

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

A Patristic Christological Defense:
Utilizing the Patristic View of the Incarnation
as a Defense Against the Problem of Suffering

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ABSTRACT

At issue is the question of whether it is logically consistent to embrace the existence of an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent God in the presence of evil and suffering. Many factors *prima facie* seem to indicate that the existence of such a God in the presence of an abundance of pain, evil, and suffering is logically incoherent. If such a God does exist, why does He allow the evil and suffering that He does? Hume asserts, such a being should be capable of preventing evil and suffering. Van Inwagen argues that the existence of a world that is constantly modified to override the laws of nature by preventing evil and suffering, Hume's happy world, would be massively irregular. Furthermore, Van Inwagen argues that an adequate defense can demonstrate that seemingly incoherent facts are not necessarily evidence against a theory. Therefore, is it possible to construct a defense that could satisfy some of Hume's demands without causing massive irregularities? Can the construction of a possible world reconcile some of the demands of Hume's hedonic Utopia with Van Inwagen's objections? Is it possible to develop a middle ground—a middle world—that might behave as a defense against the problem of suffering?

A Patristic Christological Defense explores potential options that may be available for how an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent God may overcome evil and suffering, should He decide to do so. A possible world capable of making a Patristic Christological Defense against the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships must include 1. An omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent God who cares about justice. 2. Should He decide to counter suffering, He must also behave within certain self-imposed limitations that were set the moment that creatures with moral competencies came into being. 3. This possible world must also include higher-level freewill, sentient creatures who are subject to natural laws (regularity), like the actual world. And finally, 4. these morally culpable creatures must also have the intellectual capacity to detect suffering but are limited in their scope as to why they suffer.

Higher-level freewill, sentient creatures, in any possible world, will possess significantly less knowledge than their creator. Outside of the cognizance of these creatures, it is reasonable to believe that immaterial realms exist through which an omnibenevolent God can act. This project aims to build a creative defense utilizing the conduit of the immaterial realm (soul, mind, and will) of the Patristic view of the Incarnation by exploring the ontological implications of the Incarnation and the existential application of the Incarnation through biblical narratives as the Patristics saw them, which may, in turn, yield some morally sufficient reasons (not necessarily actual reasons) in a possible world for God allowing suffering caused by broken relationships.

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CHAPTER 1: SUFFERING AND THE PATRISTIC VIEW OF THE INCARNATION

Introduction: Hume's Hedonic Utopia

As contemporary students and scholars continue to discuss the abundant material available regarding the topic of the problem of evil and suffering, there exists numerous positions, accessible from both fields of philosophy and theology of which to subscribe. Represented within these respective fields are scholars who assent to various ideologies, most of whom develop arguments, both for and against theism, utilizing the model of God as He is portrayed within the Christian Scriptures. At issue is the question of whether it is logically consistent to embrace the existence of an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent God in the presence of evil and suffering. Many factors *prima facie* seem to indicate that the existence of such a God in the presence of an abundance of pain, suffering, and evil is logically incoherent. If such a God does exist, why does He allow the evil and suffering that He does? Can Hume's assertion still be made that Epicurus's questions have yet to be adequately answered? Hume asks, "Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then where does evil come from?"¹ Questions like these not only form the basis of a theodicy but also, perhaps, the major problem facing philosophers and theologians in modern theistic scholarship. A theodicy is the means to explain the justice of God. Synthesizing the words of Milton with his own, Plantinga offers the following definition: "[A theodicy] is an attempt to 'justify the ways of God to man,' to show that God is just in permitting

¹ David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, in the version by Jonathan Bennett presented at https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hume1779_3.pdf, 44, accessed August 9, 2020.

evil.”² Theism maintains that it is logically coherent to believe in the existence of the theistic God despite the apparent pointlessness of evil and suffering.

Given the overwhelming evidence of evil, pain, and suffering, Hume suggests that if the kind of theistic God actually exists, would He not be inclined to preemptively remove suffering? Individuals, communities, and entire nations face misfortunes that detract from human happiness. An all-wise, all-powerful being such as the one who illuminates the pages of Scripture, if He exists, should effortlessly be able to change the calamities faced by the creatures of the Earth, according to Hume:

[A] being who knows the secret workings of the universe might easily, by particular volitions, turn all these happenings to the good of mankind and make the whole world happy, without revealing himself in any operation. A fleet whose purposes were useful to society might always meet with a fair wind. Good rulers might enjoy sound health and long life. Persons born to power and authority might be endowed with good temperaments and virtuous dispositions. A few outcomes such as these, regularly and wisely brought about, would change the face of the world; and yet they would no more seem to disturb the course of nature or thwart human conduct than does the present arrangement of things where the causes are secret, and variable, and complex.³

As far as Hume is concerned, a perfectly good God provides no such interference. Therefore, to blindly claim He exists, contrary to the high probability that He does not act, requires a very active imagination in Hume’s opinion.⁴ Van Inwagen counters that the inability of someone to comprehend justifiable reasons for why evil and suffering can coexist with God is not necessarily strong evidence against theism: “A difficulty with a theory does not necessarily constitute

² Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 27.

³ Hume, 49. Wright cautions that a certain measure of humility should accompany judgmental statements about divine behavior: “But it serves as a warning to us not to pontificate with too much certainty about what God should and shouldn’t have done” (N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 59, ProQuest Ebook Central).

⁴ Hume, 48.

evidence against it. To show that an acknowledged difficulty with a theory is not evidence against it, it suffices to construct a defense that accounts for the facts that raise the difficulty.”⁵ Certainly the coexistence of God, evil, and suffering presents a difficulty for theists. However, is there a *defense* that can be constructed that accounts for why any evil or suffering exists at all? The “facts” that Hume raises intend to lay bare the apparent contradiction of a Christian theodicy but are they just as effective against a *defense*?

Even though Hume concedes that the world lacks some regularity, Van Inwagen argues that the existence of a world that is constantly modified to override the laws of nature, Hume’s happy world, would be massively irregular.⁶ How would a massively irregular world operate? Providing the following example of a massively irregular world, Van Inwagen claims it is questionable whether such a world could even be described as properly functioning: “God, by means of a continuous series of ubiquitous miracles, causes a planet inhabited by the same animal life as the actual earth to be a hedonic Utopia. On this planet, fawns are (like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) saved by angels when they are in danger of being burnt alive. Harmful parasites and microorganisms suffer immediate supernatural dissolution if they enter a higher animal’s body.”⁷ Using this hypothetical Utopia, Van Inwagen demonstrates that it could hardly be described as properly functioning because of the need for constant, “irregular,” adjustments. This methodology is precisely what Hume attempts to employ in order to disconfirm Christian theism. However, Van Inwagen contests that only a world like the actual world could produce

⁵ Peter Van Inwagen, “The Problem of Evil, the Problem of Air, and the Problem of Silence,” in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 170, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁶ Hume, 49, 51; Van Inwagen, 158-159.

⁷ Van Inwagen, 158.

intelligent life because it is so tightly structured. Intelligence is a prerequisite to experiencing and detecting suffering, apart from which it goes undetected.⁸ For Van Inwagen, Hume's hedonic hermeneutic produces a world that is massively irregular and massively deceptive.⁹ Regularity is the means by which drawing certain conclusions about evil is even possible, apart from which evil would remain undetectable. Therefore, Van Inwagen concludes that the kind of world that Hume proposes would disallow the ability to experience or detect suffering.¹⁰ The detection of suffering requires the kind of universe that produces cognizant, sentient beings, precisely like the actual world that exists.¹¹

Hume admits, as previously stated, that there exists irregularities in the actual world and supposes that if God exists, in light of observable evil and suffering, He should be obligated to make the world even more irregular through some kind of cosmic camouflage that preemptively eliminates evil and suffering anytime a free action or intention, for that matter, has potential to cause harm.¹² Van Inwagen counters that the reliability of regularities, which are a byproduct of

⁸ Van Inwagen, 157, 160. Admittedly, intelligence is not the only faculty necessary for experiencing and detecting suffering, but a properly functioning brain working in conjunction with other properly functioning bodily systems is indispensable. Of course, this qualification also does not rule out suffering experienced and detected that goes beyond physiological properties. These concepts will be more fully developed in Chapter 6.

⁹ Ibid., 161.

¹⁰ Hume briefly concedes the effect that God's constant interference would have upon regularity and, in turn, reasons: "It is true that if each thing that happens were caused by an individual volition on God's part, the course of nature would be perpetually broken, there would be no dependable regularities, and so no man could employ his reason in the conduct of life" (Hume, 49).

¹¹ Van Inwagen, 162. Regardless of the potential, hypothetical worlds that could possibly exist, Van Inwagen concludes that there are only two options available within environments that develop sentient creatures and "S" (i.e., all possible suffering of all sentient terrestrial creatures) is a natural consequence of every one of them: "Every possible world that contains higher-level sentient creatures either contains patterns of suffering morally equivalent to those recorded by S, or else is massively irregular" (Ibid., 153, 160). Every possible world with sentient creatures, according to Van Inwagen, contains either suffering that can be detected or potential suffering that is constantly being monitored and overridden by an invisible Regulator.

¹² In Hume's model, a good God would also remain liable for the prevention of potential natural evil that befell good individuals or communities.

natural laws, is the only reason that conscious animals are capable of experiencing and detecting suffering. As a result, before the question, “Why is there any evil and suffering at all?” can be answered, the prior question, “Why are higher-level sentient creatures capable of identifying evil and suffering?” must be resolved. Hume attempts to disconfirm theism by using the attributes of the God described in Scripture in order to expose inconsistencies in view of the problem of evil and suffering. Regardless of how the world came into being— God, evolution, or a combination of both—what capacity do higher-level freewill, sentient creatures have to arrive upon conclusions about how the world should operate with absolute certainty? Van Inwagen questions, “Why should one suppose that one’s inclinations to make judgments of value are reliable in this area? One’s intuitions about value are either a gift from God or a product of evolution or socially inculcated or stem from some combination of these sources. Why should we suppose that any of these sources would provide us with the means to make correct value judgments in matters that have nothing to do with the practical concerns of everyday life?”¹³ Van Inwagen contends that in addition to higher-level sentient creatures’ dependence upon regularity in order to experience and detect suffering, those same creatures must also recognize the cognitive limitations that prevent absolute certainty in this area. When scholars, like Hume, confidently declare what God should or should not do regarding evil, pain, and suffering, they

¹³ Van Inwagen, 162. Likewise, C. S. Lewis, as an atheist, concluded that if the universe is worse than one might expect given the possible existence of an omnibenevolent, omnipotent, omniscient God, how was he capable of making this value judgment? “My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? If the whole show was bad and senseless from A to Z, so to speak, why did I, who was supposed to be part of the show, find myself in such violent reaction against it?” (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1980), 38). In Hume’s defense, he does speculate that Providence may have reasons justifying a refusal to intervene, but this observation neither supports or refutes divine attributes: “There may, for all we know, be good reasons why Providence doesn’t intervene in this manner; but we don’t know them; and though the mere supposition that such reasons exist may be sufficient to save the conclusion concerning the Divine attributes from being refuted by the observed facts, it can surely never be sufficient to establish that conclusion” (Hume, 49).

should acknowledge the possibility of misunderstanding the motives behind an omniscient mind.¹⁴

Purpose and Method: “Suffering” Between Two Extremes

In consideration of Hume’s hedonic Utopia and Van Inwagen’s challenge “to construct a *defense* that accounts for the facts that raise the difficulty,” can a possible world be constructed that could arbitrate this dispute? Attempting to satisfy some of the demands of each position, what must this world include? Before attempting to construct such a possible world, it is necessary to provide a distinction between theodicy, which was previously defined, and defense. Plantinga, dissatisfied with the theodicies of his day, initially presented the concept of a ‘defense,’ which has been further developed by a number of scholars since. Stump, who not only numbers among these innovators but also consistently provides significant gains in philosophical theology, shares the following description of a defense: “[A] defense describes a possible world that contains God and suffering and that is similar to the actual world, at least in the sense that it contains human beings, natural laws, and evils much like those in our world; and then the defense proposes a morally sufficient reason for God’s allowing evil in such a possible world.”¹⁵

¹⁴ In consideration of cognitive limitations, Wykstra contends that this concept is intrinsic to theism and therefore positions rational creatures to admit aspects of God that may not entirely be understood: “The observed sufferings in the world do require us to say that there are outweighing goods connected to them that are entirely outside our ken, but this is not an additional postulate: it was implicit in theism (taken with a little realism about our cognitive powers) all along. If we have realized the magnitude of the theistic proposal, cognizance of suffering thus should not in the least reduce our confidence that it is true. When cognizance of suffering does have this effect, it is perhaps because we had not understood the sort of being theism proposes for belief in the first place” (Stephen J. Wykstra, “The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of ‘Appearance’,” in *The Problem of Evil*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 160).

¹⁵ Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 19, ProQuest Ebook Central. The main difference between a theodicy and a defense, at least as far as how I am planning to employ each term, is that a theodicy seeks to provide actual or concrete reasons for why God allows evil, whereas a defense only seeks to propose a possible morally sufficient reason why God may allow evil in any possible world like our own.

Stump actualizes this description of a defense in her book—*Wandering in Darkness*—whereby she innovatively employs analytic philosophy in combination with Aquinas’s theodicy and short stories she derives from specific biblical narratives, along with some aspects of Plantinga’s Free Will Defense in order to build a defense against the problem of suffering. Likewise, this project seeks to build a defense—a possible world—based upon Stump’s description and particular elements of her methodology by utilizing the Patristic view of the Incarnation in conjunction with biblical narratives and some aspects of Plantinga’s Free Will Defense against the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships.¹⁶ Consequently, what must this world include?

Hume, who is extremely forthcoming with recommendations, places significant weight upon liberty and justice. Consider his proposal involving a small, divine interference to preemptively rid the world of the dictatorial reign of Caesar: “One wave a little higher than the rest, by burying Caesar and his fortune in the bottom of the ocean, might have restored liberty to a considerable part of mankind.”¹⁷ The justification of this alternate world, absent evil that sends men like Caesar to a watery grave, Hume suggests is to “turn all these happenings to the good of mankind and make the whole world happy.”¹⁸ Ironically, in this scenario, Hume justifies the use of natural evil to rid the world of moral evil. However, Hume seems to fail to account for mercy, which is not only a higher-order good but also “to the good of mankind” made accessible

¹⁶ Following Stump’s lead, I will limit the argument specifically to the problem of suffering, because suffering is the derivative and existential consequence of evil: “I have formulated this expression of what is commonly called ‘the argument from evil’ in terms of suffering rather than evil, because suffering, not evil, seems to me the salient thing. . . . It is the fact of suffering, not its origin, that raises the problem of evil in connection with so-called natural evil. As for moral evil, the phrase ‘moral evil’ is confusingly ambiguous as between ‘moral wrongdoing’ and ‘suffering caused as a result of human agency.’ But both of these referents for the phrase ‘moral evil’ raise the problem of evil only because of suffering” (Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 21). The aim of my argument will further limit the problem of suffering by focusing specifically upon suffering caused by broken relationships.

¹⁷ Hume, 49.

¹⁸ Ibid.

because of justice. On this score, what is Hume's standard for "good"? Should mercy ever be extended to an evil man? Would it be evil for a good man to voluntarily suffer punishment on behalf of an evil man in Hume's hedonic Utopia? Would this situation even be permitted to manifest itself in Hume's World of preemptively eliminating evil and, if so, at what point should God, if He exists, determine to interfere?¹⁹ What if by taking the punishment of the evil man, the evil man eventually became persuaded to become a good man? In Hume's economy, would failure to probe this possibility of mercy, which has the potential to lead to "the good of mankind," also count as an evil against the probability of the existence of a perfectly good God? These few questions demonstrate that Hume's Utopia, when pressed, may suffer from a failure to examine this one issue of justice, among others, more deeply "to the good of mankind." Questions such as these may also reveal the thin nature of Hume's hedonic Utopia and give the impression that his world is more analogous to a dictatorial dystopia.

Genesis, Terminus, and Theosis

If Hume's hedonic world is the "genesis" of what God ought to do, then Van Inwagen's world of "massive irregularities" as the actualization of Hume's hedonic Utopia is the potential "terminus." Can the construction of a possible world satisfy some of the demands of Hume's hedonic Utopia without causing massive irregularities? Is it possible to develop a middle

¹⁹ Should God prevent good men from trying to reform evil men, or even misbehaving children for that matter? Would reform even be a possibility in Hume's world? Is God obligated to reveal to good men, the evil men who are permanently bent toward evil, so as not to waste time and resources of good men in Hume's morally efficient (or deficient) world? By doing so, does this further obligate God to completely eliminate the aspect of risk in every relationship? For example, if God in His foreknowledge perceives that a friend will at some point in the future betray a friend, is God, according to Hume, required to prevent the friendship from ever happening in the first place? These are just some of the questions that arise from the massive interference that Hume requires of God, if He exists. The complexity of irregularity increases exponentially with each divine intervention that suffocates free will intentions and actions.

ground—a middle world—that might behave as a defense against the problem of suffering?²⁰

Reflecting upon Plantinga’s Free Will Defense, it is important to keep in mind that including morally capable creatures in this possible world, which must be done, places certain limitations upon God: “To create creatures capable of moral good, therefore, [God] must create creatures capable of moral evil; and he cannot leave these creatures free to perform evil and at the same time prevent them from doing so.”²¹ Hume may be right in thinking that a perfectly good God should counteract the problem of evil and suffering in some way, but Plantinga’s observation reveals that in order to do so, God must behave within certain, self-imposed limitations that were set the moment creatures with moral competencies came into being.²² Even Hume, for whatever reason, seems, to a degree, to acknowledge this point when he places the limitation of invisibility upon God.²³ Furthermore, not to act within the framework of free moral creatures subject to natural laws would itself be a violation of justice because God would not only be guilty of expecting humans to behave in certain ways that they were never capable of in the first place, but He Himself would also demonstrate that these expectations were never able to be met apart from

²⁰ Although Dawkins employs the term “Middle World” in his work *The God Delusion*, our aims are considerably different on several points. However, there exist some elements within the space of his description of this middle world that may prove to be helpful toward the end of Chapter 3 of this project (Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Trade & Reference Publishers, 2006), 412, accessed August 3, 2021, ProQuest Ebook Central).

²¹ Plantinga, “God, Evil, and the Metaphysics of Freedom,” in *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), Oxford Scholarship Online, 2003, 167. According to Plantinga, neither God’s goodness nor His omnipotence is undermined by the free will decisions of creatures, even though He gave them the capacity to make such choices (Ibid.).

²² According to Plantinga, there exist certain limitations upon God’s character, person, and nature: “[N]ot even an omnipotent being can bring about logically impossible states of affairs or cause necessarily false propositions to be true” (Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 17). Augustine already came to this conclusion in his own writings: “[N]ot even [God] is more powerful than himself” (Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* IX, 17, 32; see also VI, 18, 29).

²³ “[A] being who knows the secret workings of the universe might easily, by particular volitions, turn all these happenings to the good of mankind and make the whole world happy, without revealing himself in any operation” (Hume, 49). Of course, this may not be Hume’s primary motive for suggesting that God, if He exists, should remain invisible.

divine domination. The moment that God relies “exclusively” upon divine attributes, divorced from the context of natural laws and the subsequent consequences of free moral choices, to overcome the evil intentions of freewill creatures—Hume’s demand—He demonstrates that Creation was engineered for human moral failure from the beginning. Specifically, by acting the way Hume desires, God may be guilty of the very thing He is trying to prevent—evil and suffering. However, acting within these limitations—natural laws and the subsequent consequences of free moral choices—God may be able to justifiably satisfy His own demands that He placed upon humanity from the beginning, as well as some of Hume’s demands, *mutatis mutandis*, at the same time.

Should God choose to act in any world on behalf of humanity, He must do so by surrendering to intrinsic conditions previously established at Creation. One of the main self-imposed limitations involves the subsequent consequences of free moral choices made by morally capable creatures. Plantinga takes this idea one step further by clarifying that once a choice is actualized in time by beings capable of exercising free will, regardless of the world or the changes made to increase or decrease evil, the outcome would be the same, and no world from then on would be possible without that actualization. The reason for this is that higher-level sentient creatures maintain their given identity and propensity for evil regardless of the world (real or imagined) in which they are placed. Kripke’s argument in which he describes the essential properties of gold reinforces this point in a slightly different way by establishing that regardless of the world in which gold exists, as an element, it must retain the atomic number of 79 to remain gold.²⁴ Even God, if He exists, must maintain His essential characteristics

²⁴ Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1981), 125. Plantinga defends this claim by describing a scenario where he places a politician by the name of Curley in a bribable dilemma. Regardless of the possible worlds that God can actualize with significantly free creatures, Curley, given the

regardless of the world in which He appears. Therefore, from a transworld perspective, gold is gold, God is God, and man is man. God, like man, always maintains His identity regardless of which world he attends. Likewise, if the essential identity of any given higher-level sentient creature is changed, which would be the case given Hume's hedonic Utopia, then that creature ceases to exist. If Plantinga is correct, the end of Hume's argument is the extinction of humanity as we know it. To repeat Plantinga's conclusion, regardless of the world in which a given creature is present, the choices made given similar circumstances result in equivalent outcomes.

If Hume supposes God should preemptively act and if Van Inwagen argues that this would create a massively irregular world, how may God engage evil and suffering considering Plantinga's further qualification? If Plantinga's assessment is correct, there is no room in any world for God to retroactively delete a specific action once a human choice has been exercised within time.²⁵ A cursory glance at Scripture reveals that almost every divine act of God on behalf of humanity follows some kind of activating terrestrial event (i.e., blessings upon the faithful, enacting divine judgment, provision for the needy, deliverance for the oppressed, etc.).²⁶ Likewise every one of Hume's previously mentioned scenarios (useful fleets met with fair winds, granting good rulers long life, sinking Caesar in the depths of the sea) are all born out of an

properties of his makeup (his essence) and the hand he has in making the decision, will engage in at least one wrong action: "[P]erhaps what God knows in advance is that no matter what circumstances he places Curley in, so long as he leaves him significantly free, he will take at least one wrong action" (Plantinga, "God, Evil, and the Metaphysics of Freedom," 186 (see also: 176, 180, 181, 184-185)). Plantinga bases this claim upon a concept he refers to as transworld depravity, which is possibly present within every free will creature (Ibid., 180, 186-191, 195). Although this situation is hypothetical, Plantinga's express objective is to show that if it can be logically justified that a world including the existence of God and evil is probable, then belief in God in the presence of evil is not logically incompatible.

²⁵ Stump not only agrees with this assessment but argues that this is the prevailing view among philosophers and theologians: "On the view of virtually all philosophers and theologians, even God cannot change the past" (Eleanor Stump, *Atonement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 50).

²⁶ An activating terrestrial event simply describes a choice made by morally culpable inhabitants of the earth that could potentially stir God to act.

activating terrestrial event. Hume bases his moral assessments as to when God should act upon known human predispositions and behavioral circumstances that have been actualized in his alternate world at specific points in time. Once these human predispositions and behavioral circumstances have been activated, according to Plantinga, they cannot be deactivated.

If the actual world contains *activating terrestrial events* that prompt a divine response, then a possible world that could behave as a defense against the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships must include *activating transworld events or conditions* (ATC).²⁷ Therefore, as a result of previous considerations, it is necessary for this possible world or middle world to include at least the following conditions: First, a middle world capable of making a defense against the problem of suffering must include an omniscient, omnipotent, perfectly good God who cares about justice and not only creates higher-level freewill, sentient creatures but then also acts within certain, self-imposed limitations that are set the moment these creatures with moral competencies come into being. Second, this middle world must include morally culpable creatures who are subject to natural laws (regularity), like the actual world, and have the intellectual capacity to detect suffering but are limited in their scope why they suffer. In this middle world, man is limited by nature in a similar way that God limited Himself by creating morally culpable creatures. God requires no more of man than He requires of Himself. God must behave within certain limitations as a result of designing men and men who must behave within certain natural limitations as a result of being designed by a Designer who will hold them morally culpable for their freewill choices. In essence, in this possible world, God is limited by

²⁷ If an activating terrestrial event describes a choice made by morally culpable inhabitants of the earth that could potentially stir God to act, then an activating transworld event or condition describes a choice made by similar morally culpable inhabitants of any world that could potentially stir God to act. This concept is derived from a combination of Plantinga's notion of transworld depravity and Kripke's concept of transworld properties (i.e., gold).

human nature, and humans are limited by mother nature, and there may be no better means by which to explain this connection than by God becoming a man thereby restricting Himself to human nature and being subject to the laws of nature as a man.²⁸

Therefore, a possible compromise between these two extremes—genesis and terminus—may be the germination of the union of the divine and human natures—“theosis.”²⁹ As God acts in this possible world, a new man is the catalyst for a new world. Regarding the problem of suffering, when God acts, He does not scrap creation to remedy the problem, but instead forms a new union of divinity and humanity. Regarding the problem of suffering then, in God’s economy, a new world is only possible by means of a new man. Finally, this middle world must include morally sufficient reasons for God allowing suffering in the first place.

²⁸ Christ would not only have to submit to the laws of nature, but He would also have to submit to the law according to his human nature, which will be one of the topics thoroughly covered in subsequent chapters. It will also be shown that this concept in no way endorses the heresy of kenotic theology. Following Stump’s lead, in order to guard the integrity of my defense, I will use “Christ” to refer to the God-man in my possible world so as to provide adequate distance from an actual historical person—Jesus. As Stump argues, to employ the name “Jesus” is to confuse the purpose for which this project is being written (Stump, *Atonement*, 7). This project is not an attempt to prove the historical existence of Jesus, but the aim is rather philosophical theology that seeks to build a defense against the problem of suffering driven by the Patristic view of the Incarnation and biblical narratives that feature broken relationships within the pages of the New Testament.

²⁹ Daley offers an explanation of theosis—what the Fathers of both the East and the West designate as divinization—by drawing deeply from the writings of Maximus the Confessor: “It is by acting divinely, even willing divinely, at great cost to his normal human interests, in other words—by being ‘divine in a human way, and human in a divine way,’ in Maximus’s characteristic phrase—that Jesus’ natural humanity becomes most fully itself. The divinity of Christ’s human nature, one might say, is adverbial rather than substantial. Such union with the will of God, with the dynamic activity of God’s transcendent being, is, in Maximus’s view, ‘the great and hidden Mystery, the preconceived end for whose sake all things exist.’ The harmony of human and divine wills in Christ, which flows from the concrete, unique structure of his person—of his composite hypostasis—is, in Maximus’s understanding, a sign of the transformation of the modalities of our own existence that will constitute our salvation, as well as the key to understanding and practicing the ascetic life in an authentic way. This is the revelation to humanity of the way of holiness, first realized by Christ himself: ‘For if he himself has allowed his mysterious action of becoming part of humanity to reach its term, being made like us in every way except sin alone, and even descending to the lower parts of the earth, where the tyranny of sin had driven the human race, then surely he will also bring to term his mysterious action of letting humanity be made divine, by making us like himself—except only (of course) for essential identity with him—and by elevating the human person above the heavens, where the fullness of love exists by nature, and where, in its limitless goodness, it invites humanity from below’” (Brian E. Daley, *God Visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered*, 1st ed. (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2018), 222). Explained more thoroughly in Chapter 3, Christ’s humanity undergoes the process of divinization, which is “a sign of the transformation of the modalities of our own existence that will constitute our salvation,” and eventually enables believing humans to participate in the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4).

In similar ways that Stump utilizes the theodicy of Aquinas in conjunction with biblical narratives to build a defense, in this project, I will instead seek to develop a defense based upon the Patristic view of the Incarnation in combination with biblical narratives, which I will treat as stories that feature how the incarnate God works to alleviate human suffering caused by broken relationships in a possible world.³⁰ Since the Fathers' Christological hermeneutic is based upon Scripture, it seems logically coherent to use biblical narratives.³¹ Referencing various biblical narratives throughout the course of my argument will be necessary for the overall defense. However, my primary focus in the final chapter will be to explain Christ's conversation with the Samaritan Woman at the well (John 4:1-42), through the application of the Patristic Christological method that develops during the course of my argument. Each of these narratives involve suffering caused by fragmented relationships that were in some way restored by Christ. The dialogues within these narratives will also be supplemented by other teachings and parables of Christ that deal specifically with suffering caused by broken relationships.³² In keeping with a

³⁰ Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 21.

³¹ Daley, *God Visible*, 196. This theme will become a point of emphasis in Chapters 3-5.

³² For example, the parable of the Prodigal Son is a prime example of not only suffering caused by a broken relationship but also a story that features perhaps one of the greatest episodes of reconciliation ever told. The son may have taken himself away from the father, but the father, in what is perhaps one of the greatest examples of self-donation outside of the Incarnation, had never let go of the son. This particular episode had so much of an impact upon Miroslav Volf that he admits that it was this passage that triggered his idea for a "theology of embrace," which is his take on "making space for the other": "The eyes that searched for and finally caught sight of the son in 'the distance' (v. 20) tell of a heart that was with the son in 'the distant country' (v. 13). Away from home, the son remained still in the father's heart. Against the force of the wrongdoing suffered and the shame endured that sought to push the son out, the father kept the son in his heart as an absence shaped by the memory of the former presence. Since he would not give the departed son up, he became a father of the 'lost' son, of the 'dead' son (v. 24). When the son's attempt to 'un-son' himself changed the son's identity, the father had to re-negotiate his own identity as a father" (Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1996), 159). The father's reaction of making space in himself for his son, was probably to the chagrin of his culture, based upon the older son's disappointment in the father. The life of the relationship of the son to the father was never based upon the moral behavior of the son or his rejection of his father but was rather sustained by—an activating transworld condition—the space that the father reserved in his heart for his son. Just as the father had to re-negotiate his own identity as a father, I will argue in a possible world, God the Son made space in Himself for humanity by re-negotiating his own identity and, as a result, becoming human.

defense, my purpose is not to establish the truth of the Incarnation, or the biblical narratives for that matter, but only to explain what the Incarnation was to the Patristics, how their understanding of this doctrine may provide morally sufficient reasons for God's allowing suffering in this middle world, and to demonstrate how that God and suffering can possibly coexist. Regarding some clarification upon Stump's methodology, she not only explains the versatility of a defense but also dedicates an entire chapter to the highly effective use of employing narratives within her defense:

A defense is a story that accounts for the existence of God and the existence of the suffering in our world and that is not demonstrably false; a defense does not need to claim that the reasons it ascribes to God for allowing suffering are God's actual reasons, only that they might be God's reasons, for all we know. And so fictional narratives can also undergird a defense, if those narratives are capable of providing an adequate story for the defense. On the other hand, of course, if the narratives in question are in fact divinely revealed truth, then the defense based on those narratives will also be a theodicy.³³

Utilizing the Patristic view of the Incarnation will permit me to explore the ontological implications of the Incarnation as the Patristics saw them, which in turn may provide some possible explanatory purposes (not necessarily actual reasons) in this middle world for God allowing suffering through the story of the development of this doctrine. Furthermore, employing a few biblical narratives in conjunction with the Incarnation will serve to illustrate practical interactions between the Incarnate God and humans who are suffering from broken relationships, which may add morally sufficient reasons for God's allowing suffering in such a possible world. I am only planning to use these narratives as adequate stories for my defense. To reiterate

³³ Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 35. A more thorough explanation of Stump's method can be read in the final chapter of this project. Hasker broadens the definition of a defense even further to include "any counter-argument that attempts to defeat or neutralize an argument from evil without claiming to give God's reasons for allowing the evil in question" (William Hasker, *The Triumph of God Over Evil: Theodicy for a World of Suffering* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2008), 20).

Stump's point, if the narratives are indeed divine revelation, then the defense will also be a theodicy.

My rationale for using the Patristic development of the Incarnation is that remains, in my opinion, the most interesting period overflowing with rich, sophisticated, and innovative ways of thinking about God's interaction with man as man. The Patristic story of the Incarnation develops along a path with many twists and turns and small adjustments—deletions and additions to understanding not so much how God might have become a man, but rather who He was ontologically as a man—that at times gives one the impression that the story could have perhaps had a radically different outcome. Of course, the story of the Incarnation was written with many different editors and was not devoid of significant disagreement, controversy, and compromise. Because of the vast diversity of characters and views included in the story of the development of the Incarnation, it becomes necessary to limit the range by amplifying just a few significant contributors. My primary focus will be upon three main influencers—Athanasius (295-373), Augustine (354-430), and Cyril of Alexandria (378-444).³⁴ Other participants will only be included on an auxiliary level. Only those individuals who served to sharpen (positively or negatively) the understanding of these three men will be included.

Research Significance

In consideration of Hume's framing of the problem of evil and suffering and the numerous responses of philosophers and theologians, in addition to those previously mentioned, what further benefits could possibly justify the generation of yet another defense? Considering

³⁴ Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius* (London: Routledge, 2004), 2, 27, doi:10.4324/9780203457634; Edward L. Smither, *Augustine as Mentor a Model for Preparing Spiritual Leaders* (Nashville: B & H Pub. Group, 2009), 1; Daniel A. Keating, *The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2, 7.

my argument thus far, what possible bearing could the Patristic view of the Incarnation specifically have upon the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships and what value is there in recasting ideas that were developed over a millennium ago as a defense? Is this not simply another esoteric philosophical pursuit that has absolutely no practical implications for humanity at large? Finally, is it even necessary to respond to challenges made by atheologians and philosophers regarding the implausibility of the coexistence of a good God and evil? In response to these questions, at least nine reasons demonstrate why this work featuring the Patristic view of the Incarnation as a defense is needed.

First, when philosophers, like Hume, remain unchecked, a perception can develop that theologians and philosophers of religion appear to have no meaningful response. Many viable arguments exist which attempt to establish morally sufficient reasons for the coexistence of God and suffering, and I imagine many more are to come. Left unanswered, the community of Christian scholars appear to be intimidated by extremely valid and exceedingly difficult questions, even if this is not the case.

Second, engaging proponents of antitheistic ideas may be a way of extending an academic courtesy by displaying respect for the time and thought that has gone into preparing such arguments. Although both philosophers and theologians engage in analysis of the coexistence of a good God and the problem of suffering, they rarely find occasion to exchange ideas. This engagement may lead to further dialogue by which countless others may become willing to listen to primary reasons given for a specific position, and then, in turn, may stimulate an openness to counterarguments as well. Ideally, broader intellectual growth may occur through mutual respect and understanding that develops in the course of sharing ideas.³⁵ Failure to

³⁵ Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 20.

grapple with those in opposition to our position lends itself to academic echo chambers, which only serve to further epistemic stagnation. During the presidential address of the 53rd annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Darrell Bock reflecting upon debates both inside and outside of Christianity suggested taking some cues from the Apostle Paul to engage a broader audience:

Our task . . . is to present and defend the Scripture using all the means necessary to make the case. The result, in my view, requires a two-pronged strategy in engaging the inside and outside debates, with the phenomena of Scripture themselves always at the forefront. I see precedent for this dual level of interaction in Scripture itself when I look at Romans 1 alongside Acts 17. Romans 1 is a scathing critique of the pagan culture, yet interestingly, when Paul addresses that culture provoked by the presence of idols in Acts 17, he could not work harder to address them in a tone of invitation starting from their context, while exposing what it lacks also using their own culture's words. We need more of such engagement with our wayward culture.³⁶

Bock goes even further than simply encouraging scholars to start from a cultural context while exposing what it lacks by the use of their own words; he argues that modern Christian philosophers and theologians should strive to emulate the philosophy of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 as well by “becom[ing] all things to all people so that by all possible means [we] might save some.”³⁷ Bock argues that one way to do this is to realize that culture has moved “from a culture of words to a culture of images.”³⁸ Additionally, he encourages writers to write in more creative ways by utilizing the styles of contemporary culture in order to have a broader appeal

³⁶ Darrell Bock, “Purpose-Driven ETS: Where Should We Go? A Look At Jesus Studies And Other Example Cases,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 45:1 (Mar 2002): 18-19, accessed April 7, 2018, <http://www.galaxie.com/article/jets45-1-02#ZGJETS45A0232>. Bock continues that this is also a way Christian scholars can move from the defensive position by placing opponents to theism on the defensive (Ibid., 19). In the process of such pursuits, Bock encourages the exercise of both “intellectual honesty” (conceding valid points made by critics) and “intellectual empathy” toward opponents (Ibid., 18, 31).

³⁷ 1 Cor 9:22. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *NIV*. This Pauline concept has incarnational implications.

³⁸ Bock, 22.

for the gospel by cracking the “secular ceiling.”³⁹ This strategy is precisely my purpose for building a creative defense by utilizing the Patristic view of the Incarnation in order to provide possible reasons (not actual) that God may allow suffering caused by broken relationships.

Third, after two centuries of strapping scholars with the shackles of the narrow confines of the scientific, historical-critical method which grew out of the Enlightenment, scholars from Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox backgrounds are calling for a resurgence of interest in Patristic exegesis.⁴⁰ The intention of this revival is not to suppress the advances of the historical-critical method but rather to supplement this approach with a fuller appreciation of the exegetical and hermeneutic practices of the church fathers. Examining the Patristic view of the Incarnation provides the modern scholar with an embarrassment of rich interpretive methodologies and insights that can greatly aid the process of applying balance to the field of modern, biblical hermeneutics and philosophical theology. These methods will further serve the process of developing a new defense which seeks to provide possible answers to the problem of suffering from the Patristic view of the Incarnation. Patristics unanimously agreed that the Scriptures display divine revelation, which points to deeper spiritual truths. By examining the commentaries, sermons, and philosophical insights of the Fathers on both the Old and New Testaments, modern scholars may be able to deduce morally sufficient reasons for suffering by highlighting themes from their view of the Incarnation.

Furthermore, focusing upon the Patristic view of the Incarnation has also, at times, encouraged exegetical unity, ecumenical community, and harmonious accountability by

³⁹ Bock, 23.

⁴⁰ Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 184-185, accessed September 26, 2019, ProQuest Ebook Central; David Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2004), 2, 62; Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 120, 123, ProQuest Ebook Central.

centering upon the tradition held in common among the Christian community.⁴¹ The Rose Hill Conference in 1995 provided a healthy environment for Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant scholars to discuss areas of agreement stemming from the teachings of the Fathers, who held that hermeneutics is both spiritual and communal. Although some disagreement over how to interpret commonly held traditions was evident, in a number of areas participants agreed. Hall acknowledges that there was consensus by participants recognizing that Patristic exegesis was done within the confines of the church: “[N]ear unanimity reigned among participants on the intimate connection between the Bible and the church. Participants acknowledged the Fathers’ consistent argument that one reads the Bible safely and effectively only within the context of Christ’s body, the church.”⁴² The Bible was born within the church. It was never the intention of the Fathers, who were closer to the apostles than modern exegetes, for Bible interpretation to be done in isolation.⁴³ Hall, reflecting upon the words of Gregory of Nazianzus, further emphasizes this point by contending that exegesis in seclusion is incapable of flourishing for it lacks the fertilizer of communal prayer, worship, and adoration: “Exegesis and theological exploration have become technical skills often practiced in separation from the life of the Christian community and the history of that community’s reading of Scripture over the centuries. In their

⁴¹ Cultivating a promising environment for ecumenical scholarship, Patristic studies focus attention upon that which Christians hold in common, according to Daley: “Christian dialogue and collaboration often begins in the rediscovery of common roots” (Daley, *God Visible*, 3).

⁴² Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, 187.

⁴³ Hall stresses this point by placing an exegetical emphasis upon the proximity of the Fathers to the authors of Scripture: “The fathers lived and worked in hermeneutical proximity to the biblical writers, especially those of the New Testament” (Ibid., 54). Additionally, a Protestant representative in attendance at the conference made a historical argument that most errors occurring within the church began in isolation: “[S]olitary study, cut off from the fellowship of believers seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and lacking any awareness of the faith of the church through the ages, is often a source of serious error” (Harold O. J. Brown, “Proclamation and Preservation: The Necessity and Temptations of Church Tradition,” in *Reclaiming the Great Tradition: Evangelicals, Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue*, ed. James S. Cutsinger (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 80). See also Gerald Bonner, “Augustine as Biblical Scholar,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, eds. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 548, 553.

search for a home within the academy, many biblical scholars and theologians have planted themselves in soil that cannot provide the nutrients Gregory sees as nonnegotiables for theological and exegetical fruitfulness.”⁴⁴ As they dialogue with each other in meetings like the Rose Hill Conference, modern scholars not only learn like the Fathers, but also cultivate the soil for theological insights to blossom as they learn from the Fathers. The context of Christ’s body provides an environment conducive to exegetical unity and harmonious accountability.

Fourth, the Patristics propose a vast number of rules by which the deeper understanding of Scripture manifests itself. One explanation involves the mysterious condescension of the Incarnation of the Logos as a means to illumination, salvation, and deification. Connecting the past with the present, Bingaman, as he explores the *Philokalia*, proposes that the Incarnation is the corrective by which Scripture must be understood: “This process of discovery is fundamentally Christocentric in orientation: it is through the lens of the incarnation of the Logos ‘enfleshed in the words of Scripture’ that Scripture must be read and understood.”⁴⁵ Just as the Son of God is incarnate in human flesh, the living Word of God may mysteriously manifest the person of Christ. For the Fathers, the Bible has an essential role to play in revealing the person, nature, motives, and character of God to humans. Commenting on the Eastern Orthodox tradition, Herbel explains the Bible’s role as the intermediary that exists between God and humans: “[T]he Bible becomes an extension of God’s condescension, for the Son authors and incarnates who God is, and the Spirit guides one to read the Bible in accordance with the

⁴⁴ Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, 72.

⁴⁵ “Introduction,” in *What Is the Bible?: The Patristic Doctrine of Scripture*, eds. by Matthew Baker and Mark Mourachian (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), xvii. On this point, reflecting upon comments about the *Philokalia*, Bingaman accordingly reverberates that reading Scripture is to be done with the view of actively conversing with Christ (Ibid., 106-107).

hypothesis of that Son.”⁴⁶ Although the Bible is not a part of God, the Patristics believe that it does contain the Word of God. Through these words, He communicates the revelation of His son. Tapping this mystery in a possible world may disclose a significant number of morally sufficient reasons for suffering that God allows.

Fifth, the reason that the Incarnation plays such a vital role within Patristic exegesis and the reason why it deserves further attention for this project is that this doctrine singlehandedly overcame Greek dualisms. Athanasius was able to make a distinction between the generation of the Son and the creation of the world, which potentially has crucial philosophical implications for how God could involve himself with the problem of suffering in a possible world. Even though God is transcendent, He condescends in an intimate way, according to Carr, thus limiting Himself for the sake of human understanding: “Far from lapsing back into the Greek dualisms, however, it is precisely this sharp distinction that allows Athanasius to affirm that God is truly with us as the creator and sustainer of our world, and that God has come to be among us in the incarnation, truly sharing our condition within its creaturely ‘measures and limits.’”⁴⁷ The Patristics believe that God limits Himself to reveal Himself to creatures other than Himself. Although God is higher than humanity, He descends to humanity by communicating with humans in symbols that are comprehensible.⁴⁸ Commenting on Saint Ephrem’s exegesis, Baker contends that natural theology alone is incapable of revealing an accurate view of God: “It is

⁴⁶ Oliver Herbel, “A ‘Doctrine of Scripture’ from the Eastern Orthodox Tradition: A Reflection on the Desert Father Saint Sarapion of Thmuis,” in *What Is the Bible?*, 32.

⁴⁷ John Taylor Carr, “Reality and Biblical Interpretation: T. F. Torrance’s Retrieval of Patristic Hermeneutics,” in *What Is the Bible?*, 176.

⁴⁸ Vanhoozer utilizes the Incarnation as an act by which God “goes out of himself” in order to achieve understanding in another: “The Incarnation, wherein God goes out of himself for the sake of communicating himself to another, grounds the possibility of human communication by demonstrating that it is indeed possible to enter into the life of another so as to achieve understanding” Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, And The Morality Of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998), 161. Thiselton

only because God has revealed God's self in human words that we are able at all to speak with any positive sense about God."⁴⁹ Therefore, Scripture is the means by which God communicates with man. Scripture, in cooperation with nature, and nature, interpreted through Scripture, may provide true revelatory knowledge about God and the problem of suffering in a possible world.⁵⁰

Sixth, as contemporary students and scholars discuss the abundance of Augustine's theological corpus, his contributions to the church's official position on Christology seems to go consistently unnoticed. His influence, among scholastics, reformers, and modern scholars is evident in numerous areas of historical, practical, and, even, philosophical theology; however, specific references to Augustine's Christology has unjustifiably been missing, in large part, from the majority of research on the topic.⁵¹ His reputation as a Western theologian exceeds that of Origen and Tertullian. Tertullian may be noted for his concept of *una persona*, but the development of a complete formulation of this idea would not be achieved until Augustine.⁵² Historically, Augustine's life is framed by Christological controversies, which may explain why

reflecting upon the ideas of Wilhelm Dilthey shares this concept as well by revealing that "putting oneself in someone's place" is central to New Testament teaching: "'Putting oneself in someone's place' as a way of understanding may not be entirely possible, but it is a profoundly Christian aim in expressing concern for the other" (Thiselton, 143).

⁴⁹ Matthew Baker, "'He Has Clothed Himself in Our Language': The Incarnational Hermeneutic of Saint Ephrem the Syrian" in *What Is the Bible?*, 38. Communication, according to Vanhoozer, even though seldom exhaustive, is the primary way to develop relationships that are both meaningful and intimate. This is true of divine meaningful relationships, no less than human: "[W]e can say that God created us with linguistic faculties in order to communicate with and understand one another (and with him)" (Vanhoozer, 289).

⁵⁰ Blowers asserts that understanding Patristic exegesis must begin not with the Fathers' methods but rather how it is even possible in their minds for God to communicate to humanity: "[W]e must begin with their perception of the very conditions under which divine revelation to created beings is even possible—a matter that is not normally front and center in modern critical exegesis, preoccupied as it often is with the sacred text as an artifact to be excavated" (Paul M. Blowers, "The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ as 'Saturated Phenomenon' and as a Key to the Dynamics of Biblical Revelation in Saint Maximus the Confessor," in *What is the Bible?*, 85).

⁵¹ Daley, *God Visible*, 150.

⁵² Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 131, 392.

every major theological treatise that he wrote magnifies the person of Christ.⁵³ Daley contends that although Augustine was not personally involved in developing remedies to these controversies, his Christological reflections, decades before Chalcedon, seem classical: “[R]ich and moving reflections on Christ himself appear . . . usually couched in terms that sound so classical, so balanced and well-rounded, so orthodox, that one tends to forget they were written twenty to forty years before Leo’s *Tome* and the Chalcedonian formula.”⁵⁴ Augustine’s understanding of Christology, in many ways, was formative in shaping the orthodox position of the Incarnation. His incarnational insights may yield even further reasons why God permits suffering in a possible world.

Seventh, from an apologetic perspective, commenting upon Hellenistic formulas adopted by the church prior to Augustine, Brown argues that modern scholars who fail to incorporate prevalent methods within their theology deprive themselves of necessary tools to defend against contemporary heresies:

Many theological conservatives who believe, by contrast, that the Son indeed is fully God also object to the formulas and interpretations of Nicene orthodoxy simply because they are Hellenistic in flavor, make use of philosophical categories and language, and are not simply biblical. By adopting a prejudice against the use of philosophical language and the Hellenistic influence in theology, many Christians who want to be conservative and orthodox deprive themselves of the tools that are necessary to build a stable doctrinal structure and ultimately will fall into some variety of heresy, very likely into one orthodox theology has already rejected.⁵⁵

⁵³ As a Christian thinker, according to Daley, Augustine’s life was flanked by the condemnation of Apollinarianism and the controversy over Mary’s title, *Theotokos* between Nestorius of Constantinople and Cyril of Alexandria (Brian E. Daley, “Christology,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 164).

⁵⁴ Daley, *God Visible*, 151. Newton asserts that there exists direct evidence of Leo’s dependence upon Augustinian articulation of the Incarnation (John Thomas Newton, Jr., “The Importance of Augustine’s Use of the Neoplatonic Doctrine of Hypostatic Union for the Development of Christology,” *Augustinian Studies* 2, (1971): 12.

⁵⁵ Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 104-105.

Newton's study further clarifies that in addition to defending the church against contemporary heresies, Augustine also understood the need to use pagan philosophers in his approach in order to be relevant to his culture: "[Augustine's] stated apologetic method [was] to use a theory adopted by pagan philosophers in his apologetic works because in a letter written to Marcellinus immediately after *Ep.* 137 he stated that it was his intention to use authorities which the pagans would recognize."⁵⁶ Heeding Brown's advice and Augustine's practice is precisely what I intend to do in this project. My desire is to use the contemporary understanding of a defense as it has previously been explained in order to entertain probable reasons in a possible world by which God and suffering coexist. In this project, similar to Augustine, I will cater to philosophical and theological authorities that are easily recognizable and then use all means necessary at my disposal to indulge the possibility of a defense hatched and controlled by the Patristic understanding of the Incarnation.

Eighth, this new defense may, in some ways, express the very spirit of the Incarnation, in that, to think that God could become a man in any world initially seems scandalous but upon further consideration, a number of scholars already mentioned have come to view this divine move as potentially ingenious.⁵⁷ Anytime a person (human or divine) initially appears to shift traditional categories, it is expected to be met with skepticism. However, for those who are patiently willing to remain open to new ways of thinking about old problems by simultaneously

⁵⁶ Newton, 3. Wilken in his review of *Christ in Christian Tradition* also emphasizes this point by reflecting upon Grillmeier's understanding of how the Fathers utilized secular concepts to aid in expressing Christological formulas: "In Grillmeier's view the philosophical categories of the fathers and the terms from Greek philosophy actually aided the Church in interpreting and expressing its faith" (Robert L. Wilken, review of *Christ in Christian Tradition*, by Aloys Grillmeier, *American Society of Church History*, 35, no. 3 (September 1966): 361–63. doi:10.2307/3162320). Therefore, utilizing secular philosophical language was not simply driven by apologetic strategies, but was rather indispensable to a clearer articulation of the faith of the early church.

⁵⁷ Plantinga asserts that the Incarnation is not simply the greatest story ever told, as some have indicated, but rather it is the greatest possible story that ever could be told (Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 58-59).

anchoring to that which can be known and prudently and cautiously venturing into obscure epistemic areas, there may await even greater plains of theological and philosophical opportunities yet to be explored and discovered.

Finally, this project aims to employ a degree of historical theology in concert with analytic philosophy and biblical narratives. This unlikely union will provide a base from which to construct the possible world for my defense. Stump who spends a significant portion of her introduction outlining the limitations of analytic philosophy, specifically in the realm of analyzing personal relationships, considers the supplementary benefits of joining analytic philosophy to narratives: “I am going to consider the problem of suffering by reflection on narratives as well as contemporary analytic discussions of the problem. It is my hope that the result will be a true marriage, generating something newly good, and not just a forcible joining-together of reluctant bedfellows.”⁵⁸ Utilizing biblical narratives, Stump argues, allows for a fuller development of contemporary discussions on the problem of suffering. If a defense features a possible world (not the actual world) and if marrying narratives to analytic philosophy was successful in Stump’s development of a defense, can the utilization of historical theology or even the history of Christian thought be just as effective, or will its incorporation undermine a defense? It would undermine my defense if the goal was seeking to prove the historical reliability of a given person, place, thing, or idea at a particular point in actual time. However, proving that is not my purpose. Traditionally, historical theologians ask questions like, “Is history objectively possible or is it completely subjective?” The beauty of a defense is that these questions have little bearing, if any, upon a possible world. Taking Stump’s lead, I desire to generate something newly good that can account for the coexistence of God and suffering and is

⁵⁸ Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 25.

not demonstrably false.

Research Statement

This project aims to build a creative defense utilizing the Patristic view of the Incarnation by exploring the ontological implications of the Incarnation and the existential application of the Incarnation through biblical narratives as the Patristics saw them, which may, in turn, yield some morally sufficient reasons (not necessarily actual reasons) in a possible world for God allowing suffering caused by broken relationships. Explicating why God may possibly allow suffering caused by broken relationships in a possible world will be achieved in three parts. Part One: A detailed explanation of the Patristic view of the Incarnation, preceded by a brief introduction of the Incarnation, will be examined. Part Two: Following the practices of Athanasius, Augustine, and Cyril of Alexandria—the Patristic view of the Incarnation, in the process of offering a defense against the modern philosophical problem of suffering, I plan to continue using the texts of these Patristic writers in conjunction with modern scholars to develop a foundation for a Patristic Christological method to analyze biblical narratives. Therefore, constructing a method for building a defense will be accomplished by consolidating three questions that bear heavily upon God's ability to respond to the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships in any world:

1. Why are higher-level freewill, sentient creatures unable to detect God acting in any world? Answering this question will require a more thorough familiarity with what I have dubbed transworld incognizance (TWI).
2. How should higher-level freewill, sentient creatures expect God to act in any world should He decide to involve Himself in the fight against the problem of suffering? This question will consider the conduit of immaterial irregularities (i.e. soul and mind) through which God could justifiably act should He decide to do so.
- And finally, 3. precisely what should higher-level freewill, sentient creatures expect God acting in any world to resemble?

Answering this question will focus primarily upon the Incarnation—specifically regarding Christ’s will—as God’s means to act in categories detectable to higher-level freewill, sentient creatures in any possible world. And finally, Part Three: While mining the wealth of incarnational implications from the Patristic view of Christ’s interaction with others within a biblical narrative, it will be demonstrated how that incarnational principles featured through a Patristic Christological method may potentially yield at least three morally sufficient reasons, among others, for God allowing suffering caused by broken relationships in this middle world: The first morally sufficient reason for God allowing suffering caused by broken relationships may be that suffering provides the activating transworld condition (ATC) necessary to make reconciliation possible. Reconciliation in a possible world may not only demonstrate the extremes that God is willing to subject Himself in order to restore the broken relationship with humanity but may also require personal suffering on His part.⁵⁹ According to Plantinga, as previously stated, God may not be able to both create freewill agents and prevent them from choosing evil, but, in a possible world, He may be able to subject Himself to the consequences—suffering—caused by the choices that humans make especially if suffering is the coalescence of restoration. He can identify with humanity by becoming human thereby potentially sharing a deeper intimacy through the union of mortal suffering. Consequently, God engages humanity by teaching humans that restoration of all human brokenness comes exclusively through the liberation of His own mortal flesh from the effects of the Fall, ultimately restoring humanity by incorporating them into His body.⁶⁰ The second morally sufficient reason for God allowing

⁵⁹ The question of whether God can suffer will be more thoroughly analyzed in later chapters.

⁶⁰ The divinization of Christ’s humanity would first undergo a process, in this middle world, whereby the Son would descend to the limitations of mortality and through the flesh by way of His divinity lift his humanity to the status of deity. This divinization for Christ’s human nature happens in two ways: First, since Christ did not preexist as a man, it happens immediately apart from any human merit of His own upon His conception (Chapter 8).

suffering caused by broken relationships may be that suffering provides the activating transworld condition (ATC) necessary to make transworld transformation possible. Transworld transformation will be shown to occur once individuals respond favorably to God's offer of restoration.⁶¹ As a result of being reconciled to Christ, the believer receives the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and this ATC alleviates suffering caused by the previous alienation from God by providing the necessary catalyst whereby humans in this possible world can become partakers of the divine nature. The Patristics refer to this process as theosis or divinization. For Athanasius, the Incarnation escorts believers to the very presence of God by way of the divinization achieved first through the body of the Son and ultimately experienced by believers so that humanity can participate in a relationship with the deity.⁶² The third morally sufficient reason for God allowing suffering caused by broken relationships may be that suffering provides the activating transworld condition (ATC) necessary to make participation with the Godhead possible. Analogous to the Son of God becoming the first fruits of a new man who completely participates within the Godhead, so also participation with the Godhead is made available to believers. God equips believers in this possible world to participate with Him in the process of restoring others; He

Because the preexistence of Christ's humanity is absent prior the Incarnation, He could do nothing earlier in His humanity to merit the grace by which His human nature was joined to the divine. And second, it happens through a process that both Athanasius and Augustine refer to as transcending His human nature by degrees (Chapters 3 and 4). In His body, He becomes the first fruits of a new man who completely participates within the Godhead (Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 2.61, 65, 66, 70; *On Luke X.22 (Matt. XI. 27)*, 3).

⁶¹ Hypostatic cognitive empathy (HCE)—God's ultimate way of empathizing with humanity by becoming human—may be the only way to provide a platform for deeper intimacy between the deity and humanity. However, an individual human response to the hypostatic extension of reconciliation is necessary before restoration can fully develop into a meaningful relationship. From a transworld perspective, it should be noted that a meaningful relationship with the deity may, for some, temporally incur an even greater degree of suffering for the individual respondent (Matt 5:11; Acts 9:16; Phil 3:10). Therefore, following the model of the Incarnation, true love transcends any personal harm to the self (Ps 15:4; See also 13n29 on how the process of divinization further explains intimacy with divinity may actually excite suffering in one's humanity).

⁶² Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 54.3. This concept is thoroughly explained in Chapter 3.

accomplishes this by commissioning believers as His ministers of reconciliation.⁶³ In a possible world, God achieves this through the Holy Spirit by creating space within the believer that was previously unavailable. Once the believer enters this holy reconciliatory communion through faith, she gains access to divine power, made possible through the humble act of the Son of God becoming man, which authorizes the follower to cooperate with God in the process of reconciling others to Himself. Allowing humans to become partakers of the divine nature provides space within the individual to make room for reconciling others through a divine concept known as self-donation.⁶⁴

A Brief Introduction of the Patristic View of the Incarnation

Doctrines, like cathedrals in the ancient world, were not constructed over years or even decades, but sometimes took centuries to complete. Like cathedrals, the development of the doctrine of the Incarnation was a process involving numerous proposals, countless rejections,

⁶³ 2 Cor 5:16-20.

⁶⁴ Volf commenting on the twin ideas of “self-giving” and “mutual indwelling” that make communion possible within the Trinity and between the Godhead and humanity writes the following: “[T]he self-giving is a way in which each divine person seeks the ‘glory’ of the others and makes space in itself for the others. . . . Can such complex identity that rests on the twin notions of ‘self-giving’ and ‘mutual indwelling’ be brought from heaven down to earth? In a sense, this ‘bringing down’ is the goal of the whole history of salvation: God came into the world so as to make human beings, created in the image of God, live with one another and with God in the kind of communion in which divine persons live with one another.” Volf acknowledges that this particular concept is referred to as perichoresis, which was originally explained by John of Damascus: “John of Damascus writes, ‘For . . . they are made one not so as to commingle, but so as to cleave to each other, and they have their being in each other without any coalescence or commingling,’” (Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1996), 180-181)). From the standpoint of self-donation, God in Christ desires full restoration of individuals; however, according to Volf, this can only take place for those who allow themselves to be “guided by the narrative of the triune God”: “[R]econciliation with the other will succeed only if the self, guided by the narrative of the triune God, is ready to receive the other into itself and undertake a re-adjustment of its identity in light of the other’s alterity (Chapters 7 and 9). The idea of ‘re-adjustment’ may suggest equal acceptability of all identities and a symmetry of power between them. But to assume such universal acceptability and symmetry as givens would be to fall captive to a pernicious ideology” (Volf, 110).

and a large body of individuals including emperors, princesses, bishops, and theologians.⁶⁵

Unlike the masons and carpenters, who made their craft shaping unblemished materials suitable for a structure which would house the worship of the faithful, these ideologues were weaned on the finer arts of politics, rhetoric, theology, and philosophy. They were attempting, reluctantly at times, to harness an unblemished description of what they understood to be a divine act—the Incarnation, that would be consistent with Scripture, agreeable to the church, and worthy of worship. Understanding that achieving absolute certainty was an impossibility, some wondered whether the task should even be attempted or if it should just be designated a mystery. Forged in the milieu of political maneuvering, religious enthusiasm, and, occasionally, genuine concern over a correct view of what came to be known as the doctrine of the Incarnation, the church fathers could not remain silent in the presence of, in their view, so many lopsided ideas generating unacceptable formulas.⁶⁶ Insufficient explanation led to inconsistent representation and was responsible, in part, for refining Christological formulation.⁶⁷ The Fathers came to understand that a proper view of Christ was foundational to every other major doctrine within Scripture. Although extremely complex, the doctrine of the Incarnation became essential to Patristic Christology because it formed the central core of the history of salvation, which at its

⁶⁵ Kannengiesser contends that in addition to imperial and theological realities, the controversy surrounding the development of the Incarnation was also driven by localized Christian metropolises: “[T]he great controversy over the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ which lasted through the fourth century . . . was a controversy led by the bishops and their theologians in a political background created by the interests of each Christian metropolitan in the boundaries of the Roman Empire. It was also complicated by the growing nationalism under a religious guise in Egypt and in the whole of the Roman Orient. Such a controversy must have resulted in political decisions inspired by the imperial government” (Charles Kannengiesser, “Athanasius of Alexandria and the Foundation of Traditional Christology,” *Theological Studies* (Baltimore) 34, no. 1 (1973): 105-106).

⁶⁶ Christopher A. Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 50, 95-96, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁶⁷ In one sense, it could be argued that producing an acceptable formulation of the doctrine of the Incarnation was galvanized in the crucible of suffering.

heart, is reconciliatory.

According to the Fathers, the view one holds of the Incarnation directly impacts how she interprets the history of salvation. For this reason, the church fathers maintained that it was imperative that the articulation of the Incarnation was consistent with biblical teaching and the *regula fidei*. The Fathers were not, according to Berkhof, attempting to provide an exhaustive description of exactly how the Son is simultaneously God and man: “[T]he early Church did not claim to be able to penetrate to the depths of this great doctrine, and did not pretend to give a solution of the problem of the incarnation in the formula of Chalcedon. It merely sought to guard the truth against the errors of theorizers, and to give a formulation of it which would ward off various, palpably unscriptural, constructions of truth.”⁶⁸ Understanding the limitations of human language as a result of the Fall, the Fathers desired to remain true to Scripture while attempting to interpret divine revelation in a manner that respected the original intent of the gospel.⁶⁹ There is something of a mystery regarding exactly how someone could be both God and man, and to a large degree, the Fathers wanted to preserve the ineffable quality of the Incarnation. Based upon Scripture, they understood God’s capability of communicating His will to humanity, which is

⁶⁸ Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 101-102.

⁶⁹ Borrowing an illustration from Wittgenstein, Hall shares an exercise he regularly conducts with theology students in order to illustrate the limitations in describing even the most common human experiences: “I have also repeated this language experiment with class after class of beginning theology students. The responses I have received are remarkable. What does coffee smell like? ‘Dirt.’ ‘Warmth.’ ‘A spring morning.’ ‘Something sweet.’ ‘Something bitter.’ ‘Wet mud.’ Even some of the most common human experiences, it seems, are incapable of description apart from metaphor and simile” (Christopher A. Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, 41, 49). Stump also extensively analyzes the limitation of human language, specifically the cognitive ability to know in a propositional sense. She argues, in part, that some knowledge is not mediated by natural language (Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 71). To illustrate this point, Stump reflects upon the difference between “knowledge about” pictures and “knowledge in” pictures (“seeing into a picture”) developed by Dominic McIver Lopes while studying visual arts. There is considerable difference, according to Stump, between simply knowing some characteristics about something and truly knowing something on a deeper more intimate level: “Lopes’s ‘knowledge-in’ is analogous to the knowledge of persons, not only in the sense that it is not reducible to knowledge that, but also in the sense that it is immediate, intuitive, and difficult to articulate in language” (Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 72). More will be said about Stump’s concept of understanding “other minds” beyond a propositional or analytical sense in Chapter 9.

precisely what they believe the Gospels state that He did by way of sending His son to be born of a virgin. Cyril of Alexandria contends that the Almighty has a habit of mysteriously condescending to humans through means by which they can accurately discern His will:

For he came down in the form of fire onto the bush in the desert, and the fire played upon the shrub but did not consume it. When he saw this Moses was amazed. Why was there no compatibility here between the wood and the fire? How did this inflammable substance endure the assaults of the flame? Well, as I have already said, this event was a type of a mystery, of how the divine nature of the Word supported the limitations of the manhood; because he chose to. Absolutely nothing is impossible to him (Mk 10:27).⁷⁰

A conflict may arise in the human mind regarding these mysterious mediums by which God communicates; however, it is important to remember there is no tension from the divine perspective in the Patristic view. In this instance, Moses was amazed at the wood's apparent ability to exist in the presence of a substance that naturally, under "his normal" circumstances, would consume it. Cyril is encouraging his readers to hold their minds open to the same divine possibility and stand in awe of the revelation of the Incarnation as God's ultimate communication to man.⁷¹

The context of the church was also a major factor driving how the Incarnation would come to be understood. A change from the cultural background of the primitive church occurred which would influence how later Christianity would process the Incarnation. The early church, predominantly Jewish, enjoyed the luxury of learning from the apostles, as well as the apostolic

⁷⁰ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, ed., trans. John McGuckin (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 79.

⁷¹ "Divine possibility" to some readers, may, at first, seem oxymoronic, but the whole point of Cyril's statement is to stimulate the idea that if in times past God communicated through shrubbery, livestock, natural elements, insects, angels, flames, prophets, miracles, Scripture, etc., why should humans question His capacity for speaking through His Son when nothing is impossible through Him? The Fathers believed something that Pentecost observes regarding the revelatory nature of the Incarnation: "The revelation is dependent upon the Incarnation. . . . God had revealed truth in the Old Testament in such ways as by speaking to men directly through visions and dreams and by bringing messages through the prophets; but in the coming of Christ we have revelation made through a person" (Dwight J. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 31.

fathers. Later Christianity was rapidly distancing itself from the Jewish context within which it was born. The shift that occurred was ever less apocalyptic and increasingly more Hellenistic. As a result, Studer argues that this shift gave birth to a “time of the beginning of the continuous revelation of the mystery of Christ.”⁷² Two determinate factors influencing the progressive understanding of the Incarnation were apostolic tradition and the change of cultural background. Both the proclamation of Christ and ecclesiastical demands were influenced by Hellenistic thought, which in turn impacted the concept of the doctrine of the Incarnation. The Hellenistic mind, according to Studer, classified entities as corporeal and incorporeal, as a result, Christianity began to process its understanding of God, the Logos, and humanity through these dualistic categories:

The growing influence of hellenistic thought, for which salvation essentially consists in the *reduction omnium ad unum* implies that the Christians increasingly regarded God and the world as a hierarchy of various levels of being. They also conceived of things as entities, which in a gradual declension from ultimate truth fall short of being, truth and goodness. It is against this background that they also came to understand the relationship of God and the Logos, the Logos and Jesus. In other words: Christian thought increasingly operated by means of ontology.⁷³

In a context where ontology is the driving force of understanding the nature and relationship of being, it was only a matter time when the Incarnation would be systematized. Christianity was forced to defend the messianic claims of Christ against the Jews, the monotheistic claims against the pagans, and now Christology would have to be reorganized to meet the intellectual demands

⁷² Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*, ed. Andrew Louth (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1993), 15, eBook. Progressive revelation and faith in progress and reason, according to Stark, have always been hallmarks of Christianity from its inception: “[F]rom early days, the church fathers taught that reason was the supreme gift from God and the means to progressively increase their understanding of scripture and revelation.” He continues, “Christian theologians [including Augustine and Aquinas] have devoted centuries to reasoning about what God may have really meant by various passages in scripture, and over time the interpretations often have evolved in quite dramatic and extensive ways” (Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success*, 1st ed., (New York: Random House, 2005), 7-8, 18)).

⁷³ Studer, 18.

of a culture obsessed with ontology.

The Incarnation would eventually be dissected according to the Greek philosophical understanding of the Supreme Being. God, according to the Greek mind, was both immutable and impassible. These two concepts alone provide enough material to occupy Patristic Christology for over three centuries. If Christ is divine, the church fathers, while also having to consider many other factors, were faced with the dilemma of having to explain how an impassible God could suffer.⁷⁴ Just a small sampling of church fathers reveals the extreme complexity of this essential doctrine. Justin builds his entire biblical argument upon the climax of the Incarnation within the history of salvation and a suffering Messiah that was foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures. Maintaining the centrality of the crucified Messiah, Irenaeus boldly affirms that the salvation of humanity depends upon the God-Man. Tertullian sustains Justin's suffering Messiah and Irenaeus's claim that the salvation of mankind requires a mediator that is both God and man, but he rejects any understanding of the Incarnation that would violate the impassibility of God.⁷⁵ Like machining with words, Christology requires extremely high theological precision because there is so little room for error. Even though the doctrine of the Incarnation is so multifaceted, Berkhof concludes that the Fathers determined four primary aspects that must be maintained in order to produce a legitimate description of the doctrine: "The Church was in quest of a conception of Christ that would do justice to the following points: (a) His true and proper deity; (b) His true and proper humanity; (c) the union of deity and humanity in one person; and

⁷⁴ Studer, 44.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 51, 57, 68. Hellenism was not solely responsible for this doctrinal dilemma; it should be noted that 2 Clement refers to Christ as God as early as AD 140 (Ibid., 47). These ideas are embedded in Christianity. This is the material that the New Testament writers produced and, as a result, the articulation of the ontology of the Incarnation seems inevitable, it just required the right catalyst. Those influenced by Hellenistic epistemology seemed happy to oblige.

(d) the proper distinction of deity from humanity in the one person. [The Church] felt that as long as these requirements were not met, or only partly met, its conception of Christ would be defective.”⁷⁶ Extremes in Christology, even those with the best of intentions, stem from exceeding or surrendering one of these four points at the expense of the others. It cannot be stated too frequently that these components developed over a long period, involved the contribution of what eventually came to be known as the orthodox position, and were often goaded by the antithesis of that position.

⁷⁶ Berkhof, 102.

CHAPTER 2: TOWARDS A CHRISTOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY

Where Faith Meets Form

Since the Patristic view of the Incarnation provides, in large part, the material in this project for what may prove to be morally sufficient reasons for suffering caused by broken relationships, it is imperative to explain in detail how the Fathers chose to articulate the concept of God becoming a man. The details of this analysis of what is essentially a divine visit from another world may provide sufficient guidance not only of how God could possibly intervene in defeating evil and suffering, but also may yield morally sufficient reasons for Him to allow evil and suffering in any world in the first place. Focusing upon incarnational constructs may produce incarnational principles for how a divine being may go about reconciling broken relationships. Potentially answering Hume's challenge, focusing upon incarnational constructs may yield activating transworld conditions for how a divine being "who knows the secret workings of the universe might easily, by particular volitions, turn all these happenings to the good of mankind and make the whole world happy."⁷⁷ Of course, emphasis in the previous sentence must remain upon "potentially" since God in this possible world simply provides the means for achieving "happiness" but the outcome, as in any broken relationship, must require a response. One party can initiate the process, but the other party must decide whether to embrace and respond to the invitation. Therefore, the purpose of explicating the Incarnation in detail is to extract the Patristic view of the Incarnation and utilize it to assemble a defense that may satisfy a number of the parameters necessary for God to act in a possible world on behalf of man as a man to defeat the problem of evil by providing morally sufficient reasons for God allowing suffering.

The very thought of a god leaving another world to occupy a possible world where he

⁷⁷ Hume, 49.

renegotiates his identity to save humanity engenders philosophical conflict. When innovative ideas clash with traditional ways of thinking, conflict is inevitable. Foreseeably, every Christology, whether orthodox or unorthodox, has a synthetic lineage that is usually associated with a protagonist and an antagonist, at least this is how historians and theologians frame the theological hybridization of the Incarnation. Because of the heavy influence of Hellenistic epistemology, certain theological assumptions were made by the Fathers, which drove the arrangement and understanding of Christ.

One of the first major challenges to the Christology of the early church emerged from Gnosticism. Although many scholars argue that an oversimplification results when Gnosticism is treated generically, a number of themes within this ideology become points of emphasis for Patristic Christological purposes, which may, in turn, exhume incarnational reconciliatory principles. Gnosticism is extremely syncretistic and has a propensity to attach, adapt, and transform any system of belief attempting to explain physical existence. The dualistic nature of Gnosticism makes Christianity a prime candidate, or victim, depending upon one's theological persuasion. Gnostics believe there is an infinite quantum gap between the physical (evil) and the spiritual (good) realms. As a result, the Supreme Being, in their view, can have nothing to do with physical matter, except to work through a mediator capable of freeing mankind's soul from the prison of the physical body.⁷⁸ As the Hellenistic worldview collides with Christianity, Gnosticism can seamlessly insert itself, while simultaneously going virtually undetected. Studer describes the ripe setting in the second century, which makes this union possible: "The salvation of man himself consists in liberation from the corporeal world, the soul's prison, and in a return home through a purifying spirituality. According to the Christian reception of the Hellenistic

⁷⁸ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th rev. ed. (New York: HarperOne, 1978), 23-26.

explanation of the world, through his ascension to the true world Christ plays the role of the mediator, who just as he has called all things into multiplicity, also leads them all back to unity.”⁷⁹ According to this Hellenistic view, the physical realm is deemphasized, a mediator is required to act on behalf of the Supreme Being, and the soul is trapped within a material body awaiting liberation. A Hellenized Christ provides a convenient segue to Gnosticism.

A Christology Based upon Scripture

Irenaeus was extremely adept contending with Gnostic teaching by insisting that Scripture clearly teaches that the Word was joined with flesh “according to the will of the Father,” who is the Supreme Being.⁸⁰ He was so skillful at debunking Gnosticism that his arguments would prove useful to the Chalcedonian Fathers over two centuries later. Like so many church fathers, Irenaeus, according to Studer, came to view the doctrine of salvation, and ultimately reconciliation, as the means by which to unify the spirit and the flesh, and to develop a Christology based upon Scripture that forces opponents to retreat: “Irenaeus coined the term of unity, ‘one and the same’ (*unus et idem/ipse*), which will gain dogmatic importance and be sanctioned by the fathers of Chalcedon in the sense of *una persona, mia hypostasis*.”⁸¹ One of the later, pre-Chalcedonian Fathers, whose Christological exegesis also relied upon Scripture as well as the Nicene Fathers, incorporated this exact wording into his arguments against Nestorius. Cyril unambiguously argues in favor of a “single hypostasis” by uniting the Word with human flesh, which results in one Son whether prior to or after the incarnation. Beeley selects portions within Cyril’s writings that distinctly highlight the unity of Christ’s divinity and humanity:

⁷⁹ Studer, 17.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 59.

⁸¹ Ibid., 59-60.

“Cyril expresses the unity of Christ by calling him ‘one and the same’ Son or Christ. In his *Second Letter to Nestorius*, he famously argues that Christians do not worship the man Jesus ‘along with’ (σύν) the Word, but rather ‘one and the same Christ,’ because his body cannot be separated from the Word, as the former languages suggests.”⁸² The Incarnation makes possible a Christology based upon Scripture rather than simply having to yield to the pressure of Hellenistic epistemology.⁸³ Both Cyril and Irenaeus compose an epistemology that is distinctly Christocentric. Instead of Christianity being simply absorbed into an ideology that is thoroughly Hellenistic, these exegetes, although they employ philosophical concepts borne by the Greeks, contribute to the development of a Christological epistemology.

The importance of the Incarnation to Patristic Christology cannot only be discerned strictly from a basic soteriological understanding, but the very concept of God-Man instrumentally and doctrinally, in the Patristic view, preserves the early church from falling into a Gnostic chasm. Cyril’s reliance upon Scripture did not happen in a vacuum. Just as elements of his Christology can be traced to Irenaeus, he was also influenced by Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus.⁸⁴ Kannengiesser contends that Athanasius was the first theologian to systematize the

⁸² Christopher A. Beeley, *The Unity of Christ: Continuity and Conflict in Patristic Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 258, 260. Cyril emphasizes three of the four previously mentioned Christological requirements (true deity, true humanity, and the union of both in one person) within his *First Letter to Succensus* by using an illustration of human composition: “As to the manner of the incarnation of the Only Begotten, then theoretically speaking (but only in so far as it appears to the eyes of the soul) we would admit that there are two united natures but only One Christ and Son and Lord, the Word of God made man and made flesh. If you like we can take as our example that very composition which makes us men. For we are composed of body and soul and we perceive two natures; there is one nature of the body, and a different nature of the soul, and yet one man from both of them in terms of the union. This composition from two natures does not turn the one man into two, but as I have said there is one man by the composition of body and soul” (Cyril, *1 Ep. Succ.* 7). Although this Cyrilian excerpt only accentuates three of the four Christological requirements, Cyril does clarify other places in his writings that Christ’s human and divine natures are “different things without confusion” (Beeley, 262).

⁸³ This is not to say that the tools of Hellenistic philosophy were completely useless. Many Fathers were experts at utilizing philosophy as an exegetical apparatus by which to more clearly delineate the Incarnation as an evangelistic and apologetic catalyst.

⁸⁴ Beeley, 261-262.

Incarnation: “Athanasius was the first bishop and theologian of the early Church who attempted to organize all Christian doctrine concerning the incarnation of God. This contribution of systematic order directly influenced the Great Catechism of Gregory of Nyssa; it influenced Ambrose of Milan and Cyril of Alexandria.”⁸⁵ One could very easily deduce apart from scholarship, the Cappadocians discussing the Christological methodology of Athanasius in one of their many conversations. Interestingly, Athanasius’s methodology was thoroughly biblical. He relied heavily upon biblical vocabulary and drew from the full council of what he understood to be divine revelation, concentrating mostly upon the Gospel of John and the Epistles of Paul in order to coordinate quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures.⁸⁶ Athanasius is so original in his approach of focusing precisely upon the moment where faith meets form that Kannengiesser credits him with a new brand of Christological anthropology: “[Athanasius] composed a new concept of man and his salvation, expressed in Christian terms. His insistence on the corporeal condition makes one think of a definite influence from Irenaeus of Lyons. . . . [H]e presents the spiritual experience of Antony the Hermit . . . in such an original manner that the reading of Scripture . . . leads him to prefer the actual moment of faith, in the immediate and corporeal condition, to all other possible forms of gnosis.”⁸⁷ Athanasius displays the uncanny ability of maintaining a theological symmetry that focuses upon the necessity of both the humanity and

⁸⁵ Kannengiesser, 107.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 111. Kannengiesser admonishes modern scholarship for completely neglecting Athanasius’s recourse to Scripture: “I emphasize this because it is important for our contemporary critical interest in early Christology that the initiative of Athanasius in this domain would never have taken on lasting historical significance if it had not benefited from his very original method of having recourse to the Bible as a theologian (Ibid., 106-107).”

⁸⁷ Ibid., 110. To balance this claim, Kannengiesser concedes that the Arians influenced, in part, the hermeneutics of Athanasius (Ibid.). It is worth noting that in addition to Athanasius, Cyril, and Irenaeus, Justin also developed what Studer claims is the “first exegesis which consists of discussion at length of a scriptural text in a methodical and detailed way.” This text—Psalm 21, is messianic and may be a sample of Christological epistemology in seminal form (Studer, 47).

divinity of the Incarnation by utilizing Scripture as a Christological ballast. As a result of developing this new way of interpreting Scripture, Athanasius not only influences the next two centuries of Christology, but he gives birth to a new way of thinking that is distinctively incarnational. Through the new revelation of the Incarnation in a possible world, God could provide the exclusive polemical means by which to overcome some of the effects of evil and suffering upon the mind by potentially equipping the Fathers with an intellectual approach that was extremely advanced and able to defeat, in their view, the pervasive theological fallacies of their day.

Athanasius did influence Cyril; however, this is not to say that Cyril lacked originality of argumentation. The specific language of “hypostatic union” that Cyril employs in his Christology is completely severed from Athanasius’s usage. Beeley highlights hypostatic language in Cyril’s *Commentary on John*: “Cyril writes that the Word, who is by nature God, came together with his flesh in unity, and ‘united in himself things widely opposed by nature and averse to fusion with each other’ (*Com. Jn.* 1.9, 17, 18; 14.20).”⁸⁸ Cyril emphasizes that the moment the nature of divinity united with humanity, something unnatural happened, but the end was an actual unification. Although illustrations are extremely deficient when explaining the nature of divinity, they can be somewhat helpful when amplification of divine acts aids in understanding. The act of the Word uniting with His flesh can be likened to an electrical circuit:⁸⁹ Water heaters are prewired to be retrofitted to an existing power supply. Without being extremely detailed and providing an Incarnational function to each component in this assembly, a

⁸⁸ Beeley, 259.

⁸⁹ The purpose of this illustration is simply to demonstrate how the flesh of Christ came into the circuit (unity) of the Word. Caution should be exercised because any number of heresies can be applied to this illustration if taken to the extreme.

suitable example can be made. From the electrical panel, one wire containing three wires (not intended to be Trinitarian, but convenient to the illustration): black (hot), white (neutral), and a ground, will be coupled to the water heater. Water heaters contain the same color wires, known as leads. Colors need to be mated properly, otherwise a signal may be sent down the wrong wire. The hot or black wire could represent divine nature and the white could represent human nature, but that breaks down and may go beyond this illustration. Correctly uniting all the wires—black to black, white to white, and ground to the green screw on the tank, brings the water heater into the electrical circuit. The electrical system of the tank is brought into the circuit and parallels Cyril’s concept of hypostasis—how the flesh of Christ came into the circuit (unity) of the Word—in an extremely small way.⁹⁰

Benefits of Salvation are Communicated through the Appropriation of Human Nature by God

Cyril’s understanding of the distinction between hypostasis and nature can be observed by reading his correspondence with Nestorius. Nestorius contested the term “theotokos,” which means “God-bearing one” and is a direct reference to the divinity of Jesus while in the womb of the virgin.⁹¹ Hall speculates that Cyril may have been too harsh in his dealings with Nestorius because Nestorius simply desires to protect the doctrine of the true humanity of Christ and believed “theotokos” to be misleading: “Cyril, rightly or wrongly, interprets Nestorius’s reluctance to describe Mary as *theotokos* as a threat to the reality of the union of God with

⁹⁰ Extending the illustration even further, it is also interesting to liken original creation, especially when Adam fell out of union with God, to a water heater that fails and the leaking water causes collateral damage on goods within proximity to the damaged tank, which constitutes both the need for a replacement—a new creation—as well as restoration of the goods that were damaged.

⁹¹ Brown, *Heresies*, 172. Brown identifies three test questions that arose during the Christological conflicts at the end of the fourth century: “There were three fundamental test questions that appeared in the context of the Christological problem: (1) was God born of Mary, or only a man? (2) Did God die on the cross, or only a man? and (3) Should the human nature of Christ be worshiped?” (Ibid., 170).

human nature, a reluctance that in turn threatens the benefits obtained through such a union. For it is through the appropriation of human nature that the benefits of salvation are communicated to that nature by *God and no other*.”⁹² Nestorius affirmed the divinity of Christ, but not the infallibility of the term “theotokos,” he proposed the term Christotokos instead.⁹³ Regardless of Nestorius’s misunderstood position, as a result of this dispute, the Christology of Cyril is made all the more clear because he understood Nestorius to be saying that Christ had two natures that were not united but only appeared to be united. This point is extremely obvious in Cyril’s third letter to Nestorius:

So we confess the Word to have been united hypostatically with flesh, and we worship One Son and Lord Jesus Christ. We do not separate or hold apart man and God as if they were connected to one another by a unity of dignity or sovereignty . . . ; nor do we designate specifically a Christ who is the Word of God and then specify another Christ, the one who is born of a woman. . . . We do not say that the Word of God has dwelt in him who was born of the holy virgin, as if in an ordinary man, for this might imply that Christ was a God-bearing man.⁹⁴

Cyril clarifies the inimitability of the hypostasis of Christ by maintaining the union of His humanity and divinity within one person. Otherwise, Christians would have to refer to the one person Christ as two people. Cyril also seeks to extinguish any foolish talk about limiting Christ to simply a man whom God indwells, similar to how Christians understand the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within believers.

⁹² Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, 90. Brown agrees with this assessment. He claims that Nestorius also contested this term because in it he discerned the exaltation of Mary, which eventually would come to pass (Brown, *Heresies*, 173-174). Berkhof also agrees that Nestorius did not adhere to every position for which Cyril held him accountable; however, Cyril apparently had the foresight to see that future generations that pursued this line of thinking would eventually subscribe to a position that would undermine Christ’s qualification as Redeemer: “[I]f Mary is not *theotokos*, the relation of Christ to humanity is changed, and He is no more the effectual Redeemer of mankind. The followers of Nestorius did not hesitate to draw the conclusion” (Berkhof, 104).

⁹³ Brown, 174.

⁹⁴ Cyril, 3 Ep. Nest. 4.

Cyril contests any ideas that would insufficiently convey an actual union between Christ's humanity and divinity. He insists that the Word, united to His flesh, is God. If true, how does Cyril answer the objection that Christ actually called the Father God and does this make Christ, being God Himself, the God of Himself?: "It is, therefore, as man and in so far as pertains to what is fitting to the limitations of the self-emptying, that he says that he is subject to God alongside us. This is how he also became subject to the law (*Gal. 4.4*) even though, since he is God, he himself pronounced the law and is the law-giver."⁹⁵ Cyril offers a solution to this apparent dilemma by alluding to Scripture and providing an exceptionally practical example.⁹⁶ An opponent that debates the union of Christ's divinity and humanity on the basis that He calls the Father God, would also have to acknowledge that same logic creates another predicament because as the law-giver, He also subjected Himself to the law that He Himself gave. Cyril's simple solution is that becoming a man, Christ had to submit to the law according to His human nature. Beeley strongly disagrees with those who try to argue that Cyril means the same thing when he uses terms like "nature" and "hypostasis" interchangeably:

It has often been supposed, on the basis of examples such as this, that hypostasis and nature simply mean the same thing for Cyril, namely, a single existent being. But this is not the case either. Instead, the phrase, "hypostatic union" indicates that the Word is united with human flesh as a single hypostasis or person, not two—that the union occurs in and by the unique Son of God, so that there is one Son in the incarnation just as there is one Son apart from it; yet the meaning of 'nature' is not exactly equivalent to this,

⁹⁵ Cyril, 3 Ep. Nest. 5. Cyril incorporates Scripture as an illustrative antidote, which is another example of his Christological epistemology. For modern exegetes, since this practice has become so common, it is easy to overlook within Patristic Christology; however, it must be kept in mind that Cyril was one of primary architects of this exegetical development.

⁹⁶ Most of the references in this section of Cyril's letter are from John; however, he refers to Phil 2 without specifically mentioning it. He basis his exegetical authority upon the apostles, evangelists, the whole counsel of Scripture, and the Fathers. Cyril is so adamant about the union of Christ as one person that he states that those who refuse to acknowledge this biblical truth should be excommunicated: "If anyone divides the hypostases of the One Christ after the union, connecting them only by a conjunction in terms of honour or dignity or sovereignty, and not rather by a combination in terms of natural union, let him be anathema" (*Ibid.*, 12 anathema 3).

since the divine nature belongs to the entire Trinity.⁹⁷

Beeley argues that Cyril does not use “nature” to indicate “a single existent being,” but instead prefers the language of “hypostatic union.” Cyril maintains a distinction of natures (human and divine) but not to the extreme of neglecting a genuine Christological unification.

Incarnational Implications of a Christological Epistemology

It is important at this point in the argument to pause and consider what incarnational implications a Christological epistemology has upon the construction of this defense. Building upon Plantinga’s concept of transworld depravity in Chapter 1, Cyril’s solution of utilizing the law by pointing to Christ as both legislator and subject as a defense against the suggested disunion of Christ’s two natures may provide a sufficient platform to entertain the philosophical possibility of transworld legislation. Stated another way, if God (or the Son of God), who is the Supreme legislator in one world could become a creature who is subject to His own legislation in another world, then maybe this incarnational act in and of itself could possibly be considered as some sort of inverted divine defense. Plantinga’s point that it is possible that all higher-level sentient creatures suffer from transworld depravity may also logically suggest another possibility that all higher-level sentient creatures are subject to transworld legality, and in turn, transworld morality.⁹⁸ Perhaps, wherever there are higher-level sentient creatures with the capacity to

⁹⁷ Beeley, 260.

⁹⁸ Transworld morality simply encompasses the idea that wherever higher-level freewill, sentient creatures exist, there also exists the capacity for right and wrong choices. Intrinsic to free will is the ability to make choices. Some of these choices will be right or wrong, which will also produce benefits or consequences for the individual or the group. Therefore, to employ a term like transworld depravity assumes a standard for right and wrong—transworld morality—by which to identify depravity. It should be noted that some scholars challenge whether Plantinga has truly proven that transworld depravity is logically possible. Otte engages the objection that Plantinga has not proven that universal transworld depravity is logically possible. Taking a slightly different approach while maintaining a free will defense, Otte contends that morally perfect worlds are unobtainable and he eventually defends Plantinga’s conclusion of God’s inability to actualize a morally perfect world by arguing that whether every

perform good and evil there will also be a divine law of which they are required to comply regardless of the world in which they occupy.

In a possible world, if God genuinely requires higher-level freewill, sentient creatures to comply with His will, it would seem to follow, if He is good, that He would place some kind of indication of this expectation within their world. As He communicates His expectations to some of these creatures, it is not improbable that they would record these communications especially if God gave the command to publish His instructions. Over time it would also become feasible to believe that others would study these divine decrees, like the Fathers, as precedents that could assist in interpreting successive divine acts, like the Incarnation. Therefore, in the same way that God cannot both create free will beings capable of good and evil and then simultaneously prevent them from choosing evil, neither can He create free will beings capable of good and evil and then force them to choose good. However, it would be entirely permissible for a good God to place indicators of Himself, and His expectations, within proximity to these creatures so that they can at least remain aware of what qualifies as good and evil acts all while maintaining the ability to make volitional choices.

Furthermore, if God desires to communicate that benevolence is one of His primary characteristics, as well as an indispensable quality that He most desires to observe in the lives of higher-level free will, sentient creatures, a clear manifestation of this higher order would have to

person would eventually choose wrong is unnecessary: "All that is really needed is that one person would choose wrong if God tried to actualize a morally perfect world" (Richard Otte, "Transworld Depravity and Unobtainable Worlds," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 78, no. 1 (2009): 174, accessed August 22, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40380416>). Otte concludes: "[I]t is epistemically possible that God has a good reason for permitting evil; if all morally perfect worlds are unobtainable, God could not actualize a world containing moral good and no moral evil. A free will defense based on the concept of morally perfect worlds being unobtainable is successful. . ." (Ibid., 177). Critics of Plantinga and Otte may argue that both universal transworld depravity, as well as that all morally perfect worlds are unobtainable have not been shown to be logically possible, however, Otte argues that they are epistemically possible (Ibid.). For Plantinga's purposes all he has to show in a defense is that transworld depravity is logically coherent in a possible world for all we know.

be a principal feature in His dealings with these creatures. Therefore, in a possible world, a good God would not only demand compliance of His creation to His communication but would also precisely model the kind of compliance He seeks from His creatures through His own actions. Should a good God desire higher-level sentient creatures to value His words, a sufficient way to convey this idea would be for Him to value His own words. Consequently, it would not be unreasonable for God to act in accordance with His words to the extent of swearing by His own name and, as a result, it is also logically foreseeable that the phrase “according to your word” may even become a mantra among His adherents.⁹⁹

Compliance with His own communication within another world may, in and of itself, be an incarnational principle.¹⁰⁰ As God preemptively inserts His word into a world of higher-level sentient creatures, He is condescending to a creaturely level by communicating in symbols that are understandable to them.¹⁰¹ By inserting His word in a possible world, God can prepare higher-level sentient creatures ahead of time for divine acts He plans to implement in the future. If the Incarnation happens to be one of those divine acts He plans to implement in a possible

⁹⁹ Gen 22:16 (Heb 6:13); The Psalmist in Ps 119 alone pleads with God for understanding (169), directing his steps (9, 37, 133), strength (28), preservation of life (107), redemption (154), rescue (170), salvation (41), and comfort (76) all either “according to your word” or “according to your promise.” Reference to biblical examples are simply to aid in understanding the point at hand; proving the truth of these specific verses is beyond the scope of building a defense in a possible world.

¹⁰⁰ Vanhoozer utilizes the Incarnation as an act by which God “goes out of himself” in order to achieve understanding in another: “The Incarnation, wherein God goes out of himself for the sake of communicating himself to another, grounds the possibility of human communication by demonstrating that it is indeed possible to enter into the life of another so as to achieve understanding” (Vanhoozer, 161). For some theologians, the revelation of the Incarnation of Christ was not hastily generated in the mind of God as some quick solution in response to sin. For instance, according to Moltmann who leans towards the supralapsarian position, the Incarnation has always been God’s foundational plan regardless of Adam and Eve’s response in the garden because He desires communion on the deepest level with humans. Otherwise, argues Moltmann, if the Incarnation was simply a reaction to mankind’s sin, there would be no further need for the Incarnation after sin and death were abolished (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 114-117).

¹⁰¹ Vanhoozer establishes this theological hermeneutic as his primary thesis: “All textual understanding is a theological matter – an encounter with something that transcends us and has the capacity to transform us, provided that we approach it in the right spirit” (Vanhoozer, 381).

world in the future, God can incrementally deposit communications that are recorded ahead of the advent. Upon commencement of the Incarnation, God's previous communication will already be in place. Therefore, it then becomes possible for the incarnate Son of God to reference these previously recorded divine communications that preceded the act of His Incarnation. Pointing to this divine data outside of Himself written prior to His Incarnation enables Christ to provide verification of His divine office to the higher-level sentient creatures He plans to reach with His heaven-born message.¹⁰²

The divine transforming other which is outside of the self is harmoniously disclosed through the self-donation known as the Incarnation, which is revealed within the text of Scripture. In a possible world, God can both design and choose physical communication, which includes but is not limited to the spoken word, as His channel to sufficiently communicate His purpose and His will to be received by creaturely senses. Christ's physical communication spoken at a specific time and heard by his contemporaries can be passed down through written texts by human authors to be read by human readers. Vanhoozer utilizing a concept from Thiselton recognizes an interesting incarnational parallel between authors, not just Gospel writers, and their texts and God taking upon human flesh:

If the text is communicative action fixed by writing, then human authors are indeed "incarnate" in their texts. Just as an agent performs certain acts through bodily movements, so an author performs communicative acts through the body of his or her work. . . . A text is an extension of one's self into the world, through communicative action. Thiselton rightly sees the connection between Christian doctrine and literary interpretation: "Theologically a hermeneutic of an embodied text reflects an incarnational Christology, in which revelation operates through the interwovenness of word and deed." The divine author embodied his message in human flesh: "In Christ the truth of God is spoken, embodied, and lived."¹⁰³

¹⁰² See an illustration of this point—Christ meeting two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:44–45)—in Chapter 6.

¹⁰³ Vanhoozer, 229.

In a possible world, human authors are incarnate in their texts; the divine author is incarnate in human flesh. However, could it be said that the Word made flesh has become the Word made text? Is the divine author incarnate in the text of Scripture? Or is this simply just a case of the Word in flesh made text, so that the text could be communicated to human flesh? Is this simply a concept of flesh transformed to text to be received by future flesh?

This may be an oversimplification of what the Fathers perceived to be God's accomplishment through the invention of the Incarnation, but it is an interesting line of thought to explore, nonetheless. The issue at hand is considerably more complex than the flesh made text and requires at least two qualifications. First, the Incarnation localizes the divine and the human into one person. So there is a spiritual dynamic, which, according to Witmer, "shrouds the mechanics of the process in mystery," present within the spoken words of Christ and this spiritual dynamic must also be true of the recorded words of Christ that come down to the present day in the form of the New Testament.¹⁰⁴ Second, the recorded words of Christ ("flesh to text") which have been read by humans beyond the earthly life of Christ ("text to flesh") can possibly diminish the image of God if the reader fails to recognize that humans are spiritual beings as well as physical beings. Consequently, bringing these two components together in a possible world will fail to produce the desired results if the presence of the Word of God in

¹⁰⁴ John Witmer, writing on the issue of "The Incarnate and the Written Word of God," contrasts Lewis Sperry Chafer's view of this apparent parallel to his own by challenging the following quote by Chafer: "The parallel between the Living Logos and the Written Logos is sustained only to a limited degree. There are important dissimilarities as well.... There is no hypostatic union or conjunction of natures in the Written Logos...whereas the humanity of Christ was unfallen and in no way subject to the Adamic nature, the human authors of the Bible were fallen men whose sin is without hesitation recorded in the Sacred Text." Witmer responding to Chafer argues that the problem is not with the parallelism between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Scriptures but rather with a faulty analogy between the process and the final product: "The product on one hand and the process on the other cannot logically be made analogous. A perfect parallelism can be drawn, however. When process in relation to the Incarnate Word is compared with process in relation to the written Word, beautiful and perfect symmetry reflective of divine wisdom results. Likewise, when product is compared with product, the parallelism is exact and complete," (John A. Witmer, "The Incarnate and the Written Word of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 113:449 [Jan. 1956]: 67–68, accessed July 22, 2018, <https://www.galaxie.com/article/bsac113-449-09>).

Scripture working in conjunction with the Holy Spirit's role of illuminating believers to a sufficient understanding of God's intentions within the process is neglected.¹⁰⁵ Divine communication can be recorded by humans but divine assistance may still be necessary in order for humans to understand divine revelation.

The record of the Incarnation as it is recorded in Scripture apparently allows higher-level sentient creatures to relate to God by way of the Holy Spirit. The relationship between the human reader and the divine author is made possible by the Word made flesh and the Spirit illuminating the mind of the reader.¹⁰⁶ The Incarnation is magnified as the ultimate communication for reaching the other. Christ becomes flesh without diminishing his divinity in the same way he reaches humanity without completely dissolving their identity. Christ as divine enjoys communion with the Godhead and as human enjoys communion with other humans ultimately bridging the communicative gap between the human and the divine and making it possible for human communion with the divine.

Beyond the value that God may place upon His word in a middle world, reflecting upon the Christological epistemology in this section, there exists at least one morally sufficient reason why God may allow suffering caused by broken relationships. By permitting higher-level sentient creatures the freedom to choose evil and suffer, as a result, allows said creatures to observe God demonstrating precisely to what great lengths He is willing to go in order to eradicate their suffering. No matter how scandalous it may appear in their limited thinking, God, in a possible world, can will to unite Himself to creatures widely opposed to His nature. In the case of the Incarnation, there is an actual ontological union, not just the appearance of one,

¹⁰⁵ John 16:13; Luke 24:45.

¹⁰⁶ John 14:26.

where divinity meets both the material and immaterial aspects of said creatures. As a result, God demonstrates His desire and ability to appropriate human nature to communicate the benefits of salvation to that nature, restore humanity, and repair the relationship.¹⁰⁷

To what extent is God willing to intercept evil on behalf of higher-level sentient creatures? As Hume suggested, a good God should be expected to run divine interference in order to rescue humans from their own proclivity to choose evil. He should be willing to intrude into any possible world where the possibility of evil and suffering is present. We should expect a benevolent God to include within His creation a way to safeguard humanity should they happen to choose evil. Another electrical analogy may serve to illustrate precisely how God could possibly intercept evil. A ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlet greatly reduces the risk of injury by outfitting outlets in proximity to damp areas with an internal circuit breaker that can immediately shut off power any time a potentially dangerous situation presents itself. An individual who accidentally splashes water onto such an outlet increases the likelihood of being protected from electrical shock. In a similar way, a good God could create an environment in a possible world where permanent hazardous results from freewill choices can be interrupted. By alluding to the story of the Garden of Eden, what if God could metaphorically outfit a garden with His own garden fault conduct interrupter (GFCI)? What if in this possible world He hardwired safeguards into the image of higher-level sentient creatures so that He could personally involve Himself the moment these creatures chose to behave outside of His will? What if the decision of the initial occupants of the garden to disobey could trip a divine outlet that set in motion an incarnational response? What if God could greatly reduce the risk of permanent injury to these creatures by incorporating a garden fault conduct interrupter or in this

¹⁰⁷ Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, 90.

case a garden fault conduct interceptor in the form of an Incarnation?

CHAPTER 3: TOWARDS A CHRISTOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Athanasius's Influence upon the Evolution of the Incarnation

Athanasius's theology was driven by the firm exegetical conviction that faith precedes reason.¹⁰⁸ He exemplifies, both for his contemporaries and for modern scholars, how to employ logical methods restrained by what he held to be divine revelation while engaging in the work of theological reflection. As a result of this discipline, Athanasius was able to navigate the most turbulent controversy in church history over the person and nature of Christ with sound responses to ideas that he believed insufficiently explained the Incarnation. Exercising his commitment to faithfully exegeting the text of Scripture, he exposed flaws in the logic of his Arian opponents by demonstrating that they were processing the language of Scripture through the lens of human relationships, thus placing anthropomorphic limitations upon the Godhead. Ultimately, Athanasius's hermeneutics for developing a sound biblical explanation of the Incarnation was foundational for what eventually became the orthodox Trinitarian position of the church.

The Hermeneutical Controls of Athanasius

History, for the most part, preserves Athanasius as a warrior of Christological conviction who was resilient despite insurmountable opposition. He receives praise from men like Gregory of Nazianzus and Pope Leo the Great, who exalt Athanasius as being the first to holistically articulate both the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity. As a theologian, according to Anatolios, his influence is not bound by geography or time: "Traditionally considered in both the

¹⁰⁸ Johannes Quasten, *The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature*, vol. 3 in *Patrology* (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1950), 66.

Eastern and Western Churches as a premiere authority in Christological and Trinitarian doctrine, he continues to be especially venerated by the Coptic Orthodox Church of his native Egypt.”¹⁰⁹ Defending both the full humanity and deity of Christ was extremely challenging. Athanasius, at times, led a theological position held by the minority, spent seventeen of his forty-six years of ministry in exile, and even had to write from a monastic desert hideout. His position was defined by the debates of his time, but nothing influenced his Christology more than the Council of Nicaea.¹¹⁰ Anatolios contends that Athanasius initially strove to defend the humanity and deity of Christ strictly by using Scripture: “He largely eschews the Nicene formulation of the relation between the Father and the Son as ‘homoousios,’ whose lack of scriptural provenance was one of its central liabilities, and concerns himself instead with attacking the scriptural bases of anti-Nicene theology.”¹¹¹ However, once opponents of Nicene theology began to disapprove of the term “one in essence” (homoousios), arguing that it conveys Sabellianism, Athanasius began to include this idea as a primary exegetical control.¹¹² The relationship between the Father and the Son and between the Son and humanity, by way of the Incarnation, would occupy the center of Athanasius’s Christology.

¹⁰⁹ Anatolios, 25–27.

¹¹⁰ Thomas G. Weinandy and Daniel A. Keating, *Athanasius and His Legacy: Trinitarian-Incarnational Soteriology and Its Reception* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 1, 4–5.

¹¹¹ Anatolios, 15. This section seeks to display the cautious, but, in Athanasius’s view, necessary move to go beyond Scripture, which was the primary epistemology of Chapter 2, by articulating a Christological anthropology without compromising Scripture.

¹¹² Weinandy and Keating, 3. Athanasius sought to highlight the distinction between the Father and the Son, so as to distance the Nicene position from endorsing Sabellianism. Using the words of Christ, he was able to demonstrate in what sense the Godhead was unified essence. For Athanasius, the Father and the Son did not partition the Godhead, nor were they merely the same person using a pseudonym, but they are two persons in one nature as stated in *Against the Arians*: “On this account and reasonably, having said before, ‘I and the Father are One,’ He added, ‘I in the Father and the Father in Me,’ by way of shewing the identity of Godhead and the unity of Essence. For they are one, not as one thing divided into two parts, and these nothing but one, nor as one thing twice named, so that the Same becomes at one time Father, at another His own Son, for this Sabellian holding was judged an heretic. But They are two, because the Father is Father and is not also Son, and the Son is Son and not also

Like a 100-ton counterweight on a crane, Athanasius utilizes Nicene theology to control his arguments about the person of Christ within the possible world of ideas about the Incarnation. The articulation of the doctrine of the Incarnation seeks to build a sturdy bridge between divinity and humanity. Athanasius, to a degree, understood the danger of limiting a proper understanding of God to human language and human experience; he sought to expose, in his view, the error of his opponents in this regard: “And is it not a grievous error, to have material thoughts about what is immaterial, and because of the weakness of their proper nature to deny what is natural and proper to the Father? It does but remain, that they should deny Him also, because they understand not how God is, and what the Father is, now that, foolish men, they measure by themselves the Offspring of the Father.”¹¹³ Athanasius, through his writings, exercises extreme caution as he carefully proceeds to hoist one aspect of the ineffable mystery of God onto the bridge of human comprehension.¹¹⁴ Between the abutments of what He perceives to be divine revelation and human intellect, Athanasius positions the Incarnation to close the gap. To balance the load of his argument, Torrance contends that Athanasius employs the Nicene formulation as a counterweight: “The homoousion undoubtedly provided the controlling centre [*sic*] of his thought, for it gave clear and decisive account of the underlying oneness in Being and Activity

Father; but the nature is one; (for the offspring is not unlike its parent, for it is his image), and all that is the Father’s, is the Son’s. Wherefore neither is the Son another God, for He was not procured from without, else were there many, if a godhead be procured foreign from the Father’s; for if the Son be other, as an Offspring, still He is the Same as God; and He and the Father are one in propriety and peculiarity of nature, and in the identity of the one Godhead, as has been said” (Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 3.4).

¹¹³ Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 1.15; Athanasius accuses the Arians of placing Scripture within the limits of human reasoning in a number of his writings. According to Athanasius, the Arians believe that nothing exists apart from their understanding and that they restrict the person of God within the limitations of their own minds (Athanasius, *Ad. Ser.*, 2.1).

¹¹⁴ Refer back to 32n69 for an illustration demonstrating the difficulty of explaining even the most mundane human experiences let alone something as intricate and complex as the Incarnation.

between the Incarnate Son and God the Father upon which everything in the Gospel depended.”¹¹⁵ The weight of the entire argument rests upon the proper expression—balance, of the relationship between the Father and the Incarnate Son. For Athanasius, homoousion became the inference to the best explanation of the divine relationship that Scripture reveals.

Made Man or Manmade?

Arius held the conviction that Christ was not only subordinate to the Father, but that He was also a creation of the Father. Appealing to a number of passages of Scripture, but one in particular, both Arius and his followers upheld the Christological conviction that Proverbs 8:22, “The Lord created me as the beginning of his works, before his deeds of long ago” (*NET*), indicates that the Word was created in the beginning.¹¹⁶ To further concretize their point, Arians appealed to many New Testament passages which indicate subordination or human limitations of Christ, for example: “‘the firstborn within a large family’ (Rom 8:29); ‘the first born of all creation’ (Col 1:15); ‘the Father is greater than I’ (John 14:28). They also marshalled all of the passages that ascribed ignorance, weakness, suffering, and growth to Jesus, the Son of God.”¹¹⁷ Unanswered, these passages could prove to be extremely embarrassing to proponents of Nicene theology. Initially, the statements, within these Scriptures, made about the Son seem extremely problematic. Not so for Athanasius because he argues that the problem stems from faulty Arian exegesis:

It remains that he who reads Scripture should examine and judge when it speaks of the Godhead of the Word, and when it speaks of his human life; lest, by understanding the

¹¹⁵ Thomas F. Torrance, “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity According to St Athanasius,” *Anglican Theological Review* 71, no. 4 (1989): 397.

¹¹⁶ According to conventional rules of biblical criticism, Anatolios contends that Athanasius could argue that this text is irrelevant because it is not even referring to Christ (Anatolios, 89).

¹¹⁷ Weinandy and Keating, 41.

one when the other is intended, we become victims of the same derangement as has befallen the Arians. Knowing him to be Word, we know that ‘through him all things were made, and without him was not anything made’, and, ‘by the Word of the Lord the heavens were established’, and, ‘he [sent out] his Word and [healed] all things’.¹¹⁸

It is the context, for Athanasius that drives the interpretation. A discerning eye trains to distinguish when a text of Scripture is referring to the divine aspect of Christ’s existence and when it is referencing His human life.

Another major theological inconsistency in Arian thinking, for Athanasius, was that if Christ is a creature, according to their own view, he eventually achieves a status that is worthy of glory. This idea not only unites God’s essence to a mere created being, but it also permits a created being, on his own merit, to ascend to the heights of the Almighty. If true, Athanasius reasons, then any creatures who excel in glory should receive worship from those who are inferior: “If he was worshipped because he excelled in glory, then each of those who are inferior should worship the one who excels it. But it is not so. A creature does not worship a creature, but the servant worships the Master and the creature worships God. So Peter the apostle restrained Cornelius, who wished to worship him, saying ‘And I also am a man’ (Acts 10:26).”¹¹⁹ Athanasius claims that Christ receives worship because He is other than the creatures and is one in essence with the Father. Furthermore, He is the means by which the knowledge of God is brought to humanity. Athanasius maintains that the Son is divine offspring, not merely human, who disseminates divine revelation: “And beholding the Son, we see the Father; for the thought

¹¹⁸ Athanasius, *Ad. Ser.*, 2.8. Furthermore, Athanasius argues, earlier in his letters to Serapion, that if the Son is a creature, He is incapable of enveloping the attributes of God. Literally, in essence, this would make God one with creatures (*Ibid.*, 2.5). Additionally, Anatolios contends that since Athanasius dedicated so much effort refuting the idea that the Son is a creature, God’s relation to creation was central to his Christological exegesis (*Anatolios*, 32).

¹¹⁹ Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 2.23.

and comprehension of the Son, is knowledge concerning the Father, because He is His proper offspring from His essence. . . . [T]herefore that which is begotten is neither affection nor division of that blessed essence.”¹²⁰ For Athanasius, Christ is not just some creature who achieves divinity, nor is He unlike any other creature, but He is the eternal Son of God worthy of worship because He is one in essence with the Father. He does not share the essence, as if there is division, but the Son is distinct and yet consubstantial with the Father.

The Communication of Idioms and Transcending by Degrees

If the Son is not a creature, then exactly what kind of human is Christ? Does He experience a full human nature, or does He only appear to be a genuine human being? According to Weinandy and Keating, from Athanasius’s incarnational expression, three primary truths about the person of Christ must be retained in order to balance the homoousion (according to Nicaea) of His divinity without compromising the authenticity of His humanity: “First, it must truly be God who came to exist in the flesh. . . . Second, the divine Son must be fully human. Here, the emphasis is on the full and authentic humanity of Jesus. . . . Third, the divine Son of God must truly be a genuine human being. This truth highlights that the union between the Son’s divinity and his true humanity must be such that the Son actually exists as one of us.”¹²¹ To

¹²⁰ Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 1.16. Further clarifying this point, Torrance draws upon Athanasius’s idea that the Son is the exclusive means by which the Father makes His essential nature known to humanity: “[F]or us to know the Son is to know the Father in accordance with what he is in his own essential Nature, in the indivisibility of the Father from the Son and of the Son from the Father, and thus to know God in the internal relations of his eternal Being” (Torrance, 396). Athanasius makes it clear in his letter to Epictetus that this is not to say that the body of Christ is coessential to the Father in the same way that the Word is coessential to the Father (Athanasius, *Ad Epictetum*, 59.4, 8).

¹²¹ Weinandy and Keating, 38. They continue by explaining that these three incarnational truths embody the communication of idioms realized by both Athanasius and Cyril. Although distinguishing between when the human nature of Christ is speaking and when the divine nature of Christ is speaking within the Gospels is necessary; it is also essential to acknowledge that the Son of God is the one performing the action in both natures: “Cyril realized, as did his mentor Athanasius, that the communication of idioms embodied all three incarnational truths—that it was *truly the divine Son* who *truly existed* as an *authentic human being*, and thus that divine and human attributes are rightly predicated of him who is the Son of God” (Ibid., 47).

Athanasius, Christ is truly God, fully human, and these two natures are held in perfect union.¹²²

The Son of God became a human without ceasing to be God.¹²³ In order to further clarify his position concerning the relationship of the divine Word with the human body of Christ,

Athanasius provides an exegetical example of what has come to be known as the communication of idioms:

[T]he incorporeal Word made His own the properties of the Body, as being His own Body. Why, when the Body was struck by the attendant, as suffering Himself He asked, ‘Why [did you strike] Me?’ And being by nature intangible, the Word yet said, ‘I gave My back to the stripes, and My cheeks to blows, and hid not My face from shame and spitting.’ For what the human Body of the Word suffered, this the Word, dwelling in the body, ascribed to Himself, in order that we might be enabled to be partakers of the Godhead of the Word.¹²⁴

Athanasius explains that when the human nature of Christ suffered, the Son, who actually became a man, imputed to Himself the sufferings of the flesh, not that His divinity would become passible, but rather so that His humanity would eventually become impassible. Although the divine aspect of the Son is impassible, His human nature is passible, which for Athanasius becomes the very theme of why the Son ultimately became human.

The communication of idioms, for Athanasius preserves the idea that what happens to the

¹²² Anatolios contends that to say that Christ’s humanity and divinity are held in perfect union is not the same as saying that His humanity and divinity are equal: “[T]he fact that Jesus Christ is equally human and divine does not at all imply that his humanity and divinity are in fact equal. The inequality between the divinity and humanity of Christ is typically emphasized by Athanasius in terms of the active agency of the divinity in relation to the humanity” (Anatolios, 55).

¹²³ Arians contest that if the Son of God became human then there must be a change that has occurred and since God cannot change, the Word obviously was not God. In response to this reasoning, Weinandy and Keating argue that Athanasius once again establishes that Arians, failing to understand the reality of the divine becoming, build their conclusions upon faulty, limited, human logic that collapses under the weight of the Incarnation: “What Athanasius is grappling with is the singular manner in which the Gospel of John employs the word become. Become normally, by definition, denotes some form of change. However, within the incarnation it is employed in a new one-off manner, in a manner that was never used before and never will be used again, the reason being that never before did one being, God, become another being, a human being, without ceasing to be who he always was, God. The incarnational become does not imply a change in the Word’s existence as God but denotes his assuming a human manner of existence so as to actually exist as a human being” (Weinandy and Keating, 41n5).

¹²⁴ Athanasius, *Ad Epictetum*, 59.6.

physical body of Christ is authentically assumed by the Son. As the Son of God, His body was an instrument by which He carried the properties of the flesh. Athanasius explains that the Son put on the flesh; He was not external to it but rather existentially and incarnationally shouldered fleshly properties within the deity: “[T]he properties of the flesh are said to be His, since He was in it, such as to hunger, to thirst, to suffer, to weary, and the like, of which the flesh is capable; while on the other hand the works proper to the Word Himself, such as to raise the dead, to restore sight to the blind, and to cure the woman with an issue of blood, He did through His own body.”¹²⁵ Christ, as the Son of God—according to Athanasius—suffered in the flesh, but He also performed divine acts within the flesh. In His humanity he suffered, but “[H]e took up our pain and bore our suffering”—performed fleshly acts—by way of the His divinity.¹²⁶ For Athanasius, the Son put on everything concerning the physical body; however, Athanasius did not stop here, he clarifies that Christ also bore the weaknesses of the immaterial part of the emotions and intellect as well: “The Word as man was ignorant of [the last day], for ignorance is proper to man, and especially ignorance of these things. Moreover, this is proper to the Saviour’s love of man, for since he was made man he was not ashamed, on account of the flesh which is ignorant, to say ‘I know not,’ so that he may show that while knowing as God, he is ignorant according to the flesh.”¹²⁷ In this passage, Athanasius is apologetically responding to those who try to exploit the ignorance of Christ’s knowledge displayed in Mark 13:32 as proof that He was created.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 3.31.

¹²⁶ Isa 53:4 (cf. 1 Pet 2:24–25).

¹²⁷ Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 3.43. Reflecting upon Origen’s theology, Daley contends that Christ’s human nature must continue to grow both physiologically and intellectually throughout his lifetime. After the plan of His earthly life is complete, Origen determines that Christ knows all that the Father knows including “the day and the hour of the end” (Daley, *God Visible*, 89).

¹²⁸ “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

This was not an issue for Athanasius because he embraced a holistic redemption of mankind through Christ the man, which included the intellect.

Every aspect of the Son's humanity—emotionally, physically, intellectually—both material and immaterial, was being incrementally redeemed—in Athanasius's thinking—through the sanctification of Christ. How is this possible? Athanasius kept pressing the coalescence embodied within the Incarnation: “And while He, the incorporeal, was in the passible Body, the Body had in it the impassible Word, which was destroying the infirmities inherent in the Body.”¹²⁹ The divinity of the Son bore the weaknesses of His body in order to identify with those who would eventually be sanctified as a result of His sanctification. For Athanasius, this is why the Son became human. By His flesh “[being] made impassible and immortal,” He provides access by which all humans can become impassible and immortal.¹³⁰ Athanasius views the Son as having descended to humanity, taking on human flesh, that he might overcome human nature so that it could be annexed to deity: “[T]he manhood [of Christ] advanced in Wisdom, transcending by degrees human nature, and being deified, and becoming and appearing to all as the organ of Wisdom for the operation and the shining forth of the Godhead. Wherefore neither said he, ‘The Word advanced,’ but Jesus, by which name the Lord was called when he became man; so that the advance is of the human nature. . . .”¹³¹ Athanasius imagines this as a process of transcending human nature by degrees, examples of which can be observed in the life of Christ at

¹²⁹ Athanasius, *Ad Epictetum*, 59.6.

¹³⁰ Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 3.58. This concept was not intended to promote the idea that all men will experience impassibility for that required a response of faith in Christ. Athanasius would argue that faith in Christ provides mortals with both immortality and impassibility; however, rejection of Christ leaves humans in a state of eternal passibility. According to Scripture, Christ achieved immortality (not impassibility) for all mankind, for all will experience a resurrection, some to eternal communion by faith and others to eternal separation from God (John 5:29; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor 15:22).

¹³¹ Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 3.53.

his birth, at His baptism, during the Transfiguration, and at His Resurrection. This was not an adoption of the Son by the Father, but, instead, initiated the protocol by which humans were being made capable of being adopted by the Father through the work of the Son.¹³²

God Became Man that Man Could Become God

The Son of God's descent into the realm of sinful humanity illustrates a climactic theme within Athanasius's doctrine of the Incarnation. The existence of the Son of God, as a human, is essential to the soteriology of Athanasius.¹³³ According to Anatolios, the human body of Christ is the touchstone of Athanasius's Christology because it is the locus of what is nearest to human existence: "If, according to Athanasius, the human body is 'what is closest to ourselves,' the assumption of the human body by the Word indicates the point at which the Word becomes 'closest' to us."¹³⁴ Viewing the Son of God as merely a created being in the economy of the Godhead completely undermines the central thrust of the gospel according to Athanasius. In a possible world, God's response to the Fall of humanity was to send the Word clothed in human flesh to restore humanity back to its rightful place in communion with deity.¹³⁵ Anatolios further

¹³² Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 1.38–39. Although beyond the scope of this book, modern scholars, like Bart Ehrman, who advance the idea that the earliest Christians embraced Adoptionism, would do well to consider Athanasius's soteriological concept of sanctification by degrees within the person of the God-Man (See Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*, (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2014, 218ff.). For future research, this concept deserves further apologetic attention. Responding to Ehrman's claim that early Christians held to some form of Adoptionism, this may be one way modern scholars employing Patristic concepts, like Athanasius's idea of "transcending by degrees," with modest effort could refute adoptionistic superimpositions thrust upon historical Christology. Current adoptionist's revisions could be shown to lack historical and biblical provenance.

¹³³ Soteriology is, for Athanasius, another hermeneutical control that he utilizes linguistically to maintain biblical integrity as he addresses the existence of the Son of God in the person of Christ: "Thus within his supreme incarnational perspective, soteriological and ontological factors were always combined in Athanasius' development of the Nicene doctrine of God" (Torrance, 397).

¹³⁴ Anatolios, 45.

¹³⁵ The incarnational confession of Athanasius can be summarized by the idea that the immortal Word took upon Himself a mortal body so that His divinity could perfect what was lacking in His humanity: "[T]herefore the perfect Word of God puts around Him an imperfect body, and is said to be created 'for the works;' that, paying the

contends that the reason Athanasius untiringly insists that Christ is fully God who became a man is that, for him, this condescending act comprehends the entire message of redemption in its totality: “It is given systematic expression in *Against the Greeks — On the Incarnation*, where Athanasius sketches a comprehensive portrait of the ascending structure of the human being according to the original creation, the inversion of this structure of ascent by humanity’s descent into sin, and the salvific descent of the Word that effects humanity’s renewed ascent unto deification.”¹³⁶ The divinization of Christ’s humanity would first undergo a process whereby the Son would descend to the limitations of mortality and through the flesh by way of His divinity lift his body to the status of deity. In His body, He becomes the first fruits of a new man who completely participates within the Godhead.¹³⁷

The deity of the Son incrementally conquered the mortality of His body. He takes first place in all things because He did for humanity something that humanity could never accomplish apart from deity.¹³⁸ For this reason, Athanasius, demonstrates that salvation for humanity is inseparable from the divine Word becoming human, liberating His own flesh from the effects of the Fall, and raising it from the bonds of death:

His flesh before all others was saved and liberated, as being the Word’s body; and

debt in our stead, He might, by Himself, perfect what was wanting to man. Now immortality was wanting to him, and the way to paradise. This then is what the Saviour says, ‘I glorified [You] on the earth, I perfected the work which [You have] given Me to do’ (Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 2.66).

¹³⁶ Anatolios, 35–36.

¹³⁷ See 28n60.

¹³⁸ For future research, according to Athanasius, the sense of “first place” and firstborn are not referring to Christ as a created being having a beginning, but rather point to the idea in which Christ is the firstborn to open the womb of heaven. He is the firstborn among the new man consecrated unto the Lord. Studying the biblical concept of firstborn in light of Patristic Christological insights may provide further clarification about the pre-existence of the Word and in what sense He is the firstborn among the sons of God. Athanasius spends a considerable amount of time disputing this specific issue with Arius. As a result of Athanasius’s research, modern scholars have access to voluminous data of which to respond to the doctrinal descendants of Arianism (i.e., Jehovah’s Witnesses). Examining *On Luke X.22 (Matt. XI. 27)*, in addition to Athanasius’s *Con. Ar.*, scholars can locate thorough responses to Arian heresies that combine logical insights with nimble exegesis of the text of Scripture.

henceforth we, becoming incorporate with It, are saved after Its pattern. For in It the Lord becomes our guide to the Kingdom of Heaven and to His own Father, saying, 'I am the way' and 'the door,' and 'through Me all must enter.' Whence also is He said to be 'First-born from the dead,' not that He died before us, for we had died first; but because having undergone death for us and abolished it, He was the first to rise, as man, for our sakes raising His own Body. Henceforth He having risen, we too from Him and because of Him rise in due course from the dead.¹³⁹

Since the Son took up residence in a mortal body, His divinity not only gained redemption for His own body but for all creatures remade in His image. Unable to die as the eternal Word, the Son put around Himself a body that could be subject to death so that He could die in the place of all humanity.

To illustrate this point, Athanasius provides the example of a great king, worthy of palatial honors, and yet humble enough to be the guest in a modest cottage. As a result of the regal guest taking up residence in an individual household, the entire city is guaranteed the protection and amenities that accompany the presence of His Royal Highness: "And like as when a great king has entered into some large city and taken up his abode in one of the houses there, such city is at all events held worthy of high honour [*sic*], nor does any enemy or bandit any longer descend upon it and subject it; but, on the contrary, it is thought entitled to all care, because of the king's having taken up his residence in a single house there: so, too, has it been with the Monarch of all."¹⁴⁰ What changed about the house was not determined by a structural addition or any renovation that the homeowners decided to improve by way of their own effort; the increase in value for the home and the large city had everything to do with the status and presence of the honored guest. Moments like the one described have far reaching effects into the future. Long after the king leaves, the humble cottage enjoys the esteemed status as the place

¹³⁹ Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 2.61.

¹⁴⁰ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 9.3.

where the king once stayed. Visitors would, no doubt, make a journey to the cottage just to stand in the place where the king once stood. So it is with the King of Kings taking up residence within the humble tabernacle of His own body. Athanasius boldly asserts that the Son became man that man could be made God: “For He was made man that we might be made God; and He manifested Himself by a body that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father; and He endured the insolence of men that we might inherit immortality.”¹⁴¹ For Athanasius, the Son’s Incarnation envelops divine revelation to the extent that Christ could say to his disciples, “If you really know me, you will know my Father as well” Philip, in need of clarification, then asks, “Lord, show us the Father” To which Christ replies, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father!”¹⁴² However, the Incarnation, for Athanasius, extends divine revelation far beyond just providing a glimpse of the Father, it escorts believers to the very presence of God by way of the divinization achieved first through the body of the Son and ultimately experienced by believers.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 54.3.

¹⁴² John 14:7–9.

¹⁴³ This divinization in no way suggests that man becomes equal to the Father or the Son but instead provides the means by which humans can become partakers of the divine nature so that they can participate in an eternal relationship with God (See 13n29). Drawing upon the writings of the apostle Peter, Athanasius can make such claims: “I can pray this because his divine power has bestowed on us everything necessary for life and godliness through the rich knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and excellence. Through these things he has bestowed on us his precious and most magnificent promises, so that by means of what was promised you may become partakers of the divine nature, after escaping the worldly corruption that is produced by evil desire” (2 Pet 1:3–4 (*NET*)). As previously stated, just as there exists an inequality between the divinity of Christ and the humanity of Christ, there also exists an inequality between the Incarnate Christ and humans who have become partakers of the divine nature.

Incarnational Implications of a Christological Anthropology

As we did in Chapter 2, let us pause in the argument to consider what incarnational implications a Christological anthropology has upon the construction of this defense. It is presently possible to begin addressing two questions from the introduction in greater detail: 1. Can the construction of a possible world satisfy some of the demands of Hume's hedonic Utopia without causing massive irregularities? And 2. Is it possible to develop a middle ground—a middle world—that might behave as a defense against the problem of suffering? To answer the first question, it may be possible for God to meet Hume's demands without causing, in the words of Van Inwagen, "massive irregularities." But to meet Hume's demands, in a possible world, while avoiding "massive irregularities," God must do so by means of an extraneous option. The Christological anthropology employed by Athanasius may indicate such an option, but to do so, it will subject a possible world where God acts not to "massive irregularities," but rather to "immaterial irregularities."¹⁴⁴ I am employing the term "immaterial" not in the sense of insignificance, but rather, in the sense of those aspects of both deity and humanity that Athanasius refers to as "immaterial." If God had a way to work through the immaterial attributes of divinity and humanity to restore both the material and immaterial aspects of humanity, then He would be acting within the set parameters of a possible world without violating His own self-imposed limitations that were fixed the moment that creatures with moral competencies came into being. As stated previously, not to act within the framework of free moral creatures subject to natural laws would itself be a violation of justice because God would not only be guilty of expecting humans to behave in certain ways that they were never capable of in the first place, but

¹⁴⁴ For all we know, it may not be "irregular" for God to act immaterially in a possible world. Nonetheless for the consistency of the argument, I will describe God's action through this term.

He Himself would also demonstrate that these expectations were never able to be met apart from divine domination. The moment that God relies “exclusively” upon divine attributes, divorced from the context of natural laws, the subsequent consequences of free moral choices, and both the material and immaterial aspects of humanity to overcome the evil intentions of freewill creatures—Hume’s demand—He demonstrates that Creation was engineered for human moral failure from the beginning.

Whereas Cyril argues in favor of the unity of Christ’s divinity and humanity within a “single hypostasis” and contests any ideas that would insufficiently convey an actual union between Christ’s humanity and divinity (Chapter 2), Athanasius, defending the deity and humanity of Christ, sought to highlight the distinction between the Father and the Son so as to distance the Nicene position from endorsing Sabellianism.¹⁴⁵ Both men argue that human intellectual capacity for understanding how the Incarnation was able to embody both divinity and humanity should not be the sole basis for limiting what God is able to do or ultimately determine what Christ is or is not. Both men also expose what they perceive to be logical incoherence within the thinking of their opponents by demonstrating their failure to determine when Christ is speaking or acting through His divine nature and when He is speaking and acting through His human nature. Cyril contends that it is as man that Christ became subject to the law (*Gal* 4:4) even though as God He pronounced the law in the first place. Athanasius pursues the flaws in the intellect of his Arian opponents by claiming that they were processing the language of Scripture through the lens of human relationships, thus placing anthropomorphic limitations upon the Godhead. Additionally, both men rely heavily upon Scripture, but Athanasius eventually

¹⁴⁵ Although chronologically Athanasius preceded Cyril of Alexandria, philosophically he succeeds Cyril within the given organization of this argument. Additionally, in a possible world where a defense is being made, historical references to time, or the lack of chronology, neither constricts nor defeats the argument.

perceives the need to utilize the decision of Nicaea both by incorporating and defending the term *homoousios* (“one in essence”) as a hermeneutical control and by highlighting the distinction between the Father and the Son to distance the Nicene position from endorsing Sabellianism. Athanasius maintains his Christological anthropology by utilizing somewhat of an apophatic approach while defending *homoousios*.

An interesting correlation between the Word of God in Scripture and the Word of God made flesh can be made as a result of the way Athanasius was able to explain the distinction between the Father and the Son—two persons and one nature—and the distinction between the divinity and humanity of Christ—two natures and one person. As stated previously in Chapter 2, in a possible world, God is able to incrementally deposit indications of Himself by way of communications that are recorded not only to point to His existence but also to signal expectations He holds for higher-level sentient creatures. In a similar way that God can incrementally deposit communications over time that are collected ahead of a foretold event to form a comprehensive divine revelation designated the Word of God, Athanasius’s concept of Christ’s divine nature transcending His human nature by degrees so that His human nature could be brought into union with the Godhead also forms a thorough and complete divine revelation through a process known as divinization. In both cases—the Word of God in Scripture and the Word of God made flesh—the purpose is to advance human nature (both material and immaterial) toward the divine.

In each case, the Word of God in Scripture—advancing human cognition toward the divine—and the Word of God made flesh—transcending human nature by degrees until unity with divinity is achieved, the limitation of human understanding seems to be at least one of the

motivations for God to act in any possible world.¹⁴⁶ Again, it may actually be the limitation of human comprehension that causes God to act. Suffering caused by broken relationships in a possible world provides the activating transworld condition (ATC) of human ignorance, which, in turn, may supply the necessary catalyst for God to act, as well as point to another activating transworld condition. Perhaps the biblical narrative of how the serpent behaves in the Garden of Eden offers an even better explanation of how human ignorance could originally be exploited not only causing a broken relationship between God and man, but eventually causing all parties involved to suffer. Therefore, just as it is possible that all higher-level sentient creatures suffer from transworld depravity (Plantinga's concept) and are subject to transworld morality (Chapter 2), these conditions may logically suggest another possibility that all higher-level sentient creatures battle transworld incognizance.¹⁴⁷ Perhaps, wherever there are higher-level sentient creatures with the capacity to perform good and evil, there will also be a divine law of which they are required to comply but of which they are also unaware until God determines to act in word or deed within their world.¹⁴⁸ Athanasius's accusation against the Arians that they were placing anthropomorphic limitations upon the Godhead by failing to discern "when [Scripture] speaks of the Godhead of the Word, and when it speaks of his human life" is one small example of how I am using the term transworld incognizance.

¹⁴⁶ Heb 1:1–2 seems to imply both the incremental deposit of communication from God to humans and, in turn, limited human understanding which may necessitate why God would need to advance beyond merely speaking through prophets to speaking through His Son in the first place. References to Scripture are in no way meant to prove the content but simply serve as a supplement to better understand the argument.

¹⁴⁷ Transworld incognizance simply conveys the idea that humans are cognitively finite and lack a complete intellectual understanding or awareness of their own ontological state of being at any time in any given environment and in any possible world. Any given world containing higher-level freewill, sentient creatures will also contain properties that cannot be unequivocally known by said creatures with absolute certainty. A more thorough application of this concept will be forthcoming in Chapters 4–6.

¹⁴⁸ Gen 2:17.

To begin to answer the second question, “Is it possible to develop a middle ground—a middle world—that might behave as a defense against the problem of suffering?” Dawkins’s description of a “Middle World” in his work *The God Delusion* may be helpful. Although prima facie our aims seem considerably different—his scientific and mine philosophical, upon further examination, both arguments seek philosophically to exploit the limitations of human cognition. Whether one agrees or disagrees with Dawkins’s theory of origins, he provides what may be for my purposes a contemporary example of transworld incognizance. Dawkins’s point in employing the term “Middle World” serves to illustrate, in his view, the limited perspective of the evolutionary development of the human brain:

I now want to pursue the point mentioned above, that the way we see the world, and the reason why we find some things intuitively easy to grasp and others hard, is that our brains are themselves evolved organs: on-board computers, evolved to help us survive in a world – I shall use the name Middle World – where the objects that mattered to our survival were neither very large nor very small; a world where things either stood still or moved slowly compared with the speed of light; and where the very improbable could safely be treated as impossible. Our mental burka window is narrow because it didn’t need to be any wider in order to assist our ancestors to survive.¹⁴⁹

Interestingly, regardless of one’s view of origins there is agreement upon the narrowness of the “mental burka window” that Dawkins refers to as “our brains.” I agree with this assessment but think it somewhat overly optimistic, given the limits of human cognition, that necessity alone can simply generate a broader, biologically induced perspective, which is clearly demonstrated by his innate ability to diagnostically analyze the current state of the human cerebrum.¹⁵⁰ Nonetheless,

¹⁴⁹ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Trade & Reference Publishers, 2006), 412, accessed August 3, 2021, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁵⁰ Vanhoozer agrees with Dawkins’ view that evolutionists believe that the primary purpose of human cognitive function is survival; however, drawing upon the thoughts of Plantinga, Vanhoozer contests whether naturalistic evolution can produce true beliefs. This may not only call into question Dawkins’ conclusions above about human cognitive abilities, but may also be a further, albeit naturalistic, example of transworld incognizance: “From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, the primary purposes of language, as of all other human capacities, are survival and reproduction. Language is useful for getting along with others, and getting along with

it matters not whether we agree upon what could possibly generate a broader understanding; what matters is that both models admit, what I have dubbed, transworld incognizance and demonstrate that any expansion of the “mental burka window” must be due to external forces—his evolution and mine divine revelation. Philosophically, Dawkins believes that the human brain is an evolved organ, whereas I am arguing that human intellect in a possible world was designed by a being for the purpose of communicating with higher-level sentient creatures. Regardless, both premises are based upon transworld incognizance.

The mental burka window evolves according to what it understands will be necessary to survive within the Middle World according to Dawkins. The world he describes is a world where survival was not dependent upon the microscopic or the telescopic, upon the light barrier or the highly improbable, but rather upon what immediately mattered in the minds of our ancestors. Dawkins exploits the limits of the mind by revealing that perception is based upon survival not necessarily reality. He describes a world that seems to be somewhat illusory, but he attempts to mitigate any fears by unveiling that humans only need to know what they need to know when they need to know. Dawkins’s description of a Middle World only serves to reinforce the concept of transworld incognizance for a number of reasons, one of which being that given his current understanding of evolutionary biology, provided enough space and time, higher-level incognizant sentient creatures could develop in any universe. The Middle World that I am

others is useful in surviving (and in reproducing). Yet evolution need not underwrite language as anything more than a useful tool for coping with the world—a tool for manipulation, not communication, much less a medium of meaning and truth. Indeed, an evolutionary account is unable to provide an account of language as anything other than instrumental. The real question, says Plantinga, ‘is whether there is a satisfactory *naturalistic* explanation or analysis of the notion of proper function.’ He observes that naturalistic evolution does not provide sufficient reason to believe that human cognitive faculties produce for the most part true beliefs. This is ‘Darwin’s Doubt’: Darwin doubted whether the operation of the human mind, developed from the mind of lower animals, is trustworthy. My concern is with what we may call ‘Derrida’s Doubt’ about the reliability of language to communicate with others and to mediate knowledge of the world. Evolutionary psychology, then, fails to sustain the belief that the purpose of our linguistic faculties is to communicate with and understand others” (Vanhoozer, 2006).

proposing admits the limitations of human cognition by acknowledging transworld incognizance but comes equipped with the capacity to make allowances for immaterial irregularities through which God can act to overcome the cognitive limitations of higher-level sentient creatures.

In summary, Athanasius's Christological anthropology can provide, in part, some of the necessary immaterial irregularities by which God can overcome the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships in a possible world. These immaterial irregularities are incarnational and feature the human body of Christ as the touchstone of Athanasius's Christology because it is the locus of what is nearest to human existence. Athanasius contends for holistic redemption of the human nature of Christ which must include, among other things, the intellect so that all the properties of the flesh (both material and immaterial) are truly His. Therefore, His Christological anthropology requires Christ not simply to display such characteristics as ignorance but to actually embody ignorance within His human nature, as well as any consequent suffering, so that His divine nature can authentically perfect what is lacking in His human nature. For example, Christ can transfer the impassibility of His divine nature to His human nature so that the passible can become impassible. Inversely, Athanasius preserves the idea that what happens to the physical body of Christ is authentically assumed by the Son by maintaining that the divinity of Christ is the active agency of His humanity. For Athanasius, Christ is truly God, fully human, two natures held in perfect union that do not mingle. Finally, the Incarnation of the Son is the exclusive means by which the Father makes His essential nature known to humanity.

CHAPTER 4: TOWARDS A CHRISTOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Augustine's Influence upon the Evolution of the Incarnation

Augustine's Hypostatic Hermeneutic

Before a clearer understanding of Augustine's Christology can be achieved, one must first examine the influences upon his hermeneutical insights. Contemporaries of Augustine were able to confess the distinction of the two natures of Christ but were unable to overcome the most pressing theological issue of the time, which was the union of these two distinct realities. The reason that Augustine is able to probe the depths of the Incarnation more deeply than his contemporaries, and even his predecessors, is because his method of interpretation rests upon a Platonic understanding of the make-up of man and his revolutionary understanding of *persona*.¹⁵¹ While writing *De Trinitate*, Augustine employs this hermeneutical approach in a way that both honors tradition and is also able to transition beyond former linguistic categories, according to Studer: "With his criticism of the traditional concept of person Augustine has bequeathed to modern theology an important hermeneutic insight. His reservations about the Trinitarian terminology already in use at that time teach us on the one hand the need to have respect for tradition and, on the other hand, to try to see the old dogmatic language as being tied to its time, and to translate it, as far as necessary and possible, into a new form."¹⁵² As a result, the study of the Trinity first led Augustine to the discovery of the distinction between person

¹⁵¹ Grillmeier, 410, 465. Brown argues that modern scholars who fail to incorporate prevalent methods within their theology deprive themselves of necessary tools to defend against contemporary heresies (Brown, *Heresies*, 104–105). See 24n55 for full quote regarding the benefits of employing Greek philosophy as a tool to defeat Christological heresies. Newton's study further clarifies that in addition to defending the church against contemporary heresies, Augustine also understood the need to use pagan philosophers in his approach in order to be relevant to his culture: "[Augustine's] stated apologetic method [was] to use a theory adopted by pagan philosophers in his apologetic works because in a letter written to Marcellinus immediately after *Ep.* 137 he stated that it was his intention to use authorities which the pagans would recognize" (Newton, 3).

¹⁵² Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 183.

(singular) and nature (held in common), which would eventually be applied to the hypostatic union.¹⁵³

The Platonic makeup of a human being includes both the material body and the immaterial soul. Explaining the relationship between these two “substances,” although extremely difficult, eventually results in what Platonists refer to as “unconfused union.”¹⁵⁴ Daley defines this union as an unadulterated mixture of two substances: “[An unconfused union is] a union that was a ‘mixture’ of two radically different substances in a single subject, which did not produce a new hybrid but allowed both matter and spirit to retain their integrity and distinct existence.”¹⁵⁵ This “unconfused union” regarding the human constitution is precisely the analogy that Augustine utilizes to defend a proper understanding of the Incarnation.¹⁵⁶ By employing the Platonic understanding of the “unconfused union” to the Incarnation, Augustine was able to avoid the two extremes of exalting the deity of Christ at the expense of His humanity or vice versa.¹⁵⁷ Daley contends, by applying this formula to his Christology, Augustine came to see the Incarnation “as an intimate, living unity of two irreducibly distinct realities.”¹⁵⁸ Therefore,

¹⁵³ Grillmeier, 408. Grillmeier observes that Augustine provides significant improvement in previous Christological formulas because his emphasis upon the person of Christ centered upon his divinity: “[F]or Augustine the unity of person in Christ was not merely the result of a synthesis of two natures. It is rather the pre-existent person of the Word who is the focal point of this unity and who ‘takes up’ the human nature ‘into the unity of his person’ . . .” (Ibid.).

¹⁵⁴ Even while writing *De Trinitate*, Augustine concedes, according to Studer, that his understanding of the soul is incomplete (Studer, 175).

¹⁵⁵ Brian E. Daley, SJ, “A Humble Mediator: The Distinctive Elements in Saint Augustine’s Christology,” vol. 9 of *Word and Spirit: A Monastic Review* (Petersham, Mass: St. Bede’s Publications, 1987), 105.

¹⁵⁶ Newton suggests that Augustine was the first Latin church father to use the analogy of the hypostatic union theory in this way (Newton, 4).

¹⁵⁷ The concept of “unconfused union” for Augustine behaved as an additional hermeneutical safeguard. He cautioned his readers not to become so zealous defending the deity of Christ that the reality of His body suffers: “For we must be careful not to defend the divinity of the man in such a way that we remove the reality of his body” (*Ep.* 187.10).

¹⁵⁸ Daley, “A Humble Mediator,” 105.

Platonic hermeneutics not only protects the existence of the human and divine within Christ, but also prevents each substance from collapsing into the other. Additionally, this hermeneutic also provides Augustine with a practical, interpretative tool to distinguish between when Christ speaks as God and when He speaks as man in Scripture.¹⁵⁹

Augustine's Asymmetrical Synthesis

Augustine's hypostatic hermeneutical methods provided necessary theological progress regarding the doctrine of the Incarnation, specifically involving the relationship between the Logos and His flesh. Both Lucianists and Arians professed that Christ did not have a soul but was rather conjoined directly in a Logos-sarx fusion, whereby the Logos takes the place of the soul in union with the flesh. Grillmeier explains that the debate over the existence of the soul of Christ has immediate implications upon the nature of redemption: "We should be clear from the outset that the denial or the acceptance of a soul in Christ is not a question of secondary importance; it affects the whole picture of Christ and the nature of the redemptive act."¹⁶⁰

Augustine understood this all too well. In his estimation, if Christ does not have fully human traits, including a soul, then He is not a true man, and humanity remains in the same fallen state as it has throughout history.¹⁶¹ For those who found it difficult to embrace the abstract of Christ having a human soul, Augustine offers an explanation by utilizing the make-up of man as his starting point: "The person, therefore, of a man is the union of soul and body, but the person of

¹⁵⁹ From a modern perspective, being able to distinguish from which nature Christ is speaking in the Gospels may not seem terribly complex, but during Augustine's era, discerning the difference was a means to orthodoxy: "For Christ is God and man. It is as God, indeed, that he says, *The Father and I are one* (Jn 10:30), but it is as man that he says, *The Father is greater than me* (Jn 14:28). . . . Hence, when he speaks or when scripture speaks of him, we should consider both of them and see what is said in terms of what. For, just as one human being is a rational soul and flesh, so too the one Christ is the Word and a man" (*Ep.* 187.8).

¹⁶⁰ Grillmeier, 238–239.

¹⁶¹ *Ep.* 137:9, 11.

Christ is the union of God and man. For, when the Word of God is united with a soul that has a body, he assumes at the same time both a soul and a body. The former event happens every day for the procreation of human beings; the latter happened once for the deliverance of human beings.”¹⁶² Augustine explicates the Incarnation through the Platonic understanding of a natural union that occurs every day within every human. The divinity of Christ is not a substitute for the soul of His humanity.

Even though the union of divinity to a human body and soul presents an extremely complex problem, Augustine simplifies the Incarnation by reducing the argument to corporeal and incorporeal substances. Responding to a letter from Volusian, Augustine provides insight into his understanding of the hypostatic union as he answers questions about the Incarnation by posing several of his own. After clarifying that the Son of God is an incorporeal reality who took on an incorporeal soul and a man exists in a corporeal body with an incorporeal soul, Augustine poses the following question: “[I]f we were commanded to believe each of them as equally beyond our experience, which of these would we more quickly believe? How would we not admit that two incorporeal realities could more easily be united than one incorporeal and one corporeal one, provided the term ‘union’ or ‘mixture’ is not applied to these things in an inappropriate manner on account of our familiarity with corporeal things?”¹⁶³ Augustine asserts that it is easier to believe that the incorporeal Son of God took up an incorporeal soul than it is to believe that a corporeal human body could exist in union with an incorporeal soul.¹⁶⁴ As difficult

¹⁶² *Ep.* 137:11.

¹⁶³ *Ep.* 137:11.

¹⁶⁴ Daley, commenting upon Augustine’s Platonic presuppositions about the soul, explains that it is a complete spiritual substance in absolute control of a man: “Augustine . . . generally assumed that the rational soul or *mens*, in every human being, is a complete spiritual substance: physically not localized in any part of the body or

as the opponents of Augustine's Christology may find it to believe, he argues that they more readily accept an even greater, enigmatic and complex union within the human make-up.

Establishing that Christ is not some kind of soulless hybrid presents the additional problem of the mingling of human and divine natures. As the progressive nature of Christological development seeks to remain faithful to Scripture, while simultaneously defending the Incarnation against heresies, each solution poses a new set of questions: Are the two natures confused within the person of Christ? As the Son of God "takes up" the humanity of Christ, does this somehow transform the Trinity into a quaternity? Does this union affirm that the human and divine natures within Christ are somehow equal? Christian thinkers in the fourth and fifth centuries were concerned over potentially introducing new heresies as they cautiously approached the ontology of the Incarnation. One such case had to do with a monk by the name of Leporius who was excommunicated from Gaul and fled to northern Africa where he was gently instructed by Augustine.¹⁶⁵ Leporius had reservations, like many others, of God becoming a man. By mingling with man, his fear was that the Godhead would somehow be corrupted.¹⁶⁶ Using the Trinity as a model, according to Grillmeier, Augustine was able to skillfully alleviate the doubts of Leporius: "Because person and nature are distinct in the Trinity, it is possible to refer the incarnation to the person of the Logos and to allow Godhead and manhood to be unconfused. Under the guidance of Augustine, Leporius learnt the right grasp of the subject of the

identified simply as a bodily function, but giving the whole human being life and direction . . ." (Daley, *God Visible*, 153).

¹⁶⁵ Daley, *God Visible*, 156.

¹⁶⁶ Grillmeier, 466.

incarnation.”¹⁶⁷ In the same way Platonists were able to maintain the integrity of the soul and body within the union of a human, Augustine was able to maintain the unconfused union of the divine and human natures within Christ.

Prior to being corrected by Augustine, Leporius, along with some of his companions, struggled to ascribe human traits, such as suffering, to Christ. To remedy this problem, Leporius concluded that Christ was just a perfect human being. Augustine’s response to this idea was that if true, this concept would add a person to the Trinity. Leporius’s confession, which was written as a concession to be read before bishops who would eventually reinstate him, features a section that very specifically maintains the integrity of the human and divine natures: “The ‘mixture’ that results is not to be thought of as a conflation of two substances into one, nor as a combination of equal ingredients in a single whole; ‘through the merciful outpouring of his power, God has mingled with human nature, but human nature has not mingled itself with the divine. The flesh, therefore, advances towards the Word; the Word does not advance towards the flesh’”¹⁶⁸ This union does not eliminate either of the substances, nor is either substance absorbed by the other. Another way that Augustine was accustomed to explaining this union was that man was added to God and not the other way around.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Grillmeier, 466. Evidence of Augustine applying Trinitarian concepts to better explain the Incarnation can be seen almost two decades prior to these conversations with Leporius in *De Trinitate*: “There are many other things to be advantageously examined and thought about in the incarnation of Christ, which so offends the proud. One of them is the demonstration it affords man of the place he should have in God’s foundation, seeing that human nature could so be joined to God that one person would be made out of two substances. That in fact means one person now out of three elements, God, soul, and flesh . . .” (*De Trin.* XIII, 22).

¹⁶⁸ Daley, “Christology,” 166. Scholars disagree as to the level of involvement that Augustine had in this letter. Daley supposes that the letter was written by Augustine or he may have at least assisted Leporius in its production; however, Newton has argued that Leporius authored *Libellus emendationis* on his own: “It is now recognized that Leporius is the author of his own *Libellus emendationis* and not the bishop of Hippo although he had assimilated some of Augustine’s theological language and thought in order to set aside his own earlier views” (Newton, 9).

¹⁶⁹ *Ep.* 137.10.

One statement from Leporius's letter that deserves more attention is that "the mixture . . . is not to be thought of . . . as a combination of equal ingredients in a single whole." Augustine left no doubt as to his position regarding the preeminence of the divine nature within Christ. This in no way detracts from the fact that Christ is both fully human and fully God; however, the mediatory role of the Incarnation was to raise human nature to the divine: "[N]ow a mediator has appeared between God and human beings so that, uniting both natures in the unity of his person, he may raise up the ordinary to the extraordinary and temper the extraordinary to the ordinary."¹⁷⁰ This mixture does not result in a loss of divine power.¹⁷¹ Further insight into the distinction that Augustine makes between Christ's divinity and humanity can be better understood by examining specifically how he juxtaposed the two: "[Christ] is equal to the Father according to his divinity but less than the Father according to the flesh, that is, according to the man; he is immutably immortal according to his divinity, which is equal to the Father, and mutable and mortal according to his weakness, which is akin to us."¹⁷² Christ as man is mutable and mortal in Augustine's Christology. Therefore, when the human aspect of Christ suffered, the Son, who actually became a man, imputed to Himself the sufferings of the flesh, not that His divinity would become passible, but rather so that His humanity would eventually become impassible. Although the divine aspect of the Son is impassible, His human nature is passible,

¹⁷⁰ *Ep.* 137.9. The concept of the inequality between the divinity and humanity within Christ did not arise with Augustine. Athanasius had been thinking about such concepts even before the birth of Augustine. Anatolios contends that Athanasius viewed the divinity of Christ as the governing agent of his humanity. As stated in Chapter 3, to say that Christ's humanity and divinity are held in perfect union is not the same as saying that His humanity and divinity are equal: "[T]he fact that Jesus Christ is equally human and divine does not at all imply that his humanity and divinity are in fact equal. The inequality between the divinity and humanity of Christ is typically emphasized by Athanasius in terms of the active agency of the divinity in relation to the humanity" (Anatolios, 55).

¹⁷¹ Newton, 11.

¹⁷² *Ep.* 137.12.

which for Augustine is the very purpose for which the Son became human.¹⁷³

An Exchange of Opposites

Transcending by Degrees

Asymmetrical synthesis, for Augustine, is the conduit by which the Son of God gave immortality to his human nature without removing its nature.¹⁷⁴ Every aspect of the Son's humanity—emotionally, physically, intellectually—both material and immaterial, was being incrementally redeemed through the sanctification of Christ. Augustine touches upon this idea as he explains to Volusian how God could change the human nature, assumed by the Logos in the man Christ, for the better by becoming incarnate within the space of Mary's womb:

For the very greatness of [God's] power, which feels no confinement in anything confining, fertilized the virginal womb not with an infant coming from elsewhere but with one native to that womb. That same power joined to itself a rational soul and through it also a human body and the absolutely whole man that would be changed for the better without itself having been changed for the worse. This power deigned to take from it the name of humanity, while generously giving it the name of divinity.¹⁷⁵

Augustine elucidates an exchange of opposites that materializes upon conception of the Incarnation. This is not an elimination of one nature at the expense of the other but rather a sanctifying emendation of the human nature by the descent of the Logos.¹⁷⁶ Emphasizing this

¹⁷³ In *Confessions* VII, 19.25, Augustine highlights the passibility of Christ by emphasizing physical and emotional aspects of the human experience. According to Daley, in *Contra sermonem Arianorum*, Augustine distinguishes the two natures and then demonstrates how the passible actions of the human nature can be attributed to the divine: “[T]he Son of God is said to have been crucified and buried (cf. Mark 15.39; 1 Cor. 2.8), although he suffered these things not in that divinity by which he is the Only Son, co-eternal with the father, but in the weakness of human nature . . . The holy Apostle shows that this unity of the ‘person’ of Christ Jesus our Lord is so joined together from both natures . . . that each of them can apply its own nomenclature to the other: the divine to the human, and the human to the divine” (Daley, *God Visible*, 155–156). This sermon was preached within a year of Leporius's instruction from Augustine (Allan D. Fitzgerald, *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), xlviii).

¹⁷⁴ *Ep.* 187.10.

¹⁷⁵ *Ep.* 137.8.

¹⁷⁶ Grillmeier, 466.

elevation of the human nature of Christ, Daley acknowledges that Augustine frequently addresses this transformation in his writings from the mid-390's to about 412: "[Augustine] usually stresses the transformation and elevation of the human nature of Christ in its assumption by the Word, and sees the human acts of Christ essentially as accomplishing instrumentally, and revealing sacramentally, the divine acts of the Word, much as the body, in [Platonic] anthropology, acts fundamentally as revealer and instrument of the human being's personal center, the soul."¹⁷⁷ The Word acting through the instrument of the man essentially elevates and sanctifies the nature of his humanity.

The humble act of the Logos wearing and sanctifying His human nature had implications for all humanity.¹⁷⁸ The author of death would be conquered by the death of the author of life.¹⁷⁹ By pride, Adam was deceived; by humility, Christ was conceived. Opposite Adam's defeat, Augustine demonstrates through the Incarnation the primary purpose that God became a man: "The one who had been conquered, you see, was only man, and the reason he had been conquered was that he had proudly longed to be God. But the one who eventually conquered was both man and God, and the reason the virgin-born conquered was that God was humbly wearing

¹⁷⁷ Brian E. Daley, S.J., "The Giant's Twin Substances: Ambrose and the Christology of Augustine's *Contra sermonem Arianorum*," in *Augustine: presbyter factus sum*, ed. Joseph T. Lienhard, Earl C. Muller, and Roland J. Teske (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 487. In personal correspondence with Dr. Daley regarding this specific passage, he said that he would refine the passage today by replacing "Neoplatonic" with "Platonic," which is precisely why I have made the change here. He now contends that this concept is common to the whole Platonic tradition. See also Grillmeier, 409.

¹⁷⁸ While reflecting upon Augustine's thoughts in *The Trinity*, Daley explains through the Incarnation the implications for the entire human race: "Christ, in his innocent life and his victorious death, has reunited the whole human race with God and with itself. The result of this reunification of the human person, by the death and resurrection of Christ as mediator, is not only internal harmony within individuals, not only the reconciliation of individuals with God, but also their social unification: the formation of a community of love—the *Church* that Augustine repeatedly calls 'the whole Christ'—among those who are cleansed, 'fused somehow into one spirit in the furnace of charity,' which is the earthly prelude to the eternal community of the saints" (Daley, *God Visible*, 164).

¹⁷⁹ *De Trin.* XIII, 23.

that man, not governing him as he does the other saints.”¹⁸⁰ According to Augustine, Christ is divine by nature and human by grace.¹⁸¹ What Christ is by grace, He became by His nature, so that what humans are not by nature they could become by grace. Through Christ’s exchange of opposites—the Word becoming flesh—Augustine displays the result of another divine union whereby true believers become the sons of God:

[S]urely if the Son of God by nature became son of man by mercy for the sake of the sons of men (that is the meaning of *the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us*), how much easier it is to believe that the sons of men by nature can become sons of God by grace and dwell in God; for it is in him alone and thanks to him alone that they can be happy, by sharing in his immortality; it was to persuade us of this that the Son of God came to share in our mortality.¹⁸²

By an act of the Son of God becoming human, He made it possible for humans to become sons of God. His sanctification becomes justification for the adoption and ultimate divinization of the saints.¹⁸³

The Bridge

The divinization of Christ’s humanity would first undergo a process whereby the Son would descend to the limitations of mortality and through the flesh by way of His divinity lift his body and soul to the status of deity. In His body, He becomes the first fruits of a new man who completely participates within the Godhead.¹⁸⁴ The deity of the Son incrementally conquered the

¹⁸⁰ *De Trin.* XIII, 23.

¹⁸¹ *Ep.* 137.8–9.

¹⁸² *De Trin.* XIII, 12. See also *De civ. Dei* XXI, 15.

¹⁸³ Daley, *God Visible*, 168.

¹⁸⁴ Borrowing the words of Athanasius, to say that in His body He becomes the first fruits of a new man who completely participates within the Godhead is not the same as saying a new person results from this union, according to Grillmeier: “A new person does not come into being when the human nature is taken, nor does this result in two persons” (Grillmeier, 532). As stated previously, Augustine was able to prevent the collapse of both natures into each other because of his hypostatic hermeneutic that permitted him to speak of Christ as one person.

mortality of His body and soul. He takes first place in all things because He did for humanity something that humanity could never accomplish apart from deity. For this reason, Augustine, demonstrates that salvation for humanity is inseparable from the divine Word becoming human, liberating His own flesh from the effects of the Fall, and raising It from the bonds of death:¹⁸⁵

“Our enlightenment is to participate in the Word So God became a just man to intercede with God for sinful man. The sinner did not match the just, but man did match man. So he applied to us the similarity of his humanity to take away the dissimilarity of our iniquity, and becoming a partaker of our mortality he made us partakers of his divinity.”¹⁸⁶ Augustine means to emphasize the process whereby believers become partakers of the divine nature.¹⁸⁷ For Augustine, Christ serves a mediatory role, not simply in the legal sense of intervention, but rather in an actual exchange whereby redeemed humans can effectively participate in the Godhead of the Word. Augustine, using an illustration of walking between two points, argues that arrival upon a destination (God) is only possible if there exists a way (the Incarnation) from an individual’s current position to that goal: “The way to humanity’s God, leads, for the human being, through the human God. This is ‘the mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus.’ By this he is mediator: that he is a man; and by this, too, he is the way. . . . There is, then, only one way that is safe against all errors: that the same one should be God and a human being—God, as the goal to which we are going; human, as the way by which we go.”¹⁸⁸ God is the goal

Therefore, it is permissible to say that the Incarnation results in a new man without saying that the Incarnation results in a new person. The Incarnation does not add a “person” to the Trinity.

¹⁸⁵ *De Trin.* XIII, 23.

¹⁸⁶ *De Trin.* IV, 4.

¹⁸⁷ 2 Pet 1:4.

¹⁸⁸ *De civ. Dei* XI, 2 in Daley, “Christology,” 168.

and human is the way for humanity to reach the deity. As the Logos lifts His body and soul, He makes a way for all of humanity to be lifted.

The catalyst for this human transformation is, for Augustine, the Incarnation. By means of the Incarnation, humanity is lifted through a concept referred to as the “total Christ” (*Christus totus*). Grillmeier explains the seminal influence upon this Augustinian idea most likely rests upon the post-salvation reflections of another philosopher, admired by Augustine, by the name of Marius Victorinus. Victorinus held that there was something mysteriously and soteriologically universal about the divine act of God becoming man: “Two ideas are closely connected in his writings: (1) the Logos takes the whole man, with body and soul; (2) the Logos takes the ‘Logos’ of the soul and the ‘Logos’ of the flesh, i.e. not merely an individual spiritual and fleshly nature, but the whole Logos of soul and flesh, i.e. the totality of all souls and all bodies. In this way Christ delivers all souls and all bodies.”¹⁸⁹ The hypostatic union of Christ provides the way by which to place “human minds back in touch with their divine origin.”¹⁹⁰ The Incarnation solves what ancient philosophy and religion tried in vain to remedy. What natural theology or pagan philosophy is incapable of achieving on its own, Augustine demonstrates that Christ achieves the goal of placing humanity back in touch with God in such a way that believers enjoy the privilege of participating in the Godhead:

Let us congratulate ourselves then and give thanks for having been made not only Christians but Christ. Do you understand, brothers and sisters, the grace of God upon us; do you grasp that? Be filled with wonder, rejoice and be glad; we have been made Christ. For, if he is the head, and we the members, then he and we are the whole man. . . . The fullness of Christ, then, is head and members. What is that, head and members? Christ

¹⁸⁹ Grillmeier, 406. This concept is not to promote the idea that all men will experience impassibility for that requires a response of faith in Christ. Augustine would argue that faith in Christ provides mortals with both immortality and impassibility; however, rejection of Christ leaves humans in a state of eternal passibility. Christ achieved immortality (not impassibility) for all mankind, for all will experience a resurrection, some to eternal communion by faith and others to eternal separation from God (John 5:29; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor 15:22).

¹⁹⁰ Daley, *God Visible*, 162.

and the Church. It would be pride, in fact, to claim this for ourselves, unless he had seen fit to promise it; he says through the [Apostle Paul], *Now you are the body of Christ and the members* (1 Cor 12:27).¹⁹¹

This union in no way suggests that man becomes equal to the Father or the Son but instead provides the means by which humans can become partakers of the divine nature so that they can participate in an eternal relationship with God.¹⁹²

Incarnational Implications of a Christological Psychology

As we did in Chapter 2 and 3, let us pause in the argument to consider what incarnational implications a Christological psychology has upon the construction of this defense. We began addressing two questions in Chapter 3 taken from the introduction: 1. Can the construction of a possible world satisfy some of the demands of Hume's hedonic Utopia without causing massive irregularities? And 2. Is it possible to develop a middle ground—a middle world—that might behave as a defense against the problem of suffering? To answer the first question, it was stated that it may be possible for God to meet Hume's demands without causing, in the words of Van Inwagen, "massive irregularities." But to meet Hume's demands, in a possible world, while avoiding "massive irregularities," God must do so by means of an extraneous option. The Christological anthropology employed by Athanasius may indicate via transworld incognizance such an option, but to do so, it will subject a possible world where God acts not to "massive

¹⁹¹ Augustine, *Homily 21*, 8.

¹⁹² Divinization, also known as theosis, is the process whereby believers are being conformed to the image of Christ. Christ's human nature experienced the process of divinization. Christ's divine agency acting through His human nature became the way by which humans can become partakers of the divine nature. Becoming participants in the divine nature does not make humans equal to the Son of God or the Father, but rather believers in Christ, according to Maximus, will be like Him "except only (of course) for essential identity with him" (see 13n29). By making the previous statement, Maximus was qualifying that divinization provides the believer the transformation necessary to participate with the Godhead; however, that does not mean believers will enjoy the essential identity of Christ's position within the Trinity.

irregularities,” but rather to “immaterial irregularities.” If God had a way to work through the immaterial attributes of divinity and humanity to restore both the material and immaterial aspects of humanity, then He would be acting within the set parameters of a possible world without violating His own self-imposed limitations that were fixed the moment that creatures with moral competencies came into being. Augustine’s Christological psychology may provide the necessary catalyst through which “immaterial irregularities” can be sufficiently exercised by God through the Incarnation. The human soul within the person of Christ about which Augustine dedicated a significant portion of the development of his Christology may be the precise “immaterial irregularity” necessary for God to overcome the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships. If God had a way to work through the immaterial attributes of divinity and humanity—Augustine’s Christological Psychology—to restore both the material and immaterial aspects of humanity, then He would be acting within the set parameters of a possible world without violating His own self-imposed limitations that were fixed the moment that creatures with moral competencies came into being.

Whereas Cyril argues in favor of the unity of Christ’s divinity and humanity within a “single hypostasis” and contests any ideas that would insufficiently convey an actual union between Christ’s humanity and divinity (Chapter 2), and Athanasius, defending the deity and humanity of Christ, sought to highlight the distinction between the Father and the Son so as to distance the Nicene position from endorsing Sabellianism (Chapter 3), Augustine after studying the Trinity distinguishes between person (singular) and nature (held in common) and eventually applies the same discovery to Christ and then demonstrates how the actions of one nature can be attributed to the other—“the divine to the human and the human to the divine.”¹⁹³ All three men

¹⁹³ Daley, *God Visible*, 155–156.

argue that human intellectual capacity for understanding how the Incarnation was able to embody both divinity and humanity should not be the sole basis for limiting what God is able to do or ultimately determine what Christ is or is not. They all also expose what they perceive to be logical incoherence within the thinking of their opponents by demonstrating their failure to determine when Christ is speaking or acting through His divine nature and when He is speaking and acting through His human nature. However, Augustine was able to explain through Platonic terms understandable to his contemporaries how that the human acts of Christ reveal divine acts, “much as the body in Platonic anthropology . . . [reveals] the human being’s personal center, the soul.”¹⁹⁴ Augustine was able to argue persuasively that it is easier to believe that the Son of God, who is immaterial, can unite to an immaterial soul, than it is to believe a human, who is material, can unite to an immaterial soul. This union, for Augustine, was not a synthesis of equal natures into a single whole, but rather the pre-existent Logos taking up the human nature into the “unity of His person.”¹⁹⁵

Both Athanasius and Augustine argue that Christ’s divine nature transcends His human nature by degrees. Interestingly, Athanasius arrives at this conclusion while struggling to go beyond the Scriptures. Although, initially he abjures the thought of explaining the relationship of God the Father to the Son as ‘homoousios,’ he eventually realizes the necessity of incorporating this Nicene concept into his Christology in order to defend the orthodox position against opponents (Chapter 3). Athanasius eventually grows beyond one of his principal hermeneutical controls—scriptural provenance—out of the necessity of the extenuating circumstances facing the church, primarily the accusation of Sabellianism. Correspondingly, Augustine expands his

¹⁹⁴ Brian E. Daley, S.J., “The Giant’s Twin Substances,” 487.

¹⁹⁵ *Ep.* 137.9.

hermeneutical methods even further beyond the limits of both Scripture and the church by intentionally relying upon Greek philosophical tradition not only to assist in a better understanding of Christology but also to provide an explanation with potentially broader apologetic appeal. Both men develop their individual hermeneutics in the process of explaining how the second person of the Trinity went beyond God to become human. Both men—Athanasius and Augustine—grew beyond an initial state of cognizance in order to achieve a greater Christological sophistication in the minds of others. This perhaps may be the result of reflecting not just upon the theology of the Incarnation, but rather upon the very act itself. Just as the Son of God grew beyond the perceived limitations of being God to become human, so also Athanasius and Augustine grew beyond an initial state of perception, spurred by opposition, in order to achieve an even greater Christological understanding in the minds of others.¹⁹⁶ The act of the Incarnation itself contains reconciliatory lessons that actually aid the Fathers in the development of methodology that very much follows the pattern or example of God’s method of expanding human understanding of the divine. Athanasius was compelled to use Nicene terminology; Augustine was compelled to use Greek philosophy. And, according to both men, Christ was compelled by grace to be constrained to the embodiment of humanity. If Christ could use fallen human flesh to enlighten and restore humanity, then Athanasius, Augustine, and even Cyril could use fallen human philosophy to correct what was still lacking in human understanding.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ See 34n72 of this work.

¹⁹⁷ Daley maintains that philosophy is an indispensable handmaid to properly understanding the person of Christ: “The classical formulation of the Church’s understanding of who Jesus is, in other words, as that was first suggested in the Nicene Creed and then refined and developed by later early theologians and councils, is a formulation of what faith understands to be required if Jesus is to be our Savior. The ontological terms used at Chalcedon, Constantinople II, and Constantinople III, in their terse formulations of orthodox faith, were seen as necessary to bring out as clearly as possible, in the learned language of the times, the dimensions of this paradox of

Progressive understanding about the person of Christ driven, reluctantly at times, by the motivation to express the Incarnation through unconventional categories may be indicative of the transworld incognizance mentioned in the conclusion of Chapter 3. Transworld incognizance,

the Savior's person. Philosophy, as Athanasius observed in his later reflections on Nicaea, and its continually developing technical terminology, while not itself part of the original Christian kerygma, was eventually necessary as a tool, to clarify and reinforce the Church's considered, authentic understanding of the apostolic tradition" (Daley, *God Visible*, 278). Earlier in his book while examining both the Antiochene and Alexandrian traditions of theology, Daley further emphasizes the reliance of the Fathers upon the Greek philosophical tradition to assist in determining what God was truly like but this reliance upon philosophy was not to supersede the "shocking originality" of divine revelation within Scripture: "Both the Antiochene and the Alexandrian traditions of theology were rooted in highly developed cultures of scholarly biblical interpretation. . . . But the Antiochenes insisted on the need for a certain degree of hermeneutical sophistication if one were to read the Bible in a way worthy of God—a hermeneutic based on the Greek philosophical tradition about what the ultimate divine reality is and is not. Cyril was aware of these philosophical traditions, too, and was willing to use them to the degree that they did not obscure the shocking originality of the biblical message; but Scripture itself, as received in the Christian liturgy and interpreted in the Christian tradition of faith—not philosophy—for him had to be the starting point of Christian theology, and the source of Christian theological terms. So on the question of the suffering of the Word in his flesh, he concludes his argument by saying, 'Inspired Scripture tells us he suffered in "flesh," and we would do better to use those terms than to talk of his suffering "in a human nature".' Philosophical language always brought with it the subtle tendency to place human reasoning about what God must be like above the Gospel message about who and what God is" (Ibid., 196). Finally, according to Daley, Augustine concedes that human reasoning even with all of its benefits still requires the tempering corrective effects of the Christological lens in order to truly see God: "For Augustine, the person of Christ is always best described, in fact, by paradox: a paradox that brings to rhetorical emphasis the irreducible Mystery of a 'humble God,' a God who has 'emptied himself' to fill our material, historical mode of existence with his own, and to become 'head' of the 'body' which we are. It is by affirming this reality of Christ in faith, Augustine suggests in a number of places, on the basis of contingent knowledge and the Church's proclamation, that the fallen human mind is ultimately able to be healed of the pride that aims to know God by its own unaided power of speculation, and so is enabled to move towards the participatory knowledge of Christ's godhead that is itself life-giving Wisdom. In this sense, 'Christology' itself—the affirmation in intellectually humble faith of the paradox of Christ's person—becomes for Augustine the way to salvation" (Ibid., 25). Pride, according to Augustine drives the fallen human mind to believe that it can know God apart from any assistance; however, Augustine affirms that humble faith in Christ is the key to receiving, understanding, and participating in the knowledge of the "paradox of Christ's person" and ultimately becomes the way to salvation for him. Philosophy requires Christology in order to decipher who God is; philosophy and Christology are necessary bedfellows for understanding God in the minds of the Fathers. Clarifying this Augustinian idea of healing the human mind even further, Cary suggests that for Augustine, this is a perfectly natural process—restoring the mind to its original design—pedagogically, rather than supernaturally driven: "[T]he inward operation of grace] heals the diseases of the mind's eye, purifies it of its carnal attachments, and assists it to see clearly, all by way of restoring and fulfilling the capacity for intellectual vision that is the essential function of the rational mind, belonging to the very nature of reason. As Augustine develops an increasingly elaborate and nuanced psychology to explain this process of healing and homecoming for the soul, he has many more interesting things to say about how the inner teaching of the light assists not only the soul's vision but also its faith and love. But his approach to the spiritual life remains fundamentally pedagogical, not mystical or supernatural, and thus it is to the educational role of faith that we should turn to see the starting point of the ever-widening scope of Augustine's theology of grace" (Phillip Cary, *Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine's Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 101–102).

therefore, may be an act of God's grace in any possible world for it allows higher-level freewill, sentient creatures to make choices apart from being holistically culpable. God may have intentionally designed a system within which creatures could exercise their free will but do so apart from being completely aware of the unmitigated consequences and the residual culpability of each action. As a result, within the scope of their ignorance, God may have reserved a space through which He can exercise His grace. Another way of explicating this concept is to admit that any possible world where God exists there will also exist transworld incognizance within such creatures. This transworld incognizance may possibly indicate awareness of another realm that exists. Ignorance can be an indicator of the unknown, especially when creatures are aware of the possibility that there exists something of which they do not know even if they do not know what it is, they do not know. Knowledge of a lack of knowledge is still knowledge.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, it may be logically coherent to consider that any possible world that an omniscient being creates beings with finite cognition, there may also exist transworld or immaterial dimensions potentially indicated by transworld incognizance.¹⁹⁹

Any possible world where an omniscient being exercises His creative authority to create higher-level freewill, sentient creatures will result in creatures who embody finite knowledge. These creatures, in contrast to an omniscient mind, will exercise a smaller cognitive capacity not only to retain data but also to completely understand how that data harmonizes with other data. As such creatures gain access to more data, they still have a choice as to whether they are going to pursue the effort necessary to achieve an even greater understanding as to how this new data

¹⁹⁸ This concept will be further developed in the following chapters while dealing with Augustine's view of transworld incognizance, the mind/ body problem (Chapter 5) and the Platonic influence upon Patristic Christological hermeneutics (Chapter 7).

¹⁹⁹ Reflecting upon some of the attributes of God, knowledge of a lack of knowledge may also indicate knowledge of a lack of power and knowledge of a lack of presence.

integrates with previous information. They may engage in the struggle to further their progress or choose to be content with their current state of cognitive finitude, which is evident even in the actual world. For example, a patient in need of an ankle repair may simply trust an orthopedic surgeon's recommendation to have a total ankle replacement. After a series of scans and x-rays, the surgeon may discover that the patient's talus is unreconstructable due to degenerative changes. To communicate the necessity of a total-ankle total talus replacement, the surgeon may speak in considerably simpler terms so that the patient understands. All the patient knows is that she needs a total talus replacement. Printing a new 3D talus not only involves customization specific to this patient's anatomy—generated from digitally scanning the opposite talus in the healthy ankle—but also titanium and cobalt-chromium materials necessary to form the new talus.²⁰⁰ The patient most likely was not present during the years of research in conceiving and developing the possibility of designing artificial bones digitally replicated with 3D printers. The patient may not even care to know how the procedure is executed once the artificial bone replacement is finished being sculpted. She may simply desire the full use of her ankle, so she foregoes the traditional option of a permanent fusion and instead opts for a total-ankle total talus replacement while placing her total trust in the training, experience, and execution of someone who has considerably more knowledge than she.

Like the example of designing three dimensional artificial bones originating from a digital scan of an actual bone, transworld incognizance therefore may indicate the existence of immaterial realities. Strictly speaking, just as the digital scan materializes a new bone, transworld incognizance of other possible worlds materializes an indication of immaterial realities. In a

²⁰⁰ Craig C. Akoh, Jie Chen, and Samuel B. Adams, "Total Ankle Total Talus Replacement using a 3D Printed Talus Component: A Case Report," *The Journal of Foot and Ankle Surgery* 59, no. 6 (2020): 1306.

possible world, God, by His grace, makes it possible for higher-level freewill, sentient beings to know that there exist some things which they, lacking total comprehension as well as the terminological means, may not be able to describe in great detail. Within the space of the known unknowns, in a possible world, it is logically coherent to consider the existence of incarnational properties present within Augustine's Christological psychology through which God can employ immaterial irregularities to overcome the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships. As stated previously, to say that they are immaterial is not the same as saying that they are insignificant but rather that their incorporeal footprint goes corporeally undetected. Therefore, if the human body of Christ is the touchstone of Athanasius's Christology because it is the locus of what is nearest to human existence, then the human soul of Christ, according to Grillmeier, is the touchstone of Augustine's Christology because it is the locus of what is mutually nearest to human and divine existence:

It is, then, the make-up of man which forms the starting point for a solution of the christological problem. . . . For it is the Godhead and the soul which are directly united in him. The body is only joined to the Godhead by means of the soul, '*anima mediante*'. . . . Here the assumption of the inner relationship, indeed the consubstantiality, of the divine and the human soul is of paramount importance. . . . Both are as it were 'made of the same stuff'. And homogeneous things can be united.²⁰¹

If Grillmeier's observations are correct, then Augustine views the union of the immaterial properties of the divine and the human soul as more reasonable to accept than even the possibility of a digital scan of an actual bone to produce an artificial one made of titanium and cobalt-chromium materials because the immaterial properties allowing the union of the divine to the soul of a human are immaterially compatible substances, whereas a digital scan and cobalt-chromium are not.

²⁰¹ Grillmeier, 410–411.

An even more basic human experience may demonstrate the existence of transworld incognizance, which, in turn, indicates the presence of a deficient perception of reality—forgetfulness. Temporally, an individual may forget to pack a necessary item, like a toothbrush, only to remember once she is boarding her flight. This scenario, and others like it, are common among the most healthy and intelligent humans. Although forgetting an instrument to maintain proper dental hygiene while traveling may cause some anxiety, certainly this degree of incognizance is considerably less important than this weary traveler forgetting that she left a candle burning in her now empty home. Imagining an even greater degree of incognizance, what if this traveler, as a mother, in her haste to make her flight, forgot that she left her toddler seated in a locked automobile on a hot, summer day. This cognizant deficiency presents an emergent situation for the mother: She becomes panic stricken and does everything within her power to save her child, and the all-important flight now loses its priority. Human experience demonstrates that the greater the cognitive deficiency, the greater the consequences. Sadly, a temporary, cognitive lapse does not eliminate the reality beyond the ignorance. This reality is extremely familiar to those who have loved ones suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's.

Ultimately, the problem of evil and suffering cultivates an environment for disease, which can contribute to further complicating one's perception of reality by attacking the memory. This may explain, in part, the inability to detect immaterial realities. If the actual world provides examples of cognitive deficiencies caused by the problem of evil, then, perhaps, these examples point to a moment at another place, at another time, when a higher-level freewill, sentient creature made a choice that exploited transworld incognizance. If within the actual world, diet, lifestyle choices, genetic formation, and social environments can adversely affect cognitive fitness, then perhaps one possible explanation for cognitive deficiencies in the area of

detecting immaterial realities is that there was an initial moment when mankind fell from a higher level of cognitive awareness to a lower state of perceived reality traditionally referred to as the Fall.

CHAPTER 5: A PATRISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE MIND/BODY PROBLEM

Uniting the Material and Immaterial Properties of the Human Body and the Soul

In a defense, such as the one I am currently building, there is no requirement to prove the historicity of the biblical narratives. However, this does not in any way remove the burden of developing an argument that is logically coherent and, for our purposes, patristically grounded. Having considered the three categories: Christological epistemology, Christological anthropology, and Christological psychology, the question remains, “How do the material and immaterial properties of the human nature of Christ unite to the divine?” This raises another question, “How do the material and immaterial properties of the human nature unite within a human?” Previously stated, Augustine argues it is more logically consistent to believe that a divine immaterial being can unite with the immaterial properties of a human (the soul), than it is to believe the mingling of the material (body) and immaterial (soul) properties of a human. Augustine simplifies the Incarnation by reducing the argument to corporeal and incorporeal substances.²⁰² But how does Augustine interpret the biblical explanation of this union within a human? Since I will eventually be appealing to an immaterial irregularity (the union of the divine nature to the soul of a human)—in contrast to Van Inwagen’s “massive irregularity”—as the means through which God may act in a possible world, and since Augustine places the soul as the human being’s personal center in the soul/body equation, his views regarding a Christological psychology will be the primary focus for better understanding the relationship between the body and the soul in this chapter.²⁰³

²⁰² See 77n163.

²⁰³ See 82n177.

Overview of the Form, Location, and Function of the Soul within the Human Body

Although he transitions as he matures, Augustine, in his earlier works, primarily identifies the mind with the soul.²⁰⁴ Therefore, in the field of philosophy, what is traditionally regarded as the mind/body problem will be designated the soul/body problem in this chapter. Augustine exercises a high degree of epistemic humility whenever he explores the mystery of the soul/body problem: “[I] must confess that nobody has yet managed to persuade me I can ever have such a grasp of the soul, that I may assume there is no further questions to be asked. Whether I am now going to find and define anything certain, I do not know. But what I can do in this line, I will undertake, if the Lord assists my efforts.”²⁰⁵ Admittedly, Augustine views the soul/body problem as an extremely complex topic. Regardless of how much he reads, studies, and writes, he is cautious about saying anything for certain about the soul, and therefore, limits his comments about the soul’s form, location, and function.²⁰⁶ After much deliberation as he begins to encroach upon what form the soul takes, Augustine marks the futility in declaring precisely the material used in forging the soul. Did it come into existence out of nothing, or from angelic material, or was it a spiritual mystery material generated by God intended uniquely for

²⁰⁴ Hill makes this point by comparison with *De Trinitate* while translating *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* (Augustine, *On Genesis*, vol. I/13 in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2002), 337n21). *De Trinitate* was finished in 420 (Hill, *De Trin.*, 20). Cary also notes that Augustine nimbly moves between the terms heart, soul, and mind. The only distinction that he occasionally makes is that the “heart” can refer to the higher part of the mind: “The dichotomy Augustine never accepts, it should be emphasized, is the one enshrined in modern talk about the difference between heart and mind. For Augustine soul and body are different kinds of being, but heart and mind are not. Augustine’s use of the scriptural term ‘heart’ is wide-ranging, often co-extensive with the term ‘soul,’ but sometimes referring specifically to the soul’s higher part, the mind or intellect. That is to say, sometimes Augustine says ‘heart’ and means ‘mind.’ . . . The heart both loves and understands, and for Augustine the heart’s highest love is to see the Truth with the inner eye of the mind. . . . [I]n biblical terms, it is the obligation to love God with the whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. To turn away from outward, sensible things and look toward the light within is an act of the soul or heart or mind (Augustine can use any of these terms here) motivated by love for Truth and resulting in the intellectual vision of God” (Cary, 96–97).

²⁰⁵ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VI, 29, 40.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, VII, 28, 43.

mankind?²⁰⁷ He concludes nothing at this point except to acknowledge that soul formation is God's creative domain.²⁰⁸

Form of the Soul

Employing the apophatic method—describing the soul by negation, Augustine begins by refuting any notion that the soul is made from the same substance as God. Contradicting the Manichees, Augustine explains that the soul did not receive God's nature upon creation, is not identical with God's nature, nor is a share of God's nature fashioned into man's soul. Any of these conclusions throw the immutability of God's nature into question.²⁰⁹ So what was the material composition of the soul? By exploring the difficulties of the quasi-material of the soul, Augustine struggled to determine how the soul, which is rational develops, within the causal formula of original creation. Can non-rational life produce the rational soul, and if so, what separates human souls from animals? Augustine is able to arrive at a somewhat satisfactory Socratic armistice within his own mind by reflecting upon an example (i.e., an infant) of seminal rationality accessible within his own world:²¹⁰ “[S]ee how the infant soul, already of course the soul of a human being, has not yet begun to use reason, and yet we already call it a rational soul; so why should we not suppose that in that material from which [the soul] was made even sentient activity was stilled, just as in this infant soul, which is certainly that of a human being already,

²⁰⁷ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VII, 23, 34; 27, 39.

²⁰⁸ In *Book X*, he does come to a tentative conclusion that the soul was made out of nothing by God (Ibid., X, 9, 16).

²⁰⁹ If the soul of man can be corrupted with vice and if the soul of man originated from God's nature, Augustine concludes that an unsettling theological argument can be made that God's nature is corruptible, which is biblically untenable in his estimation (Augustine, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* II, 8, 11. See also *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VII, 11, 17 and 21, 30).

²¹⁰ For further study regarding Augustine's use of the Socratic method see Gareth B. Matthews, “The Socratic Augustine,” *Metaphilosophy* 29, no. 3 (1998): 196–208, accessed March 24, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24439078>. Matthew historically regards Augustine as one of the great Socratic thinkers (Ibid., 196).

rational activity is stilled for the time being?”²¹¹ From this example, Augustine contends that God has the ability to create a soul through material that is rationally suitable for the human body within the causal formula. One final qualification Augustine establishes, seeing that the soul is not corporeal, it cannot emanate from any corporeal substance up to and including heavenly bodies. Incorporeal souls must originate from incorporeal material.²¹²

Location of the Soul

As frequently as he chooses the allegorical method from his hermeneutical toolbox, it is also worth noting that Augustine spends significant time mining insights with the “literal” method as well. In some respects, he displays a greater dedication to the literal praxis than even some modern scholars who pride themselves on using this scientific approach. Consider his profound insight on the posture of the soul. Augustine notes that what separates humankind from animals is not the way in which God fashions them during creation but rather what he endows man with—an intelligent mind, as well as his physical posture in comparison to the beasts of the field:

[W]hat gives man his pre-eminence is that God made man to his image, in this respect that he gave him an intelligent mind, which puts him ahead of the animals. . . . In his body too, though, he has a characteristic which would be an indication of this, the fact that he was made upright in posture, by which to remind himself that he should not aim at earthly goals like animals which get all their pleasure from the earth, which is why they all move about belly down, leaning forward horizontally. Thus his body too is adapted to his rational soul, not as regards the lineaments and shapes of his limbs, but rather with respect to his standing up vertically, his head towards the sky, in order to gaze at those things that are sublime in the body of the universe itself, just as the rational soul ought to straighten itself up to look at what is most excellent in the spiritual realm. . . .²¹³

²¹¹ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VII, 7.

²¹² *Ibid.*, VII, 12, 19. See also 104n225 and 110n244.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, VI, 12, 21–22.

Augustine brilliantly adjusts the sight of the soul upward through the anatomical position of the human body. The physical body is adapted to the rational soul, and this posture should behave as an indication to both body and soul to gaze at the best and highest of the material universe and, ultimately, the spiritual realm. This higher-level thinking is what it means to be created in the image of God with an intelligent mind. Like the vertical posture of humans and finding significance in all the details of creation, Augustine reverts to figurative language by comparing the soul to the location of the Tree of Life within the middle of Eden. Placing the Tree of Life in the middle of Paradise, according to Augustine, should direct mankind to understand that the soul is also set at a mid-point within creation: “[A]lthough [the soul] has every material, bodily nature subject to it, it has to realize that the nature of God is still above itself. So it must not turn aside either to the right, by claiming to be what it is not, or to the left, by being slack and indifferent about living up to what it is. That then is the tree of life, planted in the middle of Paradise.”²¹⁴ This example does not mean that Augustine fails to see a literal tree in Eden; it just means he assigns figurative meaning to the trees that are present in the garden so as to improve upon the understanding of humans about themselves.²¹⁵ The trees themselves are tools to point to other truths.

Although the soul in situ is set at a mid-point between God above and its own body below, Augustine does spend significant time emphasizing that the soul is higher than the highest senses. Borrowing from medical science, he describes the elaborate engineering of the five senses and how everything within man is masterfully choreographed to be processed by the

²¹⁴ *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* II, 9,12.

²¹⁵ See Chapter 9 for Augustine’s literal view of paradise, Noah, Abraham, and Moses.

heaven of the body—“the highest area of the brain.”²¹⁶ Wherever the soul is and whatever it is made of it sits above the bodily heaven, and all of the sensory organs and everything that constitutes a human body is governed and animated by the soul.²¹⁷

Function of the Soul

To a degree, borrowing from the medical science of his day, Augustine goes to great lengths, not simply to explain the function of the soul in summary fashion, but instead, to record a cascade of physical or corporeal details—air from lungs to the heart through the veins, fine tubes that connect the brain to the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, and “rivulets” that run throughout the entire body from the brain through the marrow of the spine to detect the sense of touch—of how the entire soul administering process works.²¹⁸ According to Augustine, the soul employs these five senses of the flesh—messengers to gather data, first to better understand its immediate environment and second to improve how to behave within its surroundings. However, when it comes to understanding things beyond the physical realm, the soul must rely upon its God-given intelligence and reason, according to Augustine:

The soul therefore receives from these quasi-messengers information about any bodily things that are not hidden from it. So much, however, is it something entirely different itself, that when it wishes to understand either divine things, or God himself, or even quite simply to consider itself and its own powers and to come by something that is certainly true, it turns away from this light of the eyes. . . . to turn to . . . things it can only observe by intelligence and reason. . . .²¹⁹

The light of the eyes, in this case, acting as a sort of radar for gathering shapes and colors,

²¹⁶ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VII, 13, 20; 14.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, VII, 20, 26.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, VII, 13, 20.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, VII, 14.

translates the objects captured by vision to the brain both of which are subservient to the soul.²²⁰ Since the soul is responsible for animating the body, it must first activate that which is closest to being non-bodily, like the air and light previously mentioned. Augustine argues that light and air are the nearest non-bodily elements activated by the soul: “The soul therefore, being something non-bodily, first activates the kind of body which is nearest to being non-bodily, like fire (or rather light) and air; and then through these the other coarser elements of the body, like moisture and earth, which constitute the solid mass of the flesh, and which are more subject to being acted on than equipped to act.”²²¹ Like a hierarchical fiber optical network, Augustine explains how the soul commands these metaphorical subordinates most like itself to then, in turn, control subjects that are least like itself. This process partly explains how Augustine imagines the soul animating the entire body.

Once again, displaying extreme dedication to the literal interpretation of scripture, consider another profound Augustinian insight on how the specific location of where God made man a living soul surpasses the functional importance of every other part of the human anatomy. God breathing into man influences the proximal value of the human face to the point of entry of the human soul. According to Augustine the conjunctive moment that the soul takes on a human body through the breath of God and the face of man, the front part takes precedence over the back:

[F]rom [the marrow of the spine] the face too of course has its sense of touch, like the whole body—apart from the senses of seeing, hearing, smelling and tasting which are located in the face alone. That in my opinion is why it is written that *God blew into the man’s face the puff of life, when he was made into a live soul* (Gn 2:7). The front part naturally and rightly takes precedence over the back part, both because it leads while the other follows, and also because from it comes sensation while from the other comes

²²⁰ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 333n13.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, VII, 15, 21.

movement—thus deliberation preceding action.²²²

The significance of christening the human face with the divine puff of life, Augustine contends, is that he observes that it is within this “front part” that contemplative “deliberation” or thinking about doing something precedes the moment of “action” or movement in the “back part.”

Desiring to explain his thoughts using an even greater degree of detail, Augustine describes the coordination of the three parts of the brain. The first and the second part are gradually rendered virtually useless apart from a properly functioning memory, which is the responsibility of the third part, in the opinion of Augustine: “[T]he brain is shown to have three ventricles; one in front, at the face, from which all sensation is controlled; a second behind at the neck, from which all movement comes; the third between the two, in which they demonstrate that memory is active; otherwise, since movement follows upon sensation, you may fail to link to your perceptions what has to be done, if you have forgotten what you have done on previous occasions.”²²³ Essentially, Augustine reasons that sensation (front ventricle) precedes movement (second ventricle) and movement is triggered by memory (third ventricle). Therefore, even though he believes the front takes precedence over the back because of where God blew into the face, the front still needs the middle and the back to move the body.

Finally, each of the three parts of the brain completely rely upon the soul’s animating force not only for their effectiveness but more importantly for their existence. Essentially, Augustine maintains that the soul incarnates these parts. Reminding the reader once again not to confuse the command with the commander, Augustine precisely states the purpose of the soul: “[T]he soul is acting in these parts as in, or on, its instruments; it is not itself any of these, but it

²²² *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VII, 17, 23.

²²³ *Ibid.*, VII, 18, 24.

is quickening, animating and controlling them all, and through them looking after the interests of the body and of this life, in which ‘the man was made into a live soul.’”²²⁴ The soul is not any of these parts but is responsible for animating all of these parts. Augustine is careful not to refer to the soul as material or any kind of body that could be circumscribed;²²⁵ however, he does clarify the soul’s affect upon the body both mediately and in its absence:

Just as God . . . surpasses every kind of creature, so the soul by the very worth of its nature surpasses every bodily creature. Nonetheless it administers the body through light and air, as being the kinds of body with the closest resemblance to spirit. . . . And when the soul feels and is vexed by the body’s afflictions, it is offended at the activity with which it governs and cares for the body being thwarted through the disturbance of the body’s constitution—and this offense is called pain. . . . Finally, when these services, so to call them, fail totally through some major defect or disorder, with the messengers of sensation and the ministers of movement giving up altogether, the soul itself takes its departure, as having no reason why it should linger.²²⁶

When the servants of the soul—sensation, memory, and movement—ultimately fail, the soul takes flight by ejecting itself from the body, resulting in a divorce of soul and body. The outcome is a soulless body and a bodiless soul.²²⁷

The Marriage of Body and Soul

Examining Augustine’s commentary on the creation of mankind in Genesis 2:7 will provide further insights into how he views the coming together of the human body and the human soul. Augustine wrote in his commentary—*The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, “And God fashioned the man, dust from the earth, and blew into his face the puff of life. And the man was made into a living soul (Gn 2:7),” working from a selection of his favorite fifth century

²²⁴ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VII, 18, 24.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, VII, 21, 27–30.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, VII, 19, 25.

²²⁷ See pp. 93–94.

translations.²²⁸ Discouraged by the number of translations which were in circulation at this time, Augustine primarily relied upon three versions throughout his lifetime, according to Bonner:

Augustine indeed deplored the multiplicity of translations circulating in Africa and recommended the *Itala* as being superior to all other versions. The identity of this *Itala* has been the subject of much discussion which cannot be repeated here. It would appear to have been a European version of the Old Latin translation used in North Africa in Augustine's time, but it does not seem possible to be more precise than this. In any case, from about 400 onwards, Augustine used Jerome's Vulgate revision of the text of the gospels in his church at Hippo and long passages from the Vulgate appear in his works after that date. At the same time, in a manner which seems very strange to modern Western scholars, Augustine continued to the end of his life to regard as authoritative an Old Testament text based on the Greek Septuagint translation, and to depreciate Jerome's new translation based on the Hebrew. . . . The general acceptance of the Septuagint by the Catholic Church undoubtedly counted for much in determining his preference, and, moreover, he was convinced that the translators of the Septuagint had been accorded a peculiar understanding of the text under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.²²⁹

Being heavily influenced by the reading of the Septuagint within the Catholic Church, there is no question in the mind of Augustine as to how Genesis 2:7 should be rendered, especially the end of the verse—"a living soul" (ψυχὴν ζῶσαν).²³⁰ Twenty-five years prior to publishing *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Augustine spent some time on an earlier work—*On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* repudiating the Manichees' attacks on the book of Genesis, a sect to which he

²²⁸ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VII 1, 1.

²²⁹ Gerald Bonner, "Augustine as Biblical Scholar," 545–46, 557. Although preference was given to the *LXX*, this was not to the exclusion of Augustine consulting other renderings (*Ibid.*).

²³⁰ According to Bonner, it is worth noting a number of scholars admittedly agree that Augustine only had "a limited working knowledge of biblical Greek" (Bonner, "Augustine as Biblical Scholar," 550). Unless otherwise noted Rahlfs edition of the Septuagint will be used in this dissertation (Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta: id est, Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, editio minor (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979)). For further study, see the brief "History of the Septuagint Text" in this edition in order to view the various versions of the *LXX* of which Augustine had access, including but not limited to recensions by Origen, Lucian, Pamphilus, and Eusebius, among others. Both Lucian's version and Origen's version, which was republished alone—about sixty years after the original—by Pamphilus and Eusebius apart from the Hexapla, enjoyed wide circulation by Augustine's era, according to Jerome (*Ibid.*, lxii-lxv).

previously belonged.²³¹ Even in this earlier work he relies upon Genesis 2:7 to explain, in the face of their sarcasm, how and why God would use such inferior material as mud to fashion man. As Augustine engages Manichaeistic arguments, he uses the very ingredients of mud—water, sticks, and earth to explain how the soul animates the body: “Just as water, you see, collects earth and sticks and holds it together when mud is made by mixing it in, so too the soul by animating the material of the body shapes it into a harmonious unity, and does not permit it to fall apart into its constituent elements.” On this point, Augustine maintains his position of the soul’s ability to unify and animate the entire person.²³²

Although it is interesting to observe Augustine’s progress from such a heavy use of allegory in his first attempt of a commentary—*On Genesis* and the more literal approach he takes over two decades later in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, more notably, he maintains fairly consistent views about the soul, regardless of the method he employs and the passage of time. Keeping in mind his previous example of the ingredients of mud to illustrate the way the soul unifies and animates the human body, consider how Augustine subsequently parallels the birth of Christ through the same elements of original creation later on in this very work:

He was made, however, as I have just remarked, *from the seed of David according to the flesh*, as the apostle says, that is, as though from the mud of the earth when there was no man to work on the earth, because no man ‘worked’ on the Virgin of whom Christ was born. *But a spring was coming up from the earth, and was watering all the face of the earth* (Gn 2:6). It is entirely appropriate and right to take the face of the earth, that is, the dignity and worth of the earth, as being the Lord’s mother the Virgin Mary, watered by the Holy Spirit, who is given the name of spring and water in the gospel; so that from that

²³¹ *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* (389) and *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, which Augustine began writing possibly as early as 399 and published in 416, were written within twenty-five years of each other (Hill and Fiedrowicz, *On Genesis*, 26, 164, 348n8).

²³² *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* II, 7, 9. With his traditional literary training, as well as exposure to Neo-Platonist philosophers, Augustine relied upon the allegorical method of interpretation early on in his career—a practice that would diminish in his later works—as a student of the Bible, which is extremely evident in this attempt to build a defense of Genesis against the Manichees (Bonner, “Augustine as Biblical Scholar,” 551–52).

kind of mud, as it were, that man might be made who was set up in paradise to work there and guard it—that is, set up in the will of his Father to fulfill it and keep it.²³³

Against the backdrop of the previous entry, with this commentary, Augustine provides a glimpse into the process of his mind connecting what seem to be two unrelated ideas—the joining of the soul to a human body and the joining of the divine Son of God to a human body. Tracking the hermeneutics of the Apostle Paul’s use of Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:31-32, Augustine extracts the deeper connection that he believes Paul is attempting to reveal between Adam and Christ. For his part, Augustine is fulfilling a previous promise to bind what he calls “history” to prophecy: “But I promised that in this book I would consider first the account of things that have happened, which I think has now been unfolded, and go on to consider next what they prophesy. . . . So then, what as a matter of history was fulfilled in Adam, as a matter of prophecy signifies Christ. . . .”²³⁴ One of the reasons he is able to maintain consistency on his views about the soul regardless of his method—literal or allegorical or the passage of time, is that foundational to Augustine’s understanding of humanity is the Christocentricity of the Scriptures.

Taking what he believes to be an apostolic exegetical lead, Augustine utilizes the New Testament to decrypt the divine cipher of the Hebrew Scriptures, which consequently stimulates even greater New Testament insights into solving the soul/body problem—the relationship between the soul and the body. In the previous example of the mud, the Virgin Mary, and the Holy Spirit, there are several reasons why Augustine emphasizes the idea of the incarnate Christ being “set up in paradise.” First, for him, paradise is not simply a location where Christ both fulfills and keeps the will of His Father but rather paradise is the actual practice of fulfilling and

²³³ *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* II, 24, 37.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

keeping the will of His Father. Second, Augustine is drawing from an earlier development within this same book—*On Genesis*: when Adam was initially created, he was “ensouled,” but he was not “enspirited” until “he was placed in Paradise.”²³⁵ After neglecting to keep God’s will—the will of his father, the consequence of being driven from the garden—Paradise, is the death of the spirit within man and leaves Adam merely a “soulish” creature with a body. Therefore, just as the soul takes flight when the body fails, the spirit took flight when Adam’s soul and body failed in the garden by indulging in the fruit.²³⁶ Conversely, a believer, upon faith in Christ, experiences a rebirth of the spirit (literally “enspirited”) and is “restored to Paradise,” according to Augustine.²³⁷ Augustine concludes this passage, once again, by citing another letter of Paul: “This after all is what the apostle says: *But not first what is ‘enspirited’ or spiritual, but what is ‘ensouled’ or ‘soulish.’ For the first Adam was made into a living soul, the last Adam into a life-giving spirit* (1 Cor 15:46).”²³⁸ Three decades later commenting on the same context of Scripture, Augustine underscoring one of Paul’s main points in this passage, states that these new bodies will substantially be spiritually driven fleshly bodies.²³⁹

That is why [the bodies of the saints] are called spiritual, although there is no doubt that they will be bodies, not spirits. But as we now speak of an “ensouled” body, which however is a body and not a soul, so then the body will be spiritual, while being a body and not a spirit. . . . But as for its substance, even then it will be flesh, which is why even after the resurrection the body of Christ is called flesh. But that is why the apostle says *It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body* (1 Cor 15:44), because there will be such harmony between flesh and spirit, the spirit giving life without need of any

²³⁵ *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* II, 8, 10.

²³⁶ See 104n226.

²³⁷ *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* II, 8, 10.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ According to Ramsey, *Enchiridion* was written between 419 and 422, after the death of Jerome (Boniface Ramsey, O.P., *Introduction in The Augustine Catechism: The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, trans. Bruce Harbert, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2000), 9).

sustenance to the body that will be subject to it, that nothing within us will fight against us, but just as we will have no external enemies, so we will not have to suffer ourselves as our own inner enemies.²⁴⁰

Augustine essentially maintains that even though humans are material creatures that envelop an immaterial soul, the material or corporeal body is driven by the immaterial or incorporeal soul. Ultimately, referring to the resurrection of Christ as an example, believers will still be material creatures after their own resurrection but will envelop an immaterial spirit; the material or corporeal body will be driven by an immaterial or incorporeal spirit.²⁴¹

Reflecting further upon 1 Corinthians 15:44, *It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body*, Augustine in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, according to Hill, renders the phrase more closely to the spirit of what Paul originally intended: “[I]t is sown, you see, embodying the soul, it rises embodying the spirit.”²⁴² Hill, translating this specific entry in Augustine’s *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* from Latin into English, notes that the Latin word for soul—*animale* when properly understood means “soulish” not “animal.” Hill continues that apart from this proper distinction, the intended meaning of both *animale*—“soulish” and *spiritale*—“quickened by spirit” will be lost and give rise to numerous misinterpretations:

Animale does not mean “animal,” but literally “soulish,” that which has, is quickened by, an *anima*; and to translate *spiritale* as “spiritual” conveys entirely the wrong impression in current English, suggesting to most people an immaterial body, which amounts to a bodiless body. In contrast to *animale* it means being quickened by spirit, no longer by soul. “Soul” and “spirit” are by no means synonymous in scripture, whether in the Hebrew of the Old Testament or the Greek of the New; on the contrary, they are nearly always in mutual opposition, so that in Saint Paul, who is here just following Old Testament usage, *psychikos*, having a psyche or soul, is mostly synonymous with

²⁴⁰ *Enchiridion*, 91. See also “Different levels of causality at which things pre-exist in their causes” in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VI, 10, 17.

²⁴¹ “Body embodying soul” is another way that Augustine was prone to describe this current union (*The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VI, 19, 30; Augustine thoroughly explains Paul’s emphasis upon Adam being a material or corporeal body driven by the immaterial or incorporeal soul (Ibid., 318n25)).

²⁴² Ibid.

sarkikos, being carnal or fleshly.²⁴³

With all this attention to syntactical detail, Augustine's interest is not simply limited to the unification of the material and immaterial properties of humanity, but he desires to know how the immaterial nature transcends the material. He is not limiting his understanding to what sort of body humans have before and after belief in Christ, but he is striving to articulate how both the soul and the spirit drive the body. N.T. Wright, commenting on this very passage and giving a meager nod to Augustine in the process, makes a sharp distinction between the traditional Hellenistic view of the body/soul problem, which is the equivalent of soul escape, and the Christian view of replacing the malfunctioning human soul by retrofitting the body with the Spirit:

Being human is good; being an embodied human is good; what is bad is being a rebellious human, a decaying human, a human dishonoured through bodily sin and bodily death. What Paul desires, to take his terminology at face value, is not to let the soul fly free to a supposed astral home, but to stop the 'soul', the *psyche*, from being the animating principle for the body. Precisely because the soul is *not*, for him, the immortal fiery substance it is for Plato, he sees that the true solution to the human plight is to *replace* the 'soul' as the animating principle of the body with the 'spirit' - or rather, the Spirit.²⁴⁴

N.T. Wright, like Augustine, contends that the language of this text, in addition to the amount of space that Paul dedicates to the topic of properly aligning the body with the divine circuit by replacing the soul as its driving force with the Spirit, is indisputably in favor of a physical resurrection body.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ By calling attention to the wrong impression given by translating *spiritale* as "spiritual" in current English, there is a high probability that Hill has certain English translations in mind (*The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 318n23).

²⁴⁴ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 346, 347n104. The "immortal fiery substance" from which the soul derives in Plato's view, in addition to Paul, was likewise rejected by Augustine: "Even were the soul said to be made from the pure element of that heavenly fire, it would be wrong to believe this" (*The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VII, 12, 19).

²⁴⁵ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 343.

Augustine and Transworld Incognizance

As we saw earlier, Augustine, tailing Paul's lead, moves freely between 1 Corinthians 15:44-46 and Genesis Chapters 1 and 2 in both *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* and *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*.²⁴⁶ It is important to note that while navigating Genesis 1-3, Augustine was not only cognizant of differences between Genesis 1:1-2:4a and 2:4b-3:24—two creation accounts—but also offers a solution to these differences, according to Fiedrowicz, in the way of two moments of God's creative action: "Augustine solved the problem by interpreting the twofold account of creation as describing two moments or aspects of God's creative action."²⁴⁷ Augustine's description of these two moments of God's creative action can best be understood as created causes and concealed causes resident within the created causes. Using the terminology of planting seeds, Augustine imagines God as having "sown" all that was to be on the day that everything in the world was created simultaneously. Therefore, the created causes—God making man "in the works of the six days" in the first creation account (Gen 1:26)—seminally contain the concealed causes—"Adam . . . formed from mud already in adult manhood" in the second creation account.²⁴⁸ Another terminological tool that Augustine employs to distinguish how God acts within time—two moments of God's creative action—is to differentiate between the "primordial establishment of causes" that are originally "written into the world" and those that are "reserved to the foreknowledge of God."²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Augustine makes this his practice especially where it concerns the origination of the soul in several places in these two books. The following list is not meant to be exhaustive but provides a starting point for further investigation (*On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* II, 8, 10; 24, 37; *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VI, 19, 30; 23, 34; VII, 1, 1; 17, 23).

²⁴⁷ M. Fiedrowicz, *Introduction in The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 163.

²⁴⁸ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VI, 18, 29; VII, 28, 42.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, VI, 15, 26; 16, 27; 17, 28.

In Augustine's estimation, present then within the causal formulae of the creation account are the actualization of two potentialities: 1. things, like plants and animals, which come into existence and commonly grow to maturity over the normal course of time, and 2. things that more rarely appear fully formed, like Adam and miracles, temporally bypassing the normal intervals of the first mode.²⁵⁰ To these two potentialities, Augustine adds two more categories following creation: possibilities and necessities. To clarify these terms, Augustine highlights the human experience of aging. Relying strictly upon experience, Augustine contends that it is natural to presume that a young man will eventually grow old, but whether he actually will is completely beyond our cognitive ability: "So then the formula which prescribes that this is a real possibility is hidden, but from the eyes, not from the mind. Whether on the other hand it is also something necessary, of that we are altogether ignorant. We know indeed that what prescribes it as a possibility is there in the nature of the body itself, while manifestly not there is any formula prescribing that it is necessary."²⁵¹ Within the larger complete entry in this section, Augustine presses the issue of the deficiency of human cognitive awareness no less than five times. Humans may be capable of gathering data and observing regularities in the natural course of possibilities; however, knowing with certainty whether a person will actually grow old, within any possible world, is completely beyond our ken. Augustine actually arrives at a similar conclusion while wrestling with what can and cannot be known in *De Trinitate*:

And so we see that all the love of a studious spirit, that is of one who wishes to know what he does not know, is not love for the thing he does not know but for something he knows, on account of which he wants to know what he does not know. . . . [T]o say "He loves to know the unknown" is not the same as saying "He loves the unknown"; it can happen that a man loves to know the unknown, but that he should love the unknown is impossible. "To know" is not put groundlessly in that first sentence, because the man

²⁵⁰ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VI, 14, 25.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, VI, 16, 27.

who loves to know the unknown loves not the unknown but the actual knowing. And unless he had known what this was, he would not be able to say with confidence either that he knew something or that he did not know something. It is not only the man who says, and says truly, “I know” that must know what knowing is; the man who also says “I don’t know,” and says it confidently and truly and knows he is saying the truth, this man too obviously knows what knowing is, because he distinguishes one who does not know from one who does when he looks honestly at himself and says “I don’t know.”²⁵²

Knowing unknown things, Augustine contends, can only be known if the inquirer knows that there is something that he does not know; the man who says, “I don’t know,” knows what knowing is. This is definitely an example of transworld incognizance, at least how I am using it throughout this work within the writings of Augustine. In Augustine’s estimation, there exist unknowns that can be known by humans, and it is precisely within these concealed unknowns that God is able to act. Humans are aware that there exists within this world, or any world for that matter, dimensional processes of which they are unaware.²⁵³

Pressing this concept even further, Augustine makes use of the biblical story of Hezekiah, the dying king who prayed to receive a fifteen-year extension upon his life. With this illustration, Augustine provides a necessary clarification of precisely how he is employing the concept of the “created causes” and “concealed causes” previously mentioned. He achieves this clarification by arguing according to created causes or “lower, secondary causes” that Hezekiah’s body naturally appears to be preparing for death. However, according to “concealed causes”—causes “which lie in the will and foreknowledge of God”—God, in eternity past, had already determined the number of Hezekiah’s days.²⁵⁴ In light of human ignorance, it appears as though Hezekiah receives a bonus or extension of fifteen years of life; however, from God’s perspective,

²⁵² *De Trin.* X, 3; See also *Ibid.*, 4 and 5.

²⁵³ See 91n199.

²⁵⁴ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VI, 17, 28.

according to Augustine, this “extension” is a “necessity” resident within the foreknowledge of God. Apparently, God reserves room within His original created order to involve Himself in ways that are unknown to humanity until He decides to reveal them. This entry present within Augustine’s writing is another example of what I have dubbed transworld incognizance.

Augustine completes this previous entry by insightfully acknowledging two very important qualifications that will ultimately impact God’s ability to act within any possible world. First, Augustine contends that if indeed God reserved concealed causes to His own will, then these causes are not “dependent on the necessity of those which he created.”²⁵⁵ If God reserved room within original creation such that the freewill choices of Adam and Eve would not prohibit God from introducing His reserved will, then He would still be able to act within the set parameters of a possible world without violating His own self-imposed limitations that were fixed the moment that creatures with moral competencies came into being. This is the second qualification—God must act within His own self-imposed limitations—as was previously established within my argument, and this conclusion is precisely that which Augustine reaches: “[T]hese [causes] which he reserved to his own will cannot be contrary to those which he set up in creation by his will, because God’s will cannot be contrary to itself.”²⁵⁶ These concealed causes may provide a window for God to act through “immaterial irregularities” to overcome the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships. God’s prerogative to act through those causes, which are reserved to His own foreknowledge, is not “dependent on the necessity of those [lower, secondary causes] which he created” but He must act in accordance with His

²⁵⁵ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VI, 18, 29.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

will.²⁵⁷

N.T. Wright, perhaps somewhat relying upon Augustine, casts even further light upon these complex Augustinian concepts that have a primary role to play in the soul/ body relationship.²⁵⁸ Wright, in agreement with Augustine, gleans numerous insights surveying Paul's comments about the soul/body problem through the lens of Genesis 1 and 2: "The key to understanding the next fifteen verses [1 Corinthians 15:35-49] is to realize that they . . . are built on the foundation of Genesis 1 and 2."²⁵⁹ As a result of this foundational key to unlocking 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, some parallels can be drawn between Augustine's concepts of "created causes" and "concealed causes," (which Augustine believes are resident within the creation account) and what Wright identifies as "continuity" and "discontinuity." Both men, following Paul's lead, employ the imagery of seeds; "seeds" conceal potential future realities.²⁶⁰ Wright, commenting upon 1 Corinthians 15:36-8, explains through the concept of continuity and discontinuity how one thing can issue from another within which it is concealed and yet still be different:

[Paul] argues first for discontinuity within continuity: the plant is not the same thing as the seed, and yet is derived from it by the creator's power (verses 36-8). . . . Paul is setting up categories from the created order to provide a template of understanding for the new creation, to which he then turns. The new, resurrected body will be in continuity and discontinuity with the present one, not least because the present one is 'corruptible'

²⁵⁷ In a world full of possibilities and necessities, Augustine concludes that God's "will is what [ultimately] imposes necessity on things" (*The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VI, 15, 26).

²⁵⁸ Wright acknowledges, in reference to this passage in 1 Cor 15:42-9, that Augustine already recognized "the nature of the new body" in *Enchiridion*, 91 (N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, vol. 3 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, 1st North American ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 347n104). Clearly in this excerpt from *Enchiridion*, in addition to a number of passages already discussed in this dissertation, Augustine is wrestling with concepts he derives from Paul in conjunction with the creation narrative.

²⁵⁹ Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 340; see also 334.

²⁶⁰ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VI, 11, 18.

whereas the new one will be ‘incorruptible.’²⁶¹

Wright recognizes “categories from the created order” that Paul uses to provide a template for a better understanding of the resurrected body. Taking nothing from Wright, especially since in some respects his explanations are more suited for contemporary understanding, the categories of which he writes—discontinuity within continuity—supply even greater insights into the thoughts of Augustine on this topic of the soul/body problem.

While struggling to answer the soul/body problem, Augustine exercises an extreme degree of humility to the point that he even favorably welcomes future minds, like Wright, to wrestle with this idea of God having created concealed causes within created causes simultaneously within original creation. According to Augustine, God in six days simultaneously made all things—including souls—things present and things to come by inserting the things to come into the things present:²⁶² “[S]o he had both finished them because of the limit set to all the different kinds of things, and begun them because of the extension of the ages into the future. . . . But if there is a better way in which this can all be understood, not only shall I make no objection, I shall also be positively in its favor.”²⁶³ Augustine opens a gateway into a better understanding of the soul/body problem from the categories—“created causes” and “concealed causes”—which he initially employs to harmonize what he sees as two creation accounts. In my view, a correlation can be shown whereby Wright, with Augustine’s fifth century blessing, essentially repurposes these two categories from Augustine’s two creation accounts by brilliantly reclassifying them—“discontinuity within continuity”—as a means by which not only to better

²⁶¹ Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 341.

²⁶² See 127n294 for Augustine’s somewhat traducianistic view of the soul.

²⁶³ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VII, 28, 42.

understand Paul’s argument of how resurrected bodies can grow out of mortal bodies but also how the soul/body problem can be better understood. There exists a correlation between concealed causes which were reserved within created causes (Augustine) and discontinuity within continuity (Wright). For those who may still question the connection, it is evident that Augustine intended his concept to behave as a catalyst for all that would emerge from God’s simultaneous initialization of all things in original creation—including souls present and souls to come—by the mere fact that he consistently challenges the reader to explain how Scripture can both assert that “*God rested on the seventh day from all his works* (Gn 2:2), which the book of Genesis says, and that *he is working until now* (Jn 5:17), which is what the Lord says.”²⁶⁴ Therefore, Augustine was able to foresee future souls in Adam, including, as we saw earlier, the composite “mud of Christ,” which is a coalescing of the “earth” of the Virgin and the “water” of the Holy Spirit.²⁶⁵

By placing an emphasis upon the continuity and discontinuity between the natural body and the resurrected body in Paul’s argument, Wright can properly distinguish between the body, soul, and spirit, ultimately shedding some light upon the soul/body problem. Cleaving to Paul’s metaphor of seeds in 1 Corinthians 15:35–49, Wright tracks both the logic and the language of the apostle. Working from Paul’s concept of a bodily or fleshly resurrection, Wright concedes that the dead body of a believer that enters the ground is not the same body that rises: “[P]aul is . . . arguing for a bodily resurrection very different from a mere resuscitation. A seed does not come to life by being dug up, brushed down and restored to its pristine seediness.”²⁶⁶ It is as

²⁶⁴ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VII, 28, 41.

²⁶⁵ See 107n233.

²⁶⁶ Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 342.

though attached to the corpse of the deceased believer is a toe tag with an advance directive under the name of the person which states “do not resuscitate.” Cadavers cannot be resuscitated. Wright, clarifying another Pauline illustration, argues that not only will there be no mere resuscitation of the dead body, but neither will the resurrected body simply emerge after burial “in the same way that an oak grows from a planted acorn.”²⁶⁷ In Augustinian fashion, after exhaustively stating what the body of resurrection is not, Wright simplifies the distinction he believes Paul is making between continuity and discontinuity or rather discontinuity within continuity, which eventually results in a radical, newly clothed resurrected body: “The basic image speaks of continuity (the corn growing from the seed), but Paul here stresses the discontinuity: seed and plant are not identical. You do not sow a cauliflower, nor do you serve cauliflower-seed with roast beef. Paul is careful to describe the present body, the ‘seed’, as ‘naked’: it is not yet ‘clothed’ as one day it will be. When given its new *soma* [body] it will no longer be ‘naked’.”²⁶⁸ Wright emphasizes both the difference between the seed and the plant and that the seed—the present body, is naked.

After establishing the seminal logic of Paul’s metaphor, Wright is now ready to analyze the use of language at what he, like Augustine before him, contends is the pinnacle of Paul’s argument.²⁶⁹ Wright, underscoring the Greek in the same way Augustine before him, according to Hill, stresses the Latin, exercises extreme precision by focusing upon two different bodies—*soma psychikon* (σῶμα ψυχικόν) and *soma pneumatikon* (σῶμα πνευματικόν) within 1

²⁶⁷ Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 343.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 344.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 347, 347n104.

Corinthians 15:44.²⁷⁰ Given the larger context, Wright explains how Paul’s use of four contrasts playfully mingle to produce an unmistakable interpretation of the nature of the body that the resurrection will yield:

Paul continues with the language of sowing and harvesting, knowing it here to be metaphorical: “It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown as a *soma psychikon* [body embodying soul], it is raised as a *soma pneumatikon* [body embodying spirit].” These four contrasts are mutually explanatory. The first is the main thing Paul wishes to stress at the level of the *nature* of the new body; the last, as the sequel will show, is the point which explains how it is all achieved.²⁷¹

Paul, exercising the use of gradational contrasts in each of these four sentences, according to Wright, denotes the birth of a new body that was not only previously inconceivable but was concealed. But exactly what kind of body is actually produced by what is sown? Wright utilizes the descriptive adjectives—“corruption” and “incorruption” modifying each of the two bodies—*soma psychikon* and *soma pneumatikon* within this verse, in addition to a comparison of another verse within this same letter, in order to more fully exegete this passage: “The two sorts of ‘body’, the present corruptible one and the future non-corruptible one, are, respectively, *psychikon* and *pneumatikon*; the first word is derived from *psyche*, frequently translated ‘soul’, and the second from *pneuma*, normally translated ‘spirit’. In 1 Corinthians 2.14–15, the *psychikos* person does not receive the things of the spirit, because they are spiritually discerned, while the *pneumatikos* person discerns everything.”²⁷² By comparing the use of *psychikos* and *pneumatikos* in two separate places within the same letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 2:14-15 and 1 Cor 15:44), Wright demonstrates that Paul is clearly addressing “physical” people within the

²⁷⁰ See 110n243 and 110n244.

²⁷¹ Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 347, 347n104. I have bracketed Augustine’s terms in this verse to assist the reader in following the argument (*The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VI, 19, 30).

²⁷² Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 349.

church of Corinth but that fact is not his primary concern. Instead, Paul's use of these terms in Chapter 2 refer specifically to what is driving the person—the Spirit of God or the soul of man. An individual who receives her direction from the *psychikos* (soul), as opposed to the *pneumatikos* (spirit) is operating at a lower level than someone being directed by the *pneumatikos*.²⁷³

To plainly communicate the importance of Paul's thought behind 1 Corinthians 15:44, Wright points out that much in the way of the modern western distinction made between “physical” and “non-physical” has greatly contributed to a complete mishandling of Paul's argument. A number of modern translations have further served to increase confusion by depriving their readers of the very point Paul was striving to make, according to Wright.²⁷⁴ Wright does not hesitate to admonish the English translators of many popular translations that he believes convey the wrong idea by translating *soma psychikon* “a natural body” and *soma pneumatikon* “a spiritual body.” For instance, the *KJV*, *NIV*, and *ESV* employ the phrase “‘a natural body’ and ‘a spiritual body’” while the *RSV*, *NRSV*, *REB*, and the *CEV* use the phrase “‘a physical body’ and ‘a spiritual body’” unanimously conveying the wrong “non-physical” impression of the *soma pneumatikon*—the body that is raised—by their choice of words in translating this verse.²⁷⁵ To grasp the genuine meaning behind Paul's words, Wright contends that modern readers would do well to understand they convey less about the composition of the new body and more about what the new body will be driven by: “The adjective describes, not

²⁷³ Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 350.

²⁷⁴ See 201n445.

²⁷⁵ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 348; see also 348n107. The *CEV* has “physical bodies” and “spiritual bodies” for this verse. Wright, in agreement with Augustine, also frequently mentions that the context of Paul's argument does not support the Platonic idea of soul escape whereby the soul jettisons the physical body in order to ascend to the stars (Ibid., 346, 349).

what something is *composed of*, but what it is *animated by*. It is the difference between speaking of a ship made of steel or wood on the one hand and a ship driven by steam or wind on the other.²⁷⁶ Borrowing Augustine's terms mentioned earlier, humans, as current residents on Earth, are ensouled physical bodies driven by the soul; resurrected believers will ultimately be enspirited physical bodies driven by the Spirit. Apart from carefully exegeting this passage and, more specifically, this verse, the climax of Paul's explanation regarding the nature of the future physical body is lost on this score.²⁷⁷

Throughout the course of Wright painstakingly tracking Paul's intention of disclosing the mystery behind bodies (1 Cor 15:35-49), present and future and the animating function of both souls and the Spirit, he mentions the current state of "nakedness" of the corruptible body no less than a dozen times within this chapter.²⁷⁸ By placing an emphasis upon this condition, Wright is able to draw the reader's attention back to nakedness on display by Adam and Eve within paradise.²⁷⁹ Consequently, he echoes Paul's purpose for which current bodies serve. Specifically, that earthy bodies are not simply wasted space, nor do they merely circumscribe a soul that is desperately trying to escape, but they will be sown a *soma psychikon* (ensouled physical bodies *driven by* the soul) and raised a *soma pneumatikon* (enspirited physical bodies *driven by* the Spirit): "[Christians, in the resurrection,] will not lose their bodies; nor will they be found 'naked' (verse 37). They will 'put on a new suit of clothes', will be given a new type of physicality, whose primary characteristic, the first in the list in verses 42-4, is that it cannot wear

²⁷⁶ Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 352.

²⁷⁷ See 109n240 and 110n243.

²⁷⁸ Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 343–371.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 344.

out, cannot corrupt, cannot die.”²⁸⁰ This, too, is reminiscent of what happened in paradise when God clothed Adam and Eve, after the Fall, and then drove them from the Garden of Eden.²⁸¹

However, instead of outwardly wearing temporal garments of skin that simply shield their bodies from the elements of shame, resurrected saints will be inwardly transformed in preparation to “put on” an eternal, incorruptible physicality radiating with honor in the presence of God by virtue of wearing the image of the Messiah.²⁸²

The relationship between the soul and the body for Paul, according to both Wright and Augustine, involves deciphering how the current state of being human—“corruptible physicality” transpired in the first place, which is why Genesis 1 and 2, as we saw earlier, are foundational to his explanation. Next is to realize that “corruptible physicality,” even in its current state, still has something to contribute to future “non-corruptible physicality” and is not simply a prison to be escaped. Therefore, the climax of Wright’s explanation is unambiguously to display the harmony between present and future bodily existence beyond the incoherence that currently exists between the two states of being: “The point of it all has been that, despite the discontinuity between the present mode of corruptible physicality and the future world of non-corruptible physicality, there is an underlying continuity between present bodily life and future bodily life,

²⁸⁰ Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 357–358.

²⁸¹ Gen 2:21.

²⁸² Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 313, 347, 365–368, 373. Cross referencing 2 Cor 5:2, 4, Wright places an emphasis upon the current state of a believer’s body not only yearning for a new body, but also in what way the new body will clothe the present body: “Here [Paul] says that we who are in the present body are longing to ‘put on over the top’ (*ependusasthai*) the new body. . .” (Ibid., 367). Augustine also places an emphasis on this very point demonstrating how the garments of skin in Genesis typologically point to the Incarnation of Christ. Christ clothed Himself with human flesh so that humanity could be clothed with the image of the Messiah: “[Those submissive to him] are no longer to place confidence in themselves, but rather to become weak. They see at their feet divinity become weak by his sharing in our ‘coat of skin’ (Gen. 3:21). In their weariness they fall prostrate before this divine weakness which rises and lifts them up” (*Confessions* VII, xviii). See also *Confessions*, VII, xix.

and that this gives meaning and direction to present Christian living.”²⁸³ The discontinuity between the two modes, present and future, stems from the fragmentation–corruptible physicality of the human constitution, activated, or better yet triggered, by the Fall. Finally, herein lies the fundamental relationship between Augustine’s concepts of “created causes” and “concealed causes,” (which Augustine believes are built-in within the creation account) and what Wright has identified as “continuity” and “discontinuity.” Resident within Wright’s concept of discontinuity within continuity is an idea extremely similar to Augustine’s:

[Over] and above [the] natural course and operation of things, the power of the creator has in itself the capacity to make from all these things something other than what their seminal formulae, so to say, prescribe—not however anything with which he did not so program them that it could be made from them at least by him. He is almighty, for sure, but with the strength of wisdom, not unprincipled might. . . . So then there is one standard for things according to which this plant germinates in this way, that one in that, this age gives birth, that one does not, a human being can speak, an animal cannot. The formulae for these and suchlike standards are not only in God, but have also been inserted by him in created things and set fermenting in them. But that a wooden rod cut out of the ground, quite dead and polished smooth, entirely without roots, without earth and water, should suddenly flower and bear fruit; that a woman barren throughout her youth should give birth in old age; that a donkey should talk, and anything else there may be of that sort—all this he did indeed give to the natures he created so that these things too could be made from them.²⁸⁴

The concept of discontinuity within this passage is clearly evident within the first sentence. As long as He programs created things accordingly, present within God’s power is the capacity to bring forth something “other than what their seminal formulae . . . prescribe.” God has the capability to create things that have other things, even things that seem contrary to the postlapsarian natural or physical order, concealed within them.²⁸⁵ It may just be a matter of time, which Augustine compares to fermentation, before these things are made evident. However, “a

²⁸³ Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 359.

²⁸⁴ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, IX, 17, 32.

²⁸⁵ See 113n254.

matter of time” is just a manner of speaking because God, if He so chooses—or rather, if he previously chose in His foreknowledge—can bypass the normal intervals of time.²⁸⁶

Characteristically, Augustine then supplies three very helpful biblical examples—deadwood, a dead womb, and a talking donkey—to illustrate his basic idea. The best of the three examples for the purpose of the current argument is the dead wooden rod that suddenly bears fruit. Contrary to everything currently understood within the field of botany, Aaron’s rod miraculously blossomed (Num 17:8). This blossoming dead wood no longer in need of the animating force of roots, water, and soil, categorically falls within the bounds of discontinuity within continuity and lends itself, at least metaphorically, to the idea of resurrected bodies. Something beyond the natural order is behaving as its animating force. Furthermore, if, according to Augustine, God’s power has the capacity to sow concealed causes within original creation that are fermenting within created causes, then this means concealed causes conceived in paradise and that survive the Fall can also manifest themselves in the present age. According to the biblical explanation of the Fall, changes in conditions do occur both in the world of nature and man. Perhaps the disobedient choice of Adam and Eve detonates a series of concealed causes that were resident within creation as a divine fail-safe to counteract the effects of sin upon nature and the human constitution. These causes, known only to God in His foreknowledge, allow for the necessity of what I have previously dubbed activating transworld conditions (ATC) or conditions upon ignition that allow God to act. These conditions not only transcend the choices of men but also transcend worlds—pre-Fall and post-Fall to name a few. If the Fall does not extinguish these activating transworld conditions, but instead supplies the metaphorical voltage to the blasting cap of God’s dynamic actions, then perhaps Augustine’s concept also preserves

²⁸⁶ See 111n247–112n250.

these conditions so that concealed causes resident within created causes can manifest themselves in the age to come—another possible world as well. Put plainly, if God writes into created causes dead wood, a dead womb, and a virgin womb that can blossom with life, then perhaps within His power is the capacity to cause a new spirit driven physicality, in some mysterious way, to grow out of the old soul driven physicality. Furthermore, perhaps He can achieve this miracle through resurrection as a result of preexisting conditions that He reserved to His will by inserting them into the original creation of man.

Patristic Implications of the Mind/ Body Problem

Augustine's observations about the mind/ body problem provide a bountiful harvest of implications that will greatly assist in developing a defense against the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships. Epistemically aware of his cognitive limitations, Augustine approaches the relationship between the soul and the body with caution and humility by hesitating to state anything with absolute certainty regarding the soul.²⁸⁷ The biblical view of the creation of man, the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Christ, as well as the resurrection of believers all play a significant role in shaping the ideas of Augustine in the soul/ body equation. For example, by applying his literal hermeneutic to Genesis Chapters 1 and 2, Augustine is able to disclose valuable insights about the soul's direct relationship to the human body: First the anatomical position is adapted to the rational soul which gave rise to the upright posture of the human body—physical posture influences the upward focus of the soul.²⁸⁸ And second, the point

²⁸⁷ See p. 97n205.

²⁸⁸ Stating the converse of this example is also true, "the upward focus of the soul influences physical posture;" however, because of the Fall, Augustine implies that humans requires signs to point them in the right direction. In this case the physical body behaves as an aid to the soul by encouraging a higher point of focus. See Chapter 7 for Augustine's understanding of signs that signify other things.

of contact between the “puff” of God, the human soul, and the human face results in the sensory-rich environment of the human face.²⁸⁹ Genesis, therefore, behaves as a key to uncovering the origin of the soul or at least the place to begin in the soul/ body problem for Augustine.

Furthermore, by placing an emphasis upon the Christocentricity of the Scriptures and using the New Testament to decipher the Hebrew Scriptures, Augustine’s hermeneutical practices reciprocate even greater interpretive light upon the New Testament understanding of the mind/body problem.²⁹⁰

Augustine marks the futility in declaring precisely the material used in forging the soul. Did it come from angelic material, or was it a spiritual mystery material generated by God intended uniquely for mankind, or did it come into existence out of nothing?²⁹¹ After much deliberation over the material used in forming the soul, he concludes nothing except that it comes from God and is incorporeal:

I will affirm nothing as certain about the soul, which God breathed into the man by blowing into his face, except that it comes from God in such a way as not to be the substance of God and yet to be incorporeal; that is, not a body, but a spirit, not begotten of the substance of God nor proceeding from the substance of God, but made by God; and not made in such a way that the nature of any kind of body or of non-rational soul can be turned into its nature; and consequently made from nothing.²⁹²

Contradicting the Manichees, Augustine explains that the soul did not receive God’s nature upon creation, is not identical with God’s nature, is not a share of God’s nature, nor does it proceed

²⁸⁹ See pp. 99–103.

²⁹⁰ See pp. 106–107.

²⁹¹ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VII, 23, 34; 27, 39.

²⁹² Ibid., VII, 28, 43.

from the substance of God like the Son and the Holy Spirit.²⁹³ Employing the apophatic method—describing the soul by negation, Augustine refutes any notion that the soul is made from the same substance as God. Augustine’s utilization of the apophatic method may be yet another indication of identifying transworld incognizance within his work and may also be one way that he shows how to overcome transworld incognizance through the marriage of reason and divine revelation. Acknowledging what something is not, for Augustine, may provide a clearer understanding of what something is. As a result, he can affirm two things, the soul “comes from God” and is “made from nothing.”²⁹⁴

From the writings of Paul, Augustine, and Wright it becomes clear that the soul and the spirit are by no means synonymous in Scripture.²⁹⁵ Adam’s rebellion in the garden led to a spiritual death leaving him merely a “soulish” creature with a body. Physical death then not only produces a soulless body but also a bodiless soul.²⁹⁶ In contrast, upon resurrection, believers become enspirited bodies with such harmony between flesh and spirit that the spirit gives life “without need of any sustenance to the body that is subject to it.”²⁹⁷ Therefore, resurrection replaces the soul as the animating principle of the body with the spirit and provides further

²⁹³ See also p. 98n208. Hill notes this last point to highlight the distinction that Augustine is making between the substance of the soul and the divine procession of the Son and the Spirit from the substance of God (Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 345n30).

²⁹⁴ Although Augustine holds a somewhat Traducianist view of the soul, Traducianism does permit the first soul—Adam’s soul, to be created *ex nihilo* (Dennis J. Billy, “Traducianism as a Theological Model in the Problem of Ensoulment,” *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (1989): 19). Billy notes that one scholar goes so far as to describe Augustine as a “traducianistically modified creationist” (Ibid., 24). He continues that Augustine struggles to find complete satisfaction regarding the origin of the soul: “Indeed, two years before his death, he asserted quite plainly that, with regard to the origin of the soul, he did not know with certainty whether each soul comes from the first man (traducianism) or whether it is created directly by God (creationism) [*Retractationes* 1.1.3]” (Ibid.).

²⁹⁵ See p. 109n243.

²⁹⁶ See p. 104n227.

²⁹⁷ See p. 109n240.

clarification regarding the mind/ body problem.²⁹⁸ The primary emphasis in 1 Corinthians 15:44 is upon what is driving the person—the Spirit of God or the soul of man. According to Augustine and Wright, in contrast to Plato’s view of soul escape, Paul offers a solution to the mind/ body problem by way of a new type of physicality whereby the resurrection body is driven by the Spirit of God.²⁹⁹

Present within the work of both Augustine and Wright is then a playful relationship between composition and animation. Relying upon the writings of Paul, both men conclude that the composition of the body is physical; however, the animation of the body is driven by either the soul (fallen humanity) or the Spirit (resurrected humanity). One body (the present) is naked; the other body (the future) is clothed in the resurrection. Considering this understanding, the composition of the physical body is extremely important, but even more important to both men is precisely what is animating the body. Employing the Incarnation as the model, Christ having a human soul allows Himself to be driven by the Spirit and freely acquiesces to physical nakedness so humans can be clothed with the Spirit. Adam and Eve, on the one hand, driven by the soul, realizing they were naked, ran and hid from the presence of God (Gen 3:8). Christ, on the other hand, conscious of humanity’s nakedness, bearing the cross, driven by the Spirit, willingly followed the path to the place of his execution whereby his nakedness was on display as an exhibit to the entire world. Therefore, in a similar way that the Father clothed Adam and Eve with garments of skin (Gen 3:21)—typological of the Incarnation—He ultimately provided spiritual skin, through the sacrifice of His Son, for all of humanity so that humanity could be clothed with the image of His Son—the Messiah. Driven by the Spirit, those who submit to Christ

²⁹⁸ See pp. 110n244 and 118-119.

²⁹⁹ See p. 110n244 and 120n276.

will no longer experience nakedness primarily as soulish creatures longing for a new body (2 Cor 5: 2, 4) and “no longer [placing] confidence in themselves” but by becoming weak, like Christ, will be clothed with a new physicality—a body embodying spirit “without need of any sustenance to the body that is subject to it.”³⁰⁰

Another major implication that was made within this chapter is that both Augustine and Wright explain the possible existence of concealed causes within created causes or discontinuity within continuity. If God correctly programs created things, present within God’s power is the capacity to bring forth something “other than what their seminal formulae . . . prescribe.”³⁰¹ God has the capability to create things that have other things, even things that seem contrary to the postlapsarian natural or physical order, concealed within them. And if, according to Augustine, God’s power has the capacity to sow concealed causes within original creation that are fermenting within created causes, then this means concealed causes conceived in paradise and that survive the Fall can also manifest themselves in the present age. These concealed causes may be yet another indication of identifying transworld incognizance within Augustine’s work and may also be another way that he shows how to overcome transworld incognizance by submitting mankind’s limited cognitive abilities to causes known only to God in His foreknowledge. According to the biblical explanation of the Fall, changes in conditions do occur both in the world of nature and man. Perhaps, as previously stated, the disobedient choice of Adam and Eve detonates a series of concealed causes—primarily the series of causes necessary

³⁰⁰ See p. 109n240 and 122n280. Wright places an emphasis upon the current state of a believer’s body not only yearning for a new body, but also in what way the new body will clothe the present body: “Here [Paul] says that we who are in the present body are longing to ‘put on over the top’ (*ependusasthai*) the new body. . .” (Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 367). Christ clothed Himself with human flesh so that humanity could be clothed with the image of the Messiah, according to Augustine: “In their weariness they fall prostrate before this divine weakness which rises and lifts them up” (Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, xviii and xix).

³⁰¹ See 123n284.

to bring about the Incarnation—that were resident within creation as a divine fail-safe to counteract the effects of sin upon nature and the human constitution. These causes, known only to God in His foreknowledge, allow for the necessity of what I have previously dubbed activating transworld conditions (ATC) or conditions upon ignition that allow God to act. These conditions not only transcend the choices of men, in this case the rebellion of Adam and Eve, but also transcend worlds—pre-Fall and post-Fall to name a few. Finally, if the Fall does not extinguish these activating transworld conditions, but instead supplies the metaphorical voltage to the blasting cap of God’s dynamic actions, then perhaps Augustine’s concept also preserves these conditions so that concealed causes resident within created causes can manifest themselves in the age to come as well. Put plainly, if God writes into created causes deadwood that can blossom with flowers and a virgin womb that can blossom with the life of His Incarnate Son, then perhaps within His power is the capacity to cause a new spirit driven physicality, in some mysterious way, to grow out of the old soul driven physicality in the age to come as well. Furthermore, perhaps He can achieve this miracle through resurrection because of preexisting conditions that He reserved to His will by inserting them into the original creation of man.

CHAPTER 6: OVERCOMING TRANSWORLD INCOGNIZANCE THROUGH A SYNTHESIS OF PATRISTIC AND MODERN EXEGESIS

Components of a Patristic Christological Method

At this point in the argument, it is necessary to integrate the cumulative Patristic Christological material amassed in Chapters 2–5 for the sake of identifying the components necessary to construct a method for building a defense against the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships. The act of the Incarnation itself contains reconciliatory lessons that aid the Fathers in the development of Christological hermeneutics that aims to follow the pattern or example of God’s method of expanding human understanding of the divine. Stated previously, Athanasius was compelled to use Nicene terminology; Augustine was compelled to use Greek philosophy. And according to both men, Christ was compelled by grace to be constrained to the embodiment of humanity. If Christ could use fallen human nature as a method to enlighten and restore humanity, then Athanasius (Chapter 3–Christological Anthropology), Augustine (Chapter 4–Christological Psychology and Chapter 5–Mind/Body Problem), and even Cyril (Chapter 2–Christological Epistemology) could use fallen human philosophy to correct what was still lacking in human understanding.³⁰² Following the practices of Christ, Athanasius, Augustine, and Cyril, in the process of offering a defense against the modern philosophical problem of suffering, I plan to continue using the text of these Patristic writers in conjunction with modern scholars to develop a Patristic Christological hermeneutic to analyze biblical narratives. Therefore, constructing a method for building a defense will be accomplished by consolidating three questions over the following three chapters that bear heavily upon God’s ability to respond to the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships: 1. Why are higher-level freewill,

³⁰² Daley, *God Visible*, 25, 196, and 278. See 89n196 in this dissertation to review an extensive discussion on the Patristic use of philosophy to achieve a certain degree of hermeneutical sophistication.

sentient creatures unable to detect God acting in any world? Answering this question will require a more thorough familiarity with what I have dubbed transworld incognizance (TWI). 2. How should higher-level freewill, sentient creatures expect God to act in any world should He decide to involve Himself in the fight against the problem of suffering? This question will consider the conduit of immaterial irregularities through which God could justifiably act should He decide to do so. And finally, 3. precisely what should higher-level freewill, sentient creatures expect God acting in any world to resemble? Answering this question will focus primarily upon the Incarnation as God's means to act in categories detectable to higher-level freewill, sentient creatures in any possible world.

Transworld Incognizance

Preliminary Conditions upon Divine Activity in Any World

To what extent is God able to intercept evil on behalf of higher-level sentient creatures? As Hume suggested, a good God should be expected to run divine interference to rescue humans from their own proclivity to choose evil. He should be willing to intrude into any possible world where the prospect of evil and suffering is present. Additionally, we should expect a benevolent God to include within His creation a way to safeguard humanity should they happen to choose evil. As we saw earlier, Hume may be right in thinking that a perfectly good God should counteract the problem of evil and suffering in some way, but Plantinga's observations reveal to do so, God must behave within certain, self-imposed limitations that were set the moment creatures with moral competencies came into being.³⁰³ Furthermore, not to act within the

³⁰³ Stated previously, according to Plantinga, there exists certain limitations upon God's character, person, and nature: "[N]ot even an omnipotent being can bring about logically impossible states of affairs or cause necessarily false propositions to be true" (Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 17). Augustine already came to this conclusion in his own writings: "[N]ot even [God] is more powerful than himself" (Augustine, *The Literal Meaning*

framework of free moral creatures subject to natural laws would itself be a violation of justice because God would not only be guilty of expecting humans to behave in certain ways that they were never capable of in the first place, but He Himself would also demonstrate that these expectations were never able to be fully met apart from divine domination. The moment that God relies “exclusively” upon divine attributes, divorced from the context of natural laws and the subsequent consequences of free moral choices, to overcome the evil intentions of freewill creatures—Hume’s demand—He demonstrates that Creation was engineered for human moral failure from the beginning. However, acting within these limitations—natural laws and the subsequent consequences of free moral choices—God may be able to justifiably satisfy His own demands that He placed upon humanity from the beginning, as well as some of Hume’s demands at the same time, while simultaneously enhancing the free will of creatures by aiding the process of their own cognitive growth and increasing their ability to personally identify and understand the reality of their choices and the Creator of their reality.

Specifically, by acting the way Hume desires, God may be guilty of the very thing He is trying to prevent—evil and suffering. Part of the reason for this conclusion is that to act according to Hume’s suggestion, God may be doing so in a way that leaves higher-level freewill, sentient creatures completely oblivious to His action. The result would be an illusory world in which the residents were deceived into thinking that their actions (good and evil) carried just consequences or benefits, real weight. However, the reality of such a world would be lopsided in such a way that every choice—both good and evil—would be met with benevolent results.

of *Genesis* IX, 17, 32; see also VI, 18, 29). Again, while writing about the omnipotence of God, Augustine offers specific examples of God’s incapacity “to die or be mistaken.” He then continues: “For he is called omnipotent in virtue of doing what he wills, not in virtue of having to suffer what he does not will. If anything like that should happen to him, he most certainly would not be omnipotent. But it is precisely because he is omnipotent that some things are not possible for him” (Augustine, *The City of God*, V,10).

Consider the individual who decides to get behind the wheel of a car and drive after being intoxicated to the point that she is unable to safely operate a vehicle. Should God interfere by preventing her from colliding with a tree or another vehicle, she may falsely conclude that she is invincible and immune from any consequences, never knowing why. This would prevent the creature from being able to truly identify the difference between good and evil and would only serve to further incognizance—remaining in a state of perpetual ignorance. It is good for creatures to know the suffering they inflict upon other creatures by their own choices. Otherwise, a large portion of their own choices will have absolutely no bearing upon others within their sphere of influence. All choices denigrate free will in one way or another in this scenario. This scenario nullifies the indispensable pedagogical component of choice, which aids future learning and dispels ignorance. Therefore, at what point would God have to interfere to prevent evil according to Hume’s standard? Would it be at the very moment of action? Or would it precede the act in the process of thought? Perhaps to truly be free a higher-level freewill, sentient creature must be able to conceive heinous acts in her own mind in order to benefit from rebuking herself for even concocting such an idea. Repulsion of an evil idea demonstrates free will and may behave as an intimate catalyst to reform an individual, which may also cognitively align a creature to better identify with a good creator. God allowing an individual to conceive potential evil may further provide a person with the ability to preemptively anticipate hazards; examples of troubleshooting in fields of medicine, aviation, construction, etc. are abundant. By permitting evil, higher-level freewill, sentient creatures can participate in creator-like experiences. Pressing Hume’s assertion in this section alone yields at least six potentially detrimental anthropological perspectives: an illusory world containing nothing but benevolent results, hoodwinked invincibility, a perpetual state of ignorance, and finally the nullification of any pedagogical component of choice, self-

analysis, or ability to troubleshoot.³⁰⁴

Therefore, in a possible world if God genuinely requires higher-level freewill, sentient creatures to comply with His will, it would seem to follow, if He is good, that He would also place some kind of indication of this expectation within their world. Therefore, in a possible world, God can both design and choose physical communication, which includes but is not limited to the spoken word, as His channel to sufficiently communicate His purpose and His will to be received by creaturely senses. As He communicates His expectations to some of these creatures, as stated previously, it is not improbable that they would record these communications especially if God gave the command to publish His instructions. Over time it would also become feasible to believe that others would study these divine decrees, like the Fathers—and perhaps even modern scholars—as precedents that could assist in interpreting successive divine acts, like the Incarnation. Therefore, it follows that it would be entirely permissible for a good God to place indicators (via signs, markers, and images) of Himself and His expectations within proximity to these creatures so that they can at least remain aware of what qualifies as good and evil acts, all while maintaining the ability to make volitional choices.

Furthermore, if God desires to communicate that benevolence is one of His primary characteristics, as well as an indispensable quality that He most desires to observe in the lives of higher-level, free will sentient creatures, a clear manifestation of this higher order would have to

³⁰⁴ Based upon Plantinga's observations, atheologians are often guilty of sweeping aside numerous steps before prematurely concluding that an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God is logically incoherent with the existence of evil. Plantinga further clarifies that many atheologians fail to show their work. They identify contradictions while remaining content with their assertions instead of explaining their claim (Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 11, 23). In this brief analysis I am attempting to display a few of the ways that Hume's proposal completely fails to acknowledge the benefits and detriments of the freedom to conceive, as well as choose between good and evil.

be a principal feature of His own dealings with these creatures. Therefore, in a possible world, a good God would not only demand compliance of His creation to His communication, but would also precisely model the kind of compliance He seeks from His creatures through His own actions. Once again, a demand of compliance requires creatures capable not only of understanding external requirements, but also the ability to learn from their noncompliance. Should a good God desire higher-level sentient creatures to value His words, a sufficient way to convey this idea would be for Him to value His own words.³⁰⁵

Compliance with His own communication within another world may, in and of itself, be an incarnational principle.³⁰⁶ As God preemptively inserts His word into a world of higher-level sentient creatures, He is condescending to a creaturely level by communicating in symbols that are understandable to them.³⁰⁷ By inserting His word in a possible world, God can prepare higher-level sentient creatures ahead of time for divine acts He plans to implement in the future.

³⁰⁵ See 48n99 for examples of this concept resident within the Hebrew Scriptures. See also Heb 6:13–20. Augustine speaks of the second person of the Trinity as the divine inner teacher, and according to Cary He “must be no different in being from the Truth he teaches” (Cary, 100).

³⁰⁶ Vanhoozer, 161. Moltmann, 114–117. See *Incarnational Implications of a Christological Epistemology* in Chapter 2 for more details.

³⁰⁷ Vanhoozer establishes this theological hermeneutic as his primary thesis: “All textual understanding is a theological matter – an encounter with something that transcends us and has the capacity to transform us, provided that we approach it in the right spirit” (Vanhoozer, 381). In Chapter 7 Cary, wrestling particularly with Augustine’s view of the effectiveness of words, maintains that approaching textual understanding in the right spirit may be theological, but that does not mean that it is strictly supernatural: “[W]hereas Augustine is always clear that the intellect needs the inner help of God in order to see God, it is only later in his career that mere belief in Christ is also treated as a work of grace in the soul. As his thinking develops, the scope of our need for grace in effect expands outward, beginning with intellectual vision, the highest and inmost function of the soul, and eventually reaching faith, which is concerned with outward things like the words of the Gospel and the temporal dispensation of salvation in Christ. But even when Augustine becomes convinced that the inward operation of grace superintends the whole process of coming to God from the beginning of faith to the ultimate vision, he does not think of any part of the process as supernatural, in the Thomistic sense of elevating the mind beyond its natural capacities. The mind’s dependence on the power of God above it is perfectly natural, built into the very structure of Platonist ontology as well as epistemology. For what is more natural to the mind than to know the Truth? The capacity for such knowledge and such dependence is what makes a mind a mind, and developing that capacity is as natural to us as education, a process in which the mind’s eye learns to behold what it was created to see” (Cary, 101).

If the Incarnation happens to be one of those divine acts He plans to implement in a possible world in the future, as previously stated, God can preemptively and incrementally deposit communications that are recorded ahead of the advent. Upon commencement of the Incarnation, God's previous communication will already be in place. Therefore, it then becomes possible for the incarnate Son of God to reference these previously recorded divine communications that preceded the act of His Incarnation. Pointing to this divine data outside of Himself written before His Incarnation enables Christ to verify His own divine office within the biblical narrative to the higher-level sentient creatures He plans to reach with His heaven-borne message. The Gospel of Luke illustrates this point as Christ meets two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Without revealing His identity, Christ, according to the author of the gospel, attempts to explain all references to Himself throughout the writings of Scripture. Later in the passage when all of the disciples are gathered together, Christ says, "[T]hese are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures . . ." (Luke 24:44-45 (*NET*)). Proving the historical veracity of the actual events recorded in these verses is beyond the scope of this project. Furthermore, pointing to this divine data outside of Himself, not only provides verification of His divine office, but also may highlight another aspect of how God employs incarnational action by localizing divine data in time. Framing divine revelation (Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms) within nature (human writings) is not only possible but may be an intrinsic characteristic of how the deity communicates eternal truths to mortal minds.

Overcoming Transworld Incognizance Through the Necessity of Suffering

Why are higher-level freewill, sentient creatures unable to detect God acting in any world? If God deposits indications of Himself and His plans within any world, why are higher-level freewill, sentient creatures dependent upon the incarnate Christ identifying these signs? Why are they unable to detect these divine signals themselves? The answer may be transworld incognizance. Transworld incognizance simply conveys the idea that humans are cognitively finite and lack a complete intellectual understanding or awareness of their own ontological state of being at any time in any given environment and in any possible world. Any given world containing higher-level freewill, sentient creatures will also contain properties that cannot be unequivocally known by said creatures with absolute certainty. Observing the actual world may produce at least one possible explanation for these cognitive deficiencies.³⁰⁸ The problem of evil and suffering cultivates an environment for disease, which can contribute to further complicating one's perception of reality by attacking the memory. This may explain, in part, the inability to detect immaterial realities. If the actual world provides examples of cognitive deficiencies caused by the problem of evil, then perhaps, these examples point to a moment at another place, at another time, in another world (prelapsarian world), when a higher-level freewill, sentient creature made a choice that exploited transworld incognizance. If within the actual world, diet, lifestyle choices, genetic formation, and social and ecological environments can adversely affect cognitive fitness, then perhaps one possible explanation for cognitive deficiencies in the area of detecting immaterial realities is that there was an initial moment when mankind fell from a higher level of cognitive awareness to a lower

³⁰⁸ See the example of forgetfulness on p. 94 of this dissertation. See also Augustine's view of how the three parts of the brain can actually affect cognitive fitness (103n223).

state of perceived reality traditionally referred to as the Fall.

Stated earlier, further cognitive limitations may result from the possible existence of concealed causes within created causes—Augustine’s concept of discontinuity within continuity—Wright’s concept (Chapter 5—Mind/Body Problem). If God correctly programs created things, present within God’s power is the capacity to bring forth something “other than what their seminal formulae . . . prescribe.”³⁰⁹ God has the capability to create things that have other things, even things that seem contrary to the postlapsarian natural or physical order, concealed within them. And if, according to Augustine, God’s power has the capacity to sow concealed causes within original creation that are fermenting within created causes, then this means concealed causes conceived in paradise and that survive the Fall can also manifest themselves in the present age. He can create things for one world and still utilize them in another. These concealed causes may be yet another indication of identifying transworld incognizance within Augustine’s work and may be one more way that he shows how to overcome transworld incognizance by submitting mankind’s limited cognitive abilities to causes known only to God in His foreknowledge. According to the biblical explanation of the Fall, changes in conditions do occur both in the world of nature and man. Perhaps, as previously stated, the disobedient choice of Adam and Eve detonates a series of concealed causes—primarily the series of causes necessary to bring about the Incarnation—that were resident within creation as a divine fail-safe to counteract the effects of sin upon nature and the human constitution. If these causes were somehow shielded from the effects of the Fall that would make the Incarnation resulting from a virginal birth even more logically coherent. These causes, known only to God in His foreknowledge, allow for the necessity of what I have previously dubbed activating transworld

³⁰⁹ See 123n284.

conditions (ATC) or conditions upon ignition that allow God to act in any given world. These conditions not only transcend the choices of men, in this case the rebellion of Adam and Eve, as well as other higher-level sentient creatures—the serpent, but also transcend worlds—pre-Fall and post-Fall to name a few. Finally, if the Fall does not extinguish these activating transworld conditions, but instead supplies the metaphorical voltage to the blasting cap of God’s dynamic actions, then perhaps Augustine’s concept also preserves these conditions so that concealed causes resident within created causes can manifest themselves in the age to come as well—another world.

Synthesis of Patristic and Modern Exegesis

Any possible world where an omniscient being exercises His creative authority to fashion higher-level freewill, sentient creatures will result in creatures who embody finite knowledge. These creatures, in contrast to an omniscient mind, will exercise a smaller cognitive capacity not only to retain data but also to completely understand how that data harmonizes with other data. As such creatures gain access to more data, they still have a choice as to whether they are going to pursue the effort necessary to achieve an even greater understanding as to how this new data integrates with previous information. They may experience a degree of suffering as they engage in the struggle to further their progress or choose to be content with their current state of cognitive finitude, which is also evident even in the actual world. Therefore, one possible way to make progress and overcome transworld incognizance may be to gather all available resources within any given world. In the actual world, this includes engaging in the struggle to integrate old and new data.

Synthesis of Patristic and Modern Exegesis

Patristic hermeneutical practices can aid the pursuant effort necessary to achieve a greater understanding of how sagacious, Christological insights of the past can integrate with new data. Patristic hermeneutics—especially seen in the writings of Athanasius and Augustine, as well as others—develop in the process of explaining how the second person of the Trinity went beyond God to become human. The Fathers may offer much instruction to modern exegetes in the way of proper interpretation of Scripture, especially regarding the person of Christ. Balance between old hermeneutical developments and new seems to be a proper response to the history of theological exegesis. Emphasizing the idea of progressive revelation, contemporaries of both Athanasius and Augustine—the Cappadocian theologians, according to Hall, provide fundamental Patristic hermeneutical principles regarding the Old and New Testaments’ commentary about Christ: “The old must be read and interpreted in light of the new. The narrative of Scripture is a continuum progressing to a culmination in Christ. As the texts of the old covenant are watered by the revelation the new covenant brings, they themselves blossom even more fully.”³¹⁰ Just as the Old Covenant texts can more fully blossom by being read in light of the New, previously seen in the writings of Augustine, Patristic hermeneutics, if allowed, can flourish in light of modern exegetical ideas. As the texts of Patristic exegetical ideas are watered by modern exegetical ideas—as we saw earlier in the writings of N.T. Wright (Chapter 5), they themselves may blossom even more fully. If God incrementally distributes and oversees the process of biblical revelation through men to men, is it possible that He can also act within the historical development of biblical hermeneutics that emerge from men directly studying the Incarnation?

³¹⁰ Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, 92. Gregory of Nazianzus taught that God incrementally reveals His plans: “Gregory teaches that the Scripture presents with increasing clarity the purposes of God as God acts to rescue humanity from sin and its effects” (Ibid., 74).

And if indeed God governs in the affairs of men, what is the best approach to developing sound hermeneutics? William Wright recalling Ratzinger's solution, articulates his proposal of adopting a hermeneutic which strikes a balance between the insights of the past without neglecting the contributions of the present: "Christian exegesis 'cannot withdraw to the Middle Ages or the Fathers and use them as a shield against the spirit of modernity. That said, it also cannot take the opposite tack of dispensing with the insights of the great believers of all ages and of acting as if the history of thought begins in earnest only with Kant.' The kind of theological interpretation proposed by Ratzinger must genuinely be a synthesis of the wisdom found in both patristic and modern exegesis."³¹¹ Ratzinger proposes that in order for hermeneutical progress to be made, it does not have to be an "either / or," but rather a "both / and." Interestingly, he refers to this suggestion, in part, as the "history of thought." Ratzinger's proposal preserves the best of all hermeneutical methodologies from the inception of the church through the modern period and provides another possible way to counter transworld incognizance.³¹²

There is not only a history of thought (both cumulative and epistemological), but also a history of the Holy Spirit illuminating newly discovered thoughts burgeoning from within the biblical narrative. If God deposits indications of how He can act within any world to neutralize

³¹¹ William M. Wright, IV, "Patristic Biblical Hermeneutics in Joseph Ratzinger's Jesus of Nazareth," in *The Bible and the Church Fathers: The Liturgical Context of Patristic Exegesis*, vol. 7 of *Letter & Spirit*, ed. Scott W. Hahn (Steubenville: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2011), 201-202. This seems to be an idea that even Kant would endorse for Vanhoozer keenly observes that Kant himself relies, in part, on a synthesis of the wisdom found in both patristic and modern exegesis: "Interestingly, with regard to biblical interpretation, Kant worked an Enlightenment variation on Augustine: read in such a way so as to encourage moral progress. For Kant, the highest aim for biblical interpretation—the aim of practical reason (e.g., reason's directions for human freedom)—was moral usefulness" (Vanhoozer, 446n148).

³¹² The idea of combining pre-modern hermeneutics with modern is not a new concept. Thiselton contends that Gabler, concentrating his energy upon biblical theology and the recipient of much criticism for combining the precritical with the critical method, made a distinction, based upon historical investigation, between true biblical theology and universally pure biblical theology: "Doctrine is historically contingent on time and place. The theology of the Bible in its time and place is 'true' (wahr) biblical theology; 'pure' (rein) biblical theology is not conditioned by time and place, but is abstracted from 'true' biblical theology" (Thiselton, 123).

the problem of evil and suffering, then it would be prudent to identify how others have tracked His movement over time throughout history. Hall, reflecting upon the words of Thomas Oden—a modern proponent of calling scholars back to the church fathers through Paleo-Orthodoxy—a term he coined in defiance of neo-orthodoxy—encourages students of Christianity to embrace the cumulative history of biblical exegesis.³¹³ “We need to read widely and deeply, avoiding the temptation to study only modern authors and exegetes. Thomas Oden rightly insists that the Holy Spirit has a history. Christians have been reading and exegeting the Bible for centuries. This history of exegesis, too often the domain of professional historical theologians and historians of biblical interpretation, has largely been ignored by the broader Christian community.”³¹⁴ To better understand Christianity, modern scholars would do well to acknowledge the history of thought surrounding the interpretation of biblical concepts. Hermeneutics drive how a book is understood. Jasper writes that when a book like the Bible has significant history, to properly understand it, it must be understood in light of how it has been understood: “Understanding a book is not simply a matter of looking at how it was written, but also the history of how it has been read and accepted authoritative.”³¹⁵ If God has the ability to deposit indications of His existence within history, and if this history is written by way of the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit in cooperation with human authors—Scripture, then is it possible that God through the Holy Spirit could also play a role in acting in the actual world—or any world—by overseeing post-biblical theological insights?

³¹³ Oden, responding to students who were curious to know which school of modern theology he subscribed, began identifying as paleo-orthodox. His desire was to encourage students to familiarize themselves with the writings of the Fathers, something he felt had been lost on neo-orthodoxy (Thomas C. Oden, *A Change of Heart: A Personal and Theological Memoir*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 160-161).

³¹⁴ Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, 184-185.

³¹⁵ Jasper, 2.

If God does superintend post-biblical theological insights, “a synthesis of the wisdom found in both patristic and modern exegesis” may offer even greater access to how God may act in any world to counter the problem of evil and suffering. If Christ is the culmination of the narrative in Scripture, and if the text of the old covenant blossoms more fully by the revelation of the new covenant, then perhaps the new covenant may blossom more fully by insights found in Patristic writings, and the Patristic writings may blossom more fully when read and interpreted in light of modern scholarship.³¹⁶ As a modern scholar, Hume, himself, may be employing this exact same technique by resurrecting ancient Epicurean questions that he feels have yet to be adequately answered. The bulk of this book has been an attempt to build a defense against the problem of suffering by employing this hermeneutical formula. A contemporary example of harmonizing New Testament hermeneutical practices with more modern hermeneutical practices can be seen through the lens of redaction criticism. Jasper reveals that redaction critics employ the same hermeneutic used by the evangelist to write the Gospel of Matthew: “The evangelist’s concern is to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible. . . . [T]he evangelist reads the Hebrew Bible in the light of later events, and he reads later events in the light of the Hebrew Bible—a perfectly good hermeneutic circle.”³¹⁷ An omniscient being

³¹⁶ From prophecy foretold to the fulfillment of prophecy, the Bible not only displays a rich progressive heritage of interpreting the old in light of the new, but it also encourages future interpreters to understand and apply past biblical concepts to their own contemporary events: “The debate about whether texts are determinate and subject to one ‘literal’ interpretation or indeterminate and subject to multiple ‘spiritual’ interpretations is hardly new. Indeed, in Jewish and early Christian exegesis, most interpreters took for granted that a biblical text had more than one sense. What is more, early Jewish and Christian thinkers, far from worrying about multiple meanings, actually seemed to revel in them. The ability to ascribe some meaning other than the obvious one was considered a necessary condition of the Bible’s relevance. The Bible itself reworks earlier texts in order to make them applicable to later situations: ‘As the rabbis, Augustine, and Luther knew, the Bible, despite its textual heterogeneity, can be read as a self-glossing book. There is a world of difference, however, between the older Christian allegorists and their newer, post-Christian counterparts. For while the early Christians did indeed find meanings beyond the letter, these meanings were usually limited in number and always subject to theological constraints” (Vanhoozer, 113). Christ provides an example within the New Testament Matt 24:4-44. In this passage, He both warns the reader to remain alert and, upon seeing certain events, to understand the times.

³¹⁷ Jasper, 30.

occupying any possible world with higher-level freewill, sentient creatures has the ability to act with the end in mind as seen in the Gospel of Matthew. He can conceal divine purposes from finite creatures that will become evident in the future, which will, in turn, cast greater light upon divine acts of the past.

Better Desires / Better Relationships

As we wrestle with the effort necessary to achieve greater cognitive awareness, we encounter questions that may further clarify the purpose of suffering caused by broken relationships, as well as, how God may counteract suffering. The initial question, “If suffering exists, as human experience demonstrates, why does God allow it?” engenders deeper cognitive exercise, which spawns ancillary inquiry. Does suffering caused by broken relationships serve a good purpose, and, if so, what might that purpose be? Considering this Patristic problem in light of modern scholarship, Swinburne hints at a practical description of God’s purpose for suffering by which God awakens humans to a much higher good: “[I]t is good . . . for God to provide . . . temporary spurs and deterrents in regard to the action of seeking God If we neglect such actions because we yield to mundane desires for food and drink, fame and fortune, it is good that these should be frustrated (temporarily); and that means suffering. The existence of God has the consequence that frustration of desire provides an opportunity to develop better the desires whose fulfilment lies outside this world.”³¹⁸ God exploits temporary suffering, which includes suffering resulting from broken relationships, to breed discontent with one’s present station in this earthly life in order to develop better desires for something—a relationship, beyond what this world has to offer. Suffering, therefore, allows humans to gather data based upon personal

³¹⁸ Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 202, doi:10.1093/0198237987.001.0001.

experience. This data leads to knowledge, which better enables individuals to make more informed choices. Opportunities, masked by suffering, provide higher-level freewill, sentient creatures the means by which choices are made for good or for evil in shaping character and framing the ultimate destiny of the soul.³¹⁹ Determining how this process unfolds can be extremely rewarding to one who strives to discover God's chief end of suffering, which may be for humans to overcome their broken relationship with their Creator and to enter communion with Him. Suffering, therefore, may be necessary in order for a person to truly come to know the theistic God. Explaining how God could employ suffering to cultivate relationships with humans will be achieved in three ways: 1. Reasons how suffering stimulates discontent for terrestrial desires and simultaneously awakens a longing for something beyond this present worldly existence will be examined. 2. Ways how God may use this discontentment by cultivating both negative (punishment) and positive (supererogation) opportunities for growth will be considered. And finally, 3. modern scholars will be challenged to consider the likely possibility that God, if He exists, must allow suffering for individuals to freely participate in forming their own souls and choosing their own destiny.

Suffering Precedes Knowledge

Belief that a greater good or a lesser evil exists on the other side of suffering precedes knowledge. A desire for something better or to avoid something worse is driven by a belief that seduces higher-level freewill, sentient creatures to acquire knowledge. Swinburne argues that the desire for the acquisition of knowledge must begin from a state of ignorance: "[A]n important choice which we each of us have with respect to our own future is the choice of whether or not to

³¹⁹ Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 167.

try to acquire knowledge, factual and moral. If we are to have these choices, we must begin in a position of (at any rate) relative ignorance. I cannot choose whether or not to bother to find out the effects of smoking if I know already. And I need ignorance of what is morally good and bad if I am to choose whether to seek the knowledge.”³²⁰ Awakening from the state of relative ignorance, according to Swinburne, requires the belief that it is possible for an individual to become better through the attainment of knowledge.³²¹ This knowledge exists on the other side of suffering. Suffering requires cognizant sentient beings who are capable of experiencing and detecting it.³²² Van Inwagen arrives at this same conclusion through the process of observing the regularities that exists within this finely tuned universe:

[N]o one . . . would take seriously the idea that conscious animals, animals conscious as a dog is conscious, could evolve naturally without hundreds of millions of years of ancestral suffering. Pain is an indispensable component of the evolutionary process after organisms have reached a certain stage of complexity. . . . I conclude that . . . for all we know: Every possible world that contains higher-level sentient creatures either contains patterns of suffering, . . . or else is massively irregular.³²³

Whether one agrees or disagrees with Van Inwagen’s theory of origins, suffering is indispensably requisite for the acquisition of knowledge in “every possible world” containing higher-level freewill, sentient creatures, for all we know. In addition to Swinburne and Van Inwagen, Cary reasons that Augustine also endorses the strategy of suffering preceding knowledge to ultimately arrive at understanding.³²⁴ The struggle of rising out of ignorance is

³²⁰ Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 141.

³²¹ Richard Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 170, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2003.

³²² Peter Van Inwagen, “The Problem of Evil, the Problem of Air, and the Problem of Silence,” in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 157, ProQuest Ebook Central.

³²³ Van Inwagen, 160. Proving or disproving evolution is beyond the scope of this project.

³²⁴ Cary, 118–119.

driven by the belief that something better—more inward and upward—exists on the other side of suffering. But this still requires a response from the sentient creature to learn from the suffering, react, and choose a different course of action to achieve better results.

Suffering, even suffering from broken relationships, whether it is chosen or thrust upon an individual, provides a necessary service, which can quickly fragment ignorance. For example, betrayal in a friendship may cause suffering but simultaneously dispel ignorance. A spouse who discovers her beloved having an affair is no longer oblivious to the deceitful practices of her husband. This heart-wrenching discovery illustrates the complexity of knowledge, especially knowledge of evil. This deplorable data is not only knowledge of an evil act but also evil knowledge that disturbs the innocent mind. Much pain may be associated with this new knowledge for many days to come, even for the couple who decides to reconcile and experiences no further breach of commitment. Ignorance is necessary for individuals to be open to cognitive improvement. If this couple decides to reconcile, it is better to remain cognitively unaware of the total effort necessary for healing to take place. Otherwise, the task may be so overwhelming at the outset of reconciliation that they prematurely abandon the process. Swinburne contends that the labor involved in securing knowledge is a potential proof for the existence of legitimate choice of destiny: “Only if the acquisition of knowledge is difficult is ignorance a serious option (for individuals, and for societies). Men would be saddled with knowledge; a crucial aspect of choice of destiny would be closed to them.”³²⁵ Had God saddled men with knowledge, according to Swinburne, they would lose the epistemic asset of choosing their own destiny. Therefore, suffering supplies an extremely personal experience for the higher-level sentient creature any

³²⁵ Richard Swinburne, “Knowledge from Experience, and the Problem of Evil,” in *The Rationality of Religious Belief: Essays in honour of Basil Mitchell*, ed. William J. Abraham and Steven W. Holtzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 163.

time that it is subject to suffering. The most reliable source of knowledge and the best guarantee of ridding oneself of ignorance, Swinburne stresses, is personal experience: “The events by far the most important for the moral significance of actions which bring them about are mental events, that is experiences of sentient beings. Most sure knowledge of the experiences caused by natural processes is to be had through having experiences oneself. One’s own experience is the surest source of knowledge of what it feels like to be burnt.”³²⁶ Swinburne continues that it is possible to observe others in pain, but one cannot truly appreciate another’s suffering unless it is personally experienced.³²⁷ Personal suffering not only dispels ignorance but also provides a familiarity with suffering that becomes the handmaiden to knowledge, as well as the knowledge of others’ pain.³²⁸

Suffering of Frustrated Desire

God can actually employ suffering in the form of temporary spurs to deter humans from sinning while simultaneously motivating them to seek Him. These temporary spurs can excise ignorance and increase knowledge of something beyond immediate gratification. Utilizing the example of punishment, Swinburne reveals how God could handicap a thief in order to frustrate his practice of stealing: “God could punish me in some way which prevented me from sinning in that way again (he could cripple me so that I could no longer pursue victims from whom I

³²⁶ Swinburne, “Knowledge from Experience,” 160.

³²⁷ Swinburne maintains that moral beliefs can also be secured by means of personal consequence: “We may acquire new moral beliefs by being shown the consequences of our actions (being shown what it is like to be insulted, by being insulted ourselves) . . .” (Richard Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement*, 166).

³²⁸ Failure in striving to understand God’s purpose for suffering, according to Wykstra, is the highest order of ignorance: “If we have realized the magnitude of the theistic proposal, cognizance of suffering thus should not in the least reduce our confidence that it is true. When cognizance [*sic*] of suffering does have this effect, it is perhaps because we had not understood the sort of being theism proposes for belief in the first place” (Stephen J. Wykstra, “The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of ‘Appearance’,” in *The Problem of Evil*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 160.

planned to steal); and preventing me from indulging the desire to pursue and steal inevitably involves the suffering of frustrated desire. . . . And earthly suffering is a spur to reform sinners against God”³²⁹ Suffering in this case is actually a sublime act by which God increases knowledge by decreasing physical mobility. God, by using evil, can prevent further evil—harm the thief inflicts upon victims. On this score, Hume’s desire for universal prevention of suffering via his understanding of divine benevolence prohibits rehabilitation and exacerbates evil. Consequently, the frustrated desire becomes a potential catalyst to lead the larcenist to God through the reforming conduit of suffering. C. S. Lewis provides an even further insight into this divine phenomenon of suffering by revealing that as long as a human is content with this existence there is no room for God: “The human spirit will not even begin to try to surrender self-will as long as all seems to be well with it. Now error and sin both have this property, that the deeper they are the less their victim suspects their existence; they are masked evil. Pain is unmasked, unmistakable evil; every man knows that something is wrong when he is being hurt.”³³⁰ Breaking the will is requisite before seeking God will even be a consideration. Lewis argues that the existence and acknowledgement of personal suffering requires very little persuasion.

God’s purpose for dispelling ignorance by way of the knowledge of personal suffering may be to initiate within higher-level sentient creatures the end for which they were created—

³²⁹ Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 196-197. Swinburne developed the concept of this illustration of divine punishment by observing three traditional reasons that those in positions of authority normally give to justify penalties for misdeeds: “For human imposers of punishment (parents and the state) there are often good utilitarian reasons for carrying out the punishment (or some part of it): the traditional three reasons of prevention, deterrence, and reform. And all these reasons are also reasons why it would be good for God sometimes to punish sinners on Earth” (Ibid., 196).

³³⁰ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, in *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 406.

union with God. He subjects humans to the necessary gestation of suffering to produce a being that is ripe for divine intercourse. Of course this is no guarantee, according to C. S. Lewis, and may even result in an epistemic miscarriage: “[T]he moment the threat is withdrawn, my whole nature leaps back to the toys Let Him but sheathe that sword for a moment and I behave like a puppy when the hated bath is over—I shake myself as dry as I can and race off to reacquire my comfortable dirtiness, if not in the nearest manure heap, at least in the nearest flower bed. And that is why tribulations cannot cease until God either sees us remade or sees that our remaking is now hopeless.”³³¹ Personal suffering increases the knowledge of the threat to one’s dominion over self. The fragile nature of humanity can only be exploited by the immediate, cognitive presence of pain and suffering. Stump reasons that suffering is God’s instrument to breed discontentment in this life to provoke humans to seek Him:

Natural evil—the pain of disease, the intermittent and unpredictable destruction of natural disasters, the decay of old age, the imminence of death—takes away a person’s satisfaction with himself. It tends to humble him, show him his frailty, make him reflect on the transience of temporal goods, and turn his affections towards other-worldly things, away from the things of this world. No amount of moral or natural evil, of course, can guarantee that a man will seek God’s help. If it could, the willing it produced would not be free. But evil of this sort is the best hope, I think, and maybe the only effective means, for bringing men to such a state.³³²

³³¹ Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 412.

³³² Eleonore Stump, “The Problem of Evil,” *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*, vol. 2: Iss. 4, article 5 (1985): 409, accessed August 23, 2020, doi:10.5840/faithphil19852443. Stump arrives upon this conclusion only after offering a solution to the historical conflict between God’s sovereignty and human responsibility: “What role God plays in man’s coming to will that God fix his will is controversial in the history of Christian thought. Some Protestant theologians have argued that God bears sole responsibility for such willing; Pelagius apparently argued that all the responsibility belongs to man. The first of these positions seems to me to have difficulties roughly analogous to those raised above by the suggestion that God might miraculously fix man’s will, and the difficulties in the second are like those in the suggestion that a man himself might fix his own will. Perhaps the correct view here too consists in postulating a cooperative divine and human effort” (Ibid., 407-408). In addition to suffering, Cary commenting upon Augustine’s use of words maintains that all external things, including beauty, should turn our affections away from this world: “For Augustine sacred signs have precisely the function of directing our attention away from themselves, indeed away from all external things. . . . Indeed the great error Augustine warns us against is to be detained by the beauty of external things when we should be looking in a different dimension altogether. All creation says in effect: ‘Not me! What you’re seeking is not here! Look higher!’” (Cary, 105).

Stump demonstrates one of the primary impediments to a relationship with God within higher-level sentient creatures is pride. God uses uncertainty and impotence, which is perhaps the only effective means to ultimately eliminate this obstacle and stimulate reflection upon the possibility of “other-worldly things.”

Opportunities to Truly Come to Know God Require Suffering and Epistemic Distance

Why does God, if He exists and greatly desires communion with humans, seem to hide Himself from those with whom He desires relationship? Should He so choose, is God capable of revealing His presence to humanity? These questions assume God does not reveal His presence. They also tend to limit the medium by which He may reveal Himself. Simply because God’s methods do not conform to the expectation of finite beings in no way negates His presence. Swinburne asserts that ignorance of God’s presence provides the environment necessary for individuals to encounter the reality of the dilemma of seeking to know Him over self: “We will be in the situation of the child in the nursery who knows that mother is looking in at the door, and for whom, in view of the child’s desire for mother’s approval, the temptation to wrongdoing is simply overborne. We need ‘epistemic distance’ in order to have free choice between good and evil.”³³³ Epistemic distance is necessary in order for higher-level sentient creatures to genuinely think that they have the freedom of choice. Opportunities for better states of existence require suffering, and suffering requires intellectual space. Even cases where suffering is the result of being caught in an evil act reveal that true reform is driven by a desire to reform from within the blameworthy individual, according to Swinburne: “Penitence involves a resolution to reform, and that can only be made by someone who has some desire to reform or sees it as a good to

³³³ Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 206.

reform. But if the penitence is half-hearted, the penitent has allowed other desires to influence him. Such a person has not firmly chosen what character he shall have; and . . . the overwhelming presence of God would inhibit such free choice of character.”³³⁴ In a fallen world suffering is the medium by which God reveals His presence and expedites the conditions necessary for human penitence. The presence of His absence permits the ignorance of His presence and provides the opportunity for wholehearted repentance.³³⁵

The “Principle of Honesty”

For humans to truly come to know God, He could not have created a world where it only seemed as though they had the opportunity to pursue Him. He could not have prearranged things in Humean order so that every time that they were going to choose to do good, he permitted the act, and every time they decided to do evil, He interfered. The reason for this has to do with a concept called the “Principle of Honesty,” according to Swinburne: “The principle is a natural extrapolation to God from the similar obligations to honesty of a human teacher. It would always be wrong for me to give a student a false piece of information, which I state to be true. But it is not always wrong for a teacher to include misleading elements in what he shows to his students,

³³⁴ Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 201.

³³⁵ C. S. Lewis imagines a conversation between Screwtape and his nephew Wormwood in which Screwtape instructs that God desires the indication of a reformed will even more so than rightly aligned desires. It is the condition of a will that is so driven by a choice of destiny that the will perseveres even in the face of God’s absence: “[God] wants them to learn to walk and must therefore take away His hand; and if only the will to walk is really there He is pleased even with their stumbles. Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do our Enemy’s will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys” (C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, in *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 142). Christ is the exemplar of this very concept. The Father seems to have vanished, but the Son still obeys even as He perceives that He has been forsaken (Matt 27:46). See p. 241 of this dissertation. Cary states this idea a bit more concisely as he attempts to make sense of Augustine’s expressionist semiotics: “[F]aith relies on present signs of absent things” (Cary, 129).

in order to force them to sort things out for themselves.”³³⁶ Intentionally misleading higher-level sentient creatures with false information—for example leading them to believe they are free to choose actions with real consequences when they are not—would be, perhaps, one of the worst possible forms of malevolence that God could impose upon them, especially if He provided no means to discover the fallacy. However, this does not exempt God from arranging life experiences that force humans to scrutinize inaccurate data. This is not to say that humans can discover God or even all his purposes of suffering by way of their own cognitive faculties.³³⁷ But humans do appear to have some epistemic access to an ontological purpose for experiencing and detecting suffering.

Suffering is knowledge of a desire that is unsatisfied, which is extremely intimate.³³⁸ Suffering may be experienced by the self or by someone close to the self, but proximity to the suffering is necessary in order for the discovery of the opportunity for improvement to be evident. Swinburne asserts that loving another often involves unsatisfied desire, and when this desire is frustrated through a broken relationship, even though it can increase suffering, it is still

³³⁶ Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 139. As stated previously, God permits ignorance to allow individuals the resolve to make a personal choice to pursue knowledge. By doing so, from a human perspective, God runs the necessary risk that some of his creatures will hold and even teach false beliefs about the world: “[The Principle of Honesty] does not rule out him allowing one person to get a false idea of how the world works; or allowing one person to tell another falsities about how the world works. But it does rule out God making a world which leads people to have false views on important matters, which they cannot discover to be false” (Ibid.).

³³⁷ Weighing the likelihood of humans discovering the reason that God allows pointless suffering in every case, is extremely unlikely, according to Wykstra’s response to Swinburne: “A modest proposal might be that [God’s] wisdom is to ours, roughly as an adult human’s is to a one-month old infant’s. . . . [E]ven a one-month old infant can perhaps discern, in its inarticulate way, some of the purposes of his mother in her dealings with him. But if outweighing goods of the sort at issue exist in connection with instances of suffering, that we should discern most of them seems about as likely as that a one-month old should discern most of his parents’ purposes for those pains they allow him to suffer—which is to say, it is not likely at all. So for any selected instance of intense suffering, there is good reason to think that if there is an outweighing good of the sort at issue connected to it, we would not have epistemic access to this. . . .” (Wykstra, 156-157). Wykstra continues this argument by suggesting that humans should not come to conclusions of certainty on matters that are outside of cognitive access. For example, humans should not assume there is no purpose for suffering simply because they are incapable of discerning a purpose.

³³⁸ Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 69.

worth having: “[T]he love that persists despite inadequate satisfaction has its own special greatness. And if the beloved suffers, it is good that the lover feels frustrated in his own desires. And if the beloved dies, it is good that the lover mourn the beloved. . . . Someone is indeed unfortunate if no one is sorry when they die. A love is only worth having if it is still there when unsatisfied; that is what constitutes its serious nature.”³³⁹ Swinburne concludes that even grief is an opportunity to pay tribute to someone, who lived, was loved, and is no longer alive. The unsatisfied characteristic of love is intrinsic to the human experience. Familiarity with another living being and the frustration that stems from lack of proximity may illustrate in some small way the longing that can develop within the human soul—including Christ’s human soul, which will be seen in the section below on the Incarnation—because of suffering, for a true knowledge of God.³⁴⁰

Overcoming the Pain Barrier

Familial relationships may also provide another insight into how God uses suffering for a person to truly come to know God. Parents provide opportunities for progress by way of incentives and deterrents. Parents have an opportunity to correct minor flaws now in order to prevent major malfunctions in the future. As children grow older, Swinburne recognizes that distance of time and space becomes increasingly more necessary so that they arrive at their own conclusions in the process of choosing their destiny: “[A]ware that the child’s will is weak, the parent wishes to encourage him to do what is right, but not to force him. So here too she will, to a limited extent, reinforce the child’s will with incentives and deterrents . . . to . . . give the child time to make a considered judgement about what to do A good parent steers the middle

³³⁹ Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 77-78.

³⁴⁰ Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement*, 159.

course between leaving everything to the child on the one hand and on the other hand dictating what the child is to do.”³⁴¹ By reinforcing the will of the older child with incentives and deterrents, a parent provides countless opportunities, not just to make better choices, but ultimately for the child to participate in forming, over time, her own soul. Just as a parent uses incentives and deterrents, God may also use these tools of suffering to concurrently awaken within individuals discontent with their current status and a desire for a deeper relationship. One such incentive is to instill within humans a desire to overcome an insufficiency, even if it involves suffering. Swinburne deduces that an individual with a disability may subject himself to even greater pain in order to regain some semblance of normalcy: “Some people dislike their disabilities just as much as they dislike pain; they so dislike their inability to walk that they will undertake a programme to conquer it which involves their ‘overcoming the pain barrier’.”³⁴² Therefore, the pain can act as an incentive to overcome the disability or a deterrent to prevent one from sinning, as was the case with the earlier example of the thief being crippled by God. Either way, the belief that one can overcome an undesirable state and the act of tolerating the pain to do so is essential for a person to come to know God.

Nietzsche and the Necessity of Suffering as the Antidote for Overcoming Cognitive Limitations

One does not need to be a religious person to embrace this idea. On the contrary, Nietzsche who dedicated a considerable amount of his writing to anti-Christian ideas would agree with Swinburne very much on this point, or perhaps it would be more chronological to say that Swinburne agrees with Nietzsche on this point. Personal development, for Nietzsche, has everything to do with overcoming limitations caused by suffering: “To those human beings who

³⁴¹ Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 152-153.

³⁴² Ibid., 163. See also *De Trin.* XIII, 10.

are of any concern to me I wish suffering, desolation, sickness, ill-treatment, indignities—I wish that they should not remain unfamiliar with profound self-contempt, the torture of self-mistrust, the wretchedness of the vanquished: I have no pity for them, because I wish them the only thing that can prove today whether one is worth anything or not—that one endures.”³⁴³ In Nietzsche’s philosophical economy, the mark of good health is actually resident within the person who has the ability to overcome various maladies.³⁴⁴ Sickness is a source of increased vitality, as well as, a necessary channel for artistic greatness—better things.³⁴⁵ Kaufmann extracts this idea from the writings of Nietzsche and lists three poets, a composer, a playwright, and a novelist, most of whom overcame a physiological handicap by producing works that surpassed many other “healthy” men in their field: “It would be absurd to say that the work of healthy artists is *eo ipso* beautiful, while that of the ill must be ugly. Keats was consumptive, Byron had a clubfoot, Homer was blind, and Beethoven deaf. Even Shakespeare and Goethe—Nietzsche thinks—must have experienced a profound defect: artistic creation is prompted by something which the artist lacks, by suffering rather than undisturbed good health. . . .”³⁴⁶ Nietzsche reasons that just as a woman must experience the “repulsive and strange aspects of pregnancy” in order to produce a child, so must an exceptional work be conceived within the “manure” of a flawed individual.³⁴⁷

³⁴³ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, et al., *The Will to Power* (New York: Random House, 1967), 481. If a human can wish adversity upon those for whom he cares to develop fortitude and increase stamina, certainly God reserves the right to permissively exercise this tool as well.

³⁴⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche and Walter Arnold Kaufmann, *Ecce Homo in the Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 680.

³⁴⁵ Nietzsche, et al., *The Will to Power*, 428.

³⁴⁶ Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 130.

³⁴⁷ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche and Douglas Smith, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 80.

He views the trials of life as something that should be welcomed with joy by the exceptional individual because of what they can stimulate.³⁴⁸

To be human is to be vulnerable to experiences that may cause suffering. Even though Nietzsche did not think very highly of contemporary Christians, he did espouse a very Christian idea: worth of an individual is inherently tied to endurance.³⁴⁹ The kind of endurance that theism promotes is the ultimate endurance—eternal life, which, according to the biblical narrative, cannot be achieved apart from coming to know God. Even Nietzsche’s observation of the mark of good health connected to one’s ability to overcome sickness confirms the theistic concept that higher-order goods cannot exist apart from suffering. In the same way, it can even be argued that the mark of a good relationship is connected to mutual cooperation that must exist in order to overcome the suffering—disagreements and ill-treatment that accompanies love. Even God subjects Himself to the vulnerability that accompanies love relationships with humans, according to Brümmer: “[I]f love is a relationship, it is a relationship of mutual fellowship. As such love is necessarily vulnerable. Each partner in a relationship of love is necessarily dependent on the freedom and responsibility of the other partner for establishing and for maintaining the relationship. It is logically impossible for either partner to establish or maintain the relationship by himself.”³⁵⁰ Why does God subject Himself to this vulnerable state? Vulnerability is not only

³⁴⁸ Beyond philosophy, a body of literature in the field of psychology has developed over the course of the last few decades recognizing the personal and interpersonal growth that can result following trauma: “People may more readily admit their vulnerabilities following trauma, but also may see themselves as stronger. Interpersonal relationships may be improved through valuing loved ones more, being more open and having more compassion for others. Changes in life philosophy may come about through greater spirituality, more appreciation for each new day, reviewed life priorities, and an understanding that life is precious” (Annick Shaw, Stephen Joseph, and P. Alex Linley, “Religion, Spirituality, and Posttraumatic Growth: A Systematic Review,” *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 8, no. 1 (2005): 2). See also Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 457–459. See also James 1:2–4.

³⁴⁹ Mark 13:13; 2 Tim 2:12; James 1:12.

³⁵⁰ Vincent Brümmer, “Moral Sensitivity and the Free Will Defence,” *Neue Zeitschrift Für Systematische Theologie Und Religionsphilosophie* 29, no. 1 (1987): 95.

a characteristic, but also a qualification for entertaining a love relationship with a creature.³⁵¹ To be human is to be vulnerable. Therefore, to be God in communion with a human, who is vulnerable, is to be vulnerable.³⁵² Just as “artistic creation is prompted by something which the artist lacks, by suffering rather than undisturbed good health,” within the contextual limitation of vulnerable human flesh, God, who lacks nothing, subjects Himself to deficiencies via the incarnation, and, as a result, is able to produce something divinely beautiful by entering a love relationship with a human.³⁵³

Forego Immediate Gratification

Often, the pursuit of the knowledge of the better involves acting upon an opportunity to forego immediate gratification by subjecting oneself to a period of inconvenience. Training for better desires, better opportunities, better states of being, often entails personal choices, which involve suffering. Swinburne contends that the recognition of these options comprise opportunities for developing the will: “In the developing of such a will, as, to a lesser extent, in

³⁵¹ Brümmer, 97. Brümmer insists that God is not only vulnerable, but that He is even more vulnerable than humans in this reciprocal union: “[L]ove is a reciprocal relation, God is also dependent on the freedom and responsibility of human persons in order to enter into a loving relation with them. In creating human persons in order to love them, God necessarily assumes vulnerability in relation to them. In fact, in this relation he becomes even more vulnerable than we do, since he cannot count on the steadfastness of our love the way we can count on his steadfastness” (Ibid., 96-97).

³⁵² The concept of divine vulnerability is extremely complex. Christian theologians throughout history conclude that God is impassible. One particular theological solution that is postulated by Athanasius is the Incarnation. Since Athanasius argues that God is impassible, how is it possible that God makes Himself vulnerable? This seems to imply that God, like humans, is passible. The answer for Athanasius is grounded in the Incarnation. Athanasius explains that when the human aspect of Christ suffered, the Son, who actually became a man, imputed to Himself the sufferings of the flesh, not that His divinity would become passible, but rather so that His humanity would eventually become impassible. Although the divine aspect of the Son is impassible, His human nature is passible, which for Athanasius becomes the very theme of why the Son ultimately became human. The divinity of the Son bore the weaknesses of His body in order to identify with those who would eventually be sanctified as a result of His own human sanctification. For Athanasius, this is why the Son became human. By His flesh “[being] made impassible and immortal,” He provides access by which all humans can enter communion with an impassible and immortal God (Athanasius, *Ad Epictetum*, 59.6; Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 3.58).

³⁵³ Kaufmann, 130.

developing more specific desires, it is important to train oneself to frustrate other desires (however good in themselves) when they show signs of deterring one from pursuit of the better.³⁵⁴ A major reason for the practice of many ascetic disciplines for limited periods (such as Lent) is for a man to train himself not to indulge such desires as the desire for food except when it is good so to do.”³⁵⁵ The intentional pursuit of better desires requires denial of base appetites that distract or delay a good outcome. The action of choosing to forego one thing in hopes of acquiring something better is a common practice that God has implanted within the human experience. The acquisition of the better desire is driven by a belief of which there is no guarantee; however, the belief may increase in probability over the course of time by way of experience. This belief is also another example of transworld incognizance because it drives an individual to proceed incrementally from a state of ignorance to a state of experience. Consequently, acting on an opportunity is a choice but so is inaction, according to Swinburne: “We need to act (not merely to stop ourselves acting) in order to keep ourselves and each other healthy, fed, sheltered, etc. Sloth is a source not merely of temptation to the lesser good of not improving things, but of temptation to do what is bad or wrong (by failing to act). For we wrong our fellows (and our own animals) if we let them slide into illness, homelessness, incapacity, and so on. . . .”³⁵⁶ By not acting, in some cases, humans are potentially perpetuating an even greater

³⁵⁴ See Chapter 8 for a more thorough understanding of Augustine’s view of the will. For further study on the human will, see also Daley’s commentary on Maximus the Confessor’s views upon the “natural will” as opposed to the “gnomic will”: “Maximus explains how Christ, as Son of God, might have and exercise a complete human will by distinguishing the ‘natural will’—the inborn ability of the creature to determine how it shapes its actions; the innate tendency of every intelligent being to seek its own well-being and continuity in being—from the ‘gnomic will’: literally, the will formed by opinion; the will struggling to choose among concrete limited options, without full certainty of what is in its best interest; the will as we presently experience it, darkened as we are by the effects of sin,” (Daley, *God Visible*, 220).

³⁵⁵ Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement*, 167-168.

³⁵⁶ Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 157.

evil, and this evil is the result of a choice. Therefore, sometimes it is beneficial to force oneself not to do something in order to acquire something better. At other times it is important to do something to prevent something worse. Both choices can assist in overcoming transworld incognizance.

The opportunity to do something or to do nothing provides a choice that humans make for self and for others within proximity to the self. The opportunity to connect with others physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, not only requires knowledge of suffering but the freedom to exercise one's own volitional will to involve oneself in the suffering of others.³⁵⁷ Swinburne insists that God provides an indispensable service to an agent who has the opportunity to make such a choice to alleviate the hardships of others: "It is a great good for the agent if he can help someone who needs help. He is privileged to have the opportunity to be of use and blessed if he takes it. God does a great good for us if he gives us such opportunity. He

³⁵⁷ This choice obviously involves the initial dilemma to act or not to act and the active risk to life, limb, reputation, etc., once the decision is made to act. C. S. Lewis highlights three aspects of free will that illustrate this tension by providing a dilemma of choosing whether to save a man in danger. A person wrestling with this dilemma has a desire to help, a desire to keep out of the danger, and something above each of these desires. The third thing, he calls the moral law, presses an individual to encourage his good, but weak, desire to help, and suppress his strong desire to flee (Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 9-10). True moral belief can press an individual to act in a virtuous way, but an individual can also reject this inner voice. The strength of one's conscience, according to Swinburne, depends largely upon the conditioning of one's will: "[C]haracter is not just (or even largely) a matter of true moral belief; it is largely a matter of desire, of the natural inclinations we have to respond to situations. . . . As I emphasized before, it is a very important contingent truth about humans (and animals) that by doing actions of a certain sort when it is difficult, we make ourselves the sort of persons who do such actions readily. So showing courage etc., which can only be done in the face of suffering, has a dual role. It is good that we show courage, and it is good that thereby we make ourselves naturally courageous. Humans only have a really good character if it is the sort of character which responds readily to suffering (in others and in oneself) in the right way" (Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 169). Swinburne further clarifies that the alternative to strengthening character through hard choices over time is to incrementally weaken conscience by intensifying bad desires through negligence or poor decisions (both of which are choices): "[Children] are, to start with, capable of having good desires, capable of natural love and loyalty; capable too of believing that certain actions are the right ones to do; capable too of choosing to do actions which they believe right, despite contrary inclinations. But this matrix of belief and desire may be corrupted, as well as sanctified—first, through the agent's own choice. . . . But habit which strengthens good desires strengthens bad ones too. . . . [T]he agent intentionally dulls his conscience, blinds himself to awareness of good and bad, right and wrong. . . . [Freud] showed how self-deception was an intentional act of suppressing some belief from consciousness, which also involved the act of suppressing from consciousness the belief that you were performing that act or any other self-deceptive act" (Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement*, 174).

can only do this by building a world in which natural processes ensure that by our actions we can bring benefits to others which they cannot easily secure in any other way.”³⁵⁸ This opportunity manifests itself through the suffering of another person. By acting to meet the need, an agent not only helps another, but also, fills the personal need of being useful. Therefore, the greatest good, according to Swinburne, is to desire the fulfillment of another person’s desire. As a result, this desire satisfies three goods, including the one already mentioned: A’s desire for B’s fulfillment, B’s fulfilled desire, and that B is lucky enough to have someone else care about her state of wellbeing.³⁵⁹ This concept not only applies to how humans relate to other humans, but also, how God relates to humans. Humans stand in a privileged position to have a God who cares about their well-being enough to involve Himself in their suffering.³⁶⁰

Awareness of suffering provides the opportunity to freely choose or ignore feelings of compassion for others. If an agent chooses to feel compassion, suffering provides a further opportunity by which an agent can then freely act or neglect to alleviate the need. If an agent chooses to act, for the needs of others to be met, Swinburne proposes, there must be individuals with power available to meet the needs: “[I]f our creator creates us out of nothing, and gives to some ten good things, and to others twenty good things, no one is wronged; nor has he failed to be perfectly good. He has been generous, and, more so, he has made it possible for us to be generous. For the more power someone has and the more someone else lacks it, the greater the opportunity the former has to use his power to benefit the latter and above all to increase the

³⁵⁸ Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 167.

³⁵⁹ Richard Swinburne, “Some Major Strands of Theodicy,” in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 34, ProQuest Ebook Central.

³⁶⁰ For one example see Gen 29:31: “When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless.”

power of the latter.”³⁶¹ Suffering, in this case, is employed by God to provide opportunities for an agent to value something outside of the self to the point she is willing to help others. This opportunity requires a free will agent to use her power to share the burden of suffering. Likewise, even Plantinga reasons that the foundation of the Free Will Defense rests upon cooperation between two parties—creature and Creator: “The essential point of the Free Will Defence is that the creation of a world containing moral good is a co-operative venture. . . . But the actualization of a world *W* containing moral good is not up to God alone; it also depends upon what the significantly free creatures of *W* would do if God created them and placed them in the situations *W* contains. . . . Thus is the power of an omnipotent God limited by the freedom he confers upon his creatures.”³⁶² This cooperative venture between God and man provides humanity significant power to corporately participate in shaping the moral climate. Suffering may dispel ignorance, provide opportunities, and make an abundance of choices possible that otherwise would not exist. Suffering then becomes a means by which to overcome transworld incognizance.

Opportunity for Solidarity

Choices provide the catalyst necessary to increase the knowledge of self, by learning more about another. Attaining intimacy in a relationship requires a mutual depth of knowledge that accumulates over time through thousands of cooperative interactions and decisions. For instance, Swinburne deduces that when a parent intentionally subjects a child to suffer for a greater good—exercise or education—and shares the burden in some way—exercising or studying together—the burden is decreased and the suffering more manageable. He continues that this same solidarity can be achieved between friends and ultimately between God and man:

³⁶¹ Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, 149.

³⁶² Plantinga, “God, Evil, and the Metaphysics of Freedom,” 190.

“The sharing of my suffering by my friend if that suffering is for a good cause, and my friend suffers with me because he seeks to express solidarity and support, is a good which compensates in part for the suffering. It makes, I suggest, the badness of the whole less than it would be if I alone suffered. If God shares the pain and other suffering to which he subjects us for the sake of greater goods, that indeed reduces the badness of the suffering.”³⁶³ Suffering provides an opportunity for solidarity. Perhaps a little suffering shows us a lot of God. Actively sharing the burden allows for the beneficial display of generosity. Considering the sum total of individual experience and the daily practice of caring for oneself, the cultivation of true intimacy can develop when this personal knowledge is applied to someone else in the same way. At times benevolent acts of meeting the needs of others may even exceed what one would do for self.

The Relationship Between Supererogatory Opportunities and “Impassible Suffering”

If achieving solidarity can happen between God and humans and humans with other humans while exercising or sharing some kind of burden in the same time, and if intimacy in a relationship requires a mutual depth of knowledge, then, perhaps, scholars separated by hundreds of years can share the burden of philosophizing about ideas regarding suffering. As stated earlier in this chapter, this may be a way that Christological insights of the past can integrate with new data. Swinburne, for example, acknowledges that Augustine and Aquinas both argue that God may have had other options available to rescue suffering humanity—“an angelic life, or . . . some private deed in the fifth heaven”—other than the person of Christ. However, in doing so, Swinburne emphasizes that Aquinas is quoting Augustine regarding the context of God’s unique and “peculiarly appropriate” method of choice—His Son becoming human as the suitable

³⁶³ Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement*, 216.

reparation for humanity.³⁶⁴ In essence, Swinburne, who wrote in the twentieth century, achieves cognitive solidarity with two other scholars, who respectively wrote in the fourth and thirteenth centuries. Even though these men—one a church father and the other a doctor of the church—offer much in the way of Christological insights; their writings can still flourish even more considering Swinburne’s modern exegetical ideas. While evaluating, in his opinion, a gap in the theological tradition, Swinburne expresses a desire to more fully specify the kinds of temptation that Christ—God’s “peculiarly appropriate” method of choice—encountered:

Aquinas listed ‘difficulty in doing good’ among the disabilities to which Christ was not prone. See *Summa Theologiae* 3a. 14.4. This disability, together with ‘proneness to evil’ were, according to Augustine, among the disabilities resulting from original sin. However, neither Aquinas nor Augustine had in mind when discussing Christ’s temptations the distinction between the obligatory and the supererogatory; and so Aquinas’ ‘difficulty in doing good’ may be read simply as ‘difficulty in doing some good act’ rather than as ‘difficulty in doing the best’. For all Aquinas says in this place, Christ might not be necessitated to do the best. My own preference among these two theories is for the theory that (at any rate on some occasion or occasions) Christ was subject to a balance of desire not to do the best, and overcame that balance by a voluntary act. That would make his life and death morally praiseworthy, which in effect is surely the biblical and subsequent Christian view.³⁶⁵

So even though Swinburne observes that neither Aquinas nor Augustine ever made a distinction between the obligatory and the supererogatory within the context of Christ’s temptations, the reason that Swinburne was even able to make this observation was a result of the significant theological strides that these two men had previously made. The two of these men—Aquinas and Augustine, share decades of thinking deeply not only about how the Son of God became human but also why he became human, as well as precisely what did this act achieve. Capitalizing upon their research, Swinburne can identify a gap in the data and suggest an idea that may provide

³⁶⁴ Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement*, 156, 156n20.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 159n22.

deeper insight into the kinds of temptation Christ experiences while in this world.

To better understand the role supererogation may play in the Son of God becoming man, Swinburne contends that even the damage done by immorality can become an opportunity for greater intimacy within a relationship. Humans are by nature selfish creatures. Selfishness generates offense which creates two burdens—the burden of the offended and the burden of the transgressor. These burdens create supererogatory opportunities according to Swinburne:

The best reparation is that in which the reparation restores the damage done rather than gives something else in compensation. If I damage your wooden fence, I ought to repair it if I can rather than give you a crate of whisky instead. Or if there is no wood with which to repair the fence, perhaps I can do something else which will restore something like the status quo, at any rate in essentials—for example, erect a wire fence instead. This is because the point of reparation is to restore the status quo as nearly as possible. Likewise, the best penance is that which more than makes it up to you in the respect in which I harmed you—for example, perhaps I can finish the fence if it was not completed before; or having damaged the rusty bumper of your car, I can do penance better by giving you a new bumper, rather than restoring the old one and giving you a box of chocolates at the same time.³⁶⁶

To satisfy the debt, the transgressor must restore the status quo; however, an opportunity has been created by which the wrongdoer can exceed expectations and provide restoration above what is required. Swinburne explains that instead of just restoring the loss, a guilty agent has an opportunity, not only to restore the loss but also to stimulate gratitude in the offended party by surpassing the status quo. The offense creates an opportunity for the transgressor, but it also creates an opportunity for the injured party. At this point, through the example of Christ, Swinburne explains how this is even possible: “Since what needs atonement to God is human sin, men living second-rate lives when they have been given such great opportunities by their creator, appropriate reparation and penance would be made by a perfect human life, given away through being lived perfectly. . . . Only when I owe you nothing can I give you something. . . .

³⁶⁶ Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement*, 156.

[Christ] living a life honest and generous unto death, being supererogatory, could be made available for our use.”³⁶⁷ God is the injured party and the Son of God, who owes man nothing, according to the biblical narrative, volunteered to become a man in every sense, so that He could satisfy the justice of God. Christ, out of His abundant power, gave humanity something they desperately needed and something they could not provide.

Christ sacrificially provided the best opportunity possible for humans to truly know Him by restoring mankind into creatures capable of fully offering something of true value to God. Are there any examples in the actual world whereby creatures through great pains can be trained to exceed expectations by offering something of even greater value to the humans they serve? Employing the relationship between a man and his dog, C. S. Lewis provides a marvelous example of how God can remake humans in His image, for His purpose, without completely absorbing them or deleting the matrix of their individual disposition:

To the puppy the whole proceeding would seem, if it were a theologian, to cast grave doubts on the ‘goodness’ of man: but the full-grown and full-trained dog, larger, healthier, and longer-lived than the wild dog, and admitted, as it were by Grace, to a whole world of affections, loyalties, interests, and comforts entirely beyond its animal destiny, would have no such doubts. It will be noted that the man (I am speaking throughout of the good man) takes all these pains with the dog, and gives all these pains to the dog, only because it is an animal high in the scale—because it is so nearly lovable that it is worth his while to make it fully lovable. . . . We may wish, indeed, that we were of so little account to God that He left us alone to follow our natural impulses—that He would give over trying to train us into something so unlike our natural selves: but once again, we are asking not for more love, but for less.³⁶⁸

This example serves to demonstrate that the good man is not the only one to benefit from the great pains he takes to train the dog, but the dog itself also benefits by receiving a status that is

³⁶⁷ Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement*, 157.

³⁶⁸ Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 386.

even higher in the scale than it was originally. The dog enjoys all the creaturely benefits of being loved by a creature that is higher than itself and thereby profits by receiving the creaturely comforts that are usually strictly reserved for those who are human. Likewise, out of love—according to the biblical narrative—God assigns the qualities that He deposited within man to greater purposes, and they too will enjoy comforts that are usually strictly reserved for those who are divine.

The way that God assigns the qualities that He deposited within man to greater purposes is not simply by sending His son to become a man. But rather that as a man, Christ suffers impassibly. Employing this phrase—“suffered impassibly,” Cyril provides what could be the paragon of Swinburne’s divine supererogatory act. Under normal circumstances, according to the Hellenistic mindset, suffering causes a natural organism to disintegrate. However, considering knowledge that is reserved to the mind of God, suffering inflicted upon a supernatural being who is incapable of suffering should then provide the opposite of fragmentation—healing and restoration to a natural organism. If a divine being could voluntarily suffer on behalf of humanity in human flesh, then the suffering would not register as just punishment for a guilty individual but could instead be recorded as unjust suffering of an innocent individual on behalf of the guilty. This may sound like the same echoing formula Christians maintain throughout history; however, to truly appreciate the exchange, Cyril, according to Daley, places the emphasis upon a God who cannot suffer by means of clothing Himself in human flesh for the sole purpose of suffering on behalf of those mortals who suffer:

If one remembers that suffering, like all human “passions” or passivities, was understood in the Hellenistic world as an experience that normally destroys the harmony and integrity of a natural organism, a sensory signal of lack of autonomy and of disintegration, Jesus’ “impassible suffering”—seen as human passivity and vulnerability freely taken on and “owned” by the life-giving Word of God, in his human body and soul—becomes the means by which the Word heals our passions and destructive

weaknesses, first of all in his own humanity, and so turns our suffering into a means of growth.³⁶⁹

Christ, who is the life-giving impassible Word of God, makes Himself vulnerable by freely taking on suffering. If, in Swinburne's understanding, an offense creates an opportunity for a guilty agent not only to restore the loss but also to stimulate gratitude in the offended party by surpassing the status quo. And if the offense creates an opportunity not only for the transgressor, but also for the injured party, then the Incarnation of Christ may be an example of a divine supererogatory act that not only exceeds expectations but, until revealed, is unimaginable and cognitively inaccessible to higher-level freewill, sentient creatures.³⁷⁰ Swinburne's previous supererogatory example was a demonstration of a guilty party completing a partially damaged fence or replacing a rusty bumper with a brand new one. However, Cyril's understanding of "impassible suffering" is that of the injured party, God, restoring the transgressor to a status that surpasses anything that could ever possibly be imagined. Therefore, a supererogatory opportunity, involves a guilty party more than compensating the offended party, but a divine supererogatory act involves the offended party, God, more than atoning for the guilty party's offense by providing restoration for humans to an unexpected, unanticipated, and inconceivable standing before God—a new creation. This is the essence of transworld incognizance because there is no possible way that higher-level freewill, sentient creatures could have ever anticipated, earned, or conceived such a divine supererogatory act of grace.

One possible biblical example that may shed further light on this concept of a divine supererogatory act done on behalf of humanity is Christ's first miracle at Cana in Galilee. Christ

³⁶⁹ Daley, *God Visible*, 194.

³⁷⁰ Eph 3:20.

does all the work by performing the miracle of changing water into wine, but after the “master of the banquet” tastes the new wine, he calls the bridegroom aside, not Christ, and gives him credit for saving the best till last (John 2:9–10). The author may be illustrating through the narrative of this miracle ways in the age, or another world, to come that Christ’s incarnate work could possibly position believing humans with opportunities to present gifts to the Father. Like a child at Christmas who is given the means by one parent to purchase a gift for the other, resurrected believers will theoretically benefit from participating in a similar process that was initiated by Christ. Christ does all the work by providing believers with the means to purchase a gift they can offer to the Father. Believers, in turn, participate in the process of bringing joy to the Father through their gift, knowing all along the joy they bring to the Father is only made possible by the sacrifice of the Son. During the exchange, Christ relishes the joy that transpires and exponentially increases for all parties involved—Himself included—due to His own work. This is the epitome of a divine supererogatory act.

Concluding Remarks about Transworld Incognizance as a Morally Sufficient Reason for Suffering

God could exploit temporary suffering to breed discontent with one’s present station in this earthly life to develop better desires for something beyond what this world has to offer. Theism maintains that suffering is necessary for a person to truly come to know the theistic God. Explaining how God may employ suffering to cultivate relationships with humans was achieved in three ways. First, reasons as to how suffering stimulates discontent for terrestrial desires and simultaneously awakens a longing for another world beyond this existence were examined. A desire for something better or to avoid something worse is driven by a belief that seduces higher-level sentient creatures to acquire knowledge. Ignorance is necessary for individuals to be open

to cognitive improvement. God employs temporary spurs to breed discontent and deter humans from sinning while simultaneously motivating them to seek Him.

Next, ways of how God uses this discontentment by cultivating both negative (punishment) and positive (supererogation) opportunities for growth were considered. Epistemic distance is necessary for higher-level sentient creatures to genuinely think that they have the choice to freely develop a desire to reform. Suffering is the medium by which God so chooses to reveal his presence. God prosopologically speaks through suffering because incessant awareness of His overwhelming presence would extinguish free will or at least a true test of character, according to Swinburne. Proximity to suffering is necessary for the discovery of the opportunity for improvement to become evident. To be human is to be vulnerable. Therefore, to be God in communion with a human, who is vulnerable, is to be vulnerable.

And finally, modern scholars were challenged to consider the likely possibility that God, if He exists, must allow suffering for individuals to freely participate in forming their own souls and choosing their own destiny. Training for better desires, better opportunities, better states of being, often entails personal choices, which involve suffering. Acting on an opportunity is a choice but so is inaction. Suffering is employed by God to provide opportunities for an agent to value something outside of the self to the point she is willing to help others.

This opportunity requires a free will agent to use her power to share the burden of suffering. Within biblical narratives, Christ's life epitomizes this concept. He personally satisfies God's justice—which is unlike man's—with His power, restores what was broken by humanity, and, through a relationship of cooperation, equips believers with opportunities to exceed even their own expectations by not only providing restoration above what is required but also by enabling humans to bring gifts of substantive joy to the heart of the Father. Through suffering,

this personal experience may provide existential evidence for the redeemed to truly come to know God.

CHAPTER 7: THE INFLUENCE OF PLATONISM UPON PATRISTIC CHRISTOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS

Immaterial Irregularities

A Brief Review

How should higher-level freewill, sentient creatures expect God to act in any world should He decide to involve Himself in the fight against the problem of suffering? To answer this question, we will briefly consider the conduit of immaterial irregularities through which God could justifiably act should He decide to do so. Progressive understanding about the person of Christ driven, reluctantly at times, by the motivation to express the Incarnation through unconventional categories may be indicative of transworld incognizance. Transworld incognizance, therefore, may be an act of God's grace in any possible world for it allows higher-level freewill, sentient creatures to make choices apart from being holistically culpable. God may have intentionally designed a system within which creatures could exercise their free will but do so apart from being completely aware of the unmitigated consequences and the residual culpability of each action. As a result, within the scope of their ignorance, God may have reserved a space through which He can exercise His grace, which may itself be a concealed cause within a created cause (Chapter 5). Another way of explicating this concept is to admit that any possible world where God exists there will also exist transworld incognizance within such creatures. This transworld incognizance may possibly indicate awareness of another realm that exists. Previously described by Augustine, ignorance can be an indicator of the unknown, especially when creatures are aware of the possibility that there exists something of which they do not know even if they do not know what it is they do not know.³⁷¹ Knowledge of a lack of

³⁷¹ *De Trin.* X, 3; *Ibid.*, 4 and 5. See also 113n252 for full quote.

knowledge is still knowledge. Therefore, it may be logically coherent to consider that any possible world where an omniscient being creates beings with finite cognition, there may also exist transworld or immaterial dimensions potentially indicated by transworld incognizance.

In any world, God, by His grace, can make it possible for higher-level freewill, sentient beings to know that there exists some things of which they, lacking total comprehension as well as the terminological means, may not be able to describe in great detail. Within the space of the known unknowns, in a possible world, it is logically coherent to consider the existence of incarnational properties expressly present within Augustine's Christological psychology through which God can employ immaterial irregularities to overcome the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships. As stated previously, to say that they are immaterial is not the same as saying that they are insignificant but rather that their incorporeal footprint goes corporeally undetected. Therefore, as we saw earlier, if the human body of Christ is the touchstone of Athanasius's Christology because it is the locus of what is nearest to human existence, then the human soul of Christ, according to Grillmeier, is the touchstone of Augustine's Christology because it is the locus of what is mutually nearest to human and divine existence:

It is, then, the make-up of man which forms the starting point for a solution of the christological problem. . . . For it is the Godhead and the soul which are directly united in him. The body is only joined to the Godhead by means of the soul, '*anima mediante*'. . . . Here the assumption of the inner relationship, indeed the consubstantiality, of the divine and the human soul is of paramount importance. . . . Both are as it were 'made of the same stuff'. And homogeneous things can be united.³⁷²

Again, if Grillmeier's observations are correct, then Augustine views the union of the immaterial properties of the Godhead and the human soul as more directly united than the Godhead and the human body. The soul, for Augustine, is what unites the Godhead to the body because the

³⁷² Grillmeier, 410-411.

immaterial properties allowing the union of the Godhead to the soul of a human are made up of stuff that is more compatible than that of the material body uniting to an immaterial soul—the natural construct of man. However, for Augustine, it does not necessarily follow that the human soul of Christ is coessential to the Father, as will be explained below. Therefore, the make-up of man, specifically involving the immaterial property of the soul, may be the best place to begin in order to determine how God could act in any possible world through immaterial irregularities to overcome the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships. The soul may be the conduit through which God restores the divine / human relationship by uniting humanity and deity in one person.

Two patristic qualifications are necessary at this point to avoid any misunderstanding regarding the relationship of the body and soul of Christ to the Father. First, Athanasius makes it clear in his letter to Epictetus that this is not to say that the body of Christ is coessential to the Father in the same way that the Word is coessential to the Father (Chapter 3).³⁷³ Second, building somewhat upon this idea, according to Grillmeier, Augustine views a more direct connection between the Godhead and the soul united in Christ, but the body relies upon the soul to be joined to the Godhead (Chapter 4).³⁷⁴ Therefore, by synthesizing the two ideas of these men, the Word is coessential to the Father and the soul is jointly connected to the Word; however, the body is not coessential to the Father in the same way but is rather jointly connected to the Word by means of the soul.

This raises the question: is the human soul of Christ coessential to the Father? The writings of Augustine yield at least two possible approaches to this question. The first answer

³⁷³ Athanasius, *Ad Epictetum*, 59.4, 8

³⁷⁴ Grillmeier, 410-411. See 174n372 for full quote.

can be found in a revealing passage within *The City of God*, which Grillmeier himself within the larger context, in the reference above seeking to explain Augustine's understanding of the "consubstantiality" of the divine and human soul, directs the reader. He does this, perhaps, to avoid misrepresenting Augustine's actual position and to prevent any premature misunderstandings. A hasty reading of Grillmeier's passage may mislead someone into thinking that he is of the opinion that Augustine views the substance of the soul as having been generated from the very substance of God. However, tracking Grillmeier's cross-reference—*The City of God* book X, actually reveals an apologetic method Augustine employs by utilizing Platonic logic as an evangelistic tool. Augustine argues that pure Platonists have a faint view of the triune God but fail to acknowledge the way to God—the Incarnation. Although he rebukes Platonists as stubbornly fixed in their position, he hopes to appeal to their followers who hold them in high esteem. In this passage, Augustine expresses his bewilderment over the Platonists' disbelief that God assumed a human body and soul, especially since they embrace the ideal that the human soul can become consubstantial with God: "You yourselves hold such a high notion of the intellectual soul—which is, after all, the human soul—that you claim it can become consubstantial with the mind of the Father, which you acknowledge to be the Son of God. What is so incredible, then, about one intellectual soul being assumed, in some unique and inexpressible way, for the salvation of many?"³⁷⁵ Augustine, himself, does not hold this particular Platonic position—the human soul can become consubstantial with God—but is simply attempting to appeal to their own Platonic logic. Augustine is employing Platonic logic to make an incarnational appeal to those who highly esteem Platonic opinion. He is not affirming the consubstantiality of Christ's human soul and the Godhead but is rather making an

³⁷⁵ Augustine, *De civ. Dei*, X, 29.

incarnational appeal to those who so highly value the intellectual soul—the human soul that “it can become consubstantial with the mind [or intelligence] of the Father, which [they] acknowledge to be the Son of God.”³⁷⁶

The second approach he uses to answer the question: is the human soul of Christ coessential to the Father? is that Augustine, contradicting the Manichees, explains that the soul did not receive God’s nature upon creation, is not identical with God’s nature, is not a share of God’s nature, nor does it proceed from the substance of God like the Son and the Holy Spirit (Chapter 5). Any of these conclusions, in Augustine’s view, throw the immutability of God’s nature into question. If the soul of man can be corrupted with vice, and if the soul of man originated from God’s nature, Augustine concludes that an unsettling theological argument can be made that God’s nature is corruptible, which is biblically untenable in his estimation.³⁷⁷ The Incarnation is magnified as the ultimate communication for reaching the other. Christ becomes flesh without diminishing his divinity in the same way he reaches humanity without completely dissolving their identity. Augustine demonstrates God’s uncanny ability to move toward humanity by utilizing the instrument of human nature to communicate the spirit of his love to them:

The grace of God could not have been more graciously commended to us than it was in that the only Son of God, while he remained immutably himself, put on humanity and, by the mediation of a man, bestowed upon men the spirit of his love. By this love a way was opened for men to come to him who was so distant from men—as distant as the immortal is from the mortal, as the immutable is from the mutable, as the righteous is from the ungodly, as the blessed is from the wretched. And because he had implanted in us by nature the desire for blessedness and immortality, he, remaining blessed while he assumed mortality in order to grant us what we love, taught us by his suffering to despise

³⁷⁶ Even though Augustine may not hold this position—that Christ’s human soul is consubstantial with God—it cannot be said that he abandoned Platonic ideas altogether.

³⁷⁷ Augustine, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees* II, 8, 11. See also *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* VII, 11, 17 and 21, 30.

what we fear.³⁷⁸

God moves toward humanity to communicate His love. This Patristic hermeneutical method will be highlighted in Chapter 9 as it is utilized to demonstrate how Christ–God incarnate behaves toward the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1–42) and what He reveals about the nature of God in the process. Christ as divine enjoys communion with the Godhead and as human enjoys communion with other humans ultimately bridging the communicative gap between the human and the divine and making it possible for human communion with the divine (Chapter 2).

Augustine insightfully acknowledges two very important qualifications that will ultimately impact God’s ability to act through immaterial irregularities within any possible world. First, Augustine contends that if indeed God reserved concealed causes to His own will, then these causes stated earlier (Chapter 5) are not “dependent on the necessity of those which he created.”³⁷⁹ Think about the implications of this statement alone. If God reserves room within original creation such that the freewill choices of Adam and Eve would not prohibit God from introducing His reserved will into the mix, then He would still be able to act within the set parameters of a possible world without violating His own self-imposed limitations that were fixed the moment that creatures with moral competencies came into being. This is the second qualification—God must act within His own self-imposed limitations—as was previously established within my argument, and this is precisely the conclusion that Augustine reaches: “[T]hese [causes] which he reserved to his own will cannot be contrary to those which he set up in creation by his will, because God’s will cannot be contrary to itself.”³⁸⁰ These concealed

³⁷⁸ Augustine, *The City of God*, X, 29.

³⁷⁹ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VI, 18, 29.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 18, 29

causes may provide a window for God to act through “immaterial irregularities” to overcome the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships. The immaterial realm may possibly be a concealed cause within created causes through which God can act not only to overcome transworld incognizance but also to overcome the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships. Therefore, if transworld incognizance is the activating transworld condition (ATC) as to why God can act in any possible world to overcome the problem of suffering, then immaterial irregularities may be the conduit through which He sets about doing it.

The Middle World (Chapter 3), which for our purposes both contains an omniscient, omnipotent, perfectly good God in addition to higher-level freewill, sentient creatures and mysteriously links them together through human nature—precisely via the human soul that I am proposing, admits the limitations of human cognition by acknowledging transworld incognizance but also comes equipped with the capacity to make allowances for immaterial irregularities through which God can act to overcome the cognitive limitations of higher-level sentient creatures. God is not restricted by or “dependent on the necessity of those which he created.” If God had a way to work through the immaterial attributes of divinity and humanity to restore both the material and immaterial aspects of humanity, then He would be acting within the restrictions of a possible world without violating His own self-imposed limitations that were fixed the moment that creatures with moral competencies came into being. Therefore, Augustine’s Christological psychology may provide the necessary catalyst—concealed causes through which “immaterial irregularities” can be sufficiently exercised by God through the Incarnation for mankind’s restoration. The human soul about which Augustine dedicated a significant portion of the development of his Christology may be the precise “immaterial irregularity” necessary for God to overcome the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships through the

Incarnation.

Platonic Influence upon Augustine's View of the Soul, Knowing God, and the Purpose of the Incarnation

Augustine's Christian Platonism

To better understand the heavy influence of the role that immaterial realities play within Augustine's hermeneutics, it becomes necessary to make an inward turn toward the Platonic epistemology he maintains throughout his life. Augustine's deepest desire is to know God beyond mere faith through the intellect, which is a concept upon which he had been weaned from his earliest days. Although not a pure Platonist, Cary contends that Augustine, from his earliest writings—*On the Teacher* and *On Faith in Things Not Seen*, to name a few, is a Christian Platonist: "Augustine obviously does not want us to think of the way of reason as pure Platonism. He is from the beginning of his extant writings a Christian Platonist, confident that the authority of Christ is supreme because it is none other than the authority of the divine Intellect, where all intelligible things are ultimately to be sought."³⁸¹ Augustine, in agreement with Platonic thinking, identifies the second person of the Trinity with the divine Intellect. Furthermore, Augustine, according to Cary, continues throughout his life employing Platonic methodology where it complements a clearer understanding of Christian doctrine, but he is also quick to reject Platonic ways where they conflict with the tradition of Christianity, which can be

³⁸¹ Cary, 115. See also 126ff. Through rankings and reasons, Augustine acknowledges even in later works both his proximity and admiration of the Platonists: "[W]e rank [Platonists] above the rest [of philosophers] . . . [A]nd we acknowledge that they are the [philosophers] whose views come closest to ours." Furthermore, while explaining why Platonists rank higher than all other philosophers, regardless of what nation or school they are from, he reasons: "[T]he Platonists, with their knowledge of God, are the ones who have discovered where to locate the cause by which the universe was constituted, the light by which truth is perceived and the fount at which happiness is imbibed" (Augustine, *The City of God*, VIII, 9-10).

seen in the great shift in the writing and teaching of his later years.³⁸² However, notes Cary, Augustine never completely abandons Platonism, especially when it is useful for understanding.

Augustine's desire, as a Christian Platonist, is to truly understand God beyond just simply acquiring knowledge about God by means of what he has been taught by teachers or even through what he has comprehended through reading words.³⁸³ Authorities—teachers and writers, do not really teach anyone anything but rather, via questions, conjure up what is already resident within the soul. According to Cary, Augustine believes that teachers and words (signs) merely point or “admonish” the seeker in the right direction.³⁸⁴ “[T]rue learning means seeing things for yourself. You do not have to be a Platonist to believe this, but it helps. For Plato is the one who gave us the [Cave] metaphor of the vision of the mind's eye to describe an activity of the intellect deeper than mere imagination, which is dependent on the senses.”³⁸⁵ Anything external to the soul accessible to the senses can only remind or admonish. Therefore, sensible things are not entirely useless; however, maintaining the proper perspective by understanding their limits is indispensable to discovering the truth.³⁸⁶ The driving force behind Augustine's epistemology, according to Cary, is that bodily things are powerless to guide the soul to intelligible truths: “In a Platonist universe we cannot expect bodily things to have power over the soul, and especially not power to give the soul knowledge of intelligible truths, which are higher and more inward than

³⁸² Cary, 115–116.

³⁸³ Ibid., 102.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 96, 106–107.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 96.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 109. Augustine highlights his understanding of the role of the senses by emphasizing the importance of identifying the function of the mind without diminishing the purpose of the senses: “[It is important to] distinguish the things discerned by the mind from those perceived by the senses, neither depriving the senses of what they are able to do nor ascribing more to them than they are able to do” (*De civ. Dei* VIII, 7).

the soul itself.”³⁸⁷ In a Platonic world, external or bodily things are sensorially perceived whereas true progress toward understanding the inner light occurs in the highest part of the immaterial soul or mind for Augustine.

Augustine identifies Christ as the inner teacher who provides access to intelligible (spiritual) truths.³⁸⁸ Christ as the inner teacher—a concept derived from Proverbs 8—is firmly established within the tradition of the church fathers. Cary notes, Augustine was also fond of frequently quoting from 1 Corinthians 1:24 for added support to this idea: “The church fathers made much of Christ as *logos* (John 1:1) Almost equally important for the fathers was the identification of Christ as eternal Wisdom, which derives from their Christological reading of Proverbs 8 as well as from a Pauline passage that is one of the most frequently quoted in Augustine’s early writings, ‘Christ the Virtue of God and the Wisdom of God’ (1 Cor. 1:24).”³⁸⁹ From his earliest philosophical recollections, Augustine was guided to seek divine Wisdom. Therefore, this Platonic idea made for an easy Patristic Trinitarian transition for Augustine as well as many Fathers. Augustine’s primary contribution, Cary insists, was to identify Christ as this eternal Wisdom and Truth, which he locates within the soul:³⁹⁰

Christ is our inner teacher not through an act of Christian faith but by virtue of the rational mind that is common to all. Faith in fact is what we need when we are not yet able to know Christ in the deepest and most inward way, the way most befitting the nature of the rational mind: as the divine Truth seen by the intellect. Hence Augustine tells us that “faith is useful so long as one is ignorant” of intelligible things discerned by the mind. Thus his bold picture of Christ the inner teacher reflects not a Pauline notion of the indwelling Christ but a Platonist account of the intellectual vision of intelligible

³⁸⁷ Cary, 88.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 98. Cary contends that Augustine in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* classifies the intelligible above what he calls spiritual (i.e., imaginations, dreams, and visions). Therefore, the intellectual is higher than the spiritual in Augustine’s epistemology (Ibid., 96n18).

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 98.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

truths.³⁹¹

Reason, through human intellect—the highest part of the soul, is the path by which individuals achieve intellectual vision in this world by way of momentary glimpses of divine Wisdom, which, according to Augustine, is the second person of the Trinity.³⁹² Additionally, faith, in Augustine’s view, aids seekers while they are ignorant, but in pursuit, of the inner light. Once again, his concept is yet a further indication of transworld incognizance, which serves to reveal the need for dependence upon the inner teacher to steer higher level freewill, sentient minds inward and upward toward the Truth.³⁹³

The pilgrimage to knowing God truly begins from a desire that sees all externals—suffering, beauty, flesh, words, essentially all creation including “faith” in his early writings—as a distraction from achieving a purification that does not deviate from pursuing the Wisdom of God by turning inward to the immaterial soul.³⁹⁴ This thought in Augustine’s mind ultimately includes turning away from the incarnate flesh of Christ as well. The Incarnation for Augustine, in Cary’s view, is a chief catalyst illuminating the way to the primary Truth by which Christ directs truth seekers away from His flesh to the soul:

Christ the inner teacher is therefore not a Christological notion, in the strict sense having to do with the doctrine of Incarnation. But it is unmistakably a Trinitarian notion, having to do with the deity of the second person of the Trinity, the Son who is the eternal Logos

³⁹¹ Cary, 98–99.

³⁹² Ibid., 103.

³⁹³ Ibid., 100.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 101, 105. Within the larger discussion of how an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent God can permit evil, Augustine addresses suffering as a vice that devours all natural good including “integrity, beauty, wellbeing, and virtue” (Augustine, *The City of God*, XII, 3). What is interesting about Augustine’s view of seeing all externals as distractions is that instead of merely seeing evil as a privation diminishing good, higher-level freewill, sentient beings should, in a way, embrace (or better yet absorb) these devouring attacks upon natural good by turning away from the very things, like beauty and wellbeing to name a few, that they are inclined to preserve. By focusing upon the preservation of these external natural goods, humans stall the process of purification and delay their primary purpose of pursuing the Wisdom of God.

and Wisdom of God. Augustinian inwardness originated not from believing in Christ in the flesh (for what is more external than flesh?) but rather from a desire to know nothing but God and the soul. From this desire stems a project of turning away from fleshly things to the soul in order to understand the nature of God³⁹⁵

The purpose of Christ as the inner teacher taking on human flesh was to direct intellectual seekers away from His flesh. Basically, for Augustine, the internal became external to point human minds back to the internal.³⁹⁶ Ultimately, according to Cary, seeing God for Augustine is an intellectual task—“the highest and inmost function of the soul”—aided by God’s grace whereby He heals the natural capacity of the mind that is focused upon Him:

Finding Christ in the sacred inner space of the self thus does not depend on faith in the Incarnation, but it does indicate the dimension in which Augustine locates the operation of grace, which he will depict as the soul being taught inwardly by God and helped by the inner light. So to understand the development of Augustine’s theology we must not assume that the inner gift of grace always had for him a necessary connection with Christian faith. Quite the contrary: the conceptual roots of Augustine’s distinctive notion of grace lie in the inward help needed by reason, not faith.³⁹⁷

Augustine distinguishes between faith and reason by placing reason in the primary position of the immaterial dimension whereby human minds finally comprehend intelligible things with God’s assistance, but that does not mean he completely discards faith, Cary continues,

This is a perfectly Platonist idea, for ever since the Allegory of the Cave Platonist epistemology has made the mind’s grasp of intelligible things naturally and radically dependent on the power of the divine light above. So whereas Augustine is always clear that the intellect needs the inner help of God in order to see God, it is only later in his career that mere belief in Christ is also treated as a work of grace in the soul. As his thinking develops, the scope of our need for grace in effect expands outward, beginning with intellectual vision, the highest and inmost function of the soul, and eventually reaching faith, which is concerned with outward things like the words of the Gospel and the temporal dispensation of salvation in Christ.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ Cary, 99.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 113.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 101.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

Seeing God is a natural, not supernatural, process dependent upon the operation of grace whereby God helps the intellect turn from external things to the inner space of the soul.³⁹⁹ Cary suggests that for Augustine, this is a perfectly natural process—restoring the mind to its original design—pedagogically, rather than supernaturally driven.⁴⁰⁰

The Temporal Usefulness of Faith in Purifying the Mind to See God

The mature Augustine becomes more open to the temporal usefulness of faith, which includes Scripture, the incarnate Christ, and words of trustworthy testimony from others about distant times and places.⁴⁰¹ Believing the words of others in this case, according to Augustine, is like an individual metaphorically pressing against the ground (faith in lower things) after he has fallen to lift himself back up by understanding the “significance” of the inner Truth for oneself in the highest level of one’s own mind.⁴⁰² Even though Augustine’s conviction is to feature Christ’s Incarnation as the summit of Scripture and the center of human history, fixing upon Christ’s flesh should not be the end goal for the believer.⁴⁰³

For the mature Augustine the scriptural narrative has its center in the incarnation of Christ, whose human life is at the heart of the temporal dispensation of history. But of course this temporal dispensation has an eternal goal, the ultimate happiness that consists of what Scripture calls “eternal life.” So Augustine insists that we believe everything in the temporal dispensation and use it in love so as to rise from temporal to eternal things. As a consequence, in Augustine’s account of Christian faith Christ incarnate is the center but not the end. His human life is at the heart of history, but his divine and eternal life is the goal beyond it.⁴⁰⁴

³⁹⁹ Cary, 101–102.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 102.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 124, 128.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 127.

⁴⁰³ As a result of Augustine’s position to view Christ’s humanity as the means to eternity but not the end, Cary insists that he stands in disagreement with most of Nicene orthodoxy (Ibid., 133).

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 130.

Although temporal, faith in the incarnate Christ is useful so long as individuals exploit it to rise from temporal to eternal things. Cary contends that for Augustine, Christ's humanity is foundational for purifying the eyes of the heart of humanity both individually and corporately. Christ as inner Wisdom prosopologically speaks through all who admonish others toward the truth prior to His Incarnation—not to exclude Socratic philosophers—as well as all guides who point to the truth after His earthly life.⁴⁰⁵ The reason it becomes necessary to put faith in the words of others—including but not limited to the biblical narrative (the words of prophets, Christ, and apostles) and the teaching of Scripture (the words of priests and bishops)—is because as Cary observes, Augustine came to realize that sin pollutes that which is closest to God within humanity—the human mind and causes mental blindness:⁴⁰⁶

Even before Augustine, an African Platonist tradition appears to have suggested this convergence of Platonist and biblical purification in a treatise entitled *On Purifying the Mind to See God*, written by an obscure pagan Platonist named Fonteius of Carthage, who later became a Christian. The treatise introduces a problematic that is fundamental for Augustine's Christology: God is by nature omnipresent, so why can't we see him everywhere? Fonteius's explanation is that "God, who is absent nowhere, is present in vain to the polluted mind, which in its mental blindness cannot see him." Just this

⁴⁰⁵ Cary, 115, 115n92, 133, 147. In *The City of God*, Augustine dedicates a few paragraphs to the concept of the influence that the Scriptures potentially had upon Socratic philosophers, specifically Plato: "Some people who share in the grace of Christ with us are astonished when they hear or read that Plato held a view of God which, they see, comes very close to the truth of our religion. For this reason, a good many have presumed that, when Plato went to Egypt, he must have heard the prophet Jeremiah or have read, during that same journey, the writings of the prophets, and I have cited their opinion in some of my works" (*De civ. Dei* VIII, 11). He continues by observing that Plato died some sixty years before Ptolemy commissioned the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures and therefore could not have read them. But then he counters this observation by noting the studious nature of Plato and therefore suggests that he, through an interpreter perhaps, was able to glean insight from the Scriptures. Augustine then provides three parallels between the writings of the Scriptures and Plato: 1. the opening verses of Genesis upon the commencement of creation, 2. both agree that "the philosopher is a lover of God," and "most of all" 3. the name "I am" that God reveals to Moses, Augustine argues, is the same concept that Plato espouses when he describes God as the immutable Creator "the one who truly is" in contrast to created things that are "mutable and have no real existence at all" (*Ibid.*). Finally, while referencing Plato's conviction about "the most supremely just reason for creating the world" only three chapters later in *De civ. Dei*, Augustine reasons that exposure to the concept of an omnibenevolent Creator may arise from Scripture: "Plato also gives this as the most supremely just reason for creating the world—that good works might be made by a good God. Plato may have read this passage of Scripture; or he may have come to know of it from those who had read it; or, with his acute insight, he may have understood and seen the invisible things of God through the things that God made; or he may himself have learned of them from those who had seen them" (*Ibid.*, XI, 21). See also 187n407 below.

⁴⁰⁶ Cary, 130, 133.

problem is what God confronts by taking up human flesh in the Incarnation, according to Augustine. . . .⁴⁰⁷

It should be noted at this point in the argument that in a hypothetical conversation between Hume and Augustine, Augustine would most likely appeal to this transworld incognizable concept above, in part, to answer Hume's question as to why an omnipresent and omnibenevolent God seems to be absent in the presence of evil and suffering. Humans can overcome their mental blindness by growing closer to the intelligible vision of the Word through faith by listening to authorities who have caught glimpses of the inner Truth and by their words direct others to do the same.⁴⁰⁸ Therefore, restoration, or healing, of "the natural capacity of the intellect" is the goal and this can only transpire through the purification that comes by faith.⁴⁰⁹ The temporal usefulness of "faith" not only aids in healing the mind, but is itself both an indication of transworld incognizance—since true belief concedes a certain degree of ignorance—as well as the means by which to overcome transworld incognizance—since faith requires placing trust in the communication of another.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁷ Cary, 132.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 147. Augustine, writing about the "principles" of which Porphyry (classified by Augustine as a Platonist) mentions, interprets these "principles" as the Trinity. He argues that Porphyry could not recognize that Christ was "the principle" because of the blindness of personal pride and for fear of the political realities at the time. Speaking of Christ as "the principle," Augustine, through an explanation of Christ's answer to the Jews, contends that the only way to extinguish human ignorance is to be purified by the incarnation of Christ: "The principle, then, having assumed soul and flesh, cleanses the soul and the flesh of those who believe. That is why, when the Jews asked who he was, he replied that he was the principle. But we, carnal, weak, guilty of sin, and shrouded in the darkness of ignorance, would be utterly unable to grasp this unless we were cleansed and healed by him through what we were and what we were not" (*De civ. Dei*, X, 24).

⁴⁰⁹ Cary, 131.

⁴¹⁰ Vanhoozer contends that both cognitive faculties and communicative faculties work in tandem. If there exists an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent God, then there must equally exist a purpose for cognitive and communicative faculties. However, both belief and understanding experience the undermining effects of the Fall which engenders cognitive deficiencies, as well as contamination of the environment wherein communication transpires: "My argument, then, is that there is a 'design plan' for language. Language, like the mind, another divine endowment, was designed by God to be used in certain ways. The design plan specifies when our communicative faculties are functioning properly. Proper function is a matter of accomplishing the purpose for which one's faculties were designed. The proper function of our cognitive faculties, for instance, is to produce true belief. The proper

For all of Augustine's emphatic insistence upon the rationale mind's natural ability to see the inner vision of Truth by virtue of one's own purity unaided by Scripture and apart from the Incarnation, Cary responds by pairing a Platonic concession and an "orthodox" objection.

Although Augustine maintains the necessity of the role of faith in Scripture and the Incarnation, he insists that both externals—Scripture and the Incarnation—can potentially be bypassed by the pure mind that is common to all in pursuit of the inner Truth.⁴¹¹ In response to this position, Cary dismisses the notion of the cognitive acquisition of the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity apart from the tradition of Christian doctrine as highly questionable:

One can concede that it was from the Platonists that Augustine learned such ontological attributes as God's eternal and incorporeal being as supreme Good and eternal Truth, yet insist that the very concrete, not to say peculiar, Christian understanding of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is not something he could have learned apart from the orthodox tradition of Christian doctrine rooted in the Scriptures. Could anyone possibly have thought of such a notion as the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity simply by looking inward?⁴¹²

The Nicene doctrine of the Trinity is beyond discovery within the scope of one's mind which is precisely the conclusion of both the Nicene Fathers as well as the Christian Platonist tradition,

function of our communicative faculties, I contend, is to produce true interpretation—understanding. Of course, our faculties will only produce understanding when they are (1) working properly (2) in a communicative environment that is appropriate to them. These are important conditions. With regard to the first, we have seen that readers [and listeners] often have biases and interests that impede the proper functioning of their interpretive capacities. Second, as the Christian doctrine of the Fall implies, neither our faculties nor our environment is in perfect working order. The communicative environment is corrupt, riddled with people using language as an instrument of coercion rather than conversation and communion" (Vanhoozer, 205-206).

⁴¹¹ Cary, 98–99. Cary Argues that Augustine places so much weight on the Platonic view of the natural mind he believes that one can achieve the intellectual vision by way of the inner teacher completely detached from the knowledge of Christ incarnate: "Augustine understands the inner teacher as the very condition of the possibility of rational knowledge and understanding, and thus of the kind of learning that any good student of the liberal disciplines can accomplish. This is an accomplishment for which one need never have heard of the man Jesus Christ, much less believed in him as God incarnate" (Cary 99; see also 144). Augustine makes a similar point while contending for the superiority of Platonic philosophers who identify God as the one who enlightens all human learners: "[Platonists] have stated that the light of the mind which is at work in all human learning is the very same God by whom all things were made" (*De civ. Dei*, VIII, 7).

⁴¹² Cary, 139.

according to Cary.⁴¹³ Simply looking inward, no matter how pure the mind has become through instruction, will not result in comprehending, understanding, and articulating the doctrine of the Trinity. Augustine forces this epistemology because, as a Christian Platonist, he views the ontological level of the soul—where the inner word resides—as higher than the physical aspect of humanity. This includes Christ’s physiology.⁴¹⁴

Augustine’s Reliance upon Other Philosophical Methods Including Epicurean Epistemology

Before moving forward, one additional thought that may aid understanding the next section of the argument has to do with how Augustine appeals to other philosophical methods. It should be noted that although we can only hypothesize about a conversation between Hume—who builds upon Epicurus’s argument in Chapter 1—and Augustine, we may be able to identify Epicurean methodology within Augustine’s understanding of how external things can be known to the human mind. By focusing upon Augustine’s *Against the Academic Sceptics*, Bolyard develops a convincing argument whereby he detects reliance upon Epicurean epistemology within Augustine’s refutation of his opponents—Academic Sceptics.⁴¹⁵ Perhaps we can more clearly imagine what a conversation between Hume and Augustine may look like by observing how Augustine employs Epicurean epistemology. Simply because Augustine utilizes other philosophical methods, Bolyard affirms, is no indication of his endorsement of their philosophical positions. For example, Augustine, previously a skeptic, displays extreme familiarity with skeptical methodology and philosophy which he, in turn, uses to defeat, not to

⁴¹³ Cary, 141.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 144, 147.

⁴¹⁵ Charles Bolyard, “Augustine, Epicurus, and External World Skepticism,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44, no. 2 (2006): 157.

approve, their position.⁴¹⁶ Additionally, even though Augustine, according to Bolyard, may employ Epicurus's methodology this in no way means he endorses atheism or quasi-atheism.⁴¹⁷

Interestingly, two of the Academic Skeptics' themes that Augustine refutes in this text, which is extremely fitting for our purposes (especially in light of transworld incognizance), is the idea that nothing can be known—global skepticism and external world skepticism—"the view that *the existence of the external world cannot be known*."⁴¹⁸ Bolyard deduces that Augustine uses a technique of how things "seem" to counter the external-world skeptic's previous rebuttal that he bases his entire argument upon the premise of there being an actual external world, which they disbelieve: "Augustine supports [his claim that things seem to him] by arguing that seemings are required in order for error to occur—otherwise, what would we be mistaken about? And since the possibility of error is the main impetus for skeptical doubt, skepticism requires the admission that things seem."⁴¹⁹ To make someone aware of an error, Augustine argues, skeptics must admit the possibility of how things "seem" otherwise it makes no sense for them to say that his argument has failed. Augustine, according to Bolyard, mentions Epicurus or Epicureans no less than four times while developing this argument and coining what he calls a "quasi-earth" hypothesis—also suggestive of Epicurus's own terms.⁴²⁰ Bolyard proceeds to identify

⁴¹⁶ Bolyard, 158.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 157, 165, 168.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 159, 160.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 161. Augustine's logic here may even correspond to modern philosophers who espouse deconstructionist ideas regarding meaning, communication, and cognition. While refuting what he calls "Derrida's Doubt," Vanhoozer, building upon Plantinga's observation of naturalistic evolution's failure to produce true beliefs, wonders what reason a proponent of such a view even has to write: "Plantinga's objection to the performative circularity of the naturalist's attempt to allay doubt by producing arguments also applies to Derrida: once one doubts the ability of language to communicate thought to others, why bother writing books about deconstruction?" (Vanhoozer, 266n21).

⁴²⁰ Bolyard, 161, 163.

similarities in structure and content between Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, whereby he quotes Epicurus at length, and Augustine's *Against the Academic Skeptics*.⁴²¹ By doing so, Bolyard demonstrates a high probability of Augustine borrowing methods from Epicurus, an individual whose philosophical code held many dissimilarities from his own.

Bolyard's point in analyzing remnants of Epicurus in Augustine's *Against the Academic Skeptics* is to establish that the structure of Augustine's "quasi-earth" hypothesis is best explained through a concept he calls the Epicurean Realist Interpretation and that it successfully refutes Academic skepticism—both global and external-world skepticism.⁴²² By examining Epicurus's view of atoms, Bolyard is able to connect Augustine's concept of the "quasi-earth" hypothesis to registered impressions that are sensorially perceived. Epicurus holds, according to Bolyard, that mental impressions of external objects are physically perceived indirectly rather than directly from images that atoms emit:

Epicurus is best characterized as an empiricist: in his view, all of our mental contents arise ultimately from the senses. External objects, Epicurus holds, are composed entirely of atoms. But since these atoms are in constant motion, the outer surfaces of the objects continually emit "images" (*eidola*), which are extremely fine, one-atom-thick copies of these surface qualities. . . . When we register impressions (*phantasia*) of the qualities of these external objects, according to Epicurus, we do so by virtue of having sensed not a single image, but rather a series of them. This "piling up" of images is thus the causal explanation of our impressions of things, and occurs non-volitionally, beyond our conscious control.⁴²³

⁴²¹ Bolyard, 164.

⁴²² Ibid., 159, 167, 168.

⁴²³ Ibid., 166. One such passage where Augustine mentions the atoms of Epicurus is within the context of asserting the superiority of Platonists and their belief in the true God in contrast to philosophers who base their convictions upon "fables that their hearts fabricated," and limit their observations of the world to the four elements and the five senses (*De civ. Dei*, VIII, 5). Augustine continues by revealing the fallacy of their philosophy rests within their inability to see that the thoughts of their minds are not bodies (physical) but rather "the likeness of a body" (Ibid.). He directs his argument to the process of their thoughts in order to demonstrate the mental images are not physical: "[T]hey represented to themselves inwardly objects which they had seen externally, even when they were not actually seeing those objects but only thinking of them" (Ibid.). He concludes, in part, that the mind / soul does not fall within the four elements or the five senses. In a later section within the same book, Augustine mentions Epicureans' and Stoics' inferiority to Platonists because their sole criterion for truth is the unreliability of the five

The connection, for Bolyard, is between the way things “seem” in Augustine’s quasi-earth hypothesis and Epicurus’s impression of things. The reason things seem the way they are in Augustine’s view may be made more evident by Epicurus’s understanding of the play of emitting images that leave an impression of the qualities of the external objects upon the mind. The emitting images mediate between the actual qualities of the external object and the sensory impression left upon the mind.⁴²⁴ Stated once again, the key in the connection is mediation between the external object and the impression that is left by the emitting images of that external object upon the mind. Bolyard continues that even though there may be no direct perception of the external object itself, the impression of the object’s qualities from the images is enough for Epicurus to determine that something is external:

If all impressions are true, even those occurring in dreams and hallucinations, then it will immediately follow that global skepticism fails. Thus, even the impression of a *quasi-earth* is true. Furthermore, if the having of *any* impression is a direct effect of externally existing images, it must follow that there *is* an external world of some sort. Even if such a world consists only of images, it is still an external world, and this is enough to guarantee the truth of Augustine’s physical disjunctions.⁴²⁵

Bolyard contends that since Epicurus is an empiricist, and, as a result, holds that the senses can register external objects through true impressions, he arrives at the conclusion that there are

senses. He then proceeds to isolate the philosophical inconsistency of the Stoics, who hold that the senses animate their ideas, teachings, and learning, by wondering what sense allows them to see wisdom: “[W]hen the Stoics say that only the wise are beautiful, I cannot help but wonder what bodily senses they use to discern this kind of beauty, what fleshly eyes they use to catch sight of the form and the splendor of wisdom” (Ibid., 7). Although Epicurus was not a Stoic, he was an empiricist limiting verifiable information to the five senses, ultimately placing even the mind and soul within the material realm, according to Bolyard: “It should be noted that mind, like soul, is material for Epicurus, and thus this view, though strange, is not quite as strange as it at first appears to be” (Bolyard, 166n24).

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 167.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 167. Bolyard is referring to the “physical disjunctives” he features earlier in the argument whereby Augustine attempts to express several indubitable disjunctives, based upon physics, that he believes skeptics cannot deny. However, Bolyard surmises skeptics can then simply counter that Augustine bases his disjunctives upon the reality of an external world, and therefore, they can raise the counter reply, “How do you know this world exists...if the senses are fallible?” (Bolyard, 161). This is essentially the question Bolyard has Augustine answering by way of Epicurean epistemology at this point in the juncture.

some things that can be known, including an external world. As a result, according to Bolyard, Augustine can draw similar conclusions for his own purposes by building upon an epistemological foundation fashioned by Epicurus.

Following Bolyard's reasoning to identify Epicurean methodology within Augustine's understanding of how external things can be known to the human mind, perhaps we can now more clearly imagine what a conversation between Hume and Augustine may look like, all while being mindful of how Augustine employed Epicurean epistemology. Established earlier in Augustine's claim, Bolyard finishes his argument, in part, by reiterating that global and external world skepticism arise from the "possibility of error" and is therefore somewhat self-refuting: "[S]kepticism arises (in large part) from doubt of a sensory nature. But if such doubt is to be coherent, there must be some external world with which our sensory impressions potentially fail to correspond."⁴²⁶ Hume, relying upon Epicurus, fails to see the correspondence between an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent God and the presence of evil and suffering, but that does not mean there is none. This is not to say that skepticism is to Hume's argument as the external world is to God in Bolyard's argument above. Presently in the argument one cannot simply substitute the words "Hume's argument" for "Skepticism" and "external world" with the word "God," but rather that there may be something in Bolyard's argument that nudges the larger argument of this book a smidgen closer to a possible reason for the problem of suffering. For our purposes, at this point, I simply would like to note a connection between the mediation that occurs between the qualities of external objects and the impression upon the mind by way of emitting images in Bolyard's Epicurean Realist Interpretation and what Cary identifies as Augustine's expressionist semiotics below.

⁴²⁶ Bolyard, 168.

Augustine's Expressionist Semiotics

To further harmonize his understanding of Platonism within the rubric of Christianity, Augustine supplies a three-tiered ontology of body, soul, and God.⁴²⁷ The importance of the soul in Augustine's expressionist semiotics cannot be overstated. The "inner word" resides in the middle level of this ontology—the soul or mind, and, according to Cary, is not really a word, or a sign, at all but is rather "significance" or true, personal understanding.⁴²⁸ For clarification of this concept, Cary provides another one of Augustine's timely illustrations: "The sound of the word 'sun' is a sign (*signum*), the sun itself is the thing it signifies (*res quam significat sonus*), and the understanding of the sun (*intellectus solis*) in the mind of those who speak and hear the sound is its significance or meaning (*significatio*). A word consists of both sound and significance, the one external and corporeal, the other present within the mind, so that 'the sound is the body, while the significance is, as it were, the soul of the sound.'"⁴²⁹ Augustine desires to understand the inner or eternal Truth at the level of "significance." Therefore, by applying this same formula to Christ, the sound of the word "sun" is comparable, in his estimation, to the external human flesh of Christ. Both Christ and the sound of the word "sun" signify something higher and more inward, in this case the flesh of Christ is the external sign signifying the eternal Word or Truth.⁴³⁰ Cary interprets Augustine's understanding of the inner word within expressionist semiotics by disclosing an ontological hierarchical parallel: the inner word is to the Creator as the outer word is to the creature:

⁴²⁷ Cary, 135, 144.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 144.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 144-145.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 145.

[I]n expressionist semiotics the superiority of the inner word to its spoken expression can be taken as a reflection (however distant) of the ontological superiority of Creator to creature, just as in Augustine's three-tiered ontology the superiority of soul to body (level two to level three) reflects the superiority of God to created things (level one to levels two and three). Not that the inner word of the human heart is absolutely immutable like God, but it is (according to Augustine's Platonist axiom of causality) above being affected by external things. . . . It remains unchanged within the heart just as the Son of God remains immutably one with the Father even as he is made human for us.⁴³¹

Augustine's three-tiered hierarchical ontology seamlessly mirrors the superiority of the inner word of the heart to the outward voice of the word. The climax of this Augustinian comparison, Cary concludes, is that for all its complexity, the Incarnation is an outward fleshly expression of the inward, unchanging, eternal Word of God. The spoken word is the external voice that clothes the inner word just as the human flesh of Christ (body and soul) is the external voice, so to speak, that clothes the inner, eternal Son of God, which Augustine also refers to as the inner, divine, eternal Truth (also eternal Wisdom and Love), the eternal logos or Word, the divine Light, the Wisdom of God.⁴³²

Employing the method of synthesizing Patristic and modern exegesis, Cary, throughout his analysis, gleans insights by either approving or critiquing Augustine's expressionist semiotics as the means to grasp a more complete understanding of that which can yield true belief and true understanding. Therefore, according to Cary's understanding of Augustine, the outward expression, the "body" or sign, may be malleable; however, the inner word, similar to the Son of God, can remain unaffected by external things. Synthesizing Cary's understanding with another

⁴³¹ Cary, 146.

⁴³² The flesh of Christ in Augustine's writings includes both the body and soul: "As usual when speaking of the Word made flesh, Augustine takes 'flesh' to mean the whole humanity of Christ, soul as well as body" (Ibid., 147). Ibid., 98, 99, 131, 133, 136, 144, 145, 147. By applying a similar formula to the literal [external] and spiritual [inner] sense of a text, Vanhoozer connects hermeneutical practices to the incarnation as well: "[T]he way one views the literal and spiritual senses of a text is related to the way one envisages the incarnation of the Word of God; one's commentary is connected to one's Christology" (Vanhoozer, 113).

modern scholar may supply even greater appreciation for Augustine’s expressionist semiotics. By also utilizing an Augustinian approach, Vanhoozer demonstrates how, over the course of time, later communication—in this case, the recontextualization of the Old Testament in light of the Incarnation or Christ event—may come to express more fully what something means by permitting greater illumination without changing the original:

The Christian canon itself encourages the reader to recontextualize the content. Indeed, the very relation of Old Testament and New Testament is a case study in recontextualizing. The authors of the New Testament had to answer the question of what the Old Testament meant in light of the Christ event. However, when the New Testament recontextualized the Old Testament in light of Christ, it did not change its meaning but rather rendered its referent—God’s gracious provision for Israel and the world—more specific. What is of continuing relevance across the two Testaments is God’s promise to create a people for himself and the divine action that fulfills that promise. The promise that created Israel later came to be applied to the church. Hence, what God says to us today through the Old Testament, in the Spirit, is nothing other than the significance of the text, its extended meaning.⁴³³

Vanhoozer maintains that “the Christ event” casts greater light upon the meaning of the Old Testament via New Testament writings without altering the original meaning of the text. Considering Augustine’s triadic expressionist semiotics—sign, referent, and significance—recontextualizing simply renders the referent (whatever that may be even beyond the Scriptures) through extended meaning more specific. Vanhoozer continues:

Significance just is “recontextualized meaning.” Just as Jesus Christ recontextualizes the meaning of the Old Testament, so the church is called to recontextualize the meaning of Jesus Christ. In sum, the Word of God for today (significance) is a function of the Word of God in the text (meaning), which in turn is a witness to the living and eternal Word of God in the Trinity (referent). The meaningfulness of the Bible is thus a matter of the Spirit’s leading the church to extend Scripture’s meaning into the present; in this way it displays its contemporary significance.⁴³⁴

⁴³³ Vanhoozer, 423.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 423.

Significance or true personal understanding is, according to Vanhoozer, “recontextualized meaning.” Reflecting upon Cary’s use of Augustine’s illustration of the “sun,” this same formula is clearly evident in Vanhoozer’s application of the Word of God. The sound of the word “sun” (the sign) is equivalent to the Word of God in text. The sun itself, which is what the word “sun” signifies, is equivalent to the Word of God in the Trinity (referent). And finally, true personal understanding of the sun, which is the significance, is equivalent to the Word of God for today.

Signs or Words are Mediatory

Instead of viewing the sign, referent, and significance as a three-step process upon which one step builds upon the other until movement from sign to significance or true personal understanding transpires, Vanhoozer suggests viewing signs as mediatory. Signs serve to mediate between the referent—the thing it signifies, and true personal understanding in the minds of speakers / authors and listeners / readers. Drawing upon Augustine, Vanhoozer views signs (spoken words or texts) as something sacred: “[T]he text is a semantic sacrament that mediates the other: the author’s vision of the world, the testimony of the witness.”⁴³⁵ Like the spoken words of people, Augustine values the written texts of authors as a semantic sacrament. Written texts mediate the mind of the author. Loving one’s neighbor then, for Augustine extends beyond contemporary living, breathing, speaking people to the texts of authors, many of whom have passed from this earth long ago.⁴³⁶ Combining Cary’s keen observations from Augustine’s writings that feature expressionist semiotics with Vanhoozer’s may yield definitive results that recontextualizes the meaning in a way that surpasses Augustine’s understanding without violating the original sense. Vanhoozer contends that there may be more than one legitimate way

⁴³⁵ Vanhoozer, 229.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 32.

to look at a text. Diversity among interpreters, within the boundaries of a text (i.e., the Bible), may actually produce a fuller sense of the true meaning of a text:

First, with regard to meaning, it may be that we need to attend to many voices in order to appreciate the fullness of the text's unified determinate sense. It is salutary to be reminded that the way one looks at a text may not be the only legitimate way to do so. The plurality of perspectives from African and Asian Christianity may help Western Christians to discover hitherto unknown aspects of what is nevertheless really there in the text. Second, with regard to significance, the many voices confirm the relevance of the text in many different situations. Wisdom is cumulative; many generations and many cultures may be needed to mine the treasures of biblical significance. But the plural unity of interpretations should not be confused with a disordered pluralism; not all readings are equally legitimate.⁴³⁷

According to Vanhoozer, there is great value in many voices over many generations, cultures, and, I might add, disciplines (philosophical and theological, to name a few) in attending to the meaning of a text. Differing interpretations working in cooperation may be the most effective means to sufficiently understand the "other" in a text.

Transhistorical Intention and the Black Ecclesial Method

Furthermore, Vanhoozer contends that literature, by its own author's mediatory nature, intends to speak to future audiences on universal topics in ways that transcend history. While commenting upon the writings of another literary critic, Vanhoozer folds Hirsch's concept of

⁴³⁷ Vanhoozer, 424. McCaulley endorses this same concept while stressing the importance of dialoguing with other cultures during the process of biblical interpretation: "This dialogical method opens up Black biblical interpretation to other interpretive traditions. If our cultures and histories define the totality of our interpretive enterprise, the price of admission can be complete acquiescence to that culture's particularities. This is as true with European domination of the text as it would be if Black culture completely sets the contours for the debate. But if we all read the biblical text assuming that God is able to speak a coherent word to us through it, then we can discuss the meanings our varied cultures have gleaned from the Scriptures. What I have in mind then is a unified mission in which our varied cultures turn to the text in dialogue with one another to discern the mind of Christ. That means in the providence of God, I need Ugandan biblical interpretation, because the experiences of Ugandans mean they are able to bring their unique insights to the conversation. African American exegesis, then, precisely because it is informed by the Black experience, has the potential to be universal when added to the chorus of believers through time and across cultures" (Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation As an Exercise in Hope*, (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 22, accessed November 2, 2022, ProQuest Ebook Central).

what he calls transhistorical intention into his own argument.⁴³⁸ Literature, Vanhoozer ponders, invites readers not only to understand concepts, but also to see themselves through the mind of the author: “Hirsch . . . refined his meaning-significance distinction and now thinks that authors regularly intend to address future readers and so transcend their original situation: ‘Literature is typically an instrument designed for broad and continuing future applications.’ At the same time, he continues to hold fast to hermeneutic realism: ‘Stable meaning depends . . . on pastness.’”⁴³⁹ Literature mediates past ideas by applying them to present concerns, according to Vanhoozer. If this is true, how can we apply Augustine’s Platonic expressionist semiotics in a way that honors his intentions, but also addresses the present concerns of both Cary and Vanhoozer? Vanhoozer suggests one of Hirsch’s examples of how to apply past writings to present situations: “Hirsch gives the example of a Shakespeare sonnet: ‘When I apply Shakespeare’s sonnet to my own lover rather than to his, I do not change his meaning-intention but rather instantiate and fulfill it. It is the nature of textual meaning to embrace many different future fulfillments without thereby being changed.’ Because love is a universal human theme, sonnets that explore love have continuing significance.”⁴⁴⁰ Shakespeare’s writings transcend history because he consistently addresses universal themes, like love, that are applicable to future audiences. In this way, the words of the author not only have the capability of outliving him, but also reinforces and stabilizes meaningfulness to future readers.

Authors like Augustine and Shakespeare both address universal themes of the human heart and soul, which supply material for contemporary scholars, like Cary and Vanhoozer, to

⁴³⁸ Vanhoozer, 262.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 422.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

read, comment upon, and apply these words of the past to the present. Readers, then, read past words or signs for the purpose of recontextualizing meaning (significance) in the present.

Vanhoozer, once again, confirms this idea by referring to the writings of Hirsch: “Just as authors often intend to address future generations, so readers read to get something of present significance out of past texts: ‘Analogizing to one’s own experience is an implicit, pervasive, usually untaught response to stories.’ Hirsch calls for an Augustinian approach that avoids the extremes of the ‘originalists’ and ‘nonoriginalists’ alike: ‘Interpretation must always go beyond the writer’s letter, but never beyond the writer’s spirit.’”⁴⁴¹ When readers approach a text of literature, perhaps especially the Scriptures, they are attempting to glean something truly significant in the way of personal understanding and application. Hirsch, according to Vanhoozer cautions that by doing so, individuals have authorial permission to go beyond the letter but not beyond the writer’s spirit. Esau McCaulley is another contemporary scholar who brilliantly exploits the idea of readers, in this case enslaved Black persons, reading to get something of present significance from past texts: “It is also well known that . . . enslaved persons, over against their masters’ wishes, viewed events like God’s redemption of Israel from slavery as paradigmatic for their understanding of God’s character. They claimed that God is fundamentally a liberator. The character of Jesus, who though innocent, suffered unjustly at the hands of an empire, resonated on a deep level with the plight of the enslaved Black person.”⁴⁴² McCaulley argues that contemporary Christians, regardless of their ethnicity, have much to learn from the hope that enslaved persons were able to glean from the Scriptures through their unique hermeneutics. McCaulley is explicit in agreeing with Hirsch’s concept that “[a]nalogizing to

⁴⁴¹ Vanhoozer, 422.

⁴⁴² McCaulley, 17.

one's own experience is an implicit, pervasive, usually untaught response to stories." He contends that analogizing is precisely what enslaved persons were doing even though many of them were illiterate.⁴⁴³

Recontextualizing Israel's initial enslavement and ultimate liberation to their own situation provides enslaved persons, according to McCaulley, the theological calibration necessary for a correct interpretation of Scripture. Stated differently, it is precisely the "social location" of the suffering, enslaved person that provides a unique perspective by which to identify the misappropriation of the application of the Word of God.⁴⁴⁴ One example he shares is how enslaved persons decidedly rejected the teachings of white slave masters who exploited Pauline passages to instruct slaves that submission to the social order was God's will for their existence: "Black Christianity historically . . . has claimed that white slave master readings of the Bible used to undergird white degradation of Black bodies were not merely one manifestation of Christianity to be contrasted with another. Instead they said that such a reading was wrong. Enslaved Black people, even those who remained illiterate, in effect questioned white exegesis."⁴⁴⁵ As McCaulley began to consider Black biblical exegesis on the exodus, he came to see their emphasis upon the theme of the universal liberation of all humanity as paradigmatic.⁴⁴⁶ He contends that this theme led to the discovery of what he calls "the Black ecclesial instinct or method."⁴⁴⁷ The Black ecclesial method, McCaulley writes, is dialogical in that it reveals how the relationship of communication between the Bible and the context (location) of Black

⁴⁴³ McCaulley, 17.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

Christianity is mutually beneficial:

[T]he dialogue goes both ways. If our experiences pose particular and unique questions to the Scriptures, then the Scriptures also pose unique questions to us. Although there are some experiences that are common to humanity, there are also some ways in which the Bible will pose particular challenges to African Americans. For example, the theme of forgiveness and the universal kinship of humanity is both a boon and a trial for Black Christians because of the historic and ongoing oppression of Black people in this country. Although I believe we must engage in a dialogue with the text, I acknowledge that ultimately the Word of God speaks the final word.⁴⁴⁸

Therefore, just as the social location of enslaved Black people yields more accurate interpretation of broad biblical themes, whereby “their context spoke to the Bible,” the Word of God speaks back to the current social location of African Americans on themes of forgiveness and universal kinship of humanity.⁴⁴⁹ Correctly applying this two-way dialogue within one particular culture of Christianity–Black biblical interpretation can generate extremely beneficial synergistic effects “when added to the chorus of believers through time and across cultures.”⁴⁵⁰

In consideration of both “social location,” and the chorus of believers through time and across cultures, Cary, using examples of statements made by John the Baptist and Philip the apostle, demonstrates through Augustine’s writings the idea of Christ the eternal Word gradually replacing the diminishing temporal flesh of Christ within the minds of all who desire the intellectual vision of truly seeing (understanding) the second person of the Trinity in all of His fullness.⁴⁵¹ To achieve this intellectual vision, one must submit to a process whereby healing

⁴⁴⁸ McCaulley, 20.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁵¹ Cary, 148. Augustine employs John the Baptist’s statement, “He must become greater; I must become less,” (John 3:30) and Christ’s response to Philip’s statement, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,” (John 14:9) to explain that true understanding of the eternal Word must grow in the minds of believers. Philip’s request for Christ to show the disciples the Father was met with a response that Augustine interprets to mean that Philip only saw Christ with natural, external eyes apart from any kind of inward understanding (Ibid., 148-149).

restores the natural, luminous state of the eye of the mind (the inner word) to see beyond the obscured sense of physical sight. Augustine's Christian Platonism, Cary argues, is the epistemological axiom driving this Christological hermeneutic:

Christ's own flesh is therefore among the voices that must diminish, becoming less and less necessary for us, while Christ the eternal Word grows in us—that is, grows in our knowledge as the light grows not in itself, but in eyes that are being healed and can see more of it. The voice diminishes while the Word grows: this means that our diminishing need for the flesh of Christ gives way to our growing vision of the eternal Word. Once again the parallel between the humanity of Christ and the witnesses of Scripture is exact. This is a Christological hermeneutic of Scripture and history in which the Incarnation of Christ is to be used as a means to arrive at enjoyment of the kind of pure intellectual vision to which the Platonists admonish us to turn.⁴⁵²

The flesh of Christ is significant only insofar as it serves the purpose of directing minds toward the true knowledge of the eternal Word. Cary, at this point, takes issue with some of Augustine's Platonic conclusions. Is the flesh of Christ—the physical presence of another—incapable of shaping human souls? Is the ultimate goal in human understanding a reduction of all externals—all physical others including the human flesh of Christ—so that all that is left is a pure human soul in the highest sense which only permits internal things to influence the mind to frame God within the intellectual vision? Once again gleaning insight from Christ's response to Philip, Cary protests:

[T]here is no deeper way to know God than to believe his words. . . . The suggestion I would make is that knowledge of God is not like seeing an unchanging truth for yourself (so that you henceforth need no external teacher) but rather like coming to know someone present in the flesh, outside your own heart, so that precisely the one you seek to know is always your teacher. The implication is that there is no knowledge of the other that is not ultimately a gracious gift of the other, which we must be glad to receive.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵² Cary, 148.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 150. Vanhoozer contrasting Augustine's view of words with Derrida's offers further insight into the Christological understanding of communication within Augustine's writings which may be hermeneutically closer to Cary's implications of communicating than what we may initially realize: "Language is like a city in which there is both overall structure and diverse neighborhoods, a city in which speakers have freedom of movement within (city) limits. For Augustine, the purpose of the city of language is to lead one to the city of God. Language

Is this not the point of the Son of God becoming incarnate in human flesh to bring God to humanity, to meet humanity—like enslaved black persons—where they dwell? God desires humans to know him, therefore he graciously descends to humanity; humanity does not ascend to God.⁴⁵⁴ Intimacy with God, the eternal Truth or Word, stems from His gracious will to stand present in the flesh before those to whom He chooses to reveal Himself, to those by whom He chooses to be known. Cary emphasizes that this is a gracious gift, utterly dependent upon the other, making the expression of transparency something of which we should be happy to receive.

In keeping with Cary's concept of the "knowledge of the other," God incarnate—present in the flesh like all others outside of our own hearts—graciously reveals what He wants, when He wants, how He wants, and to whom He wants. On this score, Christ in the biblical narratives was able to bring the Kingdom of Heaven near to humanity because, He, the king in the flesh, was present (Matt 4:17). Cary essentially contends, His physical presence made it possible for higher-level freewill, sentient creatures with "the eye of faith" in His words to enjoy significant knowledge of God.⁴⁵⁵ "It is because he remains what he eternally is even as he assumes what he was not, that to receive this human being in faith is to receive the One who sent him (John 13:20)."⁴⁵⁶ Language and meaning are more complex than occupying the realm of temporal, external existence with little to no bearing upon the soul. Cary suggests that having to trust in the

exists for the sake of communication, and signs are to be used for this purpose. In his *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine draws a distinction between the useful (*uti*) and the enjoyable (*frui*). The highest end of human beings is enjoying God. Language, when rightly used, is one of the chief means that lead to this joy. . . . To begin thinking about language and human beings from the perspective of Christian belief is to recognize the centrality and interrelatedness of *communication* and *communion*. To respect the moral rights of the author is essentially to receive his or her communication, not to revise it. This reception, in turn, is the basis for a literary knowledge that can perhaps become the basis for personal knowledge, for communion over space and time" (Vanhoozer, 202).

⁴⁵⁴ Cary, 149.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 150.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 151.

words that others reveal about themselves may not only be a suitable companion for Augustine's expressionist semiotics but also a higher order good:⁴⁵⁷

It will help us keep these non-Augustinian options open if we recognize that expressionist semiotics, with its preference for vision and its belief in inner presence, is not the only possible explanation of how language and meaning work. . . . There are alternative pictures, such as the classical metaphor of the soul being like a wax tablet imprinted by words or biblical talk of words being written on the heart, which suggest that our minds are not causally superior to bodily things but can be formed by the external things they learn. In such a picture, belief in another person's words need not be a temporary substitute for inward vision, but rather the way our hearts are shaped by what someone outside of us wants us to know, including even himself. The suggestion is that to have our hearts shaped by the Word of God is to know the Lord. The parallel between Scripture and Incarnation, on this understanding, is that some external things have the power to grant us everlasting gifts, which can be found by embracing in faith Christ's life-giving flesh.⁴⁵⁸

In Cary's view, humans are too complex to simply stratify their ontology into varying levels of superiority. He proposes a more robust approach whereby both self-contemplation and external, physiological structures, such as the words of others about themselves, significantly influence the self. As a result, faith in the words of the physical Christ has the power to conform the human heart to the image of Christ preparing the whole person for a mature relationship with the deity whereby she can not only see, but also significantly participate in the divine nature.⁴⁵⁹ In this way, there is great value in many voices over many generations, cultures, disciplines (philosophical and theological, to name a few), and, as Cary demonstrates, various intradisciplinary methods (i.e., Augustine's and Cary's explanations for how language and meaning work) in attending to the meaning of a text. As stated previously, differing interpretations working in cooperation may be the most effective means to sufficiently

⁴⁵⁷ Cary, 150.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 151.

⁴⁵⁹ Rom 8:29; Eph 4:13; 2 Pet 1:4.

understand the “other” in a text, be it human or divine. Therefore, the Incarnation, being the ultimate marriage between the human (both material and immaterial aspects) and the divine, is perhaps the best possible means to both impact and shape humans via internal and external things, for knowing God, and for reconciling broken relationships.

CHAPTER 8: THE IMPACT OF THE PATRISTIC VIEW OF THE INCARNATION UPON THE HUMAN WILL

Augustine on the Problem of Evil

The focus of this chapter will be to enhance the reader's understanding of Augustine's perspective on how one should view the problem of evil, its ultimate origin within the created will, and how his views on the Incarnation—specifically regarding Christ's will—can be employed as a possible defense against the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships. Accomplishing this task will not rely necessarily upon Augustine's chronological sequencing of these topics, but rather will be driven by a logical order that is more in keeping with the overall theme of the defense within this book. We will begin by primarily examining Augustine's mature understanding of the origin of evil and its impact upon the will in his late work *The City of God*. Then, by employing the commentary of Han-Luen Kantzer Komline to track the development of Augustine's groundbreaking work in this area, we will transition to several of his earlier writings which will provide a deeper appreciation for how Augustine views the function of the will for good or for evil within human nature. Five points about the origin, nature, and remedy of evil will precede the final chapter, whereby we will analyze a biblical narrative through the methodological lens of the cumulative patristic incarnational defense that has been developing throughout this book. The five points regarding Augustine's view of evil and how it can possibly coexist in a world containing an omnibenevolent God are as follows: 1. Free Will v. Foreknowledge, 2. Original Sin, 3. Evil begins in a Good Will gone Bad, 4. The Efficient Cause of a Bad Will is Nothing, and finally, 5. Adam's Will v. Christ's Will.

Free Will v. Foreknowledge

For Augustine, it is vital to understand that both God's foreknowledge and human free will must be held in necessary tension. Both not only coexist, but it is blasphemous to think

otherwise. Presuppositionally harmonizing this position, Augustine concludes the antithesis of Hume's position by directly fusing man's freedom to choose good or evil to God's sustaining foreknowledge:

By no means, therefore, are we compelled either to eliminate the will's choice in retaining God's foreknowledge or—which is blasphemous—to deny God's foreknowledge of future events in retaining the will's choice. Rather, we embrace both. With faith and with truth we confess both, the one so that we may believe rightly and the other so that we may live rightly. For there is no living rightly without believing rightly in God. Far be it from us, then, to deny God's foreknowledge for the sake of our wish to be free, for it is only by his help that we ever are or will be free.⁴⁹⁶

The will's choice and God's foreknowledge are not mutually exclusive. God's foreknowledge provides humanity with a tremendous advantage to maintain true beliefs. It is precisely because God can know ahead of time that He is able to instruct humans in time. Free will, argues Augustine, in response to God's foreknowledge, enables individuals to live rightly. Intrinsic to his very nature, man is made to benefit from submitting his free will to God's foreknowledge:

“For the rational creature was so made that it is beneficial for it to be subject to God but ruinous for it to follow its own will rather than the will of its creator.”⁴⁹⁷ It is therefore to the detriment of the creature that it seeks its own will consequently severing itself from the Creator. If “[t]he fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,” then failure to fear the Lord is the beginning of an evil will.⁴⁹⁸ For Augustine then, to turn to that which is inferior from that which is supreme—even a lesser good—is a defect within the will itself.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁶ *De civ. Dei* V, 10.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, XIV, 12.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, XII, 7.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, XII, 8. In the opening chapter of her significant work on Augustine's understanding of the will, Komline specifies that Augustine views the will as a motion of the mind not just a part of the mind: “[Augustine] not only characterizes the will as belonging to or a part of the mind in a general way but also specifies it as a motion of the mind” (Han-luen Kantzer Komline, *Augustine on the Will: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 26).

Submitting to the Creator who creates creatures out of nothing is not only beneficial to the freewill creature but extends significant improvement to the creature. If an evil will can corrupt a good nature, then God in His foreknowledge may also permit a good will to amplify a good nature by making it even better. To illustrate his point, Augustine submits the example of good angels who achieve a greater existence by way of a good will:

[S]ince it was due to their good will that the good angels turned not to themselves who had lesser existence but to him who has supreme existence, and since it was by clinging to him that they gained greater existence and by participating in him that they lived wisely and happily, what does this show except that any good will would have remained impoverished, characterized only by its own desire, unless he who had made their good nature out of nothing, and had made it capable of receiving him, also made it better by filling it with himself, after first stirring it to still more ardent desire?⁵⁰⁰

Augustine reasons that God, in His foreknowledge, creates good natures capable of clinging to Him by way of a good will. As these creatures turn to “him who has supreme existence,” they experience the filling of God within themselves, instead of becoming worse by an evil will, they can become even better by a good one. This concept eventually leads Augustine to conclude a conflict between two cities yielding results not only in a struggle between good and evil within the self but also in the ultimate struggle between self-love and the love of God:

Two loves, then, have made two cities. Love of self, even to the point of contempt for God, made the earthly city, and love of God, even to the point of contempt for self, made the heavenly city. Thus the former glories in itself, and the latter glories in the Lord. The former seeks its glory from men, but the latter finds its highest glory in God, the witness of our conscience. The former lifts up its head in its own glory; the latter says to its God, *My glory, and the one who lifts up my head* (Ps 3:3). In the former the lust for domination dominates both its princes and the nations that it subjugates; in the latter both leaders and followers serve one another in love, the leaders by their counsel, the followers by their obedience. The former loves its own strength, displayed in its men of power; the latter says to its God, *I love you, O Lord, my strength* (Ps 18:1).⁵⁰¹

Human freedom is a choice between the love of self and the love of God. A good will seeks the

⁵⁰⁰ *De civ. Dei* XII, 9.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, XIV, 28.

love of God and enjoys a greater degree of freedom. By finding its highest glory in God, a good nature through a good will provides room within itself—a place of communion with God—so that God can both enter and exalt the good nature.

Perhaps the greatest example Augustine offers of self-love is that of a good nature so absolutely corrupted by an evil will that it becomes an evil angel. Subsequently, if God in His foreknowledge can permit a good will to amplify a good nature by making it even better, and if He can also permit an evil will to corrupt a good nature making it worse, then, according to Augustine, an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent being should, in His foreknowledge, know how to make good use of an irrevocably, morally degenerate created being's evil will for good purposes:

[I]n his providence and omnipotence God distributes to each what is due to each and knows how to make good use not only of the good but also of the evil. Thus, although the evil angel, as the deserved punishment of his evil will, was so condemned and hardened that he could no longer have a good will, what was there to prevent God from making good use of him and allowing him to tempt the first man, who had been created upright, that is, with a good will? For man had been so constituted that, if he trusted in God's help as a good man, he would vanquish the evil angel; but if, by pleasing himself in his pride, he deserted God, his creator and helper, he would himself be vanquished. Thus, with an upright will helped by God, he would gain a good reward, but, with a perverse will that deserted God, he would gain only an evil reward.⁵⁰²

Two things Augustine asserts regarding God's power is not only that He is capable of making good use of an evil will of an angel, but also that the constitution of man is such that it requires constant trust in God's help in order to fulfill his designated purpose. Therefore, what we should expect is a good God who can make good use of a good nature gone bad by way of an evil will. We should also expect a good God to provide ample opportunity for a good man to make good use of his good will for the purpose of serving God and vanquishing the evil angel. Since God is

⁵⁰² *De civ. Dei* XII, 27.

not only capable of making good use of the good but also of the evil, we should not only expect a good God to make good use of the evil will, but we should also expect a good God to be compassionate to a good nature that has become corrupted by an evil will.

By summoning Epicurus's dilemma, Hume's approach to answering the existential cohabitation of an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent being and evil may be extremely oversimplified. The complexity of the dilemma demands patient consideration of God's intricate dealings with higher-level freewill, sentient creatures. If there is an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent being, then how should we expect him to behave toward the worst misappropriations of free will. Should He just cancel them a priori as Hume suggests? Wrestling with second-person experiences and accounts within the book of Job, Stump submits that the story of the man is actually set within another story—the story of the evil angel: “On the narrative's own showing, the story of Job is set within the context of the framing story of Satan, which grounds and explains it. In my view, seeing the love on God's part toward Satan is, therefore, important for understanding not only the framing story of Satan but the entire book of Job as well.”⁵⁰³ Stump offers an interpretation whereby God does not simply objectify Satan—the evil angel by making good use of him, but rather, He expresses love through probing questions with the intent of stimulating a contemplative response on behalf of the fragmented, irredeemable creature.⁵⁰⁴ As she considers facts within the story that Satan is at enmity with God and beyond redemption, she wonders why God even makes Himself available to such a creature.⁵⁰⁵ As a result of Satan's brokenness, according to Stump, even though he may not be

⁵⁰³ Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 204.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 205.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

able to get any better, an omnibenevolent Creator could take pains to foresee that he does not become any worse:

But, even if it were true in the story (as distinct from theologically accepted) that moral regeneration were impossible for Satan, degeneration presumably is not. Surely, it is possible even for an irrevocably hostile Satan to become more internally divided and more alienated from God than he is. Therefore, even if the theological assumption in the objection were accepted in the narrative, there would still be some purpose in the care manifested by God's questions, which are designed to bring Satan to insight into himself and his actions. It is possible that God's care for Satan might keep Satan from getting worse, even if it were inefficacious to make Satan better.⁵⁰⁶

On this score, Stump refuses to isolate the power of God from the love of God. On the contrary, God displays His power by stemming further degeneration of the creature through His foreknowledge and benevolence. God has no identity crisis and the conduct of a miscreant angel apparently does not dictate how He desires to treat him.

Love (omnibenevolence), knowledge (omniscience), and presence (omnipresence) all work collectively to restrain how God exercises His power (omnipotence). God governs His creatures, even those who are hostile, all while harmoniously assimilating His other attributes. Stump considers how it is even possible for God to continue extending love to a creature at enmity with Him without lashing out by reflecting upon a mother's relationship with her antagonistic child:

[W]hy suppose that real love, divine love, stops when it meets an irrevocably hostile response? There is love in a mother's trying to minimize the distance between herself and a hostile grown-up child, even if she knows that she will meet with nothing but enmity in response; and to the extent that her love is good, so is its expression in her relations with her antagonistic child. It is a sad thing in the world when an adult child is alienated from her mother, but it would not make the world a better place if the response of her mother were to become hostile toward her.⁵⁰⁷

Stump reasons that if a human mother can extend grace through controlled responses by

⁵⁰⁶ Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 205.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

attempting to minimize the distance between herself and a hostile child, then certainly God can and does this as well. God can display that His love is good even while anticipating that His affection will be met with rejection. Regarding God's foreknowledge of human hostility, Augustine in agreement with Hume believes that God has it within His power to prevent evil before it happens; however, unlike Hume, vis-à-vis free will, Augustine believes God leaves it within human power to demonstrate the consequences of their prideful choices and His gracious response:

[N]o future event was unknown to God, and yet God did not, by his foreknowledge, compel anyone to sin. By their subsequent experience, however, he did demonstrate to rational creatures, both angels and human beings, what a difference there is between the creature's personal presumption and his own divine protection. For who would dare to believe or to say that it was not in God's power to make sure that neither angel nor human being would fall? But God preferred to leave the issue in their power and thus demonstrate how greatly their pride avails for evil and how greatly his grace avails for good.⁵⁰⁸

A rational creature, via personal presumption, attempts to act upon incomplete knowledge which he bases upon probability. Whereas an omniscient Creator behaves benevolently with complete knowledge of future events. Evil is the consequence of human presumption, and goodness is the effect of submitting to divine foreknowledge. Hume cannot reconcile the coexistence of evil and a good God. Augustine cannot reconcile the existence of anything, including evil, apart from the existence of a good God. Hume attempts to eliminate the good God to explain man's freedom and the existence of evil. Augustine maintains that there is no human freedom apart from the existence of an omnibenevolent God.

⁵⁰⁸ *De civ. Dei* XIV, 27.

Augustine on Original Sin

Focusing upon foreknowledge and free will within the context of original creation, Augustine makes several very important observations that are beneficial for the purpose of a defense against the problem of suffering. First, God in His foreknowledge creates only good natures. Second, man, considering his free will, chose to corrupt his good nature and, as a result, infect future generations. Third, by vitiating the good nature through an evil will, mankind experiences a number of consequences, and the only remedy is through the grace of God.⁵⁰⁹ Augustine delineates this view by declaring that all humans were present in Adam's sin:

For we were all in that one man, since we all were that one man who fell into sin through the woman who was made from him prior to sin. The specific forms in which we were individually to live as particular individuals had not yet been created and distributed to us, but the seminal nature from which we would all be propagated was already present. And, once this nature was vitiated on account of sin, and bound by the chain of death, and justly condemned, man could not be born of man in any other condition.⁵¹⁰

Therefore, a good God in His foreknowledge initially creates good human natures with good wills. Man, of his own free will, chooses to corrupt his good will with evil, which, in turn, injures his good nature. As a result, since every person descends from a “condemned stock”—for “man could not be born of man in any other condition”—the only solution to this problem is rebirth in Christ—literally a “good” stock or a stock with a good nature.⁵¹¹

Augustine records misdirected desire and ignorance of truth among the main consequences that need to be overcome in the process of healing the will. As a result of original

⁵⁰⁹ *De civ. Dei* XIII, 14.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, XV, 1. To avoid any misunderstanding on his view of original sin, Augustine takes further pains to establish that everyone at birth is born in sin: “Consequently, if even infants—as the true faith holds—are born sinners, not in their own right but in virtue of their origin (which is why we confess that they need the grace of the remission of sins), then, even as they are all sinners, they are also all recognized as transgressors of the law that was given in paradise” (*Ibid.*, XVI, 27).

sin, he notes that every child left to indulge his own desires apart from any restrictions will fall prey to numerous misdeeds. After listing “the longest catalogue of sins to have come down to us from Christian antiquity,” Augustine maintains that the fallen free will requires constant discipline and attention to overcome ignorance:⁵¹²

These are, of course, the works of evil men, but they stem from that root of error and perverted love with which every son of Adam is born. For who does not know what a great ignorance of truth, already manifest in infancy, and what an overflow of misdirected desire, first putting in its appearance in childhood, characterize each person coming into this life? The result is that, if left to live as he likes and to do whatever he wants, he falls into all—or at least into many—of the crimes and shameful acts which I have listed and which I could not list.⁵¹³

Augustine notes that evil works, because of an evil will, are resident within every person from the moment of birth. He attributes this resident darkness to original sin. The only way to cultivate the human heart to receive the seed of truth is by subjecting humankind, especially during childhood, to the suffering that accompanies instruction in discipline, Augustine continues:

Prohibition and instruction keep watch, in the very senses of humankind, against the dark shadows with which we are born, and they resist their attacks. But even prohibition and instruction are full of toil and pain. For what is the meaning of all the threats we invoke to restrain the willfulness of little children? What is the point of the tutors, the teachers, the rod, the strap, the cane, the discipline with which, Holy Scripture says, the sides of the beloved child must be beaten, lest he grow up untamed and, once hardened, can barely be tamed, or perhaps not at all? Why do we have all these punishments if not to overcome ignorance and to rein in misdirected desire, the evils with which we come into this world?⁵¹⁴

Evil is resident within every human, according to Augustine. This is a universal issue among higher-level freewill, sentient creatures and rehabilitation of their will requires subjection to toil and pain. Overcoming ignorance and redirecting desire, in Augustine’s estimation, is the primary

⁵¹² Ramsey highlights this point after Augustine’s list in Book XXII (*De civ. Dei* 533n108).

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, XXII, 22.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

purpose behind instruction and discipline.

Augustine holds man solely responsible for the origin of an evil human will. Even though the initial human design stems from the creation of a good nature out of nothing, an evil will, although contrary to nature, can only occupy what begins as a good nature. If an immaterial biopsy were possible, Augustine would most likely agree that a volitional will that desires self over against that which is superior already has a resident malignancy prior to any evidence of an outward action:

[T]he will's own works were evil because they were willed according to self and not according to God. Thus the will itself—or rather man himself, insofar as his will was evil—was, so to speak, the evil tree that bore these works as its evil fruit. Furthermore, although an evil will, because it is a fault, is contrary to nature rather than in accord with nature, it still belongs to the nature in which it is a fault, for a fault cannot exist except in a nature. But it can only exist in a nature which the creator created out of nothing, not in a nature which he begot out of himself in the way that he begot the Word through whom all things were made. For, although God fashioned man from the dust of the earth, the earth itself and all earthly matter come from nothing whatsoever, and the soul which God gave to the body when man was made was also created out of nothing.⁵¹⁵

Man's will, on Augustine's understanding, develops a fault in accord with its own desires contrary to his good nature.⁵¹⁶ He also makes a clear distinction between the nature of man created out of nothing and the nature of the Word—Christ begotten out of Himself. God, therefore, initially grants to man not only a free will but also a will that is free, Augustine contends: “The will's choice, then, is only truly free when it is not enslaved to vices and sins. That is how it was given by God. But what it lost by its own fault can only be restored by the one

⁵¹⁵ *De civ. Dei* XIV, 11.

⁵¹⁶ Geisler contends that free will provides free creatures the ability to engage in evil, but this in no way places God in the position of blame for their actions: “God is responsible for making evil possible, but free creatures are responsible for making it actual” (Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 219).

who was able to give it in the first place.”⁵¹⁷ Even though Augustine holds man solely responsible for the origin of an evil human will, and even though he asserts that a will is only free when it is not enslaved to vices, he insists that God alone is wholly capable of restoring the will and solely responsible for eradicating evil.

Regarding Augustine’s philosophical view of original sin alone yields additional differences between Hume’s world of obligating an omnibenevolent God to preemptively eliminate evil and the necessary coupling of divine foreknowledge and human free will Augustine puts forward. Since, in Augustine’s view on original sin, no human is free from evil, the infection of an evil will within every human requires the immaterial antibiotic ointment of the reformatory grace of God. Listening carefully to an imaginary conversation between Hume and Augustine on this point, a good student may discern that Hume’s remedy to the problem of evil, in Augustine’s estimation is universal genocide. On the surface, Hume’s suggestion appears mercifully coherent; a good God should immediately eradicate any hint of evil. However, Augustine’s response to this notion is that Hume has a fundamental misunderstanding of the philosophical and ontological constitution not only of man, but also, of an omnibenevolent God. Hume’s solution seems the compassionate choice, however, Augustine would most likely dissent on the grounds that since evil, because of original sin, is intrinsic within all humans, Hume’s concept is anything but compassionate. It leads directly to the extinction of all humans. If Hume counters with God’s foreknowledge, which he would have to do, then God on this score would have to abort the creation of man well before He christens the idea. Augustine may reply that instead of performing abortive measures upon evil creatures, God favors sympathetic rehabilitation where possible and preventing further degeneration where it is not. The end of free

⁵¹⁷ *De civ. Dei* XIV, 11.

will and foreknowledge results in a conclusion that is diametrically opposed: For evil, Hume prefers termination, which, according to Augustine's view, would result in human annihilation; Augustine values rehabilitation. For an omnibenevolent God, Hume demands a vindictive tyrant; Augustine desires a compassionate Creator.

Explaining the fall of Adam and Eve, Augustine points to the traditional view of Satan, driven by pride, employing the medium of a serpent to express his will to the couple in paradise. The envious angel desiring subjects, writes Augustine, and realizing the man would be harder to deceive, approaches Eve—"the lower lesser part of the human couple"—in order to eventually assert his will upon them both.⁵¹⁸ Deceiving Adam, argues Augustine, had less to do with his belief that Eve was being truthful and more to do with their union.⁵¹⁹ To further illustrate this point, Augustine reminds the reader of two other individuals in Scripture—Aaron and Solomon who were led astray by others. Augustine contends that the fall in each man's case was an indirect approach veiling true intentions by flanking the will of the individual via a social connection: Adam through Eve ate from the tree, Aaron through the people made a golden calf, and Solomon led to worship idols by the seduction of his women.⁵²⁰ Perhaps by briefly reflecting upon Augustine's expressionists semiotics (Chapter 7) once again, it may not only provide better insight into his argument of precisely what took place in paradise at the time of the Fall, but also what happens, in part, every time an individual caves to an evil desire further corrupting his nature. Applying expressionist semiotics to this episode in the biblical narrative positions the deceitful word of the serpent and ultimately partaking the forbidden fruit (part of creation) as the

⁵¹⁸ *De civ. Dei* XIV, 11.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*

sign that mediates between Satan's will (the referent) and eventually the Edenic couple's new knowledge of evil (significance).⁵²¹ Through the instrument of the serpent, Satan exploits something good—God's word to misuse the good nature and ignorance of Eve to overcome the good will of the man. Therefore, just as God can put evil to good use, apparently, the envious angel can put good to evil use.⁵²² Finally, antecedent to this tragic incident, it may be useful to recall that by applying expressionist semiotics to the opening of the biblical narrative situates the benevolent prohibition of God as the sign that mediates between God's will (the referent) and the obedience of Adam and Eve (significance).

What is so significant about this divine prohibition in paradise that disobedience merits such severe and ongoing consequences? Is this not just a divine overreaction to ignorant creatures that could not have possibly known how such an innocent act could lead to unmitigated distempered results? Anticipating these questions, Augustine first answers by stating how human nature was changed both internally and externally:

Someone may want to ask why human nature is not changed by other sins in the same way that it was changed by the transgression of the first two human beings. As a result of their sin it was made subject to all the corruption that we see and feel and, through this, to death as well. At the same time, it was disturbed and tossed about by a flood of powerful and conflicting emotions; and so it became very different from what it had been in paradise prior to sin, even though man then had an animal body just as he does now.⁵²³

Augustine observes that subsequent sins do not retain the same force as original sin. Prior to sin, human nature enjoys a predisposition of dominion over nature. After the transgression, human nature seems not only to be at war with nature, but also within itself, but why? This issue, in light

⁵²¹ Gen 2:17; 3:1-7.

⁵²² See also Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 33 for more details on how and why God can use the envious angel for His purposes.

⁵²³ *De civ. Dei* XIV, 12.

of their limited understanding, was one of obedience, according to Augustine: “[W]here there was such an abundance of other foods, a command prohibiting the eating of one kind of food was as easy to observe as it was simple to remember, especially when desire was not yet at odds with the will (which only came later, due to the punishment of the transgression). Thus the injustice of violating the command was all the greater precisely because it would have been so very easy to observe and keep it.”⁵²⁴ Keeping with God’s goodness, Augustine reasons there was nothing evil within the garden. Remaining completely blameless, God brilliantly plants a simple test of will thereby preserving the tension between his omnibenevolent foreknowledge and the framing of man’s free will within a good human nature, as well as a good environment absent evil. “[O]bedience,” Augustine remarks, “is the mother and guardian of all virtues in a rational creature.”⁵²⁵ Therefore, the ease of the command merits the severity of the consequences.

The Nature of an Object v. the Convenience of a Subject

Due to cognitive limitations, higher-level freewill, sentient creatures are often incapable of detecting the intrinsic value of the good nature of things which a good God creates. Instead, utilizing the subjective criteria of convenience, they prematurely conclude that the nature of an object is useful or worthless.⁵²⁶ Commenting upon the view of certain heretics, Augustine emphasizes that their failure to think deeply about creation set within its original design showcases not only their lack of intelligence but also their inability to fully harness the good purposes for which such things were made: “Certain heretics, however, have not been willing to accept this reason—[namely, that the goodness of God should create good things]. In their view,

⁵²⁴ *De civ. Dei* XIV, 12.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, XII, 4.

there are too many things—such as fire, cold, wild beasts, and the like—which are unsuited to the needy and frail mortality of this flesh (which itself stems from just punishment), and which actually do it harm.”⁵²⁷ Augustine remarks that these heretics not only fail to see how fire, cold, and wild beasts flourish in their own rightful element, but also how they fit within the overall scheme of the beauty of Creation. Augustine continues, if they could perceive beyond their own subjectivity, then they would better appreciate the beneficial natures of elements and animals alike: “Even poisons, which are fatal when used wrongly, are turned into healing medicines when properly employed; and, on the other hand, even things that give us delight, such as food and drink and sunlight, are seen to be harmful when immoderately or improperly used.”⁵²⁸ Therefore, as seen previously, just as God can use evil wills that have corrupted good natures for good purposes, humans can also use good natures that have been corrupted (i.e., poison) for good purposes. Conversely, just as Satan can exploit good natures for evil purposes, humans can also improperly gratify their own desires by misusing good things—food, drink, and sunlight.

Evil Begins in a Good Will Gone Bad

An Evil Will requires a Good Host

Upon further examination of Augustine’s magnum opus, there are several themes that quickly develop regarding God’s goodness and man’s free will. Keeping in mind that, for Augustine, God is supremely good, and the Godhead is indisputably absent any evil will help apprehend why he is so driven to find an alternative explanation as to the origin of evil. His alternative explanation focuses upon a few characteristics of higher-level freewill, sentient

⁵²⁷ *De civ. Dei* XI, 22.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*

creatures created out of nothing. Since God is good, everything He creates is good including the nature of man. Being created out of nothing, man's failure to cling to the good immutable God by relying upon himself is only possible because his nature is mutable. The moment man turns from that which is superior—the good God, he begins to have an evil will. For any free will creature—including angels—this is initially due to pride, and God's solution for man is not removal but rather healing of the nature.⁵²⁹ In keeping with the defense of this book, He achieves this through His exemplar—the Son of God, by permitting Him to become a man by taking up human nature—body and soul, not only to heal the brokenness of man but also the broken relationship between God and man.

Good-natured Creation

Augustine is adamant about maintaining the theme of Genesis regarding the good nature of all created things including humans. The nature of the flesh, which includes the soul in Augustine's economic description of humanity, is good from the moment of creation. To force God to shoulder the blame by placing origin of sin upon the good nature of the flesh is offensive to God, according to Augustine: "With regard to our sins and vices, then, there is no reason to insult the creator by putting the blame on the nature of the flesh, which in fact is good in its kind and in its order. But it is not good to forsake the good creator and live according to a created good, whether one chooses to live according to the flesh, or according to the soul, or according to the whole man. . . ." ⁵³⁰ Therefore, to blame human nature for sinful actions—to live according to the flesh or the soul—is insulting to the creator. By applying Augustine's commentary to the modern era whereby so many justify behaviors by appealing to the psychological and genetic

⁵²⁹ *De civ. Dei* XII, 6 & 11.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, XIV, 5.

makeup of the individual, he would disagree with this analysis. Not necessarily that psychological disorders or family history can contribute to certain predispositions, but rather with the conclusion of excusing such behaviors in the name of nature. On the contrary, Augustine identifies evil as nothing more than a deprivation of good: “For there is no nature whatsoever that is evil; in fact, ‘evil’ is nothing but a term for the privation of good.”⁵³¹ For Augustine then, the source of evil must be driven by something other than the good nature. An individual may claim to participate in certain behaviors by appealing to anatomical or psychological wiring—“I was born this way!”—; however, if actions are evil, Augustine not only refuses to excuse such conduct, he localizes the blame somewhere other than nature.

Whether he is dealing with good or evil angels or good or evil humans, higher-level free-will, sentient creatures, Augustine argues, are subject to self-consensual desires. These desires or emotions originate within the will. According to Clark’s interpretation of *The City of God*, good angels and humans, govern the will in such a way as to produce the right kinds of emotions: “Humans experience emotions (*motus*), but these are *voluntates* [a wish to which we consent] for or against; those who live according to God, *secundum Deum*, love the good and have the right fears and desires, pain and gladness (14.9).”⁵³² By feeding these desires, the will either grows better or worse and, in turn, permits the nature of the creature to become better by clinging to God or deficient by turning from God. Of course, the embodiment of this idea is the Incarnation. As he begins bringing book 10 to a close, Augustine draws attention to the true mediator to

⁵³¹ *De civ. Dei* XI, 22.

⁵³² Gillian Clark, “Deficient Causes: Augustine on Creation and Angels,” in *Causation and Creation in Late Antiquity*, eds. Anna Marmodoro and Brian D. Prince (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 234. In this section please note that the Latin words *voluntates* / *uoluntates* and other derivatives of this word are variant spellings, not different words, of the English translation “will” or “a wish to which we consent.”

demonstrate the possibility of assuming human flesh without sin: “Christ showed himself to mortals in the very mortality that malign and deceitful mediators [evil divinities or fallen angels] proudly exulted that they did not have But the good and true mediator showed that it is sin that is evil, not the substance or nature of the flesh, which, along with a human soul, could be assumed and maintained without sin, and could be laid aside at death and changed into something better by resurrection.”⁵³³ Augustine, Komline observes, held that there exists within the person of Christ two wills—human and divine.⁵³⁴ Therefore, Christ, whose greatest desire is to please the Father, subjects His human will to the divine will to maintain the right fears, desires, pain, and gladness.⁵³⁵ Having two wills, human and divine, Christ displays a unique, harmonious self-consensual relationship between the perfect obedience of His human will to the divine distinct from any other individual in history.⁵³⁶

⁵³³ *De civ. Dei* X, 24. See also X, 21 and 23 for Augustine’s reference to “evil divinities” and “divine oracles,” indicating within the larger context his reference to demons in this passage.

⁵³⁴ Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 298.

⁵³⁵ John 4:34.

⁵³⁶ Komline, in detail, outlines the synchronization of the two wills of Christ. Retrospectively drawing on her own previous work, she notes, Augustine, at various moments throughout the development of his understanding—especially earlier writings, acknowledges a conflict between Christ’s two wills: “Augustine recognized two wills in Christ, as did Marcellus and Gregory, very early on in his career. Like these two predecessors, he saw these wills as in tension, if not opposed to one another” (Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 297). However, Komline explains in the primary publication, as Augustine matures—especially through Arian controversies that in his estimation sought to misrepresent the person of Christ—he not only places more emphasis upon the harmony existing between Christ’s perfectly obedient human will and the divine, but also features Christ’s human will—different from Adam’s—forthrightly longing to live according to God, *secundum Deum*: “As Maximus the Confessor would two centuries later, Augustine had come to hear the distinctly human voice of Christ not only in the prayer that the passion be avoided, but also in Christ’s rejection of a course of action opposed to God’s will. In a further anticipation of Maximus, Augustine also came to observe an important distinction in quality between Christ’s perfectly obedient human will and Adam’s human will subsequent to the fall, which was subject to sin” (Han-luen Kantzer Komline, “The Second Adam in Gethsemane: Augustine on the Human Will of Christ,” *Revue d’Etudes Augustiniennes et Patristiques*, 58, no. 1 (2012): 53, doi:10.1484/J.REA.5.101070). Komline maintains instead of diminishing the divinity of Christ, the “graced obedience in His human will” actually affirms it (Ibid., 49 and 54). For further investigation regarding the development of Augustine’s understanding of two wills in Christ, see also Brian Daley, “Making a Human Will Divine: Augustine and Maximus on Christ and Human Salvation,” in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, ed. A. Papanikolaou and G.E. Demacopoulos, Crestwood, NY, 2008, p.101–126.

Aristotle's Four Causes of Action

Wrestling with the question, “where does badness come from?” throughout his lifetime, Augustine answers in an interesting, albeit unsatisfactorily way.⁵³⁷ Complicating the question, he contends seeking an answer in the wrong location can only end in detours. Nothing can be known about the cause of evil, according to Augustine, except that the cause of evil is literally nothing (a deficit): “No one, therefore, should look for an efficient cause for an evil will. For it is not an efficient but rather a deficient cause, because the evil will itself is not an effect but rather a defect. For to defect from what has supreme existence to what has lesser existence is itself to begin to have an evil will.”⁵³⁸ Hume would probably not be terribly amused by this answer; however, Augustine is being completely serious. Here, just as Hume drew upon Epicurus for his argument, Augustine is most likely drawing upon one of Aristotle's four causes of actions—“efficient causes,” in part, to explain the origin of an evil will.⁵³⁹ Reece, explaining his four causes of actions, states that Aristotle wrote that the efficient cause of actions by timebound creatures is “self-moving agents”—human beings.⁵⁴⁰ “Aristotle thinks that human action is a species of animal self-movement, and animal self-movement is a species of natural change. Natural changes, although they are not substances and do not have causes in precisely the same

⁵³⁷ Clark, 234.

⁵³⁸ *De civ. Dei* XII, 7.

⁵³⁹ Reece provides a brief explanation for each of the four causes as follows: “I argue that Aristotle thinks that animal self-movement in general, and human action in particular, should be explained in terms of his four causes: agents' bodies are material causes, underlying substrata, of their self-movements. Their active psychological attitudes are formal causes, giving actions their identity conditions and providing paradigms for coming to be as the actions that they are. The agents themselves, qualified as self-movers in activity, are efficient causes, bringing about actions. Agents' goals are final causes, those things for the sake of which actions are performed” (Bryan C. Reece, “Aristotle's Four Causes of Action,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 97, no. 2 (2019): 214, doi:10.1080/00048402.2018.1482932).

⁵⁴⁰ Reece, 217.

way that substances do, are to be explained in terms of the four causes. . . .”⁵⁴¹ Stated more concisely, human action is ultimately a species of natural change, which is to be explained in terms of the four causes. From these four causes, Augustine, in his pursuit of where evil comes from, seeks an efficient cause.

What is even more interesting for our purposes is that those familiar with Aristotle, Reece argues, are accustomed to explaining “natural substances” through his four causes but are not necessarily as familiar with how he also applies them to explain “natural changes.”⁵⁴² Before understanding how Augustine is employing the efficient cause mentioned above, it must first be understood how Aristotle views another one of the four causes, the “material cause.” According to Reece, when a natural change occurs, the material cause is that which is subject to the actual change:

Aristotle indicates that natural non-substances (such as natural changes) are appropriately explained in four-causal terms, but he adds that the material cause in particular will differ in kind from that of substances [Metaph. 8.4.1044a32–b20]. Generated substances have matter that is subject to generation and corruption. A substratum is matter, strictly speaking, only if it is subject to generation and corruption (compare [GC 1.5.320a2–3]). Natural changes do not have matter, strictly speaking, for changes themselves are not subject to generation and corruption. Rather, for natural changes there is a substratum (*τὸ ὑποκείμενον*) that undergoes the natural change.⁵⁴³

Note the distinction Aristotle makes regarding the material cause between natural substances and natural changes. Here Reece is identifying natural or generated substances as mutable because they are subject to generation and corruption, which natural changes are not. However, that which experiences the mediate effect of natural changes, what he calls the substratum, are subject to generation and corruption and therefore are also mutable. Reece contends, for

⁵⁴¹ Reece, 213.

⁵⁴² Ibid., 214.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 215.

Aristotle, the body—subject to generation and corruption—is the substratum of the natural change:

Aristotle thinks that action, as a species of self-movement, is a natural change. On his view, the material cause of a natural change (a species of natural non-substance) is a substratum that undergoes the change [Metaph. 8.4.1044b7–20, GC 1.5.320a3–5]. What is the substratum for action, that which undergoes the change that action is? Aristotle claims frequently in Phys., DA, and MA that the body is what undergoes change in cases of self-movement in general. This will hold also for action in particular. The body is action's material cause because it is the substratum that undergoes the change that action is.⁵⁴⁴

Since Augustine is probably employing the “efficient cause” from Aristotle's writings, it is coherent to believe that we may also be able to draw some parallels regarding Aristotle's material cause as well. As previously noted, Augustine states in book XIV that faults, which may constitute a natural change, have their origin within an initially good nature.⁵⁴⁵ Although initially good, the natural change that occurs can only take place in a mutable nature created out of nothing—a substratum that can undergo change—which is also subject to generation and corruption. Further attention as to how Augustine explains why a natural change can only occur in a mutable nature created out of nothing will be considered in the next section.

One important qualification that Aristotle makes regarding material causes is that the substratum—the body in this case—of the natural change is what undergoes the change because of the action. Reece drawing upon some of Aristotle's examples—lunar eclipses and earthquakes—attempts to demonstrate that neither the moon nor the earth constitutes the eclipse or the earthquake but are the material causes that undergoes change. Moving from these illustrations back to the body, Reece clarifies Aristotle's understanding of material causes by

⁵⁴⁴ Reece, 216.

⁵⁴⁵ *De civ. Dei* XIV, 11.

negating “bodily movement” as a material cause of the action:

[A] natural change (for example, the body’s moving) cannot be a substratum that has a potentiality for, or what persists through and underlies, the same change that it purportedly constitutes. But every sort of change that generable substances undergo and effect, including locomotive change, has as its material cause such a substratum [Phys. 1.7.190a33–4, GC 1.5.320a2–5]. So, the body’s moving is not the material cause of the action; the body itself is. This is precisely what we should expect, given Aristotle’s claim that the material cause of any natural change is a substratum that undergoes the change.⁵⁴⁶

Stated once again, the body is the material cause, not the movement of the body, because the body is what undergoes the change from the action. Considering this Aristotelian conviction and because the will can affect a natural change, we can continue to draw an additional parallel to Augustine’s use of the will. The will, for Augustine, is the efficient cause of natural change of which the flesh is the material cause. Komline observes, in an effort to explain how the soul moves the body, Augustine utilizes the illustration of a hinge: “In [*On Eighty-Three Varied Questions*], Augustine refers to the will as a motion of the mind (*motus animae*), this time appealing to the hinge (*cardo*) image to rule out the idea that this motion is spatial. . . . When the soul moves the body from place to place, it does so by will (*uoluntate*). By using its will like a hinge, the soul can move things from one place to another without itself changing location in space.”⁵⁴⁷ The soul, employing the will (“the starting point of change”) affects change upon the material cause—the body.⁵⁴⁸ Aristotle’s four causes of action not only can be applied to aid Augustine’s understanding of how the will moves the human agent from good to evil, but—based upon his own choice of words—may be precisely what he is guiding his readers to

⁵⁴⁶ Reece, 216.

⁵⁴⁷ Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 27. As stated previously, in this section please note that the Latin words *voluntates* / *uoluntates* and other derivatives of this word are variant spellings, not different words, of the English translation “will” or “a wish to which we consent.”

⁵⁴⁸ Reece, 214.

consider.⁵⁴⁹

Reece distances himself from standard causal theory, which combines both psychological attitudes, as well as the agent that produces them under efficient causes, and, as a result often excludes two of the four causes of action—formal and material.⁵⁵⁰ In his attempt to apply Aristotle’s four causes of action to natural change, Reece analyzes how Aristotle can and does refer to the actual art of building and the desire to do so both as efficient causes. However, Reece also demonstrates how Aristotle can view the art of building as both an efficient and formal cause.⁵⁵¹ To lay aside any confusion, he contends that Aristotle can refer to the art of building in this unified way because of the role the efficient cause plays as a formal cause: “Aristotle’s views about causal modalities permit him to refer to the art of building as an efficient cause of sorts in light of its role as a formal cause mentioned in the precise specification of the *per se* efficient cause: the builder *qua* builder. However, strictly speaking, the art of building is not an

⁵⁴⁹ It should be noted that some scholars argue that Augustine’s supposed integration of Aristotelian ideas was the result of the later work of Aquinas: “This synthesis of Augustinian will with Aristotelian philosophy of mind is the work of Thomas Aquinas” (Charles H. Kahn, “Discovering the will: From Aristotle to Augustine,” in *The Question of ‘Eclecticism’: Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, eds. John M. Dillon and Anthony A. Long (Berkeley: The University of California Press), 238). Although this may be true, in part, this does not rule out Augustine’s access to Aristotle’s writings in his own day, and his ability to draw conclusions from Aristotle’s four causes of action in general. Tkacz notes that Augustine mentions Aristotle in his own writings and that he did have access to Aristotelian natural philosophy: “Augustine was familiar with the pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo*, but he attributes it to the work’s Latin adapter Apuleius, rather than to Aristotle. Nonetheless, Augustine did have general knowledge of Aristotelian natural philosophy, probably derived from Cicero and Neoplatonic sources. In the *De civitate Dei*, he presents an argument for the resurrection of the body that makes use of the theory of elements. To those who deny resurrection on the grounds that the levity and gravity of elements preclude earthly things from existing in the heavens, Augustine replies that there is no complete separation of elements because birds exist in the air and fire exists on earth. He adds that the soul, which Plato considers immaterial and Aristotle considers a superior fifth element, has the power to control the four elements. Augustine does worry that Aristotle’s conception of the soul may be too materialistic, amounting to the claim that the soul is the harmonious arrangement of bodily parts. He therefore dismisses it, perhaps influenced by the analysis of Aristotelian hylomorphism given by Plotinus” (Michael W. Tkacz, “St. Augustine’s appropriation and transformation of Aristotelian eudaimonia,” in *The Reception of Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. Jon Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 73, doi:10.1017/CBO9780511979873.005). See also *De civ. Dei* XXII, 11.

⁵⁵⁰ Reece, 217 and 225.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 217.

efficient cause of the house, for it does not bring about the house; the builder *qua* builder does that.”⁵⁵² The distinction that Reece is attempting to display in Aristotle’s writings is that the art of building something to be sure is “a form in the builder’s soul,” but the builder is the agent who brings about the actual house.⁵⁵³ The efficient cause in this case is the agent—the human being because he is the starting-point of action.⁵⁵⁴ The reason that he also includes desires and decisions as efficient causes is because of how Aristotle uses both to qualify the movements of the agent in the act of building:

Aristotle’s preferred scheme of qualification that I have been describing allows us to see desires and decisions as movers in the way that the art of building is: the art does not bring about the house, but can be called an efficient cause of sorts because it qualifies one’s movements as building, and thereby qualifies one as a builder, the *per se* efficient cause of the house. Likewise, desire does not bring about action, but can be called an efficient cause of sorts because it qualifies one’s movement as intentional self-movement, and thereby qualifies one as the *per se* efficient cause of action.⁵⁵⁵

Therefore, Reece demonstrates that Aristotle, at times, commingles the agent and the agent’s psychological attitudes (desires and decisions), but the desire does not bring about the actual house it only qualifies the movements of the agent in the capacity of builder. Therefore, as he views it, Reece holds that the Aristotelian four-causal view synchronizes the material, efficient, formal, and final causes for actions working together and this most closely preserves Aristotle’s original understanding of natural changes.

To summarize Aristotle’s four causes of action, having a desire to build and deciding to do so is a formal cause that, at times, is also described by Aristotle as an efficient cause of sorts

⁵⁵² Reece, 218.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 217.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 218.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 218.

because these psychological attitudes “giving actions their identity conditions and providing paradigms for coming to be as the actions that they are” are necessary to qualify an agent as an intentional self-mover.⁵⁵⁶ The agent, therefore, acting in the capacity of the builder is the efficient cause of building and the action through his body—the material cause is directed toward building materials—wood, bricks, and metal—that undergo change (also a material cause) for the sole purpose of completing a building (the final cause).⁵⁵⁷

Armed with this new knowledge, we can continue to follow why Augustine argues that the efficient cause for an evil will is nothing. Earlier in the argument, Augustine reasons that an efficient cause for an evil will cannot be located because it is actually a deficiency. Augustine languishes that seeking an efficient cause from the unknown is like grasping for an ability that does not exist:

[S]ince the causes of such defections, as I have said, are not efficient but rather deficient causes, to want to discover such causes is like wanting to see darkness or to hear silence. It is true, of course, that both these are known to us, the one by no other means than the eyes and the other by no other means than the ears. This, however, is not due to perception but rather to lack of perception. Therefore, let no one seek to know from me what I know that I do not know—unless, perhaps, what he wants to learn is not to know what we ought to know cannot be known.⁵⁵⁸

As previously seen in Chapter 5, knowing unknown things, Augustine contends, can only be known if the inquisitor knows that there is something that he does not know; Augustine knows what he does not know in this case. This is definitely an example of transworld incognizance (TWI), at least how I am using it throughout this work, within the writings of Augustine. Humans can know darkness and silence only due to lack of perception. Augustine seems to be

⁵⁵⁶ Reece, 214.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 214.

⁵⁵⁸ *De civ Dei* XII, 7.

using these two senses to indicate that humans can only know what they do not know only due to their knowledge of the lack of perception. When he says, “let no one seek to know from me what I know that I do not know—unless, perhaps, what he wants to learn is not to know what we ought to know cannot be known” it may be helpful to substitute the two senses from the previous line into this complex statement: Unless, perhaps, what he wants to learn is not to see what we ought to know cannot be seen. Unless, perhaps, what he wants to learn is not to hear what we ought to know cannot be heard. Employing these two senses, Augustine prefaces what he means by “unless, perhaps, what he wants to learn is not to know what we ought to know cannot be known.”⁵⁵⁹

The Efficient Cause of a Bad Will is Nothing

Keeping in mind that an evil will is not strictly limited to humans but, as shown above, something of which all higher-level freewill, sentient creatures are capable. Clark, considering Augustine’s remarks in book XII of *The City of God*, highlights something that Augustine is trying to nuance regarding the efficient cause of a bad will. Tracking Augustine’s remarks involving angels who chose to turn away from God to themselves, Clark stresses that he does not say there is no efficient cause of a bad will:

Why, then (12.6), did some angels make the bad choice to turn away from God, who supremely is, to themselves, who exist in a lesser degree? Augustine’s reply is quoted at the start of this chapter. A bad will (*voluntas*) is the efficient cause of a bad action. He does not say that there is no efficient cause of a bad will, but says that the efficient cause is nothing, *nihil*: *mala voluntas efficiens est operis mali, malae autem voluntatis efficiens nihil est*. A *mala voluntas* is a defection from a greater to a lesser good, not to something

⁵⁵⁹ Explaining Augustine’s response to those who press the issue of a cause for an evil will in an earlier work of his [*On Eighty-Three Varied Questions*], Koline states that he believes that it is a foolish pursuit to seek a greater cause that does not exist: “Therefore, looking for the cause of the will’s defection is a fool’s errand: there is literally nothing to see. The will does not turn away from God because of a real good but in pursuit of an illusory good, because of the illusion that it has found a good superior to God. In defecting from the good, the will is not really turning away from God toward something better, but toward nothing. The cause of this turning therefore has no real existence of its own” (Koline, *Augustine on the Will*, 50).

that is bad in itself. There is nothing wrong with gold or with power as such: the problem is disordered love of gold or power (12.8). (Indeed, there was nothing wrong with the forbidden fruit: it was just forbidden, 13.20.) That which is nothing cannot be known, but Augustine knows (12.8) that the nature of God cannot in any way be deficient, whereas natures that were made from nothing can be deficient. The *mala voluntas* does not come from God; it cannot have a natural or essential cause, because the start of a bad *voluntas* is defection from God, and the cause of that defection is itself a deficient cause, *cuius defectionis etiam causa utique deficit* (12.9). But we must not say that there is no efficient cause of a good will, for that might suggest that the *bona voluntas* of the good angels was not made by God, but is coeternal with God. Their will was made by God, as they were.⁵⁶⁰

When Augustine emphasizes that the efficient cause of the bad will is nothing, Clark maintains that he does so to concretize two nonnegotiable knowns within his theology:⁵⁶¹ First, turning from the greater to the lesser does not mean that the lesser object of affection is intrinsically evil, but rather exposes a deranged adoration for the lesser good in place of the greater good. Corruption begins in the will upon this defection. Second, there is nothing deficient in the nature of God; the nature of God cannot be deficient in anyway. However, temporal natures created from nothing are mutable and can be deficient. Therefore, a bad will cannot come from God but is rather a defection from God. The conception of a bad will is a deficient cause in a nature that was initially created good but has now defected to something less, which it thinks is better but is actually nothing. The cause of the defection is not an efficient cause; quite the opposite, it is a deficient cause. In this way, Augustine can say that the efficient cause of an evil will is nothing.

By reapplying Aristotle's four causes of action to Augustine's deduction that the efficient cause of an evil will is nothing, we can conclude that the agent who entertains an evil will begins to take on a form of nothing within his soul (formal cause). Already stated, the efficient cause of

⁵⁶⁰ Clark, 233-234.

⁵⁶¹ Komline commenting upon an earlier work of Augustine comes to a similar conclusion about the cause for a bad will: "The culprit for human depravity is the human will, and not some antecedent cause" (Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 50).

an evil will is nothing. The body that undergoes the change—the material cause—veers towards nothing and the final cause for what comes of an evil will is nothing. But how does Augustine attempt to reconcile an omnibenevolent God who has an absolute good will with the existence of an evil will whose efficient cause is nothing? What is God's role since He is the Creator of all? How might Augustine answer Hume? Grappling with the writings of Cicero, Augustine responds with a potential answer:

The breath of life, then, which gives life to all things and is the creator of every body and every created spirit, is God himself, the absolutely uncreated spirit. In his will lies the supreme power that aids the good wills of created spirits, judges their evil wills, and places all wills within his order. To some he grants empowerment, to some he does not. For just as he is the creator of all natures, so is he the giver of all empowerment. But he is not the giver of all wills. Evil wills most certainly are not from him, for they are contrary to nature, which does come from him.⁵⁶²

For Augustine, a good, uncreated God authors within the good creation, good creatures that possess good natures. God is the Creator of all natures but not of all wills. An evil will, according to Augustine, can only exist in a good, mutable nature. He contends that evil did not always exist. For those who contend that evil may draw existence from a perpetually evil will, Augustine asks, where did that initial evil come from then? For those who contend that nothing is the author of evil, Augustine responds by clarifying that every will—good or evil—exists within a nature: “[I]f it did exist in some nature, then it vitiated and corrupted that nature; it was harmful to it and so deprived it of good. An evil will, then, could not have existed in an evil nature; [an evil will] could exist only in a good but mutable nature which this fault was able to harm.”⁵⁶³ To reiterate Augustine's point, God created all natures out of nothing and apart from

⁵⁶² *De civ. Dei* V, 9.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, XII, 6.

clinging to Him those good natures become corrupted and tend to lapse back to nothing.⁵⁶⁴ A good God did not create evil, but evil preys and feeds upon that which is good. In this way, an evil will owes its existence to a good nature and, like cancer, only serves to deprive it of good.⁵⁶⁵

Komline, reading Augustine, comes to the same conclusion by way of a different approach. Instead of simply addressing the human will, she demonstrates, from the writings of Augustine, parallels he draws between human and divine wills. Without getting into all the details, it is the will for both humans and God that affects independent change through actions.⁵⁶⁶ Augustine dedicates significant time to developing the will, Komline contends, for the sole purpose of theodicy: “Augustine only bothers to articulate a notion of the divine and human wills for the purposes of theodicy.”⁵⁶⁷ Augustine hopes to check opponents who produce an endless regression of questions about the goodness of God and the existence of evil. Why did God allow evil if he had the power to create the world? Why did God create the world in the first place, opponents ask? True to form, Augustine answers by arriving at a logical syllogistic conclusion, Komline remarks:

Augustine argues in [*On Eighty-Three Varied Questions*] that God made the world because God wanted to. No further explanation can be given beyond God’s will for anything that God does. To inquire further into the ‘reasons’ for God’s action is not only futile but presumptuous, Augustine argues, since to presuppose that there might be a cause for God’s will is to presuppose that it could be determined by something more powerful than itself. The logic by which Augustine reaches his conclusion can be traced as follows: (1) the cause of God’s will must be greater than God’s will, (2) but such a thing does not exist, (3) ergo: not only is it impossible to *know* the cause of God’s will, but there is no further cause of God’s will. Thus the will seems to be the furthest one can go in finding the root of a divine act, not only noetically but also ontically. No cause

⁵⁶⁴ *De civ Dei* XII, 8.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, XII, 9.

⁵⁶⁶ Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 40.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

preceding God's will can be known because no such cause exists.⁵⁶⁸

Answering his human objectors by utilizing God's will permits Augustine to build a case not only for why God created the world but also for why God does anything.⁵⁶⁹ God does what He does because He wants to and has the power to actualize His desires to include His ability to create free will creatures with the capacity to generate desires of their own and the potential to act on them—for good or for evil.

Vital to the discussion is understanding that the will in Augustine's theological economy is solely responsible for decisions involving the abandonment of the purpose for which it exists. The moment the will desires to turn from God to anything, or anyone other than God, it becomes evil. This desire conceives a form in the soul, which is a formal cause because it qualifies one's movement as intentional self-movement, lends itself to the efficient cause, and, according to Augustine, becomes evil (the final cause): "For, when the will abandons what is superior and turns itself to what is inferior, it becomes evil—not because that to which it turns is evil, but because the turning itself is perverse. It is not, then, that the inferior thing made the will evil; it is rather that the will itself, because it became evil, had a depraved and inordinate desire for the inferior thing."⁵⁷⁰ Augustine's focus is upon the turn, not the thing to which it turns, and the will itself. There is no rational explanation for the turn and to search for one only spawns an infinite

⁵⁶⁸ Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 49-50. Previously dealing with Augustine's answer to the question as to why God creates in the first place, Komline provides an Augustinian warning that searching for something that does not exist may prevent one from finding what does (Ibid., 47-48).

⁵⁶⁹ This conclusion is not simply a form of modern eisegesis upon a patristic text. Komline, herself, deduces this very line of reasoning, which she bases upon the context of Augustine's statement: "[T]here is a similarity between Augustine's 'answers' to questions about the reasons for God's good creation and his 'answers' to questions about the reasons for humanity's turn away from the good. In both cases, the most one can do is to point to God's will and the human will, respectively. No further causes for these actions can be known, because no further causes exist" (Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 51).

⁵⁷⁰ *De civ Dei* XII, 6.

regress of questions. No amount of questioning is going to lead to a satisfactory answer. Clark contends, for Augustine, this is an issue of unintelligible pride whereby the creatures encroach upon God's jurisdiction by having the audacity to think they have the power to usurp God's authority:

Turning to lesser goods makes no sense, for angels or for humans; failings are not intelligible. The devil and the rebel angels took pride in themselves, who are less than God, and thought that the power they had was their own. When Augustine reaches the fall of human beings (book 14), he observes that in this there is no difference between angels, who are spiritual beings, and humans, who are soul and body, subject to passions. 'It is not by having flesh, which the devil does not have, but by living according to himself, that man became like the devil, for the devil chose [*voluit*] to live according to himself' (14.3). For humans, as for angels, *voluntas* is key (14.6).⁵⁷¹

Recalling that *voluntas* is to be understood as "a wish to which we consent," provides further clarity as to why Augustine places responsibility for the turning or orientation of the will squarely upon higher-level freewill, sentient creatures. Whether corporeal or incorporeal, there is no difference, the nucleus of turning toward self from that which is superior has pride as the root cause of decay and in this way, man became like the devil.⁵⁷²

Augustine reasons that the turn of the will is set in motion at the moment pleasure of self supersedes pleasure of God.⁵⁷³ Within the prelapsarian world, to maintain the endowment of a good will, man, in the garden, simply must cling to his Creator. The will, for Augustine, for evil or for good, is within the control or self-possession of the higher-level freewill, sentient creature according to Komline: "The relationship of God as Creator to human beings also entails that

⁵⁷¹ Clark, 234.

⁵⁷² See also *De civ Dei* XIV, 13 for Augustine's explanation of how pride casts down but humility exalts the heart.

⁵⁷³ For Augustine, the only reason the envious angel was in a position to tempt the man was because the man already began to be pleased with himself: "For it is precisely because he had begun to be pleased with himself that he was also delighted to hear *You shall be like gods* (Gn 3:5). But they would have been better able to be like gods if they had clung to the true and supreme principle in obedience, instead of taking themselves as their own principle in pride" (Ibid., XIV, 13).

human beings and all that belongs to them, including their will, are other than their creator. More specifically, the human will is good only by participation and can be harmed by defect.”⁵⁷⁴ This qualification regarding the human will—human beings are other than their creator—if true, is a defeater of those in Augustine’s time—as well as Hume’s time—who attempt to maintain that the Creator is ultimately responsible for evil. Still, if God is omnipotent, was He incapable of creating higher-level freewill, sentient creatures so they could not sin? Furthermore, was He incapable of preventing the devil from having access to Eve in Eden? Koline—employing a piece that we referenced in Chapter 5—highlights Augustine’s answers to these very questions in his earlier work, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees*:

In *Gn. Adu. Man.* this point comes up in response to the question of why God failed to make Adam so that he would not sin. Augustine replies that God did in fact make him this way. Augustine writes, ‘Well, but that’s precisely what he did do; the man was so made, after all, that if he hadn’t wanted to, he wouldn’t sin’ (*si noluisset, non peccaret*). Augustine repeats this same logic regarding Eve. If the Manichees raise the point that the devil should not have been given access to the woman, Augustine’s reply is ‘On the contrary, it’s she who shouldn’t have given the devil access to herself. She was so made, after all, that if she hadn’t wanted to she wouldn’t have done so’ (*si noluisset, non admitteret*).⁵⁷⁵

Whether answering the Manichees in the fourth century or Hume in the eighteenth century, Augustine’s response would have most likely been the same. As created, it was within the power of the wills of both Adam and Eve to do or not to do—to obey God or resist. Eve gave the devil access the moment she became pleased with herself.

Augustine’s Four Wills

At this point in the argument there are several observations that can be made regarding the will for our purposes. Since, for Augustine, the will belongs to the mind or soul, it

⁵⁷⁴ Koline, *Augustine on the Will*, 54.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 43–44.

categorically exists within the immaterial irregularities—suggested throughout this work—through which God can work to remedy suffering caused by broken relationships.⁵⁷⁶ Komline writes that Augustine’s understanding of the will develops over time within the theological contexts of biblical narratives beginning with creation and continuing through the New Testament. Throughout the process, Augustine concludes Scripture highlights four dispensations of the will: the created will, the fallen will, Christ’s will, and the redeemed will.⁵⁷⁷ What does Augustine mean when referring to the will and how does he know that a will exists? After answering in detail that knowledge of the will is self-evident to all humans, Augustine in an early treatise—*On the Two Souls*, Komline observes, provides his definition of the will: “The will is a movement of the soul, with nothing forcing it either not to lose something or to acquire something.”⁵⁷⁸ At this stage in his development, the will, for Augustine, is operating within the realm of the mind or soul. He also highlights the posture of the will in that of its own volition, it always maneuvers either to hold onto what it possesses or plans to get what it wants. In light of this position, as Augustine comes to view the will through the lens of Christ’s existence, he matures beyond simply drawing parallels between the human and divine wills by demonstrating how the incarnate Christ identifies with both the fallen and redeemed wills for the purpose of restoration: “[F]or the mature Augustine . . . Christ’s will illuminates how our will should function once redeemed by him. . . . He moves from underlining the similarity between the divine will and the human will *simpliciter* to characterizing the human will of Christ as having some commonality with both the fallen and the redeemed human wills, to emphasizing the

⁵⁷⁶ Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 23.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 327.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

parallels between the human will of Christ and the human will as restored by him.”⁵⁷⁹ Komline contends that Augustine arrives at this position only after meditating upon specific passages of Scripture. Spending a lifetime of study upon the will’s function in Genesis (the created will), Romans (the fallen will), biblical prayers, the Psalms, and the Gospels (Christ’s will and the redeemed will) yields, for Augustine, the ability to distinguish key features of the will within specific periods.⁵⁸⁰ Therefore, it is only after Augustine came to note differences of the will’s operation within original creation and its behavior after the Fall that he was able to note the commonality Christ’s will displays with both the fallen and redeemed wills. Furthermore, the cumulative structure of his understanding not only permits Augustine to develop new distinctive insights concerning these four wills but also allows him to come to understand how those distinctions converge upon the potential healing of a Christological climax.

Willing Rightly without a Full Understanding

One important note vital to the overall argument of my work is the distinction Augustine makes between the will and understanding while responding to opponents who attempt to hold God responsible as the author of evil. Prior to the Fall, even considering human incognizance, Augustine contends that Adam’s created will was amply equipped to choose rightly. However, a higher-level freewill, sentient creature, according to Augustine, can have all the understanding that is needed and still fail to choose rightly:

For Augustine, then, will and intellectual understanding are not the same thing. Nor does the latter automatically produce the former. One can know that something is true and right, yet resist it. . . . Just as Augustine believes it is possible to understand without willing rightly, he contends that it is possible to will rightly without understanding. In [*On Genesis, against the Manichees*] Augustine points to Adam as a case in point. Augustine writes of Adam, “You see, if he were willing (*uellet*) to keep God’s command,

⁵⁷⁹ Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 327.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 327-328.

and persevered in living by faith until he became capable of really understanding the truth, that is, if he worked in paradise and guarded what he had received, he wouldn't come to that deformed state of mind which would lead him, when displeased with the flesh as with his nakedness, to put together worldly, carnal coverings of lies." The error of the first father of the human race consisted in failing to want to obey God's precepts in the absence of a full understanding of the truth. Adam could have willed rightly, Augustine indicates, even given his lack of knowledge, but he failed to do so. . . . Part of Adam's difficulty was sustaining right desires without a complete knowledge of good and evil.⁵⁸¹

In light of the first Adam's failure to obey in the absence of a full understanding of the truth, for God to justifiably remedy the problem of suffering for all mankind, He would have to subject the second Adam—Christ to a similar test requiring obedience in the absence of a full understanding of the truth. One glaring example of just such a test may be precisely what Christ is experiencing from the cross. To briefly illustrate the distinction Augustine is attempting to make between will and understanding, all one must do is examine one of Christ's remarks from the cross within the biblical narrative. Stated previously, Christ would not only have to submit to the laws of nature, but He would also have to submit to the law according to his human nature. Even prior to Augustine's distinction between will and understanding, Athanasius contends this God-man, among other limitations, would also have to somehow be subject to ignorance, which is a subsequent consequence of human nature, in addition to being subject to natural laws (Chapter 3).⁵⁸² So for example, treating the Gospels as fictional narratives as a means to undergird my defense in this possible world, Matthew 27:46, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" could behave as a test of will—an activating transworld condition—whereby the God-man displays ignorance limited by his human nature and yet must obey in the absence of a full

⁵⁸¹ Koline, *Augustine on the Will*, 39-40.

⁵⁸² *Con. Ar.*, 3.43

understanding of the truth.⁵⁸³

In this moment, Christ, according to the narrative, acting in his human nature may be dealing directly with the problem of evil and suffering within His human will, specifically suffering caused by a perceived broken relationship between He and His Father. Christ asks a very human question, “Why?” This question is the very essence of incognizance. As far as the reader can tell, He may be asking it of His God, not because He has actually been forsaken, but rather perhaps, in his human ignorance, because He perceives this to be the case and as a result suffers from a deficient perspective. In the narrative, God may not have actually abandoned Christ, but to satisfy God’s self-imposed limitations, it would be necessary for Christ to experience suffering based not strictly upon reality but rather his perception of reality if he was to be truly human. Additionally, God the Father, to satisfy His self-imposed limitations, would remain unable to reveal to the incarnate son His presence even in the face of apparent desertion. Christ can detect suffering but may be limited in his scope, at times, as to why he is suffering, and this is precisely the kind of test that could qualify Him to be the redeemer of humanity. Where the first father failed, Christ wanted to obey God’s precepts in the absence of a full understanding of the truth. As stated previously, “Adam could have willed rightly, Augustine indicates, even given his lack of knowledge, but he failed to do so.” Christ did will rightly given His lack of knowledge and therefore succeeds as the one who restores humanity. Unlike Adam, Christ sustained right desires without a complete knowledge of good and evil.

Another observation that can be made, especially in light of Augustine’s definition of the will—“the will is a movement of the soul, with nothing forcing it either not to lose something or to acquire something,” is that for the will to be culpable it has to arrive at desires that are not

⁵⁸³ Proving the historicity of the biblical narratives is beyond the scope of this defense.

forced upon it. However, this definition still sanctions the manipulative actions of one higher-level freewill, sentient creature exploiting the naivete of another for its purposes. One free will can use another free will for its own purpose. Augustine, according to Komline, describes the first sin as the treacherous effect of an individual acquiescing to a hubristic suggestion that aimed to harness control of the unwary creature:

Augustine [in *On Genesis, against the Manichees*] describes the first sin as pride; pride was the crux of the serpent's crafty suggestion. . . . Augustine goes on to describe this pride as wrongful willing. It consisted, he writes, in "wishing (*uolunt*) to be God's equals" and being persuaded to act "against God's law, and so forfeit what they had received, while they had wanted (*uoluerunt*) to grab what they had not received," namely "to enjoy . . . bliss independently of God's control."⁵⁸⁴

Considering the definition of the will, in the case of the first sin Adam and Eve were not forced to lose or acquire something. However, by submitting through bad wills to the persuasive serpent, they lost what they had to acquire something they did not and ended up with nothing. As Augustine considers the impact of the first sin upon the created will, he discovers a degenerative will that has mutated in at least two ways according to Komline:

Far from being the center of our moral responsibility over which human beings retain absolute control, the will has now spiraled out of control. It has done so in two ways. First, the will eludes and resists a person's commands. Post-fall, human beings are unable to will what they know is right in a consistent or unalloyed way and therefore become subject to a psychological paralysis that prevents them from leaving sin behind. Second, the will itself now fails to keep command of the body and mind as it was designed to. Even when human beings succeed in willing the right thing, body and mind rebel against the dictates of the will. Thus, subsequent to the fall the will can neither be controlled nor exercise control as it should.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁴ Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 60-61.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., 61. In this section, Komline notes two more very important points about the will from Augustine's work—*On Free Choice*. First she clarifies that Augustine's focus is upon the Fall's impact on the will not the cause of the fall. Second, he emphasizes that greed is the root of all evil: "The question of how the fall impacts the will is not to be confused with the question of how the fall of the will came about. . . . Augustine reiterates that nothing besides the will itself can explain the will's deviation from good. Avarice is the root of all evils, so the most that can be said by way of explanation is that the root of evil is the will's desiring more goods than it needs" (Ibid., 61n11).

As noted previously regarding divine foreknowledge, clinging to God stabilizes the creature's freedom both to control its own will and employ the will to control the body and mind as it should. Operating within the domain of God's will guarantees the order of higher-level freewill creatures to maintain control over their being (Chapter 5).

Desiring to exist independently by turning away from the Creator, for Augustine, is not only unjust but is also the epitome of relinquishing control over oneself. Since in comparison to God individuals are infinitely less, a turn toward self from God results in a significantly smaller domain. Again, by failing to cling to God as its nucleus, the power of the will diminishes to the extent that it becomes subject to lesser and lesser elements within creation. Since all creatures are dependent upon their Creator, order can only be maintained by affording God His proper domain. Failure to acknowledge God's proper place over created order is not only a grave injustice but accelerates the demotion of the will—that was once good—through a process whereby the will continues to move from mastery over self to becoming subject to everything less (Chapter 5). Therefore, because of Augustine's meditation upon the existence and behavior of the will, Komline explains that in *On the Two Souls* the will, for Augustine, comes to function as a lens through which to construct a more thorough definition of sin:

Now that Augustine has argued that the will exists and defended a particular conception of what the will is, he has laid the necessary groundwork for defining sin in terms of will. In Augustine's words, "For every mind reads it as something written within itself by God that sin cannot exist without the will. Sin, therefore, is the will to retain or to acquire what justice forbids and from which one is free to hold back. And yet, if it is not free, it is not a will." For Augustine at this point, sin not only implies an act of will; sin is a specific kind of will (*peccatum est uoluntas*).⁵⁸⁶

Sin is a specific kind of will that attempts to retain or acquire what justice forbids. Again, just as we saw in his definition of the will, Augustine emphasizes that this is not an act that is forced

⁵⁸⁶ Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 74.

upon the will. By attempting to acquire what justice forbade, Adam and Eve's mutiny against God had a trickle-down effect whereby everything that God initially made subject to their wills would now revolt against them in exactly the same way.

Stated earlier (Chapter 1), as scholars discuss the abundance of Augustine's theological corpus, his contributions to the church's official position on Christology—specifically the influence of Christ upon the human will that we have been dealing with in this section—seems to go consistently unnoticed. His influence, among scholastics, reformers, and modern scholars is evident in numerous areas of historical, practical, and, even, philosophical theology; however, specific references to Augustine's Christology has unjustifiably been missing, in large part, from the majority of research on the topic.⁵⁸⁷ One reason that Augustine's understanding of the human will deserves more attention is that instead of theorizing from his own reason and experience, he anchors his theological understanding upon the biblical narrative of humanity.⁵⁸⁸ As we explore the human will of Christ more deeply, consider how Augustine contrasts Adam's will with Christ's in this passage from *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, Konline writes:

[T]he fallen will came about because of the fateful actions of a single individual. This person's misuse of will brought misery to the whole human race. The redemption of the human will follows a structurally similar trajectory, with the willing of one individual rippling outward to make salvation available to all humanity. "The Christian faith, then, truly consists in the influence of these two men." Augustine contrasts their impact as follows: "By the one we were cast down to death; by the other we are set free for life. The former destroyed us in himself by doing his own will (*faciendo uoluntatem suam*), not the will of him by whom he was created; the latter saved us in himself, not by doing his own will (*non faciendo uoluntatem suam*), but the will of him by whom he was sent."⁵⁸⁹

Augustine reflects upon Christ not doing His own will by pondering upon Matthew 26:39, "My

⁵⁸⁷ Daley, *God Visible*, 150; Konline, *Augustine on the Will*, 278.

⁵⁸⁸ Konline, *Augustine on the Will*, 279.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 278-279.

Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Komline contends that it is this passage working in conjunction with other passages whereby Augustine evolves in his thinking regarding the human will of Christ. At the end of his career, according to Komline, Augustine concludes that Christ refusal to entertain sinful desire was an act of his will: “Christ was not unable but unwilling to experience sinful desire. He possessed will and all senses proper to human beings; he just did not want to misuse them.”⁵⁹⁰ Regarding the immaterial senses, Christ possessed that which was common to man; however, He did what He wanted to do and within His human will this meant that He refused to misappropriate human nature.

Adam’s Will v. Christ’s Will

Augustine throughout his career takes strides to differentiate Christ’s human will from Adam’s. Komline contends that he moves beyond simply acknowledging the common human attitude within Christ’s human will whereby His desires do not align with the Father’s: “Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.” She argues that initially, Augustine’s commentary on this passage was driven by his conviction that Christ’s human will was associated “with the wills of human persons that are in tension with God’s will. . . .”⁵⁹¹ Or that “Christ prefigures in himself those who would come after him in the church who ‘wanted to do their own will, but afterwards would follow the will of God.’”⁵⁹² Or that the unity that Christ eventually achieves by stating the fiat—“Yet not as I will, but as you will,” was the result of

⁵⁹⁰ Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 280.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 290.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*

“Christ’s triumph over His human will rather than on the proper alignment of his human will.”⁵⁹³

Ultimately however, Komline displays how Augustine arrives upon the conclusion that Christ’s human will was in perfect harmony with God’s from the beginning of His Incarnation. By reflecting upon *Against an Arian Sermon*, Komline amply demonstrates how Augustine settles upon this position by responding to John 6:38: “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me,” a verse cited by his Arian opponents to prove Christ’s subordinate finitude to the Father. As stated previously in my argument, Arians, according to both Athanasius and Augustine, were guilty of misunderstanding the divinity of Christ by reading their own anthropomorphic limitations into biblical language ultimately influencing their theology (Chapters 2 and 3). After a brief description of Homoian Arianism—a theological position emphasizing a “likeness between the Father and the Son rather than a shared substance (*ousia*)”—Augustine responds to his opponents by highlighting the theological significance of Christ’s human nature in doing God’s will.⁵⁹⁴ Augustine does not simply concede that Christ was enabled to do the Father’s will by having His own human will restricted by His divine will, but takes a different approach by contrasting the first and second Adam, according to Komline: “Augustine uses Romans 5 to establish a distinction between the condition of the human will that was in Christ and the condition of the human will that was in Adam. Adam brought sin into the world by choosing his own will, a will opposed to God. Christ’s statement in John 6:38 shows that Christ reversed the pattern Adam had set. Whereas Adam’s human will was opposed to God’s, Augustine insists, ‘Christ did not have such a will.’”⁵⁹⁵ Christ did have a

⁵⁹³ Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 291.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

human will; however, the condition of His human will was such that He did not want to oppose the will of God. Komline continues by featuring specific points within Augustine's commentary on Romans 5. First, the harmony Christ's human will enjoyed with God's was due to grace. Second, Christ's autonomy to resist temptation in his human will was a clear indication that He was fully God:

Rather, Augustine implies, Christ had a human will in perfect accord with God's, since, as is clear from Romans 5:19, "in him, *insofar as he is man*, we are taught the obedience which is just the opposite of the disobedience of the first man." Christ could achieve this obedience only by grace—because his human nature belonged to him as a mediator who was not only man, but God and man. Thus in Augustine's exegesis of John 6:38, the possibility of Christ overcoming the natural human temptation to oppose God autonomously (his capacity to say "not my will") presupposes his divine nature. In the final analysis, Augustine's explanation of how Jesus was able to resist doing his "own will" but nonetheless attain perfect human obedience functions to corroborate Augustine's case that Jesus was *non tantum homo, verum etiam deus* [not only a man but also God]. The obedience of Christ in his humanity becomes, in Augustine's argument, not a reason to object to Christ's full divinity but rather a reason to acknowledge it.⁵⁹⁶

Christ did not achieve deity through some merit of His own after being created by God in some special Arian dispensation. For Augustine, because Christ is fully man and fully God from the inception of His Incarnation, He is autonomously capable of harmonizing His human will with God's.

The harmony between Christ's human and divine wills, in a sense, may refer to the communication of idioms that Athanasius develops to answer the Arians of his own day (Chapter 3). Augustine never denies that Christ's human will was subject to God's.⁵⁹⁷ The distinction Augustine makes is precisely how Christ is able to submit His human will to the divine. The significance of Augustine's progress, different from his predecessors, Komline argues, is that

⁵⁹⁶ Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 293.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 295.

Christ generates the entire Gethsemane prayer, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will,” from a human will in perfect harmony with His divine will: “As Maximus the Confessor would two centuries later, Augustine had come to hear the distinctly human voice of Christ not only in the prayer that the passion be avoided but also in Christ’s rejection of a course of action opposed to God’s will.”⁵⁹⁸ In doing so, Konline maintains that for Augustine, Christ’s human will—in contrast to the fallen will of Adam—was the voice behind the fiat (“not as I will, but as you will), not just the previous request to remove the cup of His Passion. Recognizing the voice within His human will in both statements, for Augustine, was not only a progressive triumph over Arian Christology, but answering Arian objections also manifests another necessary logical conclusion regarding the genesis of Christ’s human nature. Reflecting upon *Enchiridion*, Konline highlights for Augustine, Christ did not achieve deity through some merit of His own after being created by God in some special Arian dispensation but was the Son of God from the moment he became a man:

In clarifying the exemplary character of incarnation, Augustine points out that the humanity of Christ had no existence at all before it was joined to the Word. A priori, then, it would have been inconceivable for it to do anything to merit the grace by which it was joined to God. As Augustine explains, “Without any preceding merits of his own righteousness, Christ was the Son of God from the first moment he began to be a man in such a way that he and the Word, which is without beginning, was one person.” In light of this fact, “how could he [the man Christ . . . be joined to God by any previous merits of his own], since from the very moment he began to be man he was also God, which is why it said The Word became flesh (Jn 1:14)”?⁵⁹⁹

That the Son of God always existed, for Augustine, becomes yet another weapon in his arsenal against the Arian idea that Christ achieved deity within His humanity of his own merit. At the moment of the hypostatic conception, the Word assumes humanity, and the flesh of Christ apart

⁵⁹⁸ Konline, *Augustine on the Will*, 297.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 300.

from any previous merits of its own righteousness was joined to God.

Never one to waste an opportunity to draw practical applications from his Christology, Augustine views the hypostatic union as a means by which to better understand how faith in Christ produces similar unmerited effects for the believer. Because the preexistence of Christ's humanity is absent prior the Incarnation, He could do nothing earlier in His humanity to merit the grace by which His human nature was joined to the divine. Parallels can be drawn from the act of grace applied to Christ's humanity in the Incarnation to the act of grace applied to believers who come to faith in Christ, Komline writes of Augustine:

Just this absence of any preexisting merits explaining the unification of Christ's humanity with his divinity, Augustine argues, reflects the entirely unmerited character of the grace that the saints have received: "Another point about the incarnation is that in the man Christ it advertises the grace of God toward us without any previous deserts on our part, as not even he won the privilege of being joined to the true God in such a unity that with him he would be one person, Son of God, by any previous merits of his own." If even Christ's perfect humanity did not merit union with God, fallen humanity can hardly claim such an accomplishment.⁶⁰⁰

To showcase the grace by which God acts toward humanity in general, Augustine deduces that even the Son of God's inception joining His humanity to His divinity in one person was not due to previous merits of His own. Underscoring this Augustinian Christological observation, Komline concludes that if the Son of God's humanity was joined to God apart from any previous merits of His own, then certainly fallen humans could not possibly think that they could achieve this union through their own efforts. This is literally the "effortless" illustration of grace that drives Augustine's view of salvation. As previously stated in Chapter 1, although extremely complex, the doctrine of the Incarnation is essential to Patristic Christology because it forms the central core of the history of salvation, which at its heart is reconciliatory. According to the

⁶⁰⁰ Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 300-301.

Fathers—specifically Augustine in this case—the view one holds of the Incarnation directly impacts how she interprets the history of salvation. His interpretation of salvation, based upon his Christology, is that the unification of humanity to deity in every case, including Christ's, is unmeritorious.

CHAPTER 9: A PATRISTIC CHRISTOLOGICAL METHOD FOR ANALYZING BIBLICAL NARRATIVES

Introduction to the Application of a Patristic Christological Method

Preliminary Remarks Regarding the Use of Biblical Narratives

Pursuing the idea of utilizing the Patristic view of the Incarnation as a defense against the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships manifests components of a Patristic Christological method which can be used to analyze biblical narratives. Applying this method to a biblical narrative will further serve our defense by aiding the understanding of how an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent God might respond through a story—a possible world—to the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships. Following Stump—by incorporating a biblical narrative into a defense, I am under no obligation to establish the historicity of the events that unfold within a given narrative: “A defense is a story that accounts for the existence of God and the existence of the suffering in our world and that is not demonstrably false. . . .”⁶⁰¹ Therefore in a defense, it is permissible to use a dialogue within the Gospels as a story whether the events actually happened or are simply a fictional narrative, Stump continues:⁶⁰² “And so fictional narratives can also undergird a defense, if those narratives are capable of providing an adequate story for the defense.”⁶⁰³ Since my defense rests largely upon the Patristic view of the Incarnation with the aim of offering a rebuttal to suffering caused primarily by broken relationships, Christ’s encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well seems most fitting. I hope to show, like Stump, that reflections upon the Patristic Christological method on suffering

⁶⁰¹ Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 35.

⁶⁰² Ibid., 30

⁶⁰³ Ibid., 35

provides a fuller defense with the help of this story.⁶⁰⁴ While explaining her method of marrying analytical philosophy to biblical narrative, Stump argues that this approach is a messy affair and will not succumb to the rigid orderliness of philosophical analysis alone but instead lends itself to a “softer and more rambling” approach.⁶⁰⁵

Stump strives to communicate the difference in approaching the strict insights of philosophical studies in contrast to the multifaceted observations that are made while interpreting narratives. Dovetailing analytical philosophy, biblical narrative, and in my case, historical theology requires caution on the part of the author and grace on the part of the reader. Since texts are open to many different perspectives, Stump seeks the freedom to explore biblical narratives—especially biblical characters—in all their rich complexity, with the tools of analytical philosophy:

Interpretations of texts— for that matter, interpretations of people and their actions— do not admit of rigorous argument. . . . Even a carefully supported interpretation of narratives is, in effect, only a recommendation to look at a text in a certain way. It invites readers to consider that text and ask themselves whether after all they do not see the text in the way the interpretation recommends. Interpretations present, suggest, offer, and invite; unlike philosophical arguments, they cannot attempt to compel.⁶⁰⁶

Like Stump, I am by no means arguing that the application of a Patristic Christological method to the story of the Samaritan woman at the well is the only interpretation, but I am inviting the reader to consider the dialogical perspective of each participant within this narrative through the aforementioned method. This approach is in keeping with the overall theme of my argument because, according to Stump, I am upholding the spirit of the Fathers in doing so: “Many of the influential figures in the history of Christianity, for example, brought philosophical skill to bear

⁶⁰⁴ Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 25.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

on biblical narratives; and there is still much of philosophical interest to be learned from, for example, Chrysostom and Augustine on John, Jerome on Daniel, Aquinas on Job, Luther on Galatians, Calvin on Romans, Kierkegaard on Genesis, and hosts of other authors and biblical stories.”⁶⁰⁷ Seeking to bring philosophical skill to bear on biblical narratives, I am in good company. Furthermore, Stump encourages future research examining the previous work done by these influential thinkers specifically regarding their practice of analyzing biblical narratives philosophically.

Of special interest to me is Stump’s challenge to contemporary scholars that there is still much to be learned from Augustine’s philosophical commentary on John. Therefore, I plan to analyze Augustine’s commentary on the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) through the lens of the Patristic Christological method that has emerged from the research within the previous chapters. My hope is that by viewing Augustine’s commentary on this biblical narrative through the lens of his own Christological insights, as well as the innovative contributions of modern scholars to his Christology, we can enhance our defense through many voices by generating additional morally sufficient reasons for the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships. Perhaps in the process, this Christological analysis will also behave as an elementary Patristic Christological primer for those who desire a better understanding of Augustine’s hermeneutical practices.

Preliminary Conditions upon Divine Activity in Any World

Therefore, this chapter will seek to apply the cumulative Patristic Christological material amassed in Chapters 2-8 to the story of the Samaritan woman at the well in order to contribute to

⁶⁰⁷ Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 28.

the defense against the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships by observing morally sufficient reasons within the narrative for God's allowing evil in such a possible world.⁶⁰⁸ The act of the Incarnation itself contains reconciliatory lessons that aid the Fathers in the development of Christological hermeneutics that aims to follow the pattern or example of God's method of expanding human understanding of the divine. Stated previously, Athanasius was compelled to use Nicene terminology; Augustine was compelled to use Greek philosophy. And, according to both men, Christ was compelled by grace to be constrained to the embodiment of humanity (Chapters 2-5). Following the practices of Christ, Athanasius, Augustine, and even Cyril, I used the texts of these Patristic writers in conjunction with modern scholars to develop a foundation for a Patristic Christological hermeneutic to analyze biblical narratives. I began constructing a method for building a defense by consolidating three questions that bear heavily upon God's ability to respond to the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships: 1. Why are higher-level freewill, sentient creatures unable to detect God acting in any world? Answering this question (Chapter 6) required a more thorough explanation of what I dubbed transworld incognizance (TWI). 2. How should higher-level freewill, sentient creatures expect God to act in any world should He decide to involve Himself in the fight against the problem of suffering? This question considered the conduit of immaterial irregularities (i.e. soul and mind) through which God could justifiably act should He decide to do so (Chapter 7). And finally, 3. precisely what should higher-level freewill, sentient creatures expect God acting in any world to resemble? Answering this question focused primarily upon the Incarnation—specifically regarding Christ's will—(Chapter 8) as God's means to act in categories detectable to higher-level freewill, sentient creatures in any possible world.

⁶⁰⁸ Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 19.

To what extent is God able to intercept evil on behalf of higher-level sentient creatures? As Hume suggested, a good God should be expected to run divine interference to rescue humans from their own proclivity to choose evil. He should be willing to intrude into any possible world where the prospect of evil and suffering is present. Additionally, we should expect a benevolent God to include within His creation a way to safeguard humanity should they happen to choose evil. Might the Incarnation, featured within the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, potentially be a possible—not actual—morally sufficient means by which God intrudes into a world to alleviate the suffering of this woman highlighted in this narrative? As we saw in Chapter 6, Hume may be right in thinking that a perfectly good God should counteract the problem of evil and suffering in some way, but Plantinga's observations reveal to do so, God must behave within certain, self-imposed limitations that were set the moment creatures with moral competencies came into being.⁶⁰⁹ Does the Incarnation featured within the story of the Samaritan woman at the well comply with such self-imposed limitations? Furthermore, not to act within the framework of free moral creatures subject to natural laws would itself be a violation of justice because God would not only be guilty of expecting humans to behave in certain ways that they were never capable of in the first place, but He Himself would also demonstrate that these expectations were never able to be fully met apart from divine domination. The moment that God relies “exclusively” upon divine attributes, divorced from the context of natural laws and the

⁶⁰⁹ Stated previously, according to Plantinga, there exists certain limitations upon God's character, person, and nature: “[N]ot even an omnipotent being can bring about logically impossible states of affairs or cause necessarily false propositions to be true” (Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 17). Augustine already came to this conclusion in his own writings: “[N]ot even [God] is more powerful than himself” (*The Literal Meaning of Genesis* IX, 17, 32; see also VI, 18, 29). Again, while writing about the omnipotence of God, Augustine offers specific examples of God's incapacity “to die or be mistaken.” He then continues: “For he is called omnipotent in virtue of doing what he wills, not in virtue of having to suffer what he does not will. If anything like that should happen to him, he most certainly would not be omnipotent. But it is precisely because he is omnipotent that some things are not possible for him” (*De civ. Dei* V,10).

subsequent consequences of free moral choices, to overcome the evil intentions of freewill creatures—Hume’s demand—He demonstrates that Creation was engineered for human moral failure from the beginning. However, acting within these limitations—natural laws and the subsequent consequences of free moral choices—God may be able to justifiably satisfy His own demands that He placed upon humanity from the beginning, as well as some of Hume’s demands at the same time, while simultaneously enhancing the free will of creatures by aiding the process of their own cognitive growth and increasing their ability to personally identify and understand the reality of their choices and the Creator of their reality.

Considering these preliminary remarks regarding the use of biblical narratives, the conditions upon divine activity in any world, and principally the cumulative Patristic Christological material amassed up to this point, we are now in position to feature the elements by which to analyze the biblical narrative of the Samaritan woman at the well. The method, not the chronology of the narrative, will be the guiding principle to this “softer and more rambling” approach. Features within the narrative will be highlighted as each component of the method is considered and delineated within this chapter. The Patristic Christological method proceeding from the pages of this dissertation will be introduced by way of three primary questions, which will be answered and then displayed, in part, through the application of the method to the biblical narrative of the Samaritan woman at the well. The three primary questions that comprise the Patristic Christological method are as follows: 1. What limitations are placed upon human and divine interaction the moment creatures with moral competencies come into being and how has the Fall exacerbated these limitations? Considering the perspectives of the incarnate Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well within Augustine’s commentary may provide a fuller explanation not only regarding this question, but also the overall problem of suffering. 2. How

might God and humans labor to overcome these interactive limitations? Answering this question will focus primarily upon overcoming limitations through the concept of recontextualization (Chapter 7), which will also be answered and further explicated in the biblical narrative to be considered. And finally, 3. What are the results of overcoming these interactive limitations through recontextualization for both God and man? First it will be shown that humanity, provided the opportunity and ability by divinity, can remove much of the interactive interference through regeneration. Second, amplification through regeneration offers a fuller, more intimate relationship between God and humans, which is a principal feature of the interaction between Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well.

As we begin examining the components of this Patristic Christological method it is important to realize that measuring the true test of its effectiveness rests upon connections within the narrative that account for the existence of God and the existence of suffering and that are not demonstrably false. Although the use of biblical narrative results in a “softer and more rambling” approach, this cannot become an excuse for substandard observations that seem forced. Stump reminds her readers that the true test of a method is to be found in its application: “In the end, though, the test of a method lies not in the apology for it but in its application.”⁶¹⁰ It is my desire to showcase a Patristic Christological method with this in mind. Therefore, the central focus of this section will be to supplement each use of Augustine’s commentary on the narrative with the supporting arrangement of the method.

⁶¹⁰ Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 29.

Some Limitations placed upon Human and Divine Interaction within a Possible World

To this end, we may begin fixing upon the first of three questions: What limitations are placed upon human and divine interaction the moment creatures with moral competencies come into being and how has the Fall exacerbated these limitations? First, stated in Chapter 1, any possible world capable of making a defense against the problem of suffering must include an omniscient, omnipotent, perfectly good God who cares about justice and not only creates higher-level freewill, sentient creatures but then also acts within certain, self-imposed limitations that are set the moment these creatures with moral competencies come into being. Perhaps the main self-imposed limitation evident within the story of the Samaritan woman at the well is that the incarnate Christ is weary from His journey (John 4:6). What journey? Augustine commenting upon this passage believes the journey to be the Incarnation:

His journey is the flesh he took on for our sake. How, in fact, can the one who is everywhere, who is absent from no place whatever, make a journey? What does it mean to talk about where he goes from or where he goes to—if not that he would not have come to us if he had not taken on the form of visible flesh? So then, because he was good enough to come to us that he would appear, with the flesh that he took to himself, in the *form of a slave* (Phil 2:7), the very taking of flesh to himself is his journey. Accordingly, what else can *weary from the journey* mean but weary in the flesh? Jesus is weak in the flesh.⁶¹¹

Augustine, as was seen previously, believes that Christ suffers all the physical limits that accompany human nature, but he also establishes the importance of distinguishing between the human and divine natures in Christ. Christ in his human nature was weary traveling from Judea to Samaria (John 4:3), but Augustine always desiring the fullest explanation explains that Christ would never have experienced human weariness apart from leaving where He was. To be sure, Augustine utilizes an allegorical approach while commenting on Christ's encounter with the

⁶¹¹ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 7.

Samaritan woman at the well. Therefore, the accusation may be made that he does not really believe the account happened at a specific location in space and time. Apart from key indications within this commentary to the contrary, Augustine, reveals one of his basic hermeneutical principles while discussing paradise in another passage. Referencing a famous use of allegory by the Apostle Paul, Augustine desires to establish the history contained within the Scriptures:

But to say that there could not have been a corporeal paradise simply because it can also be understood as a spiritual paradise is like saying that Abraham did not have two wives, Hagar and Sarah, who gave him two sons, one by the slave and one by the free woman, simply because the Apostle says that the two covenants were prefigured in them. It is like saying that there was no rock from which water flowed when Moses struck it simply because the rock can also be understood to signify Christ in a figurative sense, for the same Apostle says, *And the rock was Christ* (1 Cor 10:4). . . . Nothing prevents us, then, from offering these interpretations and any others that might be more appropriate with regard to the spiritual understanding of paradise—just so long as we also believe in the truth of the history as it is presented to us in a most faithful narrative of those events.⁶¹²

Even though, at times, he relies upon the allegorical approach does not mean that he disbelieves the historicity of the event.⁶¹³ In this case, the weariness of Christ was not simply due to traveling to a geographical location but, more importantly, to an existential vocation.

Furthermore, Augustine himself presents a hermeneutical limitation—the interpretation must render the referent more specific without altering the original meaning of the text (Chapter 7).

Desiring to subject Scripture to a holistic Christological approach, Augustine seeks opportunities to identify parallels that foreshadow activities within the life of Christ. Perhaps, for this reason, he includes a glimpse of paradise to assist the interpretation of the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. Augustine draws parallels between the forming of Eve from the side of Adam and the forming of the church, prefigured in the Samaritan woman, from the

⁶¹² *De civ. Dei* XIII, 21.

⁶¹³ At the beginning of this homily, Augustine affirms the physical presence of Christ at Jacob's well, in addition to the words that were spoken there (Augustine, *Homily 15*, 1).

bleeding side of Christ on the cross.⁶¹⁴ Augustine connects the prelapsarian state of the creation of Eve to the postlapsarian regeneration of the church prefigured in the Samaritan woman. Following Augustine's lead, pressing the two accounts—before examining the narrative in detail—a few more interesting parallels can be made. In Eden, the serpent flanks the will of Adam through the social connection he shares with Eve by physically appealing to a spiritual desire they did not need (Chapter 8). In Samaria, Christ approaches the Samaritan woman directly by appealing to a physical desire to help her realize a spiritual need (John 4:10). In Eden, the serpent questions Eve about God's word regarding a physical prohibition and offers secret knowledge he claims to possess (Gen 3:1, 4-5). In Samaria, Christ asks a Samaritan woman for a drink—a physical Jewish prohibition, and then offers a gift of secret knowledge he actually possesses (John 4:7, 13-14). In Eden, Adam and Eve lost what they had—eternal life, to acquire something they did not and ended up with nothing (Gen 3:6 ff.). In Samaria, the Samaritan woman lost what she had—an unquenchable thirst, to acquire something she did not and ended up with everything (John 4:28-29, 39-42).⁶¹⁵

What other limitations are placed upon human and divine interaction the moment creatures with moral competencies come into being and how has the Fall exacerbated these limitations? Stated in Chapter 5, creatures, in contrast to an omniscient mind, will exercise a smaller cognitive capacity not only to retain data but also to completely understand how that data harmonizes with other data. In a possible world like the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, if God genuinely requires her to comply with His will, it would seem to follow, if He is good, that He would place some kind of indication of this expectation within her world (Chapter

⁶¹⁴ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 8 & 10.

⁶¹⁵ These are just a few parallels comparing the two episodes, there are a number of others.

2). Over a thousand years prior to Christ's meeting with this woman, that is precisely what He did—God communicated and commanded that His expectations be recorded for future generations. As a result, Jacob's well is the focal theme that initiates and sustains the conversation within the story (John 4:6ff.). Additionally, if God expects her to comply with His will in this possible world, having infinitely greater cognitive capacity, He must not only condescend to her level but also assist her in the process of harmonizing this divine data from the past in the present. Within the story, the Samaritan woman is astonished that this Jewish man—Christ is asking her for a drink. From her Samaritan perspective, he, as a Jew, is condescending to her level. Christ achieves this in his human nature; however, Augustine suggests that something more divine is happening when Christ responds with an offer of His own (John 4:7-10): "He asks for a drink, he promises a drink. He needs water as if to slake his thirst, and he pours forth water so as to satisfy fully. *If you knew*, he says, *the gift of God*. God's gift is the Holy Spirit. But he is still speaking in veiled terms to the woman, and little by little finding a way into her heart."⁶¹⁶ Christ is attempting to appeal to a deep desire within the woman that transcends her baser need of coming to this well once again to quench her thirst. In this possible world, God implanted this desire within her human experience the moment He created beings within His image. Christ's tactic is incrementally moving the Samaritan woman little by little from a state of incognizance to a state of other worldly experience that she can presently enjoy—transworld experience (Chapter 6).

Remaining true to his Platonic upbringing, Augustine prefaces his sermon by challenging his listeners to pay attention even though he believes the truths with which he will pose are already resident within the inner light of their souls. Recalling this concept from Chapter 7,

⁶¹⁶ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 12.

Augustine believes that teachers and words (signs) merely point or “admonish” the seeker in the right direction. Harnessing the opportunity to subject this biblical narrative to his philosophical observations, he remarks to his congregation: “The things I am going to say, as the Lord allows, will be heard by many as something you recognize, rather than as something you need to learn. But your attention should not therefore be lazy because you will be recalling what you know rather than learning something you did not know.”⁶¹⁷ Acting as a guide, the authority proclaiming truths—especially truths of Scripture—can only draw out what is already present within the soul. Anything external to the soul accessible to the senses can only remind or admonish. Therefore, sensible things are not entirely useless; however, maintaining the proper perspective by understanding their limits is indispensable to discovering the truth. Hints of Augustine’s philosophical analysis are resident throughout his commentary. For instance, when the woman observes that Christ has nothing to draw water with (John 4:11), Augustine highlights the obstacle of her flesh to truly seeing for herself (Chapter 7): “While understanding him in a different sense, and thinking in terms of the flesh, she is in some way knocking on the door so that the master might open what was closed. Ignorance—not desire—was knocking; she was still worthy of compassion and not yet instruction.”⁶¹⁸ Stated previously, the mature Augustine becomes more open to the temporal usefulness of faith, which includes Scripture, the incarnate Christ, and words of trustworthy testimony from others, but it will serve the reader well to remain cognizant of these Platonic principles while encountering his Christological hermeneutics.

⁶¹⁷ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 1.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

Overcoming Limitations through Recontextualization

This brings us to our second question: How might God and humans labor to overcome these interactive limitations? Processing the rest of the conversation between Christ and the Samaritan woman through the Augustinian concept of expressionist semiotics introduced in Chapter 7 may yield greater understanding as to how to apply this Patristic Christological method. As stated in Chapter 7, synthesizing Cary's qualified view of Augustine's expressionist semiotics with Vanhoozer's understanding may supply even greater appreciation for Augustine's expressionist semiotics. Therefore, for this section, we will employ various forms of Vanhoozer's term—recontextualization for this Augustinian approach. Vanhoozer demonstrates how, over the course of time, later communication—in this case, the recontextualization of Jacob's well in light of the Incarnation—may come to express more fully what something means by permitting greater illumination without changing the original. Since the overall theme of this chapter has to do with human and divine limitations, how to overcome these limitations through recontextualization, and the results of overcoming them, the goal of this section will be to feature how recontextualization provides greater illumination without mutation. Recall in Chapter 7, Vanhoozer argues that recontextualization is an intrinsic characteristic of the relationship between the Testaments:

The Christian canon itself encourages the reader to recontextualize the content. Indeed, the very relation of Old Testament and New Testament is a case study in recontextualizing. The authors of the New Testament had to answer the question of what the Old Testament meant in light of the Christ event. However, when the New Testament recontextualized the Old Testament in light of Christ, it did not change its meaning but rather rendered its referent—God's gracious provision for Israel and the world—more specific. What is of continuing relevance across the two Testaments is God's promise to create a people for himself and the divine action that fulfills that promise. The promise that created Israel later came to be applied to the church. Hence, what God says to us today through the Old Testament, in the Spirit, is nothing other than the significance of

the text, its extended meaning.⁶¹⁹

Remember, Augustine's expressionist semiotics includes a sign, its referent, and the significance. Utilizing Augustine's illustration of the sun, Cary explained that the word "sun" is the sign and Vanhoozer explained how signs mediate between the referent—in this case the actual sun, and its significance—true, personal understanding that occurs in the mind of those who speak and hear the sound. By limiting the hermeneutics of recontextualization within the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, we can come to understand Christ as the referent, the understanding occurring in the mind of the Samaritan woman as the significance, and Jacob's well as the sign that mediates between the referent—Christ and the significance—understanding occurring in the mind of the woman.

Observe carefully how Christ leads the Samaritan woman toward living water by way of the water in Jacob's well. In response to Christ's offer of living water, the Samaritan woman asks Christ if he is greater than "our" father Jacob (John 4:12). Christ replies by contrasting the water in Jacob's well outside of the woman that satisfies for a time to His offer of a spring of water that will bubble up inside the one who drinks—a water that satisfies for all time (John 4:13-14). She, according to Augustine, seeks physical satisfaction, Christ is offering spiritual renewal, which she could not see: "How could it be any clearer that he was promising not visible but invisible water? How could it be any clearer that he was speaking not in terms of the flesh but in terms of the spirit?"⁶²⁰ Within this possible world, in order to overcome her transworld incognizance and impart transworld transformation, Christ is striving to work through the conduit of immaterial irregularities (Chapters 6 and 7). However, she was still succumbing to the fleshly limitation of

⁶¹⁹ Vanhoozer, 423.

⁶²⁰ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 14.

having her physical thirst satisfied. Augustine maintains, like a child, the Samaritan woman's soul, instead of leading is being led by her senses (Chapter 5):⁶²¹ "Time and again was she constrained to come to that well, and to carry the load which met her needs, to come back again when what she had drawn was finished. This was her daily toil, because the water assuaged that need, but it did not extinguish it."⁶²² The routine of the daily toil of fetching water from this well was good because it was the catalyst Christ used to take away her temporal satisfaction and turn her attention to better, other-worldly desires (Chapter 6). Therefore, a possible purpose of the temporary spur of this daily toil may have been for Christ to recontextualize her temporal need of well water to reveal her eternal need for living water.

From this point forward in Augustine's homily on this narrative, he begins relying more heavily upon the meaning beneath the surface. He moves from simile to allegory. Before discounting Augustine's use of allegory, consider his deep desire to answer the question, what is Christ ultimately trying to achieve through this conversation? Better still, what is the evangelist John trying to achieve by recalling this story in the life of Christ—the light of Truth?⁶²³ Some who have been trained in the grammatical-historical method may be alarmed by Augustine's allegorical methodology in this section. However, indispensable to understanding the application of a Patristic Christological method to biblical narrative requires a measure of exegetical empathy on the part of contemporary readers. By exercising a degree of epistemic humility and reviewing Chapters 4, 5, 7, and 8, it will become evident that even Augustine held the conviction that there exist hermeneutical limitations for interpreting a text of Scripture. Recalling the

⁶²¹ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 21.

⁶²² *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, 1.

synthesis of Patristic and modern exegesis in Chapter 6, we should be mindful of the major differences between the Patristic use of allegory and their post-Christian counterparts, according to Vanhoozer:

The debate about whether texts are determinate and subject to one ‘literal’ interpretation or indeterminate and subject to multiple ‘spiritual’ interpretations is hardly new. Indeed, in Jewish and early Christian exegesis, most interpreters took for granted that a biblical text had more than one sense. What is more, early Jewish and Christian thinkers, far from worrying about multiple meanings, actually seemed to revel in them. The ability to ascribe some meaning other than the obvious one was considered a necessary condition of the Bible’s relevance. The Bible itself reworks earlier texts in order to make them applicable to later situations: ‘As the rabbis, Augustine, and Luther knew, the Bible, despite its textual heterogeneity, can be read as a self-glossing book. There is a world of difference, however, between the older Christian allegorists and their newer, post-Christian counterparts. For while the early Christians did indeed find meanings beyond the letter, these meanings were usually limited in number and always subject to theological constraints.’⁶²⁴

Stated earlier in this chapter, Augustine affirms both the historicity within biblical narratives, as well as the spiritual significance. Throughout the course of his writings, Augustine strives for a balanced hermeneutic by employing both the literal and allegorical interpretation of Scripture (Chapter 5).⁶²⁵ However, perhaps in contrast to modern exegesis, Augustine spends less time upon what he believes to be “perfectly clear” in order to spend the bulk of his explanation upon “what is obscure.”⁶²⁶

⁶²⁴ Vanhoozer, 113.

⁶²⁵ In addition to Augustine’s affirmation of a literal paradise, the two wives of Abraham, and Moses striking an actual rock, seen previously within this chapter, later in *De civ. Dei* about the Flood he reveals his convictions regarding both the historical reality and allegorical meaning of Scripture: “No one should suppose, however, that the account of the flood was written without purpose; or that we should seek in it only historical truth without any allegorical meaning; or, conversely, that the events never actually took place and the words have only figurative meaning; or that, whatever else it may be, the account has no relation to prophecy about the Church. Only a twisted mind would claim that books preserved for thousands of years with such religious care and with such concern for their well-regulated transmission were written for no reason, or that we should see in them no more than bare historical events” (*De civ. Dei* XV, 27). For further research on this topic, Stump comments extensively upon some of the present concerns about limiting biblical interpretation strictly to the historical critical method (Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*, 30-34).

⁶²⁶ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 2.

Augustine, at this point in his commentary, analogizes the water in the well to every earthly pleasure that exists. He argues that Christ is trying to draw the woman's attention from the earthly pleasures that the well represents to something spiritual. Employing similitude, Augustine likens the bucket to lust and the well to the depths that one is willing to go in order to experience pleasure: "[W]hen anyone attains the pleasure of this world—that is food, drink, the baths, the stadium, intercourse—will he not get thirsty again?"⁶²⁷ Christ, therefore, in Augustine's estimation, is awakening the "understanding" of the Samaritan woman to a much higher good by initially frustrating and recontextualizing her mundane, sensual desire for water. Moving her along incrementally, Christ in the next step, to help her understand His true identity and to breed discontent with her present station in this earthly life, will exploit the temporary suffering she has experienced from broken relationships (Chapter 6). Relying upon an allegorical approach, Augustine—pleading with his congregation, "Concentrate your minds, then, so that you may understand"—begins to explain what Christ really means when he says to the woman, "Go, call your husband" (John 4:16):⁶²⁸

[S]eeing that the woman was not understanding and wanting her to do so, Jesus said, *Call your husband*. You do not know what I am talking about because your understanding is not present. I am talking with reference to the spirit, you are hearing with reference to the flesh. The things I am talking about have no relation to the pleasure of the ears, or to the eyes or the sense of smell, or to taste or touch. They are only grasped by the mind, only drunk in by the understanding. Your understanding is not here with you; how can you grasp what I am saying? *Call your husband*, bring your intelligence here.⁶²⁹

Augustine mentions the word "intelligence" twelve more times within the next four paragraphs.

True to his Christian Platonist presuppositions, Augustine recontextualizes the husband that

⁶²⁷ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 16.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 19.

Christ is telling the woman to go and call as the intelligent mind—“the soul’s husband.”⁶³⁰

According to Augustine in another commentary written near the time of this homily, the soul employs the five senses of the flesh—messengers to gather data, first to better understand its immediate environment and second to improve how to behave within its surroundings (Chapter 5). However, for Augustine, when it comes to understanding things beyond the physical realm, the soul must rely upon its God-given intelligence and reason (Chapter 5). To understand higher truths, for Augustine, a person must turn away from the immediate indications of the senses:

The soul therefore receives from these quasi-messengers [the five senses] information about any bodily things that are not hidden from it. So much, however, is it something entirely different itself, that when it wishes to understand either divine things, or God himself, or even quite simply to consider itself and its own powers and to come by something that is certainly true, it turns away from [the] light of the eyes. . . . to turn to . . . things it can only observe by intelligence and reason. . . .⁶³¹

The driving force, then, behind Augustine’s epistemology is that bodily things are powerless to guide the soul to intelligible truths, which is precisely why, for him, Christ is entreating the woman to call her intellect into the dialogue. Reason, through human intellect—the highest part of the soul, is the path by which individuals achieve intellectual vision in this world by way of momentary glimpses of divine Wisdom, which, according to Augustine, is the second person of the Trinity.⁶³² Augustine continues commenting upon “the soul’s husband” in this section by revealing the process by which all humans are enlightened by God: “[T]here is something in our soul which is called intelligence. This part of the soul, which is called intelligence and mind, is enlightened by a higher light; this higher light, by which the human mind is enlightened, is God. . . . That is the kind of light Christ was; that is the kind of light that was talking to the woman;

⁶³⁰ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 18.

⁶³¹ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis VII*, 14.

⁶³² Cary, 103.

and she was not there with her intelligence, which could be enlightened by that light. . . .”⁶³³

Therefore, Christ getting this woman to see God is an intellectual task—“the highest and inmost function of the soul”—aided by God’s grace whereby He is healing the natural capacity of her mind as it becomes more focused upon Him (Chapter 7). The Samaritan woman, by way of her own intellectual will—assisted by God—has to turn away from sensual things in order to receive enlightenment by a higher light (Chapter 8).

This is precisely why for Augustine—to Christ’s imperative—when the woman responded by saying, “‘I have no husband,’ [Christ] said to her, ‘You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband’” (John 4:17-18). Allegorically, Augustine remarks that other commentators equate these five husbands with the five books of Moses. Although he concedes that as a possibility, Augustine contends that it is easier to view these five husbands as the five senses of the body:

[I]t seems to me that it is easier for us to take the first five husbands of the soul as being the five senses of the body. As soon as anyone is born, you see, before they can use their reason, their actions are directed only by the senses of the flesh. . . . [The soul] wants whatever flatters these five senses [pleasure]; it shrinks from whatever offends them [pain]. . . . The soul lives according to these five senses as subject to five husbands because the soul is ruled by them.⁶³⁴

The Samaritan woman, still thinking according to the flesh, is completely submissive to her five husbands—the five senses. Her will is being directed by something lower—the five senses (Chapter 5); Christ is striving to direct her through something higher—her intelligence. Stated earlier, sensible things are not entirely useless, but, for Augustine, true progress toward the inner light occurs in the highest part of the mind—the intellect. As a Christian Platonist, external or bodily

⁶³³ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 19.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

things are sensorially perceived whereas true progress toward understanding the inner light occurs in the highest part of the immaterial soul or mind for Augustine. Augustine highlights his understanding of the role of the senses by emphasizing the importance of identifying the function of the mind without diminishing the purpose of the senses: “[It is important to] distinguish the things discerned by the mind from those perceived by the senses, neither depriving the senses of what they are able to do nor ascribing more to them than they are able to do”⁶³⁵ Seeing God, for Augustine, is a natural, not supernatural, process dependent upon the operation of grace whereby God helps the intellect turn from external things to the inner space of the soul.⁶³⁶ Cary suggests that for Augustine, this is a perfectly natural process—restoring the mind to its original design—pedagogically, rather than supernaturally driven (Chapter 7).⁶³⁷

As she enters her “years of discretion” what should happen, according to natural progression in Augustine’s view, is her devotion ought to turn to her true husband, which is an intelligence that is open to being enlightened by the higher light of Christ.⁶³⁸ Her intelligence should be the “head” above her soul and Christ should be the “head” above her intelligence. However, Augustine surmises that it is as if Christ, the head, which is above her intelligence, is present, but her intelligence (her “head”) is not present.⁶³⁹ What she needs and what follows the five husbands is a better husband. Augustine remarks: “[W]hat follows these five husbands in directing her is none other than her true, lawful husband, a better one than those, who will give her better direction, directing her toward eternity, training her for eternity, educating her for

⁶³⁵ *De civ. Dei* VIII, 7.

⁶³⁶ Cary, 101–102.

⁶³⁷ Cary, 102.

⁶³⁸ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 21.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*, 19. Augustine references 1 Cor 11:3 in this section.

eternity. These five senses, I mean to say, do not direct us toward eternity, but to seeking or shunning these things of time.”⁶⁴⁰ Therefore, as Augustine sees it, intelligence, which is part of the soul, should be directing the woman in a way that supersedes the infantile delights of the senses.⁶⁴¹ Unfortunately, the soul of the Samaritan woman, as long as it remains in a state of being commanded by the senses, is weak (Chapter 5).⁶⁴² At this point, it may be beneficial to remember one very important note from Chapter 8. In order to have an even better understanding of the place of intelligence within Augustine’s ontological hierarchy of the soul, remember that intelligence and will are not the same thing: “For Augustine, then, will and intellectual understanding are not the same thing. Nor does the latter automatically produce the former. One can know that something is true and right, yet resist it. . . . Just as Augustine believes it is possible to understand without willing rightly, he contends that it is possible to will rightly without understanding.”⁶⁴³ What she ought to do and what she actually does is a matter of the will. Certainly, the will can be influenced by intelligence, but for her will to cease taking significant cues from fleshly desires is no guarantee.

In this biblical narrative, God does not just prevent evil and suffering by waving the proverbial magic wand, which seems to be Hume’s hermeneutic for how a good God should respond to free will. Instead, employing what I am calling Augustine’s hypostatic hermeneutic, God works through everything at His creative disposal (Chapter 4). According to the biblical narrative, He authored creation, so apparently, if human authors are indeed “incarnate” in their

⁶⁴⁰ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 21. See also Chapter 8 for an explanation of how this concept corresponds to Augustine’s definitions of the will and of sin.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁴² Ibid., 21.

⁶⁴³ Komline, *Augustine on the Will*, 39-40. See also *Confessions* VIII, 7.

texts, then certainly a divine being can utilize everything he instituted including laws of nature and laws of human nature to overcome suffering through the recontextualization of His Word (Chapter 2). In a possible world like this narrative, if human authors are incarnate in their texts, the divine author can embody his message in human flesh (Chapter 2). Hume's approach, according to the God featured in this biblical narrative, is too simplistic. The God featured in this biblical narrative engages Himself in the complex work of employing nature and especially human nature—to include human communication—to overcome suffering. Hume's question paraphrased, "so why does evil exist if by the wave of a hand or the breath of a word God could end it?" is answered by Augustine in a way that God inserts Himself into the details of the story by becoming human, enduring all of the years of the rigorous development as a human being, all of the hardships, to descend upon one, lone Samaritan woman in order to engage in a human conversation with her. So, perhaps a better question is why the God of the universe would go to such great lengths as to identify a forgotten no-name woman who has experienced one broken relationship after another, schedule a divine appointment, and surprise her at a specific place and time during another mundane day of fetching water? He works through her limitations, her life choices, her intellect, to understand who He is and why He is there. Christ came not only to heal her brokenness but to demonstrate what a healthy relationship with God resembles through a man. Not just any man, but Christ—God made man (Chapter 3).

Another important point to remember before moving the commentary of Augustine about this conversation forward is that he believes that words from teachers—even a God-man—are signs that merely admonish or direct the seeker in the right direction.⁶⁴⁴ Anything external to the soul accessible to the senses can only remind or admonish. Therefore, true learning involves the

⁶⁴⁴ Cary, 96, 106–107.

Samaritan woman seeing things for herself (Chapter 7).⁶⁴⁵ What she needs, Augustine remarks, is intelligence—her true husband, open to the wisdom of Christ, that can guide and provide her with the discernment necessary to distinguish between good and evil, truth and error: “in order to love the one and shun the other; between charity and hatred, in order to live in the first and not in the second.”⁶⁴⁶ However, instead of inviting intelligence into the chamber of her “head” she is entertaining an adulterer—“the man you now have is not your husband” (John 4:18). According to Augustine, an imposter has taken the place of her true husband:

So then, after [the rule of] those five senses, that woman was still all off track, and error was playing with her. This error, though, was not a legitimate husband, but an adulterer. . . . The five senses of the flesh directed you at first; you reached the age for making use of reason, and you did not get as far as wisdom but fell into error. . . . And if he was not a husband, what was he but an adulterer? “So then, call not an adulterer but your husband, in order that you may grasp me with your intelligence, not from some false idea about me through error.” The woman, you see, was still in error, thinking about that water when the Lord was already talking about the Holy Spirit.⁶⁴⁷

Christ through words is incrementally moving the woman from a sensual soul to an intellectual soul open to and directed by wisdom from above. Through these signs he is admonishing her to turn away from her adulterer—a sensual driven soul to her true husband—intelligence infused with wisdom driven soul.

In the next frame of dialogue, Augustine begins to see the Samaritan woman’s true husband—intelligence coming into the conversation: “‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.’ ‘Woman,’ Jesus replied, ‘believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem’” (John 4:19-21).

⁶⁴⁵ Cary, 96.

⁶⁴⁶ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 21.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

When she recognizes that Christ is a prophet from His insight into her past, Augustine views this as an indication that her will, by way of her intellect, is beginning to turn her soul toward wisdom (Chapters 7 and 8): “The husband is beginning to come, he has not yet come completely. . . . [T]he woman is now not far off. . . . She is beginning to call the husband, to keep out the adulterer. . . . [A]nd she begins to question him about that which normally rouses her interest.”⁶⁴⁸ An interesting comparison, in light of Augustine’s comment “[the husband–her intellect] has not yet come completely,” can be made between the thinking of the Samaritan woman and the observations that Athanasius, Augustine, and Cyril made regarding Arian opponents faced in their time. Each of these men in their writings pursue flaws specifically located within the intellect of their Arian opponents by claiming that they were processing the language of Scripture through the lens of human relationships, thus placing anthropomorphic limitations upon the Godhead and restricting the correct view of the Incarnation–Christ’s true identity (Chapters 2-4). Interestingly, the woman, also processing the language of Scripture through the lens of human relationships, ignorantly seems to be placing anthropomorphic limitations upon the Godhead when she mentions the debate between the Jews and the Samaritans regarding the location of worship and restricting the correct view of the Incarnation–Christ’s true identity, when she limits his identity to a prophet.

Augustine’s solution to the Samaritan woman’s conflict over the location of worship is that both the Jews’ (the temple in Jerusalem) and the Samaritans’ (the mountain near Jacob’s well) failure to understand how to properly relate to God was an intellectual problem. Speaking on behalf of the Samaritans in response to the pride of the Jews over Solomon’s temple, Augustine utters that the ancestors of both the Jews and Samaritans did not even worship in the

⁶⁴⁸ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 23.

temple. The conflict lingers, according to Augustine, because both groups lacked intelligence: “Both were quarreling in ignorance, because neither of them had a husband [intelligence].”⁶⁴⁹ However, different from both her own people and the Jews, the Samaritan woman was able to move beyond simply recognizing Christ as a Jewish man to a prophet, according to Augustine, because she began listening with her husband—intelligence present.⁶⁵⁰ In reply to what Augustine identifies as “a question . . . which normally rouses [the woman’s] interest,” Christ answers:

You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth. ‘The woman said,’ I know that Messiah ‘(called Christ)’ is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us. ‘Then Jesus declared,’ I, the one speaking to you—I am he (John 4:22-26).

Christ responds by not simply recontextualizing the location of worship and how the people of God were to worship, but He also educates her regarding a primary ontological characteristic of God. Augustine comments that since God is spirit and not physical, He is not limited to a geographic location, which has cosmic implications for creatures engaged in the act of worship.⁶⁵¹

For Augustine, worship has less to do with the location of the body in relation to geography and more to do with the condition, or better yet the position of the intellectual soul in relation to God. Considering Augustine’s emphasis upon intellect—when she said, “I know that Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us,”—one has to imagine that for him the Samaritan woman made significantly more progress in the way of Wisdom—

⁶⁴⁹ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 23.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*

knowing the inner Truth (Chapter 7)—than his Arian opponents who had far more access to divine revelation by way of the passage of time and the completion of the canon of the New Testament than she. No doubt she was shown a tremendous act of revelatory grace by having an intimate encounter with the Son of God incarnate, but she advanced further by properly identifying the second person of the Trinity—the divine Intellect with less divine revelation (Chapter 7 and 8). What she had been taught about the Messiah from divine revelation that God incrementally deposited in time long before she came into existence (Chapters 2, 4, and 6), she put to good use. Christ, the Word made flesh, in conjunction with the revelation she is presently receiving from Him, is progressively increasing her understanding of the Scriptures by purifying the eyes of her heart, ultimately revealing His true identity (Chapter 7). Although she only has partial understanding, she is beginning to will rightly (Chapter 8).

Recall in Chapter 7, recontextualizing Israel’s initial enslavement and ultimate liberation to their own situation provides enslaved persons, according to McCaulley, the theological calibration necessary for a correct interpretation of Scripture. Stated differently, it is precisely the “social location” of the suffering, enslaved person that provides a unique perspective by which to identify the misappropriation of the teachings of white slave masters’ application of the Word of God.⁶⁵² Likewise, it is possibly the “social location” of the Samaritan woman suffering from five broken relationships that precipitated the daily toil of fetching water from Jacob’s well. The woman’s social location places her within proximity to the prophetic utterances of Christ near Jacob’s well and this provides a unique perspective by which to identify the Jewish and Samaritan misappropriation of the application of the Word of God. McCaulley writes, the Black ecclesial method, is dialogical in that it reveals how the relationship of communication between

⁶⁵² McCaulley, 17.

the Bible and the context (location) of Black Christianity is mutually beneficial: “[T]he dialogue goes both ways. If our experiences pose particular and unique questions to the Scriptures, then the Scriptures also pose unique questions to us. Although there are some experiences that are common to humanity, there are also some ways in which the Bible will pose particular challenges to African Americans.”⁶⁵³ In a strikingly similar way to the interactive nature of the Scriptures with the social location of African Americans, the Samaritan woman’s experience with Christ—the Word made flesh is also dialogical. Christ exploits her experiences by posing unique questions to the woman. She responds with unique questions of her own to Christ—the Word, which He then uses to present particular challenges to the Samaritan woman. Her social location is caused by her suffering, and her suffering provides a unique perspective by which to come to a correct understanding of Christ’s true identity through dialogue with the Word made flesh.

Results of Overcoming Interactive Limitations through Recontextualization

This brings us to our third and final question: What are the results of overcoming these interactive limitations through recontextualization for both God and man? Christ’s conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well in the Gospel of John and Augustine’s commentary upon this biblical narrative could be a clinic for recontextualization (Chapter 7). Featured in this dialogue, recontextualization highlights what the Old Testament meant in light of the Christ event. Beyond recontextualizing the Old in light of the New Testament, Augustine’s insights may possibly be an example of what Vanhoozer regards as an obligation for post-first century believers to recontextualize the meaning of Christ: “Just as Jesus Christ recontextualizes the

⁶⁵³ McCaulley, 20.

meaning of the Old Testament, so the church is called to recontextualize the meaning of Jesus Christ.”⁶⁵⁴ From the moment of their first encounter, Christ recontextualizes the cultural prohibition against Jewish interaction with Samaritans in the mind of the woman by asking her for a drink (4:7-9). Christ also recontextualizes the physical water in the well by using it as a sign rendering the referent of the “spring of water welling up to eternal life” more specific (4:10-14). Then Christ recontextualizes the absence of a husband in the life of the woman to render the referent of His identity more specific (4:16-19). In this exchange between the Word made flesh and the Samaritan woman, she begins recontextualizing the identity of Christ—by virtue of His words—from merely a Jewish male willing to drink from her Samaritan cup, to rendering His identity more specific as a prophet. In his commentary on this exchange, Augustine recontextualizes the words of Christ by identifying the husband Christ is calling as intelligence, and the five husbands of the Samaritan woman as her five senses. He views the husband as a sign rendering the referent—her intelligence more specific. Likewise, Augustine also views the five husbands as a sign rendering her focus, the referent of her five senses—either embracing pleasure or shunning pain—more specific. As the dialogue continues, Christ recontextualizes the referent—true worship of God—which must be done “in the Spirit and in truth,”—more specific through the places of worship—the temple in Jerusalem and the mountain in Samaria (4:20-24), which are signs that mediate between the referent and the clearer understanding in the mind of the woman (significance). To this, the Samaritan woman responds by recontextualizing the identity of Christ—again, by virtue of His words—from merely a Jewish male willing to drink from her Samaritan cup and a prophet, to rendering His identity more specific as Messiah—Christ, which Christ confirms (4:25-26).

⁶⁵⁴ Vanhoozer, 423.

Recontextualizing the Psalms, in addition to other Old Testament passages, Augustine begins seeing the lowly state of the Samaritan woman in connection with the types of seekers God reveals Himself. She needs not ascend to a high mountain to be closer to God but merely needs to provide a humble space within herself where He can commune with her heart.⁶⁵⁵ Quoting a series of Psalms and then launching into the New Testament, Augustine speaks on the necessity of humility in order to be heard by God:

He is near those who have crushed their hearts (Ps 33:19). What a wonderful thing; he dwells in the heights and draws near to the humble. . . . But you want to ascend? Ascend, by all means, but do not look for a mountain. *The mountains were in his heart*—says this psalm—in *the valley of weeping* (Ps 83:6-7). A valley is low-lying. So then, do everything within; and if perchance you are looking for some high place, some holy place, present the temple within you to God. *For the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are* (1 Cor 3:17). Do you want to pray in the temple? Pray in yourself. But first be a temple of God, because he will listen to anyone praying in his temple.⁶⁵⁶

She needs not to ascend to a high mountain to be closer to God but, with Christ, the higher light's assistance, merely needs to recontextualize her identity to become a temple where God can come and lodge. The trauma of suffering five broken relationships *in the valley of weeping*, or in Augustine's estimation, five senses driven by toil and need that never truly satisfy, may have been the preparation necessary for the Samaritan woman to admit her vulnerabilities and become a temple of God (Chapter 6). Opportunities, masked by the suffering she experienced by way of broken relationships and conflict with the Jews, may have provided the Samaritan woman the means to shape her character and with Christ's assistance participate in framing the ultimate destiny of her soul by overcoming incognizance (Chapter 6).

Augustine then shows how even the conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans can

⁶⁵⁵ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 25.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid. Note that the *LXX*'s, Augustine's preference when studying the Old Testament, numbering of chapters is different than the Hebrew manuscripts.

become an opportunity through Christ for healing. Like the divine nature united to the human nature in the one person Christ, given a divine binding agent, the Jews can be fused to the Gentiles into one body of people. According to Augustine, God through Christ has the ability to join things that are widely opposed to each other: “He credited the Jews with a great deal; but do not take the Samaritans as being rejected. Think of them as that wall to which another was joined, so that, reconciled in the cornerstone which is Christ, they might be bound together. One wall, you see, is from the Jews, one from the gentiles; these walls are a long way away from each other, until they are joined at the corner.”⁶⁵⁷ Augustine recontextualizes Christ as the cornerstone that can repair the breach between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Son of God—reconciling the human and divine natures within Himself (Chapters 3 and 4)—is not only the reconciliatory cornerstone for cultivating union between the Jews and Gentiles but also, as seen above, within fragmented individuals like the Samaritan woman. The second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, recontextualized His identity to become the Word made flesh so that the Samaritan woman, with His assistance, could recontextualize her identity to become a temple within which God could dwell, and the Jews and the Samaritans could recontextualize their identities in Christ to unite into one wall. For Augustine, therefore, within the possible world of this biblical narrative, the Incarnation (sign) recontextualized the Son of God, not changing His meaning but instead rendering the referent—the love of God for Israel and the world—more specifically in the minds of the types of seekers God reveals Himself (significance). Applicable beyond fragmented

⁶⁵⁷ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 26. This concept is further confirmed by Cyril of Alexandria, a contemporary of Augustine (Chapter 4). See also Beeley, 259. Bonner, according to Keating, notes recent discovery of correspondence between Augustine in the West and Cyril in the East in the Divjak letters, especially regarding Augustine’s influence upon Cyril in the Pelagian controversy (Keating, *The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria*, 228-229).

individuals, Jews, and Gentiles, Christ—God recontextualized in human flesh—may be the reconciliatory cornerstone for cultivating union within families, communities, regions, and nations within any possible world.

Approaching the end of Augustine’s commentary regarding the Samaritan woman, and viewing the dialogue through a Patristic Christological methodology, it becomes more clear how she is able to recontextualize the identity of Christ in her own mind—again, by virtue of His words—from merely a Jewish male willing to drink from her Samaritan cup and a prophet, to rendering His identity more specific as Messiah (4:25-26). Augustine notes that she was aware of an epistemological change that would occur upon the arrival of the advent of the Messiah. He continues by revealing that she has advanced beyond her initial understanding of simply identifying Christ as a prophet to someone who was ready to receive greater enlightenment:

[S]he saw that the man she was talking to was saying the kind of things that would be beyond a prophet. . . . “Right now the Jews,” she is saying, “are arguing in favor of the temple, while we here are arguing in favor of the mountain. When he has come, he will both spurn the mountain and overthrow the temple; he will teach us all we need to know in order to worship in spirit and truth.” She knew who would be able to teach her, but did not yet recognize him, already teaching her. So she was already worthy that he reveal himself to her.⁶⁵⁸

Augustine notes that her intelligence was now worthy of being enlightened by the higher light, which is Christ (Chapter 7). He argues that she is coming to the understanding that there would be no need to receive instruction on a mountain or in a temple when the Messiah comes. Christ recontextualizes worship in a way that permits individuals who have come—through recontextualization—to identify as temples to commune directly with God in the Spirit and in truth, culminating in a human will that is made good by participation in the Godhead (Chapter 8). Already in motion, Augustine views her understanding as progress made through a cognitive

⁶⁵⁸ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 27.

process evidenced by her declaration of Christ's true identity: "She has called her husband; her husband has become the head of the woman, Christ has become the head of the husband. The woman is already being guided in faith and directed toward living a good life."⁶⁵⁹ True to his Christian Platonist epistemology, the need for grace begins with the intellect, dependent upon the higher light, and expands outward to faith, mentioned here, which is concerned with external things like the words of Christ in this dialogue (Chapter 7).⁶⁶⁰ Although temporal, faith in the incarnate Christ is useful so long as individuals exploit it to rise from temporal to eternal things, which is precisely what the Samaritan woman does in this narrative.

Upon the return of the disciples (John 4:27), Augustine contends that the woman's entire focus had changed from temporal to eternal things (4:28). His reason for her change rests upon the moment Christ confirms that He is the Messiah. The Samaritan woman, according to Augustine, experiences regeneration through recontextualization the moment she submits her will to the divine light of Christ: "On hearing, *I am he, talking to you now*, and having received Christ the Lord in her heart, what else should she do but abandon the bucket and run off to evangelize? She threw away earthly passion and hurried off to proclaim truth. Let those who want to evangelize learn; let them abandon the bucket at the well. Remember what I said earlier about the bucket. . . ."⁶⁶¹ Through recontextualization, she became a temple for God to dwell within her and ran off to proclaim the truth, which is the essence of worshiping in the Spirit and in truth. Abandoning the pleasures of this world, she drops the bucket of lust and immediately

⁶⁵⁹ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 28.

⁶⁶⁰ Cary, 101.

⁶⁶¹ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 30.

heads into town to evangelize.⁶⁶² Having removed much of the interactive interference initially preventing her from understanding Christ, she now experiences an amplification of her relationship with God through regeneration, Augustine explains: “So she abandoned the bucket, which was now not useful, but just a burden; of course she eagerly desired to be filled with that other water. To proclaim Christ, her burden now left aside, *she ran to the town and told those people. . . . Come and see the man who has told me everything I have ever done. Could he be the Christ? They went out of the town and came to him*” (Jn 4:28-30).⁶⁶³ She not only experiences regeneration, but now, worshiping God in an even more personal and intimate way, enjoys an amplification of her entire being. Evidence for this amplification can be seen in her participation with the Godhead; she is now a living, breathing temple where the Spirit of the living God dwells. Animated by the Spirit instead of the senses, this Samaritan woman is compelled to offer everyone in town a drink, not from the temporal well of pleasure but from the fountain of water welling up to eternal life within her (Chapter 5).

In contrast to the disciples, the Samaritan woman’s enlightenment occurred incrementally. Upon their return, after the departure of the woman, the disciples began urging Christ to eat, to which he responded, “‘I have food to eat that you know nothing about.’ Then his disciples said to each other, ‘Could someone have brought him food?’” (John 4:31-33). Like the Samaritan woman regarding the water, the disciples initially misunderstood Christ’s reference to food. However, Augustine reveals an interesting distinction between the incremental approach Christ takes with the woman and his more direct approach with the disciples: “What is surprising about that woman’s failure to understand about the water? Look, the disciples did not yet

⁶⁶² Augustine, *Homily 15*, 16.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, 30.

understand about the food! He, though, heard their thoughts and now taught them as the master, not in a roundabout way, as with the woman whose husband he asked for, but quite plainly. *My food*, he said, *is to do the will of him who sent me* (Jn 4:34).⁶⁶⁴ Why the change in technique? First, indicated by Augustine's observation that Christ taught them as master, the disciples already received Christ as Lord in their hearts: their intelligence was already present. Second, perhaps the disciples were becoming more acute to Christ's habit of recontextualizing the physical realm to reveal spiritual truths. Augustine, plainly indicates the sign of the food, like the sign of the water mediates Christ's greater need to do the will of His Father: "So then, in terms of that woman, his drink was also that he should do the will of the one who had sent him. Therefore, he said, *I am thirsty; give me a drink* (Jn 19:28; 4:7), so that he might produce faith in her and drink her faith and make it part of his body; his body, you see, is the Church. So then, he said, *My food is to do the will of him who sent me*."⁶⁶⁵ Christ recontextualizes his food as the will of the Father and, Augustine, following Christ's lead, recontextualizes Christ's drink as the faith of His followers. Proclaiming the full counsel of Scripture in this homily, Augustine began with the church by drawing parallels between the forming of Eve from the side of Adam and the forming of the church, prefigured in the Samaritan woman, from the bleeding side of Christ on the cross and is now ending with the church, brilliantly including one of the last statements from the cross: *I am thirsty*.⁶⁶⁶ Augustine ties together Christ's thirst for the faith of the woman and Christ's thirst, voiced through the cry of the cross, for the faith of many more to come. Perhaps, reminiscing, in Christ's dying moment, he was thirsting to drink the kind of faith He experienced

⁶⁶⁴ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 30.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 8 & 10.

one day a few years earlier by Jacob's well.

Drinking the Samaritan woman's faith and making it part of His body is Augustine's way of revealing the mystery of the presence of the church within Christ and Christ within the church. Becoming a temple is the ultimate affirmation of the amplification of her faith, a body that Christ makes a part of His body. Commenting upon this idea in the last chapter of this Gospel, Augustine writes that amplification should be a cause for celebration in the life of the believer not just for becoming Christians but for becoming Christ:

Let us congratulate ourselves then and give thanks for having been made not only Christians but Christ. Do you understand, brothers and sisters, the grace of God upon us; do you grasp that? Be filled with wonder, rejoice and be glad; we have been made Christ. For, if he is the head, and we the members, then he and we are the whole man. . . . The fullness of Christ, then, is head and members. What is that, head and members? Christ and the Church. It would be pride, in fact, to claim this for ourselves, unless he had seen fit to promise it; he says through the [Apostle Paul], *Now you are the body of Christ and the members* (1 Cor 12:27).⁶⁶⁷

Previously stated in Chapter 4, Augustine demonstrates that salvation for humanity is inseparable from the divine Word becoming human, liberating His own flesh from the effects of the Fall, and raising It from the bonds of death.⁶⁶⁸ God, he writes, is the goal and human is the way for humanity to reach the deity.⁶⁶⁹ Augustine contends, as the Logos lifts His body and soul, He makes a way for all of humanity to be lifted: "Our enlightenment is to participate in the Word So God became a just man to intercede with God for sinful man. The sinner did not match the just, but man did match man. So he applied to us the similarity of his humanity to take away the

⁶⁶⁷ Augustine, *Homily 21*, 8. Becoming participants in the divine nature does not make humans equal to the Son of God or the Father, but rather believers in Christ, according to Maximus, will be like Him "except only (of course) for essential identity with him" (see 13n29). By making the previous statement, Maximus was qualifying that divinization provides the believer the transformation necessary to participate with the Godhead; however, that does not mean believers will enjoy the essential identity of Christ's position within the Trinity.

⁶⁶⁸ *De Trin.* XIII, 23.

⁶⁶⁹ *De civ. Dei* XI, 2.

dissimilarity of our iniquity, and becoming a partaker of our mortality he made us partakers of his divinity.”⁶⁷⁰ Augustine means to emphasize the process of recontextualization whereby believers become partakers of the divine nature.⁶⁷¹ For Augustine, Christ serves a mediatory role, not simply in the legal sense of intervention, but rather in an actual exchange whereby redeemed humans experience amplification through recontextualization by effectively participating in the Godhead of the Word.

Stated previously, we determined that there is great value in attending to many voices over many generations and many cultures in order to fully appreciate the meaning of a text (Chapter 7). Throughout his writings, Augustine affirms this concept as he does during this homily, especially in the final minutes, but he moves beyond merely understanding the text to application. Christ’s statement to his disciples about the ripeness of the harvest in this passage (John 4:35-38) becomes for Augustine an organic opportunity to historically bind the work of the patriarchs, the prophets, and the church together: “[The harvest] was already ripe, into which the apostles were sent, where the prophets [and patriarchs] had labored. All the same, brothers and sisters, notice what was said: *So that both the one who sows and the one who reaps may rejoice together*. Their labors were unequal, according the season; but they will share in the joy equally; they are going to receive the reward of life together.”⁶⁷² Speaking earlier about the church prefigured in the Samaritan woman, Augustine invites his listeners to place themselves in the position of the woman. The modern ear may simply interpret Augustine’s remark as a challenge to his flock to be empathetic toward the Samaritan woman. However, tracking Augustine’s

⁶⁷⁰ *De Trin.* IV, 4.

⁶⁷¹ 2 Pet 1:4.

⁶⁷² Augustine, *Homily 15*, 32.

Christology, it is more likely that he is endorsing an idea—through the concept of the body of Christ—taught by Ambrose his mentor:⁶⁷³

It is part of the symbolism of this episode that this woman, who was a type of the Church, came from a foreign people. In fact, the Church, a foreigner to the Jewish people, was going to come from the nations. So then, let us listen to ourselves in her and recognize ourselves in her, and in her give thanks to God for ourselves. She, after all, was a figure, not the true reality, and because she prefigured the reality, that is what she became. For she came to believe in the one who proposed her to us as a figure.⁶⁷⁴

For Augustine, each passage of Scripture is to be read considering God's message of creation and salvation as a living word communicated directly to current believers, which is evident within this homily. Tradition and Scripture are indistinguishable and represent the continual presence of Christ in the Church.⁶⁷⁵

The Samaritan woman's faith is also amplified through recontextualization in the last frame of the narrative. As a temple within which the Spirit of God dwells, testifying "step by step" how Christ revealed details about her life, she became a conduit through which the living

⁶⁷³ Space will not permit this concept to be handled in detail, however, Augustine here seems to be referencing a Platonic concept known as anamnesis, which can be connected to concepts presented in Chapter 7. For further study see Christine E. Wood, "Anamnesis and Allegory in Ambrose's *De sacramentis* and *De mysteriis*, in *The Bible and the Church Fathers*, 51-66. In this chapter, Wood explores the idea of anamnesis and allegory in the writings of Ambrose. Using the example of the Passover Seder, Wood demonstrates how that participants in the ceremony do not simply remember but actually presently participate in the past event. In the same way, the liturgy of the church mysteriously actualizes the appropriation of Christ's sacrifice presently in the life of the believer primarily through the Eucharist (Wood, 53, 61-62). This may be Augustine's intention as he exhorts parishioners to actually listen and recognize themselves in the Samaritan woman. See also Todd Breyfogle, "Memory and Imagination in Augustine's Confessions," *New Blackfriars* 75, no. 881 (1994): 210-23. Among a number of insightful remarks regarding this concept, Breyfogle, relying upon *Confessions*, addresses some of the Platonic influence upon Augustine that we covered in Chapters 5 and 7. For our purposes, writing about the cognitive limitations of humanity, Breyfogle notes that Augustine seems to limit time as a function of the memory of mind: "People, Augustine remarks in book XI, frequently speak of time in terms of past and future. But how can this be? Augustine asks. Things which have happened in the past have passed away and consequently no longer exist; things which will happen in the future do not yet exist. How then, Augustine queries, do we speak of past and future as though they exist? Augustine's answer is this: past and future exist only in the present by means of memory" (Breyfogle, 215-216).

⁶⁷⁴ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 10.

⁶⁷⁵ William S. Kurz, "Patristic Interpretation of Scripture within God's Story of Creation and Redemption," in *The Bible and the Church Fathers*, 40, 47.

water springing up to eternal life flowed into the lives of her townspeople.⁶⁷⁶ On her word many came to believe, but even more Samaritans believed upon seeing Christ for themselves in person and hearing his words (Chapter 7). Augustine joyously proclaims that working through the body of Christ—the church is God’s method through which He continues to work presently:

The woman first brought the news, and on her evidence the Samaritans came to believe, and they urged him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days, and more of them came to believe; and when they had come to believe, they said to the woman, *We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world.* First, by a report, afterwards by his presence. That is how it happens today with those who are outside and are not yet Christians; they are told about Christ by Christian friends; Christ was proclaimed through that woman, who was the Church proclaiming him; they come to Christ; they believe by her account . . . and many more believe in him, and more firmly too, since he truly is the savior of the world.⁶⁷⁷

Participating with the Godhead, the suffering of the Samaritan woman became a channel for Christ to reveal His true identity to even more people. The reconciliatory force of recontextualization—in this possible world—in some ways is even greater than the miracles of Christ within other biblical narratives because here the focus is repairing relationships. When people are estranged in the actual world, repairing a relationship can take years and there is no guarantee that the brokenness will ever be healed. However, in the dialogue with the Samaritan woman, her suffering caused by broken relationships heals over the course of a conversation, and within two days, Christ, a Jewish male, comes to be recognized—through recontextualization—as the Messiah by people who have been alienated for hundreds of years.

⁶⁷⁶ Augustine, *Homily 15*, 30.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

Final Thoughts

Part One: The Patristic View of the Incarnation

This project aimed to build a creative defense utilizing the Patristic view of the Incarnation by exploring the ontological implications of the Incarnation and the existential application of the Incarnation through biblical narratives—primarily Augustine’s interpretation of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4)—as the Patristics saw them. By using this approach in this narrative, we were able to glean some morally sufficient reasons (not necessarily actual reasons) in this possible world for God allowing suffering caused by broken relationships. Explicating why God possibly allows suffering caused by broken relationships in a possible world was achieved in three parts: Part One: Highlighting a commitment to biblical language, I provided a detailed explanation of the Patristic view of the Incarnation, which behaved as a hermeneutical ballast for Cyril of Alexandria, Athanasius, and Augustine. Next, we saw that the act of the Incarnation itself contains reconciliatory lessons that aid the Fathers in the development of Christological hermeneutics that aimed to follow the pattern or example of God’s method of expanding human understanding of the divine. Athanasius was compelled to use Nicene terminology; Augustine was compelled to use Greek philosophy. And, according to both men, Christ was compelled by grace to be constrained to the embodiment of humanity. If the Son of God could use human nature as a method to enlighten and restore humanity, then Athanasius (Chapter 3—Christological Anthropology), Augustine (Chapter 4—Christological Psychology and Chapter 5—Mind/Body Problem), and even Cyril (Chapter 2—Christological Epistemology) could use fallen human philosophy to correct what was still lacking in human understanding. Athanasius viewed the human body of Christ as the touchstone of his Christology because it is the locus of what is nearest to human existence. Progressing one ontological step

further, Augustine viewed the human soul of Christ as the touchstone of his Christology because it is the locus of what is mutually nearest to human and divine existence.

Part Two: Transworld Incognizance, Immaterial Irregularities, and Overcoming Suffering through the Incarnation

Part Two: Following the practices of Christ, Athanasius, Augustine, and even Cyril, I used the texts of these Patristic writers in conjunction with modern scholars to develop a foundation for a Patristic Christological method to analyze biblical narratives. I began constructing a method for building a defense by consolidating three questions that bear heavily upon God's ability to respond to the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships: 1. Why are higher-level freewill, sentient creatures unable to detect God acting in any world? Answering this question (Chapter 6) required a more thorough explanation of what I dubbed transworld incognizance (TWI). 2. How should higher-level freewill, sentient creatures expect God to act in any world should He decide to involve Himself in the fight against the problem of suffering? This question considered the conduit of immaterial irregularities (i.e. soul and mind) through which God could justifiably act should He decide to do so (Chapter 7). And finally, 3. precisely what should higher-level freewill, sentient creatures expect God acting in any world to resemble? Answering this question focused primarily upon the Incarnation—specifically regarding Christ's will—(Chapter 8) as God's means to act in categories detectable to higher-level freewill, sentient creatures in any possible world. I attempted to answer the question, to what extent is God able to intercept evil on behalf of higher-level freewill, sentient creatures? In agreement with Hume, I argued that a good God should be expected to run divine interference to rescue humans from their own proclivity to choose evil. He should be willing to intrude into any possible world where the prospect of evil and suffering is present. Additionally, we should expect a benevolent God to include within His creation a way to safeguard humanity should they

happen to choose evil. I argued that the Incarnation, featured within the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, might potentially be the morally sufficient means by which God intrudes into a world to alleviate the suffering of the woman highlighted in this narrative. As we saw in Chapter 6, Hume may be right in thinking that a perfectly good God should counteract the problem of evil and suffering in some way, but Plantinga's observations revealed to do so, God must behave within certain, self-imposed limitations that were set the moment creatures with moral competencies came into being.⁶⁷⁸ This caused me to wonder if the Incarnation featured within the story of the Samaritan woman at the well complied with such self-imposed limitations. Furthermore, we also determined that not to act within the framework of free moral creatures subject to natural laws would itself be a violation of justice because God would not only be guilty of expecting humans to behave in certain ways that they were never capable of in the first place, but He Himself would also demonstrate that these expectations were never able to be fully met apart from divine domination. The moment that God relies "exclusively" upon divine attributes, divorced from the context of natural laws and the subsequent consequences of free moral choices, to overcome the evil intentions of freewill creatures—Hume's demand—He demonstrates that Creation was engineered for human moral failure from the beginning.

However, acting within these limitations—natural laws and the subsequent consequences of free moral choices—God may be able to justifiably satisfy His own demands that He placed upon

⁶⁷⁸ Stated previously, according to Plantinga, there exists certain limitations upon God's character, person, and nature: "[N]ot even an omnipotent being can bring about logically impossible states of affairs or cause necessarily false propositions to be true" (Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 17). Augustine already came to this conclusion in his own writings: "[N]ot even [God] is more powerful than himself" (Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* IX, 17, 32; see also VI, 18, 29). Again, while writing about the omnipotence of God, Augustine offers specific examples of God's incapacity "to die or be mistaken." He then continues: "For he is called omnipotent in virtue of doing what he wills, not in virtue of having to suffer what he does not will. If anything like that should happen to him, he most certainly would not be omnipotent. But it is precisely because he is omnipotent that some things are not possible for him" (*De civ. Dei* V,10).

humanity from the beginning, as well as some of Hume's demands at the same time, while simultaneously enhancing the free will of creatures by aiding the process of their own cognitive growth and increasing their ability to personally identify and understand the reality of their choices and the Creator of their reality.

Part Three: Reconciliation, Recontextualization, and Amplification

Part Three: While mining the wealth of incarnational implications from the Patristic view of Christ's interaction with others within a biblical narrative—specifically by examining Augustine's commentary of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), it was demonstrated how that analyzing incarnational actions through a Patristic Christological method may potentially yield at least three morally sufficient reasons, among others, for God allowing suffering caused by broken relationships in this middle world: The first morally sufficient reason for God allowing suffering caused by broken relationships may be that suffering provides the activating transworld condition (ATC) necessary to make reconciliation possible. It was shown how that reconciliation in a possible world may not only demonstrate the extremes that God is willing to subject Himself in order to restore a broken relationship with humanity but may also require personal suffering on His part (i.e., human thirst). According to Plantinga, as previously stated, God may not be able to both create freewill agents and prevent them from choosing evil, but, in a possible world, He may be able to subject Himself to the consequences—suffering caused by the choices that humans make by renegotiating His identity—through recontextualization—especially if suffering is the coalescence of restoration. He can identify with humanity by becoming human thereby potentially sharing a deeper intimacy through the union of mortal suffering. Consequently, God engages humanity by teaching humans—the Samaritan woman in this case—that restoration of all human brokenness comes exclusively through the liberation of

His own mortal flesh from the effects of the Fall, ultimately restoring humanity by incorporating them into His body.⁶⁷⁹ The second morally sufficient reason for God allowing suffering caused by broken relationships may be that suffering provides the activating transworld condition (ATC) necessary to make transworld transformation possible. Transworld transformation—recontextualization was shown to occur once the Samaritan woman at the well responded favorably to Christ’s offer of restoration.⁶⁸⁰ As a result of being reconciled to Christ, the Samaritan woman received the “spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:10-14)—the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—and this ATC alleviated the suffering caused by her previous alienation from God by providing her the necessary catalyst whereby she, in this possible world, became a partaker of the divine nature. The Patristics refer to this process as theosis or divinization. Explained earlier, the Incarnation escorts believers to the very presence of God by way of the divinization—recontextualization achieved first through the body of the Son and ultimately experienced by believers so that humanity can participate in a relationship with the deity.⁶⁸¹ The third morally sufficient reason for God allowing suffering caused by broken

⁶⁷⁹ The divinization of Christ’s humanity would first undergo a process, in this middle world, whereby the Son would descend to the limitations of mortality and through the flesh by way of His divinity lift his humanity to the status of deity. This divinization for Christ’s human nature happens in two ways: First, since Christ did not preexist as a man, it happens immediately apart from any human merit of His own upon His conception (Chapter 8). Because the preexistence of Christ’s humanity is absent prior the Incarnation, He could do nothing earlier in His humanity to merit the grace by which His human nature was joined to the divine. And second, it happens through a process that both Athanasius and Augustine refer to as transcending His human nature by degrees (Chapters 3 and 4). In His body, He becomes the first fruits of a new man who completely participates within the Godhead (Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, 2.61, 65, 66, 70; *On Luke X.22 (Matt. XI. 27)*, 3).

⁶⁸⁰ Hypostatic cognitive empathy (HCE)—God’s ultimate way of empathizing with humanity by becoming human—may be the only way to provide a platform for deeper intimacy between the deity and humanity. However, an individual human response to the hypostatic extension of reconciliation is necessary before restoration can fully develop into a meaningful relationship. From a transworld perspective, it should be noted that a meaningful relationship with the deity may, for some, temporally incur an even greater degree of suffering for the individual respondent (Matt 5:11; Acts 9:16; Phil 3:10). Therefore, following the model of the Incarnation, true love transcends any personal harm to the self (Ps 15:4; See also 13n29 on how the process of divinization further explains intimacy with divinity may actually excite suffering in one’s humanity).

⁶⁸¹ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 54.3. This concept is thoroughly explained in Chapter 3.

relationships may be that suffering provides the activating transworld condition (ATC) necessary to make participation with the Godhead possible. Analogous to the Son of God becoming the first fruits of a new man who completely participates within the Godhead, so also participation with the Godhead is made available to believers, in this case the Samaritan woman at the well. God equipped her in this possible world to participate with Him in the process of restoring others—her townspeople; Christ accomplished this by commissioning the woman as His minister of reconciliation.⁶⁸² In this possible world, God achieved this through the Holy Spirit by creating space within the Samaritan woman that was, according to Augustine, previously consumed with the five senses driven by toil and need that never truly satisfy (Chapter 5). Once she entered this holy reconciliatory communion through faith (regeneration), she gained access to divine power, made possible through the humble act of the Son of God recontextualizing Himself by becoming man, which authorized the Samaritan woman to cooperate with Christ in the process of reconciling others to Himself. Allowing humans to become partakers of the divine nature provides space within the individual to make room for reconciling others through a divine concept known as self-donation.⁶⁸³ Amplification through regeneration offers a fuller, more

⁶⁸² 2 Cor 5:16-20.

⁶⁸³ Volf commenting on the twin ideas of “self-giving” and “mutual indwelling” that make communion possible within the Trinity and between the Godhead and humanity writes the following: “[T]he self-giving is a way in which each divine person seeks the ‘glory’ of the others and makes space in itself for the others. . . . Can such complex identity that rests on the twin notions of ‘self-giving’ and ‘mutual indwelling’ be brought from heaven down to earth? In a sense, this ‘bringing down’ is the goal of the whole history of salvation: God came into the world so as to make human beings, created in the image of God, live with one another and with God in the kind of communion in which divine persons live with one another.” Volf acknowledges that this particular concept is referred to as perichoresis, which was originally explained by John of Damascus: “John of Damascus writes, ‘For . . . they are made one not so as to commingle, but so as to cleave to each other, and they have their being in each other without any coalescence or commingling,’” (Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1996), 180-181)). From the standpoint of self-donation, God in Christ desires full restoration of individuals; however, according to Volf, this can only take place for those who allow themselves to be “guided by the narrative of the triune God”: “[R]econciliation with the other will succeed only if the self, guided by the narrative of the triune God, is ready to receive the other into itself and undertake a re-adjustment of its identity in light of the other’s alterity (Chapters 7 and 9). The idea of ‘re-adjustment’ may suggest equal acceptability of all identities and a symmetry of power between them. But to

intimate relationship between God and humans, which is a principal feature of the interaction between Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well.

A Foundation for Future Work

Christ, in His dialogue with the Samaritan woman at the well, may teach us that suffering from broken relationships, and suffering in general is yet another sign pointing to the greatest need of the human soul. The sign of suffering renders the referent Christ more specific in the bodies and minds of higher-level freewill, sentient creatures (significance). For this reason, suffering caused by broken relationships may need to be recontextualized to see God's purpose more clearly. Perhaps, as a defense, the Patristic view of the Incarnation within this biblical narrative not only provides morally sufficient reasons for the problem of suffering caused by broken relationships, but also provides a foundation for future analysis of other biblical narratives utilizing the Patristic Christological method. Perhaps Christ's dialogues with others—like Peter (John 21:15-25) and Paul (Acts 9:1-31), to name a few, within biblical narratives may not only yield further morally sufficient reasons for suffering caused by broken relationships but also render the intimate activities of Christ, specifically His reconciliatory role, more specific in the minds of higher-level freewill, sentient creatures, demonstrating that in the possible world within biblical narratives God indeed involves Himself in the fight against suffering caused by broken relationships.

assume such universal acceptability and symmetry as givens would be to fall captive to a pernicious ideology” (Volf, 110).

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