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AN EXAMINATION OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Zolt Salontai

1. Introduction

“St Augustine, by any estimation, towers like a colossus over Western theology; his influence may be perceived as positive, baleful, or profoundly ambiguous, but it can never be denied.”-

Stephen R. Holmes.¹

Every orthodox ecclesial communion in the broader body of Christ considers the doctrine of the Trinity to be an indispensable hinge upon which the Christian faith reposes. In other words, Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox theologians alike recognise the centrality of the Trinity *vis-à-vis* the development of any robustly satisfactory theological elucidation of the cardinal Christian doctrines pertaining to creation and redemption. Unfortunately, within the modern ecclesial praxis of the wider Christian community, it seems that the criticism of Karl Rahner holds exceptional weight concerning the assessment that,

Despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere ‘monotheists.’ We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.²

Ergo, the task of the following essay will be to examine the significance of the thought of St. Augustine apropos his contributions to Trinitarian theology for the purposes of advancing a retrieval of the classic Christian doctrine of the Trinity, particularly as a possible corrective against contemporary imbalances in the praxis of the Body of Church relating to the teaching. However, this paper will first review the existing ecclesial consensus among mainstream Christian churches as pertains to the Trinity, with the intention that by way of reviewing the

¹ Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 129.

² Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: A Herder & Herder Book, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1970), 10-11.

extant literature of the tradition, a tantalising foretaste of the Western theological indebtedness to Augustine will be established.

2. Literature Survey of the Prominent Trinitarian Affirmations Across the Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Traditions

Within the Protestant tradition, especially in the writings of the early Reformers, most markedly in the thought of John Calvin, there is a particular admiration for Augustine. This is evident in Calvin's discussion on the Trinity in book 1, chapter 13, of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, where he expressly quotes from *De Trinitate* and *De Doctrina Christiana* as to affirm that the Father is the "*principium totius deitatis*, the beginning of the whole deity,"³ whilst also maintaining the fecundity and indeed eternity of each person within the Godhead. Subsequent Reformed theologians, such as Cornelius Van Til have also been influenced by this Augustinian emphasis in their affirmation that "unity and plurality are equally ultimate in the Godhead,"⁴ for each person of the Trinity is "exhaustive of divinity itself, while yet there is a genuine distinction between the persons."⁵ Thus, God is simultaneously "one-conscious being, and yet he is also a tri-conscious being."⁶ Here, Van Til affirms the classic Christian teaching regarding both the unity and fecundity of God, whilst addressing the "real mystery of the Trinity,"⁷ viz. the notion that "each one of the Persons possesses the whole of the divine essence."⁸ Another definitive Reformed text, specifically the 1689 London Baptist Confession of faith summarises this teaching by reasoning that the three subsistences of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are of one substance, with "each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence remains undivided."⁹

Within the medieval Catholic tradition, the perennial thinker St. Thomas Aquinas also preserves the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity in agreement with the ancient creeds of Nicaea, Constantinople, as well as the "so-called Creed of Athanasius,"¹⁰ and by extension the thought of Augustine via an upholding of the doctrine of divine simplicity through which the

³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion & 2*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), Institutes I, xiii, 29.

⁴ Cornelius V. Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology: Prolegomena and the Doctrines of Revelation, Scripture, and God* (P & R Publishing, 2007), 348.

⁵ Til, *Introduction to Systematic*, 348.

⁶ Til, *Introduction to Systematic*, 348.

⁷ Louis Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine* (Banner of Truth, 2005), 31.

⁸ Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine*, 31.

⁹ Sam Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith* (EP BOOKS, 2016), 64.

¹⁰ Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 185.

“undivided divine nature”¹¹ that exists within the Godhead is coupled with the notion that “their being three is a consequence of them being genuinely related to each other by virtue of the processions.”¹² This teaching is directly drawn from the profession made by the Athanasian Creed regarding how there is a “coming forth in God,”¹³ who is otherwise simple with respects to Being as such. Furthermore, this notion is explicitly present in the thinking of Augustine who argues that the three persons subsist “in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity; and therefore there are not three Gods but one God.”¹⁴ Similarly, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms that each person of the Godhead is that “supreme reality, viz. the divine substance, essence or nature,”¹⁵ yet there is nevertheless a distinction “from one another in their relation of origin, viz. the Father generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds.”¹⁶

As concerns the Orthodox tradition, there is a similar affirmation that “God is essence subsisting in three persons,”¹⁷ yet because of an excessive tendency towards apophaticism, the East veers towards overplaying the role of mystery in comprehending the Godhead. The quintessential example of this tendency towards mystery can be found in the thought of the eminent medieval byzantine theologian, Gregory Palamas, who insists upon a distinction between the essence and energies of the Godhead.¹⁸ This is perhaps in some respects analogous to Western discussions about *theologia* (immanent relations) and *oikonomia* (economic relations) within the Trinity, particularly as relates to 20th century discourse on the topic and the ensuing charges of pantheism levelled at Rahner’s interpretation of the relationship between the economic and immanent Trinity. Nevertheless, in the thought of Palamas, there is an affirmation of the “one unoriginated and eternal essence of God,”¹⁹ but this divine essence also possesses powers or energies as mentioned above, which are themselves unoriginated and eternal, yet are not identical with God for He transcends these pre-existent energies, which

¹¹ Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 198.

¹² Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 198.

¹³ Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Guide and Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 100.

¹⁴ Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 187.

¹⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1997), 253, <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm>.

¹⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 254.

¹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: The Experience of God* (Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 245.

¹⁸ G. E. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, *The Philokalia, Volume 4: The Complete Text; Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain & St. Markarios of Corinth* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 398-399.

¹⁹ Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 2004), 245.

exist not in Him, but around Him.²⁰ This has incidentally led certain writers, who are sympathetic to Augustine, such as Rowan Williams, to accuse Palamas of identifying and conflating the divine *ousia* or *essentia* in the vocabulary of St. Augustine with the *energeiai* of God.²¹ Other Orthodox scholars, such as Andrew Louth, build on this foundational distinction by reasoning that God can only be approached through a “theology of the alpha-privative,”²² for “we do not know God, we only know ‘about’ him; we do not know his being or essence, only his activity, *energeia*, or power.”²³

In summary, it can be stated that the Western approach to the Trinity is predominantly uniform across Catholic and Protestant contours in contradistinction to that which we find in the writings of Eastern theologians. This is largely because mainstream Western theology draws from the thought of Augustine in his accentuation of the undivided substance of the Godhead and consequently all subsequent theological reflection is highly indebted as a stream to its source. Correspondingly, with this background information in mind, the following subsection will provide an outline of Augustine’s Trinitarian theology, before closely examining his unique contribution to the doctrine as expounded in his psychologically derived analogues, which draw a foundational link between the Godhead and the human self.

3. An Outline of St. Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology

Concerning the thought of Augustine, seventh century ecclesiastic and scholar *par excellence*, Isidore of Seville famously wrote that, “He lies who says he has read you entirely for you Augustine, glow with a thousand volumes.”²⁴ This self-same difficulty confronts the scholar who attempts to provide a systematic outline of his Trinitarian theology, for the sheer scope of his erudition automatically results in the exclusion of certain writings in favour of other texts. For instance, Augustine comments on the Trinity in numerous places, viz. “*On the Trinity, Tractates on the Gospel of John, Letter 11 to Nedridius, Letter 169 to Bishop Evodius*, as well as the *City of God* and the *Confessions*.”²⁵ Therefore, this outline will primarily reference his *magnum opus* on the Trinity, whilst briefly alluding to several other texts in order

²⁰ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 246.

²¹ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 249. For more details, see. Saint Augustine, *City of God* (London: Penguin UK, 2003), 473.

²² Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* (London: SPCK, 2013), 29.

²³ Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 30.

²⁴ Sven Bernecker and Kourken Michaelian, *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2017), 440.

²⁵ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 184.

to consolidate the main Trinitarian themes disseminated throughout his writings. Concerning *On the Trinity*, the methodological preamble is the Augustinian dictum of “faith seeking understanding,”²⁶ because the intellect is fallen and thus through “grace’s education and drawing of the intellect”²⁷ we can transcend our finitude via divine assistance, through which Christ may “draw us into the mystery of his divine and transformative presence.”²⁸ Moreover, Augustine follows the historical formulation of the Nicene Creed in the mid to late 4th century, to which Augustine was beholden as a faithful Catholic²⁹ professing that “God is one substance, existing as three persons,”³⁰ yet there is equality and co-eternality, as well as an inseparability relating to “operations outside the Godhead.”³¹ These core themes will be elucidated later in further depth, however at this point the structure of this principal Trinitarian text will be delineated. The book written over a twenty-year period³² is an “exegetical, theological, philosophical, and polemical work”³³ systematically arranged into fifteen books that draw from Church tradition, scripture, collegial commentaries and treatises, particularly the writing of Hillary of Poitiers.³⁴

The structure is as follows: books one through four provide the theological and exegetical foundation for the rest of the text. This is to recapitulate the dogmatic “statement of the mystery,”³⁵ in the face of Arian and semi-Arian opposition,³⁶ as well as to accentuate the concern over divine missions, viz. “sending of the Son and Holy Spirit.”³⁷ Moreover, there is an upholding of the concomitant dual procession (*filioque*) of the Spirit from the Father and the Son with the Father’s being operating as the “source of all deity.”³⁸ Additionally, theophanies and perhaps most importantly the incarnation³⁹ are considered as discussion topics in book four as a response to his friend Nebridius, who enquired many years earlier as to why “the Son alone is said to be incarnated and not the Father and Holy Spirit as well?”⁴⁰

²⁶ Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 92.

²⁷ Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 126.

²⁸ Emery and Levering, 126.

²⁹ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 91-92.

³⁰ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 186.

³¹ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 92.

³² Groeschel, *Augustine: Major Writings*, 111.

³³ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 92.

³⁴ Henry Chadwick, *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2001), 94-95.

³⁵ Benedict J. Groeschel, *Augustine: Major Writings* (Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995), 112.

³⁶ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 93-94.

³⁷ Groeschel, *Augustine: Major Writings*, 112.

³⁸ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 94.

³⁹ Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 135.

⁴⁰ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 92.

Incidentally, the “homoian Arians”⁴¹ raised this question as an objection, due to their subordinationism of the Son to Father.⁴² Here, Augustine responds that “all three persons are involved in all the works and ways of God.”⁴³

Proceeding on, books five through seven address several linguistic and logical concerns pertaining to apophatic theology, as well as consubstantiality relating to substantial and accidental predication *vis-à-vis* concerns about heresy and quibbles about terminology.⁴⁴ Lastly, books eight through fifteen tackle the problem of analogous language relating explicating the doctrine of the Trinity, particularly the “possibility of understanding ‘three in one’ by a series of analogies drawn from human psychology.”⁴⁵ In other words, books eight through fifteen are a search for the “ontological link between the divine mystery of the Trinity and the more accessible mystery of the human self,”⁴⁶ based on the conviction that man bears the *imago dei*, which as mentioned in the introduction is ostensibly the accentuating means by which Trinitarian theology can experience a modern revival in the post-Freudian milieu.

Consequently, this essay will concentrate on Augustine’s psychologically based contributions to Trinitarian theology as developed in books eight through fifteen in his *magnum opus* on the subject matter. However, prior to doing so, this paper will briefly comment on the central Trinitarian leitmotifs explicated in Augustine’s other writings. For example, in his *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, he makes some important comments about the inseparability of the works of the Trinity, arguing that due to the fact that each person is consubstantially indivisible “creation is by the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, not three separate actions.”⁴⁷ On this point, Augustine draws especially from the Cappadocian Trinitarian heritage, most explicitly from Gregory Nazianzen,⁴⁸ as to illustrate that he is not only committed to divine simplicity, but also the divine taxis within the Godhead.⁴⁹ Correspondingly, as relates to divine missions, “Augustine can say that God sent God,”⁵⁰ for in begetting the Son, “the Father shows the Son,”⁵¹ and identically the “Son’s being is identical

⁴¹ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 187.

⁴² Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 132.

⁴³ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 187.

⁴⁴ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 95-96. Arianism and Sabellianism were concerns, along with communicational faltering between the Greeks and Latins.

⁴⁵ Chadwick, *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction*, 95.

⁴⁶ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 96.

⁴⁷ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 187.

⁴⁸ Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 134.

⁴⁹ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 187.

⁵⁰ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 192.

⁵¹ Emery and Levering, *Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, 128.

with his seeing of the Father”⁵² because ontologically each person is united in an intrinsic relationship from all eternity *vis-à-vis* their essential being.⁵³ Elsewhere, in writing to the bishop Evodius, Augustine recapitulates this notion by emphasising the equality and co-eternality of persons, who are “absolutely of one nature, an inseparable Trinity, yet a Trinity in inseparable union, distinctively and in mutual relation to each other, presenting the three to our attention separately, but in no wise separated.”⁵⁴ Likewise, in his famous *Confessions*, Augustine reflecting on the creation account in Genesis wrote that:

Under the name of God, I now held the Father, who made these things, and under the name of Beginning, the Son, in whom He made these things; and believing, as I did, my God as the Trinity, I searched further in His holy words, and to, Thy Spirit moved upon the waters. Behold the Trinity, my God, Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost, Creator of all creation.⁵⁵

In other words, each person of the Holy Trinity was actively involved in the work of creation and the persons of the Trinity are thus inseparable in their operation, despite the role of the Father as *principium*.⁵⁶

In summation, Augustine’s broad scoping Trinitarian vision covers a multitude of theological themes that are developed in the medieval and early modern period, ranging from divine simplicity, generation, missions, shared substance of the divine persons (including the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit with Father and Son), divine relations, incarnation, theophanies, and numerous Trinitarian analogies or illustrations. Now, that this essay has provided an expansive outline of Augustine’s Trinitarian theology, this paper will focus on his Trinitarian *magnum opus*, particularly with regards to the development of the sundry psychological analogies throughout the latter part of *On the Trinity*.

⁵² Emery and Levering, *Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, 128.

⁵³ Emery and Levering, *Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, 132.

⁵⁴ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 186.

⁵⁵ Saint Augustine Bishop of Hippo, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. E. B. Pusey (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), Book XIII, Chapter 5.

⁵⁶ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 94.

4. St. Augustine's Psychological Analysis of Man's Inwardness in relation to the Trinity

As mentioned above, the second portion of *On the Trinity* is dedicated to a consideration of “whether there is in humans some discernible trace of the Trinity.”⁵⁷ In other words, because man as such possesses the *imago dei* and hence resembles “the divine Trinity in that we exist; moreover knowing that we exist, we are glad of this existence and this is knowledge, for in these three things there is no plausible deception to trouble us.”⁵⁸ This above cited quotation introduces us to the concept of triadic-based analogies concerning man and the Godhead, which Augustine is exceptionally fond of utilising. Nonetheless, it must be prefaced that as pertains to Augustine's usage of ‘analogy’ as such, it would be quite mistaken to suppose that this refers to a “vague resemblance, rather it alludes to something exact and mathematical.”⁵⁹ For even when Augustine discusses various psychological analogies for the Trinity, he is not merely examining the human mind as to find a threefold analogue within the human psyche that is comparable to classic Trinitarian dogma. Instead Augustine utilises the “language of faith to explore the mind”⁶⁰ in order to demonstrate that “we might imagine the three divine persons as distinct and yet never divided.”⁶¹

This human psychical search, framed within an orthodox Trinitarian schema, is intrinsically related, not only to the divine missions as Augustine attempts to show that “there are three somethings which can both be separately presented and also operate inseparably.”⁶² But, it is also a testament to Augustine's introspective search for God within the bounds of self-interiority galvanised by the conviction that the “superior instance of created reality, human interiority, while one and inseparable, at the same time consists of three quite distinct and very real dimensions in its operations.”⁶³ Thus, Augustine's psychologically based Trinitarian gleanings are dually framed within this contextual backdrop of the objective self-revelation of God concerning divine operations and the subjective experience of God vis-à-vis the interiority of the human person. Correspondingly, it is a robustly theological and spiritual psychological

⁵⁷ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 195.

⁵⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 459. This text was cited earlier in footnote 26.

⁵⁹ Chadwick, *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction*, 96.

⁶⁰ Emery and Levering, *Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, 133.

⁶¹ Emery and Levering, *Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, 133.

⁶² Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 96.

⁶³ Peter Drilling, "The Psychological Analogy of the Trinity: Augustine, Aquinas, and Lonergan," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 71, no. 3-4 (2006): 323, doi:10.1177/0021140006075751.

analysis of the human person through whom the Godhead is analogously comprehended in a finite way via triadic conceptions.

Yet, before examining some direct examples of Augustine's triadic formulations, it must be borne in mind that even with the employment of analogies, there are yet boundaries and limitations for us to consider. For as Augustine states,

We do indeed recognise in ourselves an image of God that is of the Supreme Trinity. It is not an adequate image, but a very distant parallel. It is not co-eternal, and, in brief, it not of the same substance as God. For all that, there is nothing in the whole of God's creation so near to him in nature; but the image now needs to be refashioned and brought to perfection, so to become close to him in resemblance.⁶⁴

Here Augustine encourages his readers to be cautious concerning the limitations associated with analogies apropos the unfathomable simplicity of God, however there is concomitantly a tantalising affirmation of the perfection of our image. This is described further in the *City of God* as a "returning to ourselves, like the younger son in the gospels,"⁶⁵ through which we are enabled (in spite of our present sinfulness) to gaze inwardly and grasp those three realities, concerning the "Trinity of eternity, truth and love, without confusion or separation"⁶⁶ in our own conscious experience via an inward turn within to our own psyche. It is here particularly that scholars have sometimes criticised Augustine's language of erring towards a separation of the human psyche into "quasi-independent parts."⁶⁷

Nonetheless, the above paragraph introduces us to the thinking of Augustine localised upon our possession of the *imago dei* through which an analogy can be drawn between man's inward self and the Godhead. This is in essence the basis for the triadic analogues utilised by Augustine throughout the second half of *On the Trinity*. However, before directly addressing the specific analogies utilised by Augustine, it could be rightly asked what indeed is the central point behind these psychological analogies in books eight through fifteen. The answer to this questions lies in Augustine's conviction regarding the "inseparability of divine operations: each indivisible divine work is initiated by the Father, carried through intelligibly by the Son, and perfected in goodness by the Spirit."⁶⁸ Correspondingly, Augustine conceives with this foundational theological presupposition in place that triadic structures constitute the "inherent

⁶⁴ Augustine, *City of God*, 459.

⁶⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, 463.

⁶⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, 463.

⁶⁷ Chadwick, *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction*, 96.

⁶⁸ Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 138.

shape of the world,”⁶⁹ through which we are able to analyse our own experiences, both internally and externally.⁷⁰ That is to say that “Augustine was searching for triadic human activities that were distinct and yet somehow one.”⁷¹ Additionally, there is an obvious “Christianisation of Platonism,”⁷² particularly of the Neo-Platonic variety present in the background of much of Augustine’s theologising in this area, along with the subtle presence of the “Aristotelian category of relations.”⁷³ This is largely because Augustine was concerned with illustrating to pagan intellectuals that the Christian concept of God as being both “one and three was so far from being gobbledygook that simple reflection on the nature of human personality offers an immediate example.”⁷⁴ Thus, these “analogies crushingly answered the critics who thought ‘three in one’ ludicrous nonsense.”⁷⁵

These analogies are as follows; firstly in book eight Augustine introduces a threefold union of love, expounded below,

Love means someone loving and something loved with love. There you are with three, the lover, what is being loved, and love. And what is love but a kind of life coupling or trying to couple together two things, namely lover and what is being loved? So here again there are three, lover and what is being loved, and love.⁷⁶

This passage on love is associated with the relationship between the *imago dei* and the human soul, namely that there is a love that transcends the kind of carnality that is often characteristic of human relations in the external world through the means of inward ascent, where human beings can discover an image of the Trinity imprinted upon their own souls.⁷⁷ In other words, “the Augustinian conclusion is that human love is the locus of the most perfect image of God.”⁷⁸ Additionally, Augustine’s Trinitarian theology is also inexplicably soteriological, for in seeking a human analogy that could vindicate the divine processions as mentioned earlier,

⁶⁹ Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 138.

⁷⁰ In accordance with Augustine’s argument, we can look within and find a vague representation of the Trinity in ourselves and in the selfsame manner, due to the triadic structure of reality; we can also find external triadic structures in the real world.

⁷¹ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 97.

⁷² Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 96.

⁷³ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 199.

⁷⁴ Chadwick, *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction*, 95.

⁷⁵ Chadwick, *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction*, 96.

⁷⁶ Saint Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: The Trinity*, ed. John E. Rotelle. trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. (New City Press, 1991), Book VIII.10.14, 257.

⁷⁷ Groeschel, *Augustine: Major Writings*, 123.

⁷⁸ Drilling, “The Psychological Analogy of the Trinity”, 324.

Augustine also wanted to account for “what scripture revealed concerning the historical course of the human image from its beauty and defacement in Adam to its renovation through the grace of Christ.”⁷⁹ However, Augustine has also been criticised for providing an inadequate analogy of the Trinity in book eight, as “the subject and object of love, as described, are two persons, not three. Moreover they are not inseparable. Furthermore, the third member of this triad is an action of both persons, the lover and the beloved.”⁸⁰ However, other scholars have heartily praised Augustine on this point, particularly with respects to not bifurcating Trinitarian theology and Christology in the way that modern theologians have tended to do. In their opinion Augustine recognises that “theology is shaped by the intersection of the common activity of the Trinity and the Son as the revealer of the Trinity.”⁸¹

In book nine Augustine, having recognised the deficiencies associated with the former analogy, “suggests that we turn from exploring the triadic shape of loving in general to the particular case of self-love.”⁸² This is because the former analogy provided in book eight “brings the lover out of self and could thus describe any sort of love.”⁸³ Hence, Augustine proceeds on to develop another triadic analogy concerning the mind, knowledge, and love, which he explains are “three somethings, and these three are one thing, and when they are complete they are equal.”⁸⁴ Here the mind is representative of the Father as the principal source of all things, whereas the Logos, which typifies knowledge, is descriptive of the Son, and love represents the Holy Spirit.⁸⁵ Another way to express the above is to think about individual persons love of self, in which the “subject and object of love are one and the same being.”⁸⁶ Accordingly, Augustine’s purpose in book eight and nine is to demonstrate how “our finite loving minds correspond to that of the infinite loving agency of God.”⁸⁷ In essence, it is then an attempt towards properly differentiating between “self knowing and self loving.”⁸⁸ However, “the lover and the beloved are the same.”⁸⁹ Parenthetically, the Thomistic tradition has considered this inter-relationship “between love and knowledge as two necessary moments

⁷⁹ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 97.

⁸⁰ Drilling, “The Psychological Analogy of the Trinity”, 324.

⁸¹ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 200.

⁸² Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 285.

⁸³ Groeschel, *Augustine: Major Writings*, 124.

⁸⁴ Augustine, *The Trinity*, Book IX.4.4, 274.

⁸⁵ Groeschel, *Augustine: Major Writings*, 125.

⁸⁶ Drilling, “The Psychological Analogy of the Trinity,” 325.

⁸⁷ Rowan Williams, *On Augustine* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 161.

⁸⁸ Williams, *On Augustine*, 161.

⁸⁹ Drilling, “The Psychological Analogy of the Trinity,” 325.

in the intellectual life.”⁹⁰ Scholars such as Letham have here criticised Augustine for veering towards what they consider to be modalism as “these are all abstract qualities, not concrete persons, and they are qualities of a single mind.”⁹¹ Others have suggested that this analogy falls short because “knowing and loving are acts of the one mind, which is to say there is one being with two activities.”⁹²

Nevertheless, Augustine continues in book ten with his favourite analogy, partially inspired by the “Delphic Oracle’s command to know thyself,”⁹³ which stimulates Augustine’s search for the ways in which the mind, although not always consciously “present to itself, can be unconscious of itself.”⁹⁴ Incidentally, this theme can also be located in the thought of Neo-Platonists such as Plotinus and Porphyry, where intelligence is “simultaneously thinker and thought.”⁹⁵ Augustine thus returns to the analogy of memory, understanding, and will,⁹⁶ which reflects “not three lives, but one life, nor three minds but one mind. So it follows of course that they are not three substances but one substance.”⁹⁷ The aforesaid activities “are operations of one reality that can be said to be ‘one life, one mind, one essence’ in the singular, yet in reference to each other the three activities are clearly plural and distinct.”⁹⁸ Thus, there is a symmetrical presentation of memory, understanding, and will, directly corresponding to the “relations between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”⁹⁹ Book ten is therefore concerned with developing a “natural image of God as co-eternal with himself,”¹⁰⁰ which is analogously represented by the “mental trinity of remembering, understanding, and loving self.”¹⁰¹

Furthermore, in the final four books, Augustine considers these triads *vis-à-vis*, “things seen, things impressed on the sight of the seer, and the purpose of the will combining the two,”¹⁰² followed by an analysis of “wisdom, rational knowledge, and animal knowledge, as well as memory, thought, and will.”¹⁰³ Finally, Augustine culminates with the acknowledgment that “even the best image is inadequate to represent a triune God who is both simple and

⁹⁰ Emery and Levering, 135.

⁹¹ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 196.

⁹² Drilling, “The Psychological Analogy of the Trinity,” 325.

⁹³ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 97.

⁹⁴ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 97.

⁹⁵ Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 298.

⁹⁶ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 196-197.

⁹⁷ Augustine, *The Trinity*, Book X, 11.18, 301.

⁹⁸ Drilling, “The Psychological Analogy of the Trinity,” 325.

⁹⁹ Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine’s De Trinitate* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2008), 280.

¹⁰⁰ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 99.

¹⁰¹ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 99.

¹⁰² Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 196.

¹⁰³ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 196.

eternal.”¹⁰⁴ Here, Augustine recognises the fundamental chasm between temporary and eternal beings, thus there can be “no substitute for faith in Christ and what he reveals of Father and Spirit.”¹⁰⁵ In other words, until the quintessential gift of the beatific vision is granted to the faithful in heaven climaxing with the ultimate intellectual and spiritual union with the Godhead, contemplation “directly towards the ineffable mystery of the divine Trinity”¹⁰⁶ will continue, yet imperfectly.

5. The Legacy of Augustine in Trinitarian Discourse

As stated earlier, the legacy of Augustine carries over into both the medieval and modern period, with thinkers such as Boethius, Anselm, Aquinas, and several Protestant Reformers. In the Eastern tradition, Augustine is seemingly neglected and even criticised for beginning with the essence of God (*De Deo Uno*) and only then considering the distinct persons (*De Deo Trino*), which impersonalised the doctrine of the Trinity into a discourse about essences and furthermore mathematical conundrums, effectively leaving a legacy to Western theology that “approached the Trinity in a way that was largely cut off from the economy of salvation.”¹⁰⁷ This Orthodox critique alleges that in emphasising the shared divine essence, Augustine loses sight of the “personal foundation for divine communion”¹⁰⁸ based upon an attentiveness to the Father’s *monarchia*, who as the fountain head is the source of the Godhead in a more organic manner than the language of essences suggests. Other scholars have challenged this viewpoint by pointing out that Augustine’s Trinitarian theology contains a grammar of divine simplicity, which accounts for the notion that the Father is the “personal source of the divine simplicity and essence” and has the corollary effect in recognising that “we should beware of speaking about a substance in which the three persons are ‘contained:’ for there is nothing but the three co-eternal and consubstantial persons.”¹⁰⁹ Correspondingly, there is in Augustine’s Trinitarian thinking a persuasive response to forms of subordination, in that he accentuates the notion that “the unity of the trinity is found in its inseparable activities or operations.”¹¹⁰ But, to respond clearly to the Eastern Orthodox accusation directed towards

¹⁰⁴ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 99.

¹⁰⁵ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 99.

¹⁰⁶ Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 139.

¹⁰⁷ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 199.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Dodaro, George Lawless,; Osa Osa, *Augustine and His Critics* (London: Routledge, 2005), 52.

¹⁰⁹ Dodaro, Lawless, Osa Osa, *Augustine and His Critics*, 68.

¹¹⁰ Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 199.

Augustine, there is in fact “no evidence in *De Trinitate* that Augustine asserted divine unity to be prior to Trinity, nor Trinity to unity.”¹¹¹

6. Conclusion

As to recapitulate the central thesis of this essay, this paper has examined the significance of the Trinitarian theology of St. Augustine of Hippo, with a specific focus on the development of his psychological Trinitarian analogies, located in books eight through to fifteen of *On the Trinity*. Prior to this, this essay broadly surveyed the Trinitarian landscape across inter-ecclesial lines, reviewing the contributions made by some of the major representative thinkers within Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox communities, whilst offering a glimpse of how subsequent Catholic and Protestant Trinitarian theologians were indebted to the influence of Augustine. After which, this paper presented an outline of Augustine’s Trinitarian vision drawing from a range of texts within the Augustinian corpus, including *On the Trinity*, *The Confessions*, and *Tractates on the Gospel of John*.

This broad ranging outline provided the foundation for a narrower assessment of Augustine’s psychological analysis of man’s inwardness in relation to the Trinity and in correspondence with the doctrine of the *imago dei*. Here, several sources were used including various primary and secondary source materials, which facilitated the detailing of Augustine’s chief contributions to the development of triadic analogues aimed at localising the Trinity within man himself. Furthermore, this essay has considered the legacy of Augustine’s thinking and has dealt with the Eastern critique of Augustine’s Trinitarian theology as to vindicate Augustine from the accusation that by extolling the divine essence he did damage to the personalised communion within the Godhead as concerns the personhood of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹¹² As the preceding section has made clear, there is no grounding for such a belief.

Overall, Augustine’s influence lingers largely over the tradition as a whole, in fact in almost every area that Augustine wrote, he would have something to contribute for many generations to come and indubitably stands today as a giant in both Western theology and philosophy. Correspondingly, his Trinitarian theology should be examined in depth as a means

¹¹¹ Stump and Kretzmann, *Companion to Augustine*, 91.

¹¹² A comprehensive discussion on this point is beyond the scope of this paper as a detailed exploration of Eastern criticism’s regarding Augustine’s Trinitarian theology warrants a multi-volume effort.

of dialoguing with a western culture that is increasingly conscious of the importance of the psychical dimension to the cultivation of the whole human person.

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