential disseminator of the imperial propaganda.⁶⁵ Yet as we shall see, Spenser's attitude towards the cult of the queen was ambivalent at best,⁶⁶ and he was as much influenced by the political vision of Augustine as by Eusebian imperialism.

The Elizabethan establishment itself vacillated between Eusebius and Augustine. Tudor spokesmen from William Tyndale to Richard Hooker made the theory of the two regiments a cornerstone of Anglican policy, yet their confessional adversaries kept accusing them of hewing too close to Eusebius. The attack, peaking in the reign of Elizabeth, came from both the left and the right. Catholic recusants and Puritan nonconformists shared a common distrust of royal meddling with the kingdom of God—Catholics because they wanted to reinstate the sovereignty of the pope in ecclesiastical affairs, and Puritans because they believed the magistrate hampered further reform along Presbyterian lines. What is quite amazing is the extent to which the

⁶³ Yates, p. 42.

⁶⁴ As cited in Yates, p. 42.

⁶⁵ See Yates, pp. 69–74; Frank Kermode, "The Faerie Queene, I and V," in *Essential Articles for the Study of Spenser*, ed. A.C. Hamilton (Hamden: Archon, 1972), pp. 273–88; Thomas H. Cain, *Praise in "The Faerie Queene"* (Lincoln and London: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1978); Robin Headlam Wells, *Spenser's "Faerie Queene" and the Cult of Elizabeth* (London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1983); John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989), as well as his *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990).

⁶⁶ In a fine study that nicely complements this chapter Richard F. Hardin traces the Erasmian political influence in Tudor and Jacobean England, arguing convincingly that "Spenser neither believes in James VI of Scotland's divine rights of kings nor defends absolute rule or the imperial concept of monarchy" (*Civil Idolatry: Desacralizing and Monarchy in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton* [Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1992], p. 20).

altercations were conducted within the parameters of Lutheran theory. Even Cardinal William Allen, the foremost Catholic apologist, talks about the different "regiments," seemingly oblivious to the fact that the concept was Tyndale's direct appropriation of Luther's *regimente*.⁶⁷ The whole religious spectrum from Catholic to Puritan seems to have accepted the basic outline of Luther's version of the Augustinian theory. The link to the Church Father is indeed the most likely reason for its general acceptance, as each side is anxious to enlist the support of such an important ally.

What Cardinal Allen especially objected to was the "othe of the Queenes souraintie in spiritual regiment, a thing improbable, vnreasonable, vnnatural, impossible."⁶⁸ We can understand his concern since committed Catholics, being unable to take the royal oath, were effectually barred from any civic career and risked being executed for treason if they were caught proselytizing.⁶⁹ The Cardinal also had a valid point when he looked back on the religious turmoil of the previous decades and wondered if it was such a good idea to tie the faith of the people to the confessional preferences of the ruler:

And it were the pitifullest hazard, and vn certainty of our faith and salvation, that could be, so to hang on the Princes will, or the lawes (commonly wholly thereon depending) that there could be imagined no neerer way to religion, then to beleue what our temporal Lord and Maister list. And it is the turpitude of our Nation through the whole world, whereat we blush before strangers that sometimes fall into discourse of such things, that in one mans memorie and since this strange mutation began, we haue had to our Prince, a man [Henry], who abolished the Popes authority by his lawes, and yet in other pointes kept the faith of his fathers: we haue had a child [Edward], who by the like lawes abolished altogether with the Papacie, the whole ancient religion: we had a woman [Mary], who restored both againe, and sharply punished Protestants: and lastly her Maiestie that now is [Elizabeth], who by the like lawes hath long since abolished both againe, and now severely punisheth Catholics, as the other did Protestants: and al these strange differences within the compass of about 30 yeres.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ See, e.g., William Allen, *An apologie and true declaration* (Henault, 1581), fol. 40^v–41^r.
STC 369. Although the *OED* traces the first English occurrence of "regiment" in our sense to John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* of 1390, it also notes that it was "very common c. 1550–1680," no doubt as a result of the dissemination of Lutheran political theory.

⁶⁸ Allen, fol. 10^v.

⁶⁹ Even if the Elizabethan government tried to distinguish between the two regiments by executing recusants for *treason* against the state rather than for *heresy* against the church (which had been the policy under Queen Mary), the end result was of course the same. Many more were burned for heresy during Mary's brief reign, however, than were executed for treason during Elizabeth's 45 years in office.

⁷⁰ Allen, fol. 34^{rv}.

Allen was not the only Catholic to advocate the separation of state and church. The Jesuits under Cardinal Bellarmine, according to J.N. Figgis, developed an Augustinian doctrine "of the civil state as being purely secular and having no ends that were not material."⁷¹ Some Catholics were indeed unwittingly closer to Luther's political vision than was many a Protestant.

The Presbyterian nonconformists with Thomas Cartwright in the vanguard voiced similar grievances against the Elizabethan settlement. The war of words between Cartwright and Archbishop Whitgift in the 1570s was to a great extent fought over the spheres of state and church. "The godlye Magistrate is the head of the common wealth, but not of the church," argued Cartwright, because "the regiment of the Church is spirituall, and respecteth the conscience, and therefore hath not to doe with ciuill offices, which respect properly the common wealth, and the outwarde, godly, honest, and quiet behauiour [sic]."⁷² Richard Hooker came to Whitgift's rescue with his magisterial defense of the Elizabethan church, *The Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*. His main targets were Cartwright and the Puritans, but he also takes time to counter the attacks from Allen and other Catholics. In Book 8, dedicated to countering the Puritans' assertion "*That unto no Ciuill Prince or Governour there may be given such power of Ecclesiastical Dominion as by the Lawes of this Land belongeth unto the Supreme Regent thereof*,"⁷³ Hooker defines the two sides of what he considered the same coin: "When we oppose the Church therefore and the *Commonwealth* in a *Christian Societie*, we mean by the *Commonwealth* that societie with relation unto all the publike affayres thereof, only the matter of true religion excepted. By the Church, the same societie with only reference unto the matter of true religion without any other affaires besides" (*Lawes* 8.1.5). He meets the Puritan objection "that the *Fathers* do oftentimes mention the *Commonwealth* and the Church of God by way of opposition" with the counter-argument: "Can the same thing be opposite unto it selfe?" (*Lawes* 8.1.5). This made sense to him since "*Saincts* and *Citizens* [are] one and

⁷¹ J.N. Figgis, *The Political Aspects of St. Augustine's "City of God"* (London: n.p., 1921), p. 103.

⁷² Thomas Cartwright's *Reply* (1573), as cited in John Whitgift, *The Defense of the Answer to the Admonition, against the Replie of T. C.* (London, 1574), pp. 695 and 754. STC 25430.

⁷³ *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, in vol. 3 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. P.G. Stanwood (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1981), p. 315. References to the *Lawes* will hereafter be given in the text by book, chapter, and section.

the same people" (*Laws* 8.1.6).⁷⁴ Although he recognizes the distinction between the church and the commonwealth, thereby maintaining the scaffolding of Augustine's mature political theory, Hooker nevertheless approaches the more Eusebian position of the young Augustine in his adherence to a "Christian Societie."

The queen's position as head of the church remained a touchy question throughout her reign, as is especially evident in Thomas Bilson's *The true difference between Christian subiection and unchristian rebellion* (1585), the officially sanctioned answer to Allen's charges against the Elizabethan settlement. Following Tyndale closely, Bilson distinguishes between the offices of prince and preacher:

The spirituall regiment which Christ hath ouer the faithfull in his Church is infinitely before the temporal regiment of Princes ouer their subiects. . . . As in spiritual perfection and consolation the Preacher excelleth the Prince by many degrees, God hauing appointed Preachers not Princes to bee the sowers of his seede, messenge[r]s of his grace, stewards of his mysteries: so for external power and authoritie to compell & punish, which is the point that we stande on, God hath preferred the Prince before the Priest, so long as the Prince commaundeth that which God alloweth. (*True difference* 219).

Bilson is clear about where to draw the line: "We giue Princes no power to deuice or inuent new religions, to alter or change Sacraments, to decide or debate doubtles of faith, to disturbe or infringe the canons of the church" (*True difference* 240). These prerogatives belonged to the spiritual regiment, in which sphere the queen stood on equal terms with her subjects.

There is some evidence that Elizabeth herself felt strongly about this issue, despite an apparent endorsement of the imperialist program. The *39 Articles of 1562*, approved by the queen, is quite explicit in spelling out her limits. Where King Edward, following Henry VIII's example, in the *42 Articles of 1552* had boldly proclaimed that "The King of Englande is Supreme head in earth, next vnder Christe, of the Church of Englande, and Irelande,"⁷⁵ the corresponding Elizabethan article is much more guarded: "The Queenes Maiestie hath the chiefe power in this Realme of Englande, and other her domin-

⁷⁴ Whitgift had countered with a similar argument: "In diuers places, [Cartwright] maketh such a distinction betwixt the church of Christ, & a Christian common wealth that hath a Christian magistrate, as he would do betwixt the church & a Heathenish common wealth, that hath a persecuting and an vnbelaueing magistrate" (p. 605).

⁷⁵ The *42 Articles of 1552* (London, 1553); article 35, "Of Ciuile magistrates." STC 10034.2.

ions, vnto whom the chiefe gouernment of all estates of this Realme, whether they be Ecclesiasticall or not, in all causes, doth appertayne, and is not, nor ought to be subiect to any forraigne iurisdiction." To this has been added an explanation, completely lacking in the Edwardian *Articles*:

Where we attribute to the Queenes Maiestie, the chiefe gouernment, by whiche titles we vnderstande the myndes of some slaundersous folkes to be offended, we geue not to our Princes, the ministring eyther of Gods worde, or of Sacramentes, the whiche thying, the Iniunctions also lately set forth by Elizabeth our Queene, doth moste playnely testifie: But that only prerogatiue, whiche we see to haue ben geuen alwayes to all godly Princes in holy scriptures, by God himselfe, that is, that they shoulde rule all estates & degrees, committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical, or no, and restraine with the ciuill sword, the stubborne and euill doers.⁷⁶

Although Head of the Church, Elizabeth was not allowed to trespass into the domain of the clergy. As John Guy, citing *A Declaration of the Queen's Proceedings*, points out: "Elizabeth denied herself power 'to define, decide or determine any article or point of the Christian faith and religion.' . . . As a matter of principle as much as to sidestep the Presbyterian lobby in pulpit and parliament, she upheld the separation of church and state in practice, ruling both but through different channels of administration."⁷⁷ The Queen's main task, in the wording of the *Articles*, was that of restraining "with the ciuill sword, the stubborne and euill doers." Or as Augustine himself had expressed it: "control of the wicked within the bonds of a certain earthly peace."⁷⁸

It is important to stress these restrictions, spelled out in the key doctrinal document of the Elizabethan settlement. The fear of papal intervention made the establishment fall back on the time-honored *language* of imperialism, yet it also acknowledged that radical Eusebianism did not square with central tenets of the reformation. What Ullmann has to say about the declining relevance of papal ideology is equally true for the imperialist extreme: "It was no longer faith in the function of the pope [or of the emperor] standing mid-way between God and man, but faith in the Bible, that is, faith in the individual's

⁷⁶ The *39 Articles of 1562* (London, 1564?); article 36, "Of Ciuil Magistrates." STC 10038.5.

⁷⁷ John Guy, "The Henrician Age," in *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500-1800*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), p. 42.

⁷⁸ *De Genesi ad litteram* 9.9.14, as cited in Markus, *Saeculum*, p. 96.

own ability to interpret the Bible. When that stage was reached, the days of the papal-hierocratic [or imperial-hierocratic] government became shorter and shorter."⁷⁹ It was rather the political vision of the mature Augustine, with its clear limits surrounding the secular sphere, that conformed to the Protestant emphasis on the limited human co-operation in matters of faith: it was the redemptive work of Christ, unaided by human effort (imperial, papal, or otherwise), that brought about salvation. These caveats are important when we now turn to *The Faerie Queene*. Although the work contains its fair share of Eusebian imperialism, this influence is strongly tempered by an Augustinian political outlook.

IV

The Augustinian presence is particularly evident in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*. As C.A. Patrides puts it, "The mighty panorama in St. Augustine's the *City of God* of the time-bound conflict between the 'cities' of centripetal love and centrifugal self-love became, for Spenser as for Milton, the ultimate foundation of their respective allegorical theologies."⁸⁰ Spenser was in no way novel, but simply followed the lead of Ariosto and Tasso. The *City of God*, according to Andrew Fichter, provides "the two cities that oppose each other in Renaissance epic."⁸¹ Du Bellay's Roman poetry, translated and imitated by Spenser, was another transmitter of this Augustinian topos. Yet even if Spenser encountered the topos in a number of other sources, he was almost certainly familiar with its origin as well.

The two cities correspond to the allegorical centers of Book 1: the House of Pride and the House of Holiness (together with its adjunct the New Jerusalem).⁸² Just as the tower of Babel typifies Augustine's

⁷⁹ Ullmann, pp. 128–29.

⁸⁰ "Spenser: The Contours of Allegorical Theology," *The Centennial Review* 26 (1982): 27.

⁸¹ *Poets Historical* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1982), p. 11.

⁸² The similarity between Augustine's cities and Spenser's houses is pointed out but left undeveloped in A.C. Hamilton, *The Structure of Allegory in "The Faerie Queene"* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 67; John Erskine Hankins, *Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 114; Douglas Brooks-Davies, *Spenser's "Faerie Queene": A Critical Commentary on Books I and II* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1977), p. 42; Isabel Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979), p. 62. See also *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A.C. Hamilton et al. (Toronto and Buffalo: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 299 ("Fall and Restoration of Man"), 303 ("Fathers, Latin"), and 441 ("Lucifera").

worldly city, so the "loftie towres" (*FQ* 1.4.4)⁸³ of Lucifera's Palace flaunt the pride of its inhabitants. And just as Augustine dedicates a large portion of the *City of God* to the history of the worldly city, featuring the empires of Mesopotamia and Rome, the "second Babylon" in the west (*De Civ. Dei* 14.17),⁸⁴ so Spenser fills Lucifera's dungeons with "wretched thralls," ranging from "that great proud king of *Babylon*" to "the antique ruines of the *Romaines* fall" (*FQ* 1.5.47–50). Both the city of man and the House of Pride are transitory, the latter prominently displaying a "Diall" which "told the timely howres" (*FQ* 1.4.4). If the House itself remains standing throughout the book, its ultimate fall is metonymically portrayed through a series of carefully selected images: Sansloy falls "like the old ruines of a broken towre" (*FQ* 1.2.20), while Orgoglio collapses like an "vndermined" castle (*FQ* 1.8.23). Most significant of all, when Redcrosse deals the dragon the final blow, Spenser describes its fall with the same metaphors of highness and weak foundations: "So downe he fell, as an huge rockie clift, / Whose false foundation waues haue washt away" (*FQ* 1.11.54). This whole stanza with its reiterated "so downe he fell" echoes the great angelic cry in Revelation 18: "It is fallen, it is fallen, Babylon the great citie." Indeed, both the *City of God* and the Legend of Holiness have their roots in this biblical archetype with its opposing centers of Babylon and the New Jerusalem.

The *City of God* represents a major node along the typological development of the two archetypal biblical cities, yet recent developments helped to color Spenser's conception. We have already mentioned Du Bellay and the Italian epics.⁸⁵ Ecclesiastical quarrels provided another node. In the late medieval period, clamoring voices had identified the

⁸³ All quotations from *The Faerie Queene* (*FQ*) are taken from Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche Jr., and C. Patrick O'Donnell, Jr. (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1981), with references to book, canto, and stanza given in the text.

⁸⁴ Spenser follows Augustine almost verbatim in a sonnet prefixed to *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*: "The antique *Babel*, Emprise of the East, / Upheard her buildings to the threatened skie: / And Second *Babell* tyrant of the West, / Her avry Towers upraised much more high" (*The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William A. Oram et al. [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1989], p. 776).

⁸⁵ The three Saracen brothers of Spenser's epic, for example, are a remnant from the Italian models, in which the "city of man" was inhabited by Moslems (the Ottoman Turks remained a serious threat to Christian Europe throughout the sixteenth century). With European society—both sacred and secular—having been compressed into a single "city of God" during the Middle Ages, the "city of man" had to be found outside Christian Europe altogether.

Papacy with Babylon and the Pope with antichrist.⁸⁶ The Avignonese "Captivity" brought the criticism to its head, and even Petrarch joined the chorus. But it was Luther that completed the equation by identifying the Protestant church with the heavenly City. John Bale then transplanted this dualism to English soil with *The Image of bothe churches* (1548⁷). The provocative book displays an odd Protestant mixture of Revelation and the *City of God*:

Herein is the true Christen church . . . in her right fashioned colours described. So is the proud church of hypocrites, the rose coloured whore, the paramour of Antichrist, and the sinfull sinagoge of Sathan, in her iust proportion depainted, . . . And after the true opinion of saint Austen, eyther we are citizens in the new Hierusalem with Jesus Christ, or els in the old superstitious Babilon with antichrist the vicar of Sathan.⁸⁷

It only remained for John Foxe to saturate the English consciousness with this scheme by incorporating it into his *Acts and Monuments*.⁸⁸ Spenser was therefore thoroughly up to date when he made poetic capital of Augustine's two cities: Una typifies not simply the universal church, but also its contemporary Reformed incarnation; while Duessa is not just another metonymic extension of the House of Pride, but also the papal "rose coloured whore, the paramour of Antichrist."⁸⁹

Yet Spenser deals not only with the eschatological dimensions of the Augustinian cities, but also discusses their political and civic dimensions through the cities of Cleopolis and the New Jerusalem.⁹⁰ By separating the argument into two contrasting pairs, Spenser not only portrays the cosmic battle between the cities of God and the devil (his main interest in Book 1), but he also shows the interaction between the civic state and these two other cities. Seeing the heavenly city from the Mount of Contemplation, Redcrosse in canto 10 distinguishes it from Cleopolis, the civic state:

⁸⁶ See Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969). Consult "Babylon" in her *General Index*.

⁸⁷ John Bale, *The Image of bothe churches* (London, 1548⁷), sig. A ii^r and iii^r. STC 1297. See also Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 13–46.

⁸⁸ See Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth-Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and the English Reformation* (Appleford: Sulfan Courtenay Press, 1978), pp. 68–90.

⁸⁹ For the iconographical background to Duessa as the Roman whore, see D. Douglas Waters, *Duessa as Theological Satire* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1970), and King, *Tudor Royal Iconography*, pp. 201–11.

⁹⁰ As was shown already by Isabel E. Rathborne, *The Meaning of Spenser's Fairyland* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1937), p. 24.

Till now, said then the knight, I weened well,
That great *Cleopolis*, where I haue been,
In which that fairest *Faerie Queene* doth dwell
The fairest Citie was, that might be scene;
And that bright towre all built of christall cleene,
Panthea, seemd the brightest thing, that was:
But now by prooffe all otherwise I weene;
For this great Citie that does far surpas,
And this bright Angels towre quite dims that towre of glas.

Most trew, then said the holy aged man;
Yet is *Cleopolis* for earthly frame,
The fairest peece, that eye beholden can:
And well besemes all knights of noble name,
That couet in th'immortal booke of fame
To be eternized, that same to haunt,
And doen their seruice to that soueraigne Dame,
That glorie does to them for guerdon graunt:
For she is heauenly borne, and heauen may iustly vaunt.
(*FQ* 1.10.58–59)

With the help of a characteristic pun, Spenser distinguishes between the New Jerusalem and Cleopolis. Following Augustine, who had contrasted the "earthly peace" of the human city with the "eternal peace" of the heavenly city, he calls the new Jerusalem a city of "eternal peace" (*FQ* 1.10.55), while Cleopolis is "for earthly frame, / The fairest peece, that eye beholden can" (*FQ* 1.10.59). If the "peece" of the latter citation puns on the "earthly peace" that for Augustine was the hallmark of the city of man (in its positive sense), then perhaps Redcrosse's vision of the New Jerusalem from the Mount of Contemplation is an allusion to the city of God, since Augustine had made the erroneous yet influential etymological interpretation of Jerusalem as "the vision of peace" (*De Ciri Dei* 19.11).⁹¹

Yet what are we to make of the fact that Gloriana, the ruler of Spenser's earthly city, is "heavenly borne" (*FQ* 1.10.59), a Eusebian intrusion into the very stanzas that expound the Augustinian dichotomy between the earthly and heavenly societies? And not only that, she also grants "glory" (*FQ* 1.10.59) to her retainers, for Augustine a dubious practice within the earthly city. How do Spenser's Augustinian distinctions square with the Eusebian cult of the queen, a stance that on the face of it fuses sacred and secular? Is Spenser making the

⁹¹ "... visio pacis . . ."

Fairy Queen (and thereby Queen Elizabeth) a ruler with divine prerogatives? Is she dispensing heavenly glory?⁹²

The immediate context of Book I, canto 10, speaks against such clear-cut pronouncements. When Contemplation continues his instruction of Redcrosse, he drastically modifies the glory just promised. The fealty to Gloriana, however necessary, is bought at a terrible price: "Thenceforth the suit of earthly conquests shonne, / And wash thy hands from guilt of bloody field: / For blood can nought but sin, & wars but sorrowes yield" (FQ 1.10.60). We are reminded that Redcrosse's "glory" has been won in great part within the House of Pride and in company with Duessa.⁹³ No, the glory Redcrosse will one day receive in the New Jerusalem will not depend on his service to Cleopoli: "Vnworthy wretch (quoth he) of so great grace, / how dare I thinke such glory to attaine?" (FQ 1.10.62). To enter the city of God, as stanza 57 has already made clear, he must instead be "purg'd from sinfull guilt, / With pretious blood" of "that vnspotted lam, / That for the sinnes of all the world was kilt." Yet neither is Redcrosse to follow the Anabaptists or the Donatists by withdrawing from society. As citizen of two kingdoms, he has dual and compatible responsibilities. When he begs Contemplation not to send him back to the service of Gloriana, he is admonished not to make a shortcut to the heavenly city by "forgo[ing] that royall maides bequeathed care" (FQ 1.10.63). Serving Cleopoli, even with its "guilt of bloody field," is in one sense part of his pilgrimage towards the New Jerusalem.

The glory of Gloriana is further tempered by the implicit comparison between Cleopoli and the House of Pride, where "glorie vaine" (FQ 1.4.15) is flaunted for all the wrong reasons. As Spenser follows Augustine in distinguishing between the heavenly and the earthly church, so he separates Lucifera's infernal city from Gloriana's earthly city. Yet he at the same time invites us to compare the two by stressing their similarities, both cities being ruled by virgin queens in the midst

⁹² Earlier critics have answered that question differently. While Rathborne, for example, thought that "this glory, symbolized by the Fairy Queen herself, is . . . an earthly glory" (p. 33), Jan Karel Kouwenhoven has more recently argued that "Spenser's statement that the Fairy Queen represents glory and Arthur magnificence in particular means that his poem is about the temporal manifestations of God" (*Apparent Narrative as Thematic Metaphor* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983], p. 20). Kouwenhoven's disagreement with Rathborne is not quite as radical, however, if we stress the "temporal" in his citation. We may indeed find ourselves within Augustine's civic city.

⁹³ Earlier in Book I "glory" has been mentioned ten times (the references are to canto and stanza): 1.27; 2.37; 4.9; 4.15; 4.39; 4.42; 5.1; 5.14; 6.20; 7.46. Seven of these occurrences are connected with the House of Pride or Duessa.

of courtiers hungry for fame.⁹⁴ The Augustinian warning is clear: even if Cleopoli has its legitimate place in the divine dispensation by administering an earthly peace, it turns into Babylon whenever it starts building towers toward heaven. The description of Lucifera in FQ 1.4.8–10, therefore, is in part Spenser's answer to Cardinal Allen's accusations of civic idolatry. Yes, he seems to be saying, if the queen actually takes her cult as more than exaggerated rhetoric, she, like Phæbus in FQ 1.4.9, is only presuming. Yet Spenser at the same time aims a political punch directly at Allen and the Catholics by making Duessa, the papal whore, an honored guest at the House of Pride. With Protestant glee he turns the medieval identification of the papacy with the city of God upside down by depicting how it has instead fallen in with the evil city in its bid for earthly power and glory. What is only an oblique warning to Elizabeth against exaggerated Eusebianism is an open indictment of papalism.

Despite the religious imagery, the poet's motive in blazoning Gloriana, like the official cult itself, is largely political. To bolster English morale through hyperbole was a strategy of survival in the decade of the Armada. Only in such a political context does the Elizabethan rhetoric make sense. To take the flattery of Spenser's Proems at face value as a *religious* statement would surely be misguided.⁹⁵ At the very least we have to admit that like so many Elizabethan propagandists, the poet is caught vacillating between Eusebius and Augustine.

If we neglect the political tensions between the Eusebian and the Augustinian vision within Tudor society, we are apt to arrive at too simple a picture of the role of Elizabeth I. This has been true of some one-sided research into the cult of the queen, and especially of Spenser's participation in it. Frances Yates' important and influential studies have led some to forget the context of Spenser's encomium of Elizabeth. Thomas Cain in particular has made some exaggerated claims about the poet's mission:

That Elizabeth bridges the potentially opposed realms of heaven and earth is an idealistic conception essential to Spenser's encomium as presented in 1590. By defining a real monarch, it avoids the traditional Augustinian dualism between the Cities of God and This World that would set heaven and England at odds and that would place a low valuation on human achievement in the service of the state.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ See King, *Spenser's Poetry*, pp. 114–20.

⁹⁵ See Hackett, esp. pp. 78–83, and 139–44.

⁹⁶ Cain, p. 53.

In addition to the all too common simplistic view of the "opposed realms" of "the traditional Augustinian dualism," Cain claims that Queen Elizabeth is "part of the fixed order of eternity" and "a celestial Idea that sheds meaning upon the milieu of experience and history"; indeed, she is "the principle impelling man to realize his proper rational nature."⁹⁷ These lyrical rhapsodies, presented without a hint of a qualification, make the most deferential Elizabethan panegyric pale in comparison. Yet should Elizabethan propagandist rhetoric be the norm for modern criticism? The issue boils down to Cain's wholesale identification of Elizabeth I with Una, which in turn leads to an equally rigid equation that "makes the queen identical with the True Church."⁹⁸ I am not holding the equally untenable position that the two have nothing in common; yet a more rigorous reading of the Legend of Holiness is called for, one that looks at contexts and makes necessary distinctions. To better focus the problem, let us look at two other characters in the poem.

Several decades ago S.K. Heninger convincingly showed that Orgoglio represented Philip II of Spain, yet he also made clear that the political was only one of several interpretative levels, and not the most important at that.⁹⁹ Similarly, Spenser himself in the Mercilla episode of Book 5 makes the clear identification of Duesza with Mary Stuart. Yet to insist that Duesza throughout Book I stands for the Queen of Scots would make short shrift of any coherent reading of the book. These are obvious points that we all agree on. Yet when it comes to Elizabeth, these strictures somehow do not seem to apply anymore. The reason for this is the recent urge to see the queen in any and every female (and sometimes male) hero of the poem. I concede the general relevance of this thesis, but it has sometimes been driven *ad absurdum*, and especially with Una, where every detail of her quest is explicated in sixteenth-century political terms. A close reading of the text reveals instead a more basic panorama into which England is fitted as part of a larger whole. If Una represents the Anglican church

⁹⁷ Cain, pp. 67, 72, and 73.

⁹⁸ Cain, p. 60. Cain admits that "recurrent figures in *The Faerie Queene* do not maintain the allegorical senses at all points," and that Una therefore does not "consistently figure forth the queen" (p. 71). Yet for Cain this only strengthens the encomium: whenever something blameworthy is said about Una, the queen is not intended, while everything positive has Elizabeth as the target. This view can hardly be a constructive basis for making useful distinctions, since it knows the answers before asking the questions.

⁹⁹ S.K. Heninger, Jr., "The Orgoglio Episode in *The Faerie Queene*," *ELH* 26 (1959): 171-87.

(with Elizabeth I as its head), that is only because she on a more fundamental level stands for the universal church, born in Eden and striving to be united in the regained paradise with her true head, Christ.

The beginning and end of the Legend of Holiness tie together the two levels. When Una is first presented, she can be seen as both the universal church and as its Anglican incarnation:

So pure an innocent, as that same lambe,
She was in life and euery vertuous lore,
And by descent from Royall lynage came
Of ancient Kings and Queenes, that had of yore
Their scepters stretcht from East to Westerne shore,
And all the world in their subiection held;
Till that infernall feend with foule vpror
Forwasted all their land, and them expell'd:
Whom to auenge, she had this Knight from far compeld. (*FQ* 1.1.5)

We are expected to recognize Una as the lady of the St. George legend, with its nationalistic implications, while Spenser tones down the theological connotations by making her the descendant of "ancient Kings and Queenes," rather than of the single royal couple that later is to define her as the daughter of Adam and Eve. The implied juxtaposition of Una's universal reign with Duesza's more limited Roman lineage (in *FQ* 1.2.22) no doubt points to the contemporary strife between the papacy and the reformed church. It was a commonplace of Protestant polemic to see the Roman confession as a pseudo-church gone wrong during the Middle Ages, while the Protestants were heirs of the original church with an ancestry going back not just to the apostolic age but to Eden.¹⁰⁰ Yet this does not necessarily imply a Christian worldwide *empire*. Luther for one had contrasted the papalist claims with the rule of the worldwide *church* found within different political systems, some of which were not even Christian: "And the same Christianitie is not onely vnder the Romysshe Church, or Pope, but dispersed throughout the whole worlde . . . So that vnder the Pope, Turkes, Perses, Tatters, and euery where the Christianitie is dispersed bodely. But congregated spiritually in one Gospel and faythe,

¹⁰⁰ As John Calvin, in a representative statement, asserted: "The vniuersall or Catholicke Church is the whole multitude of them, who from the beginning of the world, haue beleueed in Christ, that now do beleue, and shall beleue to the worldes end" (*Aphorismes of Christian Religion* [London, 1596], p. 114). STC 4374. Or as Melancthon had stated: "*Una est Ecclesia Dei perpetua inde usque ab Adam*" (cited in Peter Fraenkel, *Testimonia Patrum* [Geneva: Droz, 1961], p. 62).

vnder one heade whiche is Christe."¹⁰¹ After all, neither the Roman empire nor the papacy was universal. Only the church, with Christ as its head, had members spread over the then known world.

Una's knight is portrayed as St. George, the patron saint of England, right from the start (although he does not know it himself until canto 10), while his "infernal feend," the dragon, on one level stands for the Spanish threat, a reading that is corroborated by oblique references to the Armada during the dragon-fight (i.e., *FQ* 1.11.14). Spenser continues to allude to the contemporary situation throughout the book and wraps it up with a betrothal between Redcrosse and Una that John Dixon was not the only Elizabethan to read as both a theological and a political statement: "The Church and the Lambe Christe united by god himselfe, a happie knotte whereby peace hath beine Continewed 39 year."¹⁰² Yet Dixon unites more than the text allows. Despite the heavenly analogs, Spenser stresses that it is *not* the heavenly wedding we are witnessing in canto 12. Redcrosse is only *betrothed* and has to return to further service in the earthly city of Cleopolis, politely declining the request of Una's father to remain in "ease and euerlasting rest" (*FQ* 1.12.17). The New Jerusalem has not yet descended to earth.¹⁰³ Only with the last few lines of the Mutabilitie cantos does Spenser envision (in a hazy future) "that Sabaoths sight."

If Spenser at the beginning and end of his Legend of Holiness ties in the contemporary present, at other points he clearly has a wider perspective. When Una relates her own story to Arthur in canto 7, Spenser presents her as the daughter of Adam and Eve:

The forlorne Maiden, whom your eyes haue seene
The laughing stocke of fortunes mockeries,
Am th'only daughter of a King and Queene,
Whose parents deare, whilst equall destinies
Did runne about, and their felicities

¹⁰¹ Luther, *Articles*, sig. K ii^v. Augustine, in the *De Civ. Dei* 4.15, had likewise contrasted the limited expansion of the Roman empire with the universality of Christendom; see Dougherty, p. 211.

¹⁰² As cited in Cain, p. 59.

¹⁰³ As Merlin, echoing Christ's words in Matthew 24: 6, prophesies: "But yet the end is not" (*FQ* 3.3.50). Joseph Wittreich comments on Merlin's words: "Here he quiets millennial expectations and dampens apocalyptic fervor . . . Spenser's objective in *The Faerie Queene* is not to further the Tudor's messianic pretensions but to scrutinize them. In the process, he resists the expectations of his own time by distancing apocalypse into the future . . ." ("Apocalypse," in the *Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 47–48). For the apocalyptic context, see also *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, ed. C.A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1984), and Bauckham.

The faorable heauen did not enuy,
Did spread their rule through all the territories,
Which *Phison* and *Euphrates* floweth by,
And *Gehons* golden waues doe wash continually.

Till that their cruell cursed enemy,
An huge great Dragon horrible in sight,
Bred in the loathly lakes of *Tartary*.

With murderous rauine, and deuouring might
Their kingdome spoild, and cuntry wasted quight:
Themselues, for feare into his iawes to fall,
He forst to castle strong to take their flight,
Where fast embard in mightie brasen wall,

He has them now foure yerres besiegd to make them thrall.

(*FQ* 1.7.43–44)

A dragon has driven Una's parents away from Eden, and "fast embard in mightie brasen wall, / He has them now foure yerres besiegd to make them thrall." This presentation has only an indirect connection with the contemporary situation; instead, we are given a fairly traditional Christian view of the redemption drama.

Augustine had delineated a historical progression in four steps: before the law (*ante legem*), under the law (*sub lege*), under grace (*sub gratia*), and in peace (*in pace*).¹⁰⁴ This scheme informs these stanzas and indeed a large section of Book 1. The Elizabethan reader had easy access to this progression even without going back to Augustine. It had become common property long before the sixteenth century,¹⁰⁵ and the reformers adopted it for their own ends. One of the more popular presentations was in the widely read *Carion's Chronicles*. Despite its title this was largely the work of Philip Melancthon, who kept adding to it until his death in 1560. The whole structure of the *Chronicles*, like so many similar works, was based on Augustine's fourfold scheme:

The worlde shall stande syxe thousand yerres and after shall it falle.

Two thousande yerres wythout the Lawe.

Two thousande yerres in the lawe.

Two thousande yerres the tyme of Christ.

And yf these yerres be not accompyshed, oure synnes shall be the cause, whyche are greate and many.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ See e.g. *De Diu. Q.* 61.7; *Exp. Rom.* 13–18; *De Trin.* 4.4.7; *Ench.* 31.118.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Aquinas, among others, had passed along the scheme in his *Summa theologiae* 2.1 (questions 91, 98, 106–07).

¹⁰⁶ *The three booke of Cronicles*, trans. Gwalter Lynne (London, 1550), sig. *vi^r. STC 4627.

The age of the world was supposed to reach six thousand years (unless foreshortened by sin): four thousand from Adam to Christ,¹⁰⁷ and two thousand from Christ to the End. As it had for Augustine, this made the fourfold scheme correspond to the seven days of creation: the first three ages of 2000 years each equal the six first days of creation, while the fourth, in peace, merges with God's rest on the seventh day.¹⁰⁸

Much of stanza 44 of canto 7 falls into place in this perspective. The "four yeres" of the last line allude to the period from the Fall to Christ,¹⁰⁹ while the "brassen wall" is a reference to the Old Testament (OT) law that was both a protection and a prison until the period of grace under Christ. As Paul expressed it in the Epistle to the Galatians 3: 23: "Before faith came, we were kept vnder the Law, and shut vp vnto the faith, which shulde afterwarde be reueiled."¹¹⁰ When Una and Redcrosse, about to engage the dragon, approach the brazen tower, Una notices on top of the tower "the watchman wayting tidings glad to hear" (FQ 1.11.3). This reference to Isaiah 52 underlines the OT background, since the passage was seen as a prophesy of the coming of the Messiah.¹¹¹ A historical perspective beginning with Adam stretches be-

¹⁰⁷ The 1560 Geneva Bible, e.g., contains "A Perfite Syppvntion of the Yeres and Times from Adam vnto Christ, proued by the Scriptures," which finds that "from Adam vnto Christ are 3974 yeres, six moneths and ten dayes," while John Foxe settles for the round figure of 4000 years. For a study of the apocalyptic context of the computations, see Katherine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530-1645* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), esp. pp. 20-21, 93-94 (Foxe), and 182 (Raleigh). Also see C.A. Patrides, *Premises and Motifs in Renaissance Thought and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 52-63.

¹⁰⁸ Also John Bale transmitted the conflated four- and sevenfold schemes in his *Comedy concerninge thre lawes* (1548?). See Wittreich (*Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 47), who applies both these schemes to *The Faerie Queene* with its six completed books and a seventh that yearns towards "that Sabaoth's sight" (FQ 7.8.2). While Wittreich corroborates my conclusions by seeing periods "of nature, bondage, and grace" depicted throughout the poem, his examples in Book 1 are different from mine. Maren-Sofie Røstvig sees the same sevenfold pattern in *The Shepheards Calender*: "The Shepheards Calender: A Structural Analysis," *Renaissance and Modern Studies* 13 (1960): 49-75.

¹⁰⁹ Which Percival long ago suggested, but no one else (to my knowledge) has caught on to (Percival is quoted in *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition*, ed. E. Greenlaw et al., 11 vols. [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1932-1957], 1: 256).

¹¹⁰ See Carol V. Kaske, "The Dragon's Spark and Sting and the Structure of Red Cross's Dragon fight . . ." *Studies in Philology* 66 (1969): 631-32.

¹¹¹ "The voice of thy watchmen shalbe heard: thei shal lift vp their voyce, and shout together: for thei shal se eye to eye, when the Lord shal bring againe Zion" (Isaiah 52: 7-8). The marginal gloss in the Geneva Bible amplifies: "The Prophets which are thy watchmen, shal publish this thy deliuerance: this . . . was accomplished under Christ." See Kaske p. 631, note.

fore us, culminating in a dragon-fight that reenacts Christ's victory at Calvary over "the great Dragon, or captayn of all the vnfaithful sort, that olde croked serpent which deceyued Adam," to quote John Bale.¹¹² This philosophy of history, glimpsed in the biblical narrative and expounded by Augustine, was part of a medieval heritage that had been taken over by the Reformation. Calvary, according to this tradition, was the hub, the "All-circling point"¹¹³ from which spread the spokes of redemption history. In a mythical typology that connected the first and the last book of the Bible with its central gospels, Eden was seen to prefigure both Calvary and the New Jerusalem. Bale could therefore connect the river flowing out of the heavenly city in Revelation 22 with "the swete flood of Eden," and the trees lining the river with the "tree of lyfe . . . in the myddes of Paradyse at the beginninge,"¹¹⁴ while John Donne assimilated Eden with Calvary: "We thinke that *Paradise* and *Caluarie*, / *Christs Crosse*, and *Adams tree*, stood in one place."¹¹⁵ Throughout canto 11 with its dragon-fight, healing trees, and reviving water, Spenser taps into this myth by conflating Genesis, Calvary, and the Apocalypse.¹¹⁶ And the earlier cantos, leading up to the dragon-fight, can similarly be read on different historical planes: Una as the church is depicted both in an OT, a New Testament (NT), and in a contemporary/apocalyptic embodiment.¹¹⁷

The subdivision of the OT into a period without law and a period under the law provides the structure for the cantos that depict Una's wanderings "as in exile, / In wilderness and wastfull deserts strayd, / To seeke her knight" (FQ 1.3.3). Augustine had expressed the progression of the Church in *The Enchiridion*:

[God's people] existed at first before the law; then under the law, which was given by Moses; then under grace, which was first made manifest in the coming

¹¹² Bale, sig. e vii^r.

¹¹³ Richard Crashaw, "In the Glorious Epiphany of our Lord God, a Hymn," as quoted in C.A. Patrides, *The Grand Design of God* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 82. Patrides provides a fuller explication of these themes.

¹¹⁴ Bale, sigs. Oo viii^r and Pp i^r.

¹¹⁵ "Hymne to God my God, in my sickness," in *The Metaphysical Poets*, ed. Helen Gardner (1957; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 90.

¹¹⁶ It is clearly seen in stanza 46, to give only one example, where the "apples rosie red" and the "pure vermillion" juxtapose images from the Passion and the Fall.

¹¹⁷ Una, watching Redcrosse's fight "from farre" (FQ 1.11.32), not only plays her part as the Lady of the St. George legend or as the woman clothed with the sun in the apocalyptic dragon-battle, but also reenacts the role of the faithful women who remained at Calvary (after the men had fled) and then were the first to come to the open grave: "And many women were there [at the crucifixion], beholding him a *farre of*, which had followed Iesus from Galilee, ministring vnto him" (Matthew 23: 55; my emphasis).

of the Mediator. Not, indeed, that this grace was absent previously, but, in harmony with the arrangements of the time, it was veiled and hidden. (*Ench.* 31.118)¹¹⁸

In addition to glossing Una as the Church and as a symbol of grace, this passage also provides an exegesis as good as any of her much-discussed veil. In canto 3 Spenser investigates the period *sub lege*, while in canto 6 the emphasis is on a society living before or outside the mosaic law. Una's wanderings in the deserts of these cantos is an appropriate and traditional symbol for the history of the church. From Abraham's journey to the promised land until the Babylonian exile ("exile" in *FQ* 1.3.3 is a carefully chosen word), deserts form a vital part of the biblical narrative. The most important was of course the exodus from Egypt under Moses, a desert wandering that was habitually seen as a symbol for the whole OT era.¹¹⁹

The *sub lege* character of canto 3 is most graphically portrayed in Abessa, carrying her Hagarite pot in the shade of mount Sinai:¹²⁰

Vnder the steepe foot of a mountaine here; . . .
A damzell spyde slow footing her before,
That on her shoulders sad a pot of water bore. (*FQ* 1.3.10)

Paul had explicated the story of Sarah and Hagar in Genesis 21 as an allegory of law and grace: "For these mothers are the two Testaments, the one which is Agar of mounte Sina, which gendreth vnto bondage, (For Agar or Sina is a mountaine in Arabia, & it answereth to Ierusalem which now is [i.e., to the Jews]) . . . But Ierusalem, which is above, is fre" (Galatians 4: 24–26). Paul identifies Hagar with the OT law given at Sinai and thereby with the Jewish religion, while Sarah (with her son Isaac) symbolizes the promises given to Abraham, and thus the faith of the Christian church. The same holds true for Una and Abessa. Throughout this canto Spenser, in Luther's words, "shows the difference between Hagar and Sarah, that is, between the synagogue

¹¹⁸ "[Dei populus] fuit primitus ante legem, secundo sub lege quae data est per Moysen, deinde sub gratia quae revelata est per primum mediatoris adventum. Quae quidem gratia nec antea defuit quibus eam oportuit impetrari, quamvis pro temporis dispensatione velata et occulta." *Ench.* also influenced Spenser's conception of the House of Holiness.

¹¹⁹ Already in the NT this view of the OT was established; see esp. Hebrews 11.

¹²⁰ See Kathryn Walls, "Abessa and the Lion: *The Faerie Queene*, I.3.1–12," *Spenser Studies* 5 (1984): 3–30. Unfortunately, despite Walls's conclusive affiliation of Abessa with Hagar (for the pot on her shoulder, see Genesis 21: 14), the old but unconvincing identification with the Samaritan woman still lingers on (the even more unlikely allusion to Rebecca at Haran has at least been dropped): see "Abessa" in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 3.

and the church, or between the Law and the Gospel."¹²¹ The one difference from Paul is that Spenser (with Luther) also includes the legalistic Romanists in his depiction of the synagogue.¹²² This double vision is in line with the general tendency to see the periods before and after Christ in tandem, and is encouraged by the reformers' insistence that grace and law were universal concepts that could not be equated with the old or new testaments.¹²³ Abessa therefore represents the legalistic impulse throughout history, while Una stands for the covenant of grace both in biblical and Tudor times.

Canto 6 repeats canto 3. Una roams the "deserts" in search of Redcrosse, when she is suddenly threatened by danger. After the allegorical core (1.3.10–25 and 1.6.7–34) Archimago appears, and furious battles with Sansloy bring both cantos to a close. These parallels underline the complementary nature of the allegory. As the veiled Una in canto 3 is contrasted with a synagogue living *sub lege*, so here she is confronted with the sayrs, living outside the law altogether. The sayrs have traditionally been interpreted as representing pagans living according to natural religion, and the emphasis has most often been upon their innocence, even "a human perfectability untainted by original sin."¹²⁴ The first part of this interpretation I believe to be correct,

¹²¹ Luther's lectures on Galatians, in *Luther's Works*, ed. J. Pelican (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963) 26: 442.

¹²² Also Calvin lumps together "Papists, Ishmaelites and Hagarites" (*Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle [Edinburgh, 1854], p. 145).

¹²³ "The old Testament," says Calvin, "is taken two manner of wayes: sometimes to signifie the Legall couenant, sometimes to signifie the couenant of grace as it was established with Abraham & his posteritie" (*Aphorismes*, p. 41).

¹²⁴ Sean Kane, *Spenser's Moral Allegory* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 184. For similar views see M. Pauline Parker, *The Allegory of "The Faerie Queene"* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), pp. 70–71; Graham Hough, *A Preface to "The Faerie Queene"* (London: Duckworth, 1962), pp. 150–51; Harry Berger, Jr., "Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Book I: Prelude to Interpretation," *Southern Review*, 2 (1966): 34; C.S. Lewis, *Spenser's Images of Life*, ed. Alistair Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 83–85; Maurice Evans, *Spenser's Anatomy of Heroism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 101–02; John Erskine Hanks, *Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), p. 123; James Nohrnberg, *The Analogy of "The Faerie Queene"* (1976; rpt. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 218–22; Douglas Brooks-Davies, pp. 61–62. A greater awareness of the sayrs' moral limitations is shown by some scholars: Virgil K. Whitaker, "The Theological Structure of *The Faerie Queene*," in *That Sovereign Light*, ed. W.R. Mueller and D.C. Allen (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1952): 52; William Nelson, *The Poetry of Edmund Spenser* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 156–57; Anthea Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 87–89. Yet the consensus, as expressed in the *Spenser Encyclopedia*, is still to see the sayrs of *FQ* 1.6 as "naive, benign creatures" (p. 628).

but as to the second part I have serious reservations. Satyrs after all were proverbially lecherous,¹²⁵ a characteristic that is emphasized in canto 6. Whenever Spenser refers to satyrs elsewhere, they are destructive or even deadly, but never innocent.¹²⁶ The satyrs that worship Una may have an instinctive feeling for religion, but all too easily they degenerate into idolatry. As the people of Asia Minor in Acts 14: 11–13 worshipped Paul and Barnabas as Zeus and Hermes, so the satyrs mistake Una for a pagan deity: “[They] worshipt her in vaine, / And made her th’Image of Idolatryes; / But when their bootlesse zeale she did restraine / From her own worship, they her Asse would worship fayn” (FQ 1.6.19).

Of their leader Sylvanus no better can be said. Seeing Una, he “burnt in his intent” (FQ 1.6.15); and although taking her for Venus and Diana, this does not prevent him from being reminded of previous pederasty. Harry Berger provides a pertinent gloss: “The tree of death on which Sylvanus supports his aged limbs comes to life as a mirror of inverted and destructive love (the god for the boy, the boy for the beast), a love which destroys its own object through ignorance or uncontrol . . .”¹²⁷ Far from being a description of prelapsarian innocence, a picture emerges that can best be glossed by the now familiar verses from Paul’s Epistle to the Romans:¹²⁸

Because that when they knewe God, they glorified him not as God, nether were thankful, but became vaine in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was full of darkenes. When they professed them selues to be wise, they became fooles. For they turned the glorie of the incorruptible God to the similitude of the image of a corruptible man, & of birdes, and foure footed beastes, & of creeping things. Wherefore also God gaue them vp to their hearts lustes, vnto vnclennes, to defile their owne bodies betweene them selues. (Romans 1: 21–25)

Sylvanus and his satyrs show ingratitude by not glorifying God;¹²⁹ instead they worship and serve the creature, forsaking their Creator, and are therefore given up “to their hearts lustes.” Just as Paul in Ro-

¹²⁵ See Henry Gibbons Loiseich, *Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1932), p. 59 (Fauns) and pp. 105–06 (Satyrs).

¹²⁶ See FQ 3.10.48 and 3.11.35; *Daphniaida* ll. 155–61; *The Tauer of the Muses* ll. 267–70; *Virgils Gnat* ll. 177–79; *Bellayes visions* 12.

¹²⁷ Berger, p. 36.

¹²⁸ I join Darryl J. Gless (*Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994], p. 108) in seeing the analogy to Romans 1.

¹²⁹ Sylvanus’ “vye twyne” (FQ 1.6.14) is a traditional emblem of ingratitude (Richard Douglas Jordan, “Una Among the Satyrs: *The Faerie Queene* 1.6,” *MLQ* 38 [1977]: 128). Jordan’s general interpretation of the satyrs as OT Jews, however, I find unpersuasive.

mans contrasts the Christians with the law-less Gentiles (as well as with the law-abiding Jews), so here Spenser contrasts the faith of the true church with classical pagan society, and the picture is not a pretty one.

But what of the Greek achievements in philosophy and the arts? Is not Spenser supposed to stand in the forefront of renaissance humanism? Yes, but in Book 1 he is talking about faith. As he is wary of mixing freely the political and the spiritual realm, so he distinguishes the realms of reason and revelation.

Yet Sylvanus is not the whole picture: we must also take Satyrane into account. Satyrane’s allegorical function has been subject to a plethora of interpretations, ranging from a faculty of the soul or a part of Redcrosse’s psyche to external identifications such as primitive Christianity or Henry VIII.¹³⁰ But if the satyrs represent pagan civilization, a more natural interpretation would be to see Satyrane as the acme of such a society, in the form of those Greek philosophers who had arrived at a position that was as close to revealed truth as was humanly possible: the belief in a supreme deity and a system of ethics not unlike the one given the church. Had not Socrates been likened to a satyr by Alcibiades in the *Symposium* (215–222b)? The Greek names of Satyrane’s ancestors—Thyamis (“passion”), Labryde (“turbulent,” “greedy”), and Therion (“wild beast”)—reveal both the geographical setting and the ethical morass from which he rises. His fame, like Greek philosophy, has spread over the world (FQ 1.6.29); and coming into contact with divine Truth, he (in the same way that Plato, according to an persistent tradition, had sat at the feet of Moses) learns Una’s “discipline of faith and veritie” (FQ 1.6.31). In return Satyrane brings Una out of the *silva*, the place “where wild animal nature and passion dominate.”¹³¹ But ultimately he cannot take Redcrosse’s place: “But she all vovd vnto the *Redcrosse* knight, / His wndering perill closely did lament, / Ne in this new acquaintance could delight” (FQ 1.6.32). Battling Sansloy, who was the one to lead Una

¹³⁰ See *Variorum*, 1: 244–48; Nelson, p. 157; Berger, p. 38; Evans, p. 102; Hankins, p. 124; Nohrnberg, p. 222; Brooks-Davies, pp. 67–68; A. Bartlett Giamatti, *Exile and Change in Renaissance Literature* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1984), p. 93; *Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 628.

¹³¹ As Servius, the medieval commentator on the *Aeneid*, explicates the term. Also Augustine in *Conf.* 10.35.56 describes the “immensa silva” in similar language, echoed by Dante’s “selva oscura” (*Inferno* I, 2) as well as by Petrarch (see Sara Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch’s Laurels* [University Park: The Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1992], pp. 84–86, and Nelson, p. 159).

"away into a forrest wild" (FQ 1.6.3). Satyrane's power is strained, and we are left in suspense as to the final outcome.¹³² That may be as it should, since the Saracen's name ("without law") speaks of Satyrane's own origin.¹³³ One thing is clear: against the dragon he would have done no better than the knights in FQ 1.7.45 that became his "piteous pray"; only Redcrosse can be victorious against such an enemy. In the natural sphere, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle have their value, but they cannot be relied upon in matters of salvation.

For Augustine the fourfold scheme was seen not only as historical periods, but also as stages in the religious development of the individual, from a state of ignorance via the knowledge of the law to the freedom of grace and the final beatitude in peace. He puts it most succinctly in *The Enchiridion*:

When, sunk in the darkest depth of ignorance, man lives according to the flesh, undisturbed by any struggle of reason, this is the first state. Afterwards, when through the law has come the knowledge of sin, and the Spirit of God has not yet interposed His aid, man, striving to live according to the law, is thwarted in his efforts and falls into conscious sin, and so, being overcome of sin, becomes its slave . . . This is man's second state. But if God has regard to him, and inspires him with faith in God's help, and the Spirit of God begins to work in him, then the mightier power of love strives against the power of the flesh; and although there is still in the man's own nature a power that fights against him (for his disease is not completely cured), yet he lives the life of the just by faith, and lives in righteousness so far as he does not yield to evil lust, but conquers it by the love of holiness. This is the third state of a man of good hope; and he who by steadfast piety advances in this course, shall attain at last to peace, that peace which, after this life is over, shall be perfected in the repose of the spirit, and finally in the resurrection of the body. (*Ench.* 31.118)¹³⁴

¹³² His success as knight "is limited" in other parts of the poem too (*Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 628); see cantos 7 and 11 of Book 4, and cantos 4 and 5 of Book 4.

¹³³ Cf. Gless, *Interpretation*, p. 109.

¹³⁴ "Sed cum in altissimis ignorantiae tenebris, nulla resistente ratione, secundum carnem vivitur, haec sunt prima hominis. Deinde cum per legem cognitio fuerit facta peccati, si nondum divinus adjuvat spiritus, secundum legem volens vivere vincitur et sciens peccat, peccatoque subditus servit . . . Haec sunt secunda hominis. Si autem respexerit deus ut ad implenda quae mandat ipse adjuvare credatur, et agi homo coeperit dei spiritu, concupiscitur adversus carnem fortiore robore caritatis, ut quamvis adhuc sit quod homini repugnet ex homine, nondum tota infirmitate sanata, ex fide tamen iustus vivat, iustaeque vivat in quantum non cedit malae concupiscentiae, vincente delectatione iustitiae. Haec sunt tertia bonae spei hominis, in quibus si pia perseverantia quisque proficiat postrema pax resistit, quae post hanc vitam in requie spiritus, deinde in resurrectione etiam carnis implebitur."

The reformers, with Luther in the forefront, likewise described the spiritual progression in the same categories, with an emphasis upon the move from the condemnation of the law to salvation by grace.¹³⁵

We find the same dual historical and individual progression in the Legend of Holiness. We have looked at the historical stages in cantos 3 and 6, but Spenser also makes Redcrosse advance from a state of ignorance (seen in particular during his first meeting with Archimago), through condemnation under the law (most acutely felt when he encounters Despair), to the healing grace encountered in the House of Holiness and the peace glimpsed from the Mount of Contemplation. When Redcrosse has come within sight of that final goal, Spenser sums up the progression of the whole book by comparing four different mountains:

That done, he [Contemplation] leads him to the highest Mount;
Such one, as that same mighty man of God,
That bloud-red billowes like a walled front
On either side disparted with his rod,
Till that his army dry-foot through them yod,
Dwelt fortie dayes vpon; where writ in stone
With bloudy letters by the hand of God,
The bitter doome of death and balefull mone
He did receive, whiles flashing fire about him shone.

Or like that sacred hill, whose head full hie,
Adorn'd with fruitfull Oliues all arond,
Is, as it were for endlesse memory
Of that deare Lord, who oft thereon was fownd,
For euer with a flowring girlond crown'd:
Or like that pleasaunt Mount, that is for ay
Through famous Poets verse each where renown'd,
Or which the thrise three learned Ladies play
Their heavenly notes, and make full many a louely lay.

(FQ 1.10.53-54)

If Mount Parnassus represents *ante legem*, then Mount Sinai stands for *sub lege* and the Mount of Olives for *sub gratia*. And of course, from the Mount of Contemplation (which these three other mountains are

¹³⁵ The dichotomy between law and grace goes back to St. Paul, but Augustine extended its application in a number of works. Of these, *On the Spirit and the Letter* (*De spiritu et littera*) was of crucial importance for Luther's theological development and for the development of the Reformation at large.

compared to) Redcrosse is shown the city of "eternall peace" (*FQ* 1.10.55).¹³⁶

Which brings us back to where we started: Spenser's presentation of Augustine's two cities in stanzas 55 to 63. What needs to be emphasized again in our own summary is that this progression, in both its historical and its individual guise, leads up to the *heavenly* city, not to Cleopolis. Elizabeth I, as head of the Church of England, has a part to play in that city; yet her own progression towards peace lies primarily on the personal level. Gloriana is not Una.

¹³⁶ Spenser's rearrangement of the Augustinian scheme is admittedly odd, but repeats the reverse order of the first two eras in cantos 3 and 6. Carol V. Kaske, "Spenser's Pluralistic Universe: The View from the Mount of Contemplation," in *Contemporary Thought on Edmund Spenser*, ed. Richard C. Frushell et al. (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1975), has also interpreted the three mountains (Parnassus, Sinai, and Olivet) as representing "the traditional three dispensations: Nature, Law, and Grace" (p. 147), but for her the mountains do not represent a progression along Augustine's fourfold scheme but "different dispensations or ways to heaven" (p. 132). See also her *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1999), which unfortunately reached me too late for inclusion in this study.

Postscript

This study has traced St. Augustine's enduring effect on a number of seminal early modern writers. His greatness can be gauged not only by the breadth and penetration of his ideas as such, but also by the complex and highly influential responses to the different strands of his thought. The full width of the multifaceted Augustinian perspectives encompasses a surprisingly large part of the continuum we call the European Renaissance. Yet the "Augustine" of the Renaissance most often assumed a different character from that envisioned by modern historical or patristic studies. Indeed, being dressed up to fit various needs was one key to the Father's success. Since the inherent diversity of his writings, with their emphasis on vertical or horizontal perspectives, catered to the differing needs of early modern humanists, philosophers and reformers, Augustine assumed a multitude of shapes. While some made him into a Plato in cowl, others refashioned him into a fideist skeptic, a scriptural ciceronian or a Pauline predestinarian.

Yet there were also continuities in these protean perspectives. If we compare the "Augustines" of Petrarch and Spenser we find common concerns in spite of differing social and religious contexts. To both poets the Father delineated a world of fluctuation and error, yet ultimately meaningful through the intervention of the divine Logos. The erratic desire of the Petrarchan lover in *Rime sparse* or the errant knights' aimless wandering through the *silvas* of *The Faerie Queene* are for both poets redeemed by a combination of the formal harmony of number and the verbal message of grace. The divided self of Petrarch's poetic persona, seeking solace in Augustine's similar fate, set a pattern for Catholic and Protestant sonneteers all the way to Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* and Spenser's *Amoretti*. Petrarch's Augustinian insistence in *On His Own Ignorance* that the spheres of reason and revelation are compatible yet distinct are echoed in the structuring of Spenser's *Four Hymnes*, in the implicit distinction between nature and grace in the division of *The Faerie Queene*, but also seen in the

different roles of Satyrane and Redcross in the Legend of Holiness. In these continuities Petrarch and Spenser are perhaps more typical than Calvin and Ficino, who exemplify the extreme poles of the Augustinian legacy. Having a spectrum of choices on a variety of topics, most writers muddled their way through the Father's thought to positions that cannot always be described as clearly vertical or horizontal. Yet it is the tensions between these two perspectives that best describes the multivalency of the Renaissance.

What might be surprising is the extent to which Augustine is still with us, still engaging us, even as our perceptions of him are no longer those of earlier periods. When we read recent books not only in theology or philosophy but in psychology, semiology or hermeneutics (not to speak of *Newsweek* or *The Washington Post*), we find his name with some frequency, and his ideas discussed with more than historical interest. I want to end this study by very briefly outlining two possible "Augustines" for our own times: one hierarchical and conservative, the other hybrid and post-colonial (to use some modern buzz-words). These two versions are of course not the only possible modern ones, but provide the extremes of the spectrum. Like its Renaissance counterparts, both reflect certain aspects of the Father's thought while neither captures its full width and complexity.

The first Augustine is a dummy set up only to be knocked down by a variety of modern-isms: the arch-reactionary system-builder standing behind a strictly vertical, logocentric, hierarchical and patriarchal construct. I'm thinking of the Augustine made responsible for the inquisition and the continuation of slavery, as well as other forms of political and religious oppression, including the misogyny and sexual repression of the last 1500 years. This description of the hierarchy can easily be combined with the picture of the otherworldly mystic who despises the world with all its forms of human life, the anti-humanist (or arch-humanist, depending on where one comes from) who chains language to a fixed Logos that stifles the liberating play of signifiers. Of course I'm exaggerating, even demonising my picture, but milder versions are not hard to come by.

Then there is the Augustine of political pessimism, existential angst and the decentred subject,¹ the early theorist of the post-modern di-

¹ See, for example, the cultural materialist Jonathan Dollimore on Augustine as one of the most important originators of "the neurosis, anxiety and alienation of the subject-in-crisis" ("Shakespeare and Theory," in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, ed. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin [London and New York: Routledge, 1998], p. 271).

lemma, the grandfather of Freud, Kierkegaard and Derrida. The latter and Augustine in fact share strikingly similar personal trajectories. Both are outsiders born on the margins of empire, indeed the very same periphery (present-day Algeria), and both cross borders as they move towards the political and cultural centers (Paris and Milan) only to radically question the basic assumptions of those centers. Both refuse to be pinned down, never being satisfied with earlier positions in their intellectual inquisitiveness. Both deal with dichotomies or contradictions; what Karl Jaspers said about Augustine is equally true for Derrida: "Augustine is one of the thinkers who ventures into contradictions, who draw their life from the tensions of enormous contradictions. . . . Augustine faces the contradictions. And more than that: he presses them to their utmost limits."² Finally, both see themselves and humanity at large as being in a state of exile. The following statement could have been culled from a book on or by Augustine, but is in fact written about Derrida:

Exile is our condition, for each of us to bear and make use of in our own way. In this universal exile and alienation lie also an ethical appeal, namely that a possible recognition of what is human is not opened up by desperately holding on to cultural identities, but by recognizing that humanity's deepest fate entails an unavoidable lack of identity and belonging.³

As with the "hierarchical" Augustine described above, this picture of a "post-modern" Augustine is exaggerated, yet being close enough for us to recognize crucial aspects of the Father's thought. Which Augustine is the true one? As in the Renaissance, that depends on who you are, and what you are looking for.

² As quoted in Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, ed. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago and London: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 207.

³ My translation of Hans Ruin's "Främlingskap som filosofi [Exile as Philosophy]," a book review of Derrida's autobiographical *Le monologisme de l'autre ou La prothèse d'origine* in *Dagens Nyheter* 29 March 2000. Another fascinating parallel can be made to the French feminist Hélène Cixous, also an "exile" grown up in Algeria, who in recent autobiographical works connects her own life story to Augustine's *Confessions*.

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