

**St Augustine's *Confessiones*:
the role of the *imago Dei* in his
conversion to Catholic Christianity**

by
André Roos

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Philosophy in Ancient Cultures



at

Stellenbosch University

Supervisor:
Dr Annemaré Kotzé

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Department of Ancient Studies

March 2011

DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: 1 November 2010

ABSTRACT

Although St Augustine of Hippo (354–430 C.E.) was raised as a Christian, he refuted Catholicism as a youth in his search for divine wisdom and truth. Like the biblical prodigal son, he first had to realise the error of his aversion (turning away from the Catholic Church) before he could experience conversion (returning to the Catholic faith). Augustine narrates certain central events of his life in the *Confessiones* as a series of conversions, leading him from his native Roman North Africa to his conversion to Catholic Christianity in the Imperial City of Milan. Philosophy, especially Neo-Platonic thought, played a crucial role in his conversion process, as did the influence of St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, and other Neo-Platonic intellectuals in Milan. Neo-Platonism also influenced Augustine's conception of the *imago Dei* (image of God).

Although Augustine's teaching of the concept of the *imago Dei* is found in all his works (but mainly in *De Trinitate*), a survey of the literature has shown that the way in which this concept is used to inform, structure and advance his conversion narrative in the *Confessions*, has not yet been investigated in a structured manner. In order to address this gap in scholarly knowledge, the thesis attempts to answer the following research question: How did the concept of the *imago Dei* inform and structure Augustine's conversion narrative, as recounted in his *Confessiones*, taking into account the theological and philosophical influences of Ambrose and the Neo-Platonists of Milan on his spiritual development?

The investigation was conducted by an in-depth study and analysis of the *Confessiones* and relevant secondary literature within the historical, philosophical and religious framework of the work. An empirical approach, by means of textual analysis and hermeneutics, was used to answer the research question. The analysis of the *Confessions* is limited to its autobiographical part (Books 1 to 9). In order to carry out the analysis, a theoretical and conceptual framework was posited in Chapters 1 to 4,

discussing the key concepts of *conversion* and of the *imago Dei*, as well as explaining the influence of Neo-Platonism and Ambrose on Augustine. In Chapter 5, this conceptual framework of the nature of the *imago Dei* is complemented by a literary framework for the *Confessions* to form a meta-framework. The textual analysis was done within the meta-framework with reference to certain endowments (attributes) imprinted in the image, namely *personality, spirituality, rationality, morality, authority, and creativity*.

The main conclusion is that Augustine's personal relationship with God had been harmed by the negative impact of sin on these endowments of the divine image in him. His gradual realisation that God is Spirit, his growth in faith, and his eventual acceptance of the authority of Scripture and of the Catholic Church, brought about the healing of the broken image of God in Augustine and also the restoration of God's likeness in him. This enabled Augustine to be reconciled to God through Christ, who is the perfect Image of God, and helped to convert him to the Catholic Church, which is the Body of Christ.

OPSOMMING

Alhoewel die Heilige Augustinus, Biskop van Hippo (354–430 n.C.), as Christen grootgemaak is, het hy as jong man die Katolisisme verwerp in sy soektog na goddelike wysheid en waarheid. Soos die verlore seun van die Bybel, moes hy eers die fout van sy afkerigheid (wegdraai van die Katolieke Kerk) insien voordat hy tot bekering (terugkeer tot die Katolieke geloof) kon kom. Augustine vertel sekere kernegebeure van sy lewe in die *Confessiones* (*Belydenisse*) as 'n reeks van bekeringe, wat hom gelei het van sy geboorteplek in Romeins-Noord-Afrika tot sy bekering tot die Katolieke Christendom in die Keiserstad Milaan. Filosofie, veral Neo-Platoniese denke, het 'n deurslaggewende rol gespeel in sy bekeringsproses, soos ook die invloed van die Heilige Ambrosius, Biskop van Milaan, en ander Neo-Platoniese intellektuele in Milaan. Neo-Platonisme het ook Augustine se begrip van die *imago Dei* (Godsbeeld) beïnvloed.

Alhoewel Augustinus se leer oor die begrip *imago Dei* in al sy werke aangetref word (maar veral in *De Trinitate*), het 'n literatuurstudie uitgewys dat die manier waarop hierdie begrip gebruik word om sy bekeringsverhaal in die *Confessions* toe te lig, vorm te gee en te bevorder, nog nie op gestruktureerde wyse ondersoek is nie. Om hierdie leemte in vakkundige kennis te vul, poog hierdie tesis om die volgende navorsingsvraag te beantwoord: Hoe het die begrip *imago Dei* Augustinus se bekeringsverhaal toegelig en vorm gegee, soos vertel in sy *Confessiones*, met inagneming van die teologiese en filosofiese invloede van Ambrosius en die Neo-Platoniste van Milaan op sy geestelike ontwikkeling?

Die ondersoek is uitgevoer deur middel van 'n grondige studie en ontleding van die *Confessiones* en toepaslike sekondêre literatuur binne die historiese, filosofiese en godsdienste raamwerk van die werk. 'n Empiriese benadering, by wyse van teksontleding en hermeneutika, is gebruik om die navorsingsvraag te beantwoord. Die ontleding van die *Confessiones* is beperk tot die outobiografiese deel (Boeke 1 tot 9). Om die ontleding uit te

voer, is 'n teoretiese en konseptuele raamwerk vooropgestel in Hoofstukke 1 tot 4, waar die sleutelbegrippe *bekering* en *imago Dei* bespreek is, asook die invloed van Neo-Platonisme en Ambrosius op Augustinus. In Hoofstuk 5 word hierdie konseptuele raamwerk vir die aard van die *imago Dei* aangevul deur 'n literêre raamwerk vir die *Confessions* om sodoende 'n metaraamwerk te vorm. Die teksontleding is gedoen binne die metaraamwerk met verwysing na sekere geestesgawes (eienskappe) wat in die beeld neerslag vind, naamlik *persoonlikheid*, *spiritualiteit*, *rasionaliteit*, *moraliteit*, *outoriteit*, en *kreatiwiteit*.

Die hoofgevoltrekking is dat Augustinus se persoonlike verhouding met God geskaad is deur die negatiewe impak van sonde op hierdie geestesgawes van die Godsbeeld in hom. Sy geleidelike besef dat God Gees is, sy groei in sy geloof, asook sy uiteindelijke aanvaarding van die gesag van die Bybel en van die Katolieke Kerk, het meegebring dat Augustinus se gebroke Godsbeeld en -gelykenis herstel is. Daardeur is Augustinus met God versoen deur Christus, wat die volmaakte Godsbeeld is, en sodoende is hy bekeer tot die Katolieke Kerk, wat die Liggaam van Christus is.

Soli Deo Gloria

“You are great, Lord, and highly to be praised Ps. 47:2): great is your power and your wisdom is immeasurable’ (Ps.146:5)...to praise you is the desire of man, a little piece of your creation. You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” (*Conf.* 1.i.1)

To my parents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Declaration	ii
	Abstract	iii
	<i>Opsomming</i>	v
	INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1	THE CONCEPT OF CONVERSION	5
1.1	Introduction	5
1.2	Late Antiquity as the age of spirituality	7
1.3	Conversion from a theological and biblical perspective	8
1.4	Conversion to religion	11
1.4.1	The pagan view	11
1.4.2	Adhesion and conversion	12
1.4.3	Conversion to the Christian faith	13
1.5	Conversion from the perspective of philosophical literature and the works of Augustine	16
1.6	Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity	17
1.6.1	The <i>Confessiones</i> as autobiography of a convert	17
1.6.2	Some major elements of Augustine's conversion process	20
1.6.3	Augustine's mature views on conversion	23

1.7	Conversion and the <i>imago Dei</i>	26
1.8	Conclusion	26
CHAPTER 2	THE CONCEPT OF THE <i>IMAGO DEI</i>	28
2.1	Introduction	28
2.2	The <i>imago Dei</i> in the Old Testament	28
2.2.1	Origin of the terms “image” and “likeness”	28
2.2.2	The creation account in Genesis	30
2.2.2.1	The Priestly tradition	31
2.2.2.2	The Yahwist tradition	33
2.2.3	Man’s relationship with a personal God and fellow human beings	34
2.3	The <i>imago Dei</i> in the New Testament	35
2.3.1	The completion and fulfillment of the <i>imago Dei</i>	35
2.3.2	The terms “image” and “likeness” in the New Testament	35
2.3.3	The new humanity ushered in by Jesus Christ through a renewed humanity	36
2.3.4	Jesus, the perfect image, reflecting the glory of God	38
2.3.5	Man’s spiritual renewal in Christ	39
2.3.6	Conclusion	40

2.4	Patristic views on the <i>imago Dei</i>	40
2.4.1	The Schools of Antioch and Alexandria	41
2.4.2	St Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon	41
2.5	Augustine's development of the concept of the <i>imago Dei</i>	43
2.5.1	Introduction	43
2.5.2	"Image" and "likeness" in Augustine's works	43
2.5.3	The structure of the soul as image of God	45
2.5.4	The power or endowment of God's image in man	46
2.5.4.1	The endowment of <i>personality</i>	47
2.5.4.2	The endowment of <i>spirituality</i>	47
2.5.4.3	The endowment of <i>rationality</i>	48
2.5.4.4	The endowment of <i>morality</i>	49
2.5.4.5	The endowment of <i>authority</i>	50
2.5.4.6	The endowment of <i>creativity</i>	50
2.5.4.7	Conclusion	51
2.5.5	Neo-Platonic influence on Augustine's conception of the <i>imago Dei</i>	51
2.5.5.1	Introduction	51
2.5.5.2	Image, likeness, and hypostasis	52
2.5.5.3	Conversion and the image	53
2.5.5.4	Restoration of the image	53
2.6	Conclusion	55

CHAPTER 3	THE PHILOSOPHY OF NEO-PLATONISM	57
3.1	Introduction	57
3.2	Pythagoreanism	58
3.3	Platonism	59
3.4	Middle Platonism	61
3.5	Neo-Platonism	62
3.5.1	Introduction	62
3.5.2	Plotinus, the <i>Enneads</i> , and clarification of Plato's philosophy	63
3.5.3	Spiritual concept of reality	66
3.5.4	Procession, contemplation and creation	66
3.5.5	The metaphysical concept of the One	68
3.5.6	The ordering of reality	69
3.5.7	Soul and intellect	70
3.5.8	Platonism, Neo-Platonism and Christian philosophy	71
3.6	Conclusion	73

CHAPTER 4	THE MILAN PERIOD: ST AMBROSE AND CHRISTIAN NEO-PLATONISM	75
4.1	Introduction	75
4.2	St Ambrose and the Church of Milan	75
4.3	Ambrose's Neo-Platonic philosophy and sermons	77
4.4	Ambrose's pastoral role and Scriptural exegesis	79
4.5	The circle of Christian Neo-Platonists at Milan	81
4.6	The <i>libri platoniorum</i>	83
4.7	Augustine and Neo-Platonism	85
4.8	Conclusion	88
CHAPTER 5	THE <i>IMAGO DEI</i> IN THE <i>CONFESSIONES</i>	90
5.1	Introduction	90
5.2	Conceptual framework of the nature of the <i>imago Dei</i>	92
5.3	Literary framework that complements the conceptual framework of the nature of the <i>imago Dei</i>	100

5.4	Textual analysis according to the six endowments of the divine image in man	102
5.4.1	Introduction	102
5.4.2	The endowment of <i>personality</i>	103
5.4.3	The endowment of <i>spirituality</i>	108
5.4.4	The endowment of <i>rationality</i>	114
5.4.5	The endowment of <i>morality</i>	120
5.4.6	The endowment of <i>authority</i>	126
5.4.7	The endowment of <i>creativity</i>	130
5.5	Conclusion	135
CHAPTER 6	CONCLUSION	138
	LIST OF REFERENCES CITED	145

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of the *imago Dei* (image of God) in St Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity, as it features in his conversion narrative, the *Confessiones*. The investigation is done within the context of the theological and philosophical influences of St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, and the Christian Neo-Platonic circle in Milan on Augustine's intellectual, spiritual, and moral development. Although Augustine's teachings on the *imago Dei* are found in all his works (but mainly the *De Trinitate*) (Clark 1999:440), a survey of the literature has shown that the role of the *imago Dei* in his conversion, as it is treated in the *Confessiones*, has not been investigated in a structured manner.

I devote the first four chapters of the thesis to provide a theoretical basis for investigating the research problem. In the penultimate chapter, Chapter 5, I then formulate a meta-framework pertaining to the nature of the *imago Dei* and the literary structure of the *Confessiones* within which to analyse the role of the *imago Dei* in Augustine's conversion. I conclude the thesis with my findings in Chapter 6.

Chapter 1 examines the concept of *conversion* to come to an understanding of what Augustine's conversion journey entailed. Although Augustine had a devout Christian mother, St Monica, as a youth he rejected Catholicism in his search for divine wisdom and truth. Like the prodigal son, he first had to realise the error of his *aversion* (turning away from the Catholic church) before he could experience *conversion* (returning to the Catholic faith), according to Oroz Reta (1999:241). Augustine narrates certain central events of his life in *Confessiones* as a series of conversions, leading to his ultimate conversion to Catholic Christianity in Milan, as Van Fleteren (1999:229–231) points out, under the influences of St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, and the intellectual circle of Christian Neo-Platonists.

Oroz Reta (1999:239) observes that the noun *conversio* and the verb *convertere* both refer to “the act of returning or becoming, the effect of a change, whether in a spiritual or a material sense”. This change has the specific connotation of thinking and acting differently, inwardly as well as outwardly. Conversion entails the turning away from a sense that something is wrong, towards a positive ideal (Nock 1998:8). Oroz Reta (1999:240–241) maintains that Augustine defined conversion as the “decision and the total commitment of a life surrendered to God”, brought about by grace and divine mercy. His conversion process describes a soul’s journey towards God, marked by different turning points in his life. Hawkins (1985:20–22) distinguishes between a gradual and a crisis conversion. I contend, however, that Augustine’s conversion journey consisted of repeated incidences of conversion and that it was therefore a gradual process. In the New Testament, *conversion* refers in the first instance to man turning to God, who had revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, as remarked by Zumstein (1998:1231–1232).

In Chapter 2, I investigate the concept of the *imago Dei* with a view to establishing the nature of the image and how it was interpreted by the early Church Fathers in the context of both the Old and New Testaments. Augustine developed the three main theological interpretations of the image posited by the Church Fathers and formed his own conception of the nature of the *imago Dei*, discerning that the image had a divine power or endowment. Augustine’s teachings on the *imago Dei* originated from Gen.1:26, where man and woman are described as having been created in the image of God (Clark 1999:440). As further noted by Clark (1999:440–441), Augustine taught in an early work, *De Genesi ad litteram* (written in 393 C.E.), that God’s image in man had been lost through sin in Paradise, since Adam and Eve could no longer contemplate God, but later conceded that man could regain the image of God. Duffy (1999:28) holds that God’s image and likeness in humans was deformed through the Fall and had to be *reformed* by advancing closer to God. In his post-*Confessiones* work *De Trinitate* (written between 399 and 419 C.E.), the chief source for his teaching on the *imago Dei*, Augustine would

conclude that the true image of the Trinitarian God was the “dynamic remembering, knowing, and loving of God, with the mind as capacity for these activities”, according to Clark (1999:440). The human being, Augustine argued, was an imperfect image of God, who was at once the origin, example, and destiny of man. Clark (1999:441) observes that man had to perfect this image by becoming more like God through living virtuously and increasing his wisdom through love and by obeying God’s will.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I respectively discuss the theological and philosophical influence of Neo-Platonism and Ambrose on Augustine’s understanding of what the *imago Dei* entails. The teachings of Neo-Platonism and the sermons of Ambrose were decisive in helping Augustine to come to the understanding that God and the soul are spiritual and not material, and that Scripture could be interpreted allegorically. Clark (1999:440) maintains that Ambrose’s sermons, which dealt with Neo-Platonist themes such as free will and the spiritual nature of God, taught Augustine that *image* referred to the soul, not the body. In Milan, Augustine was introduced to the *libri Platoniorum* of various authors, including the *Enneads* of Plotinus and works by Porphyry. Augustine, according to Clark (1999:441) agreed with Plotinus that the image constantly strove to return to its origin; however, whereas Plotinus thought that the *nous* (the supreme reasoning part of the soul) was not a perfect image of the One, Augustine learnt from the Bible that Jesus, the Son, was indeed a perfect image of the Father.

Augustine further taught that knowledge of the self, as the image of God, was needed to attain a true knowledge of God, which was a prerequisite for man’s return to God (Clark 1999:441). Plotinus and Porphyry also treated the theme of the soul’s fall and return to God (Van Fleteren 1999:228). This return was a continuous journey of the soul to God and proceeded from love of God and fellow man (Clark 1999:441). The image would be perfected only in heaven when man finally obtained a beatific vision of God (Clark 1999:441). It is this journey that Augustine traces in his *Confessiones* in striving to perfect his

image in God, which is attained through progressive conversion, by turning more and more to God (Duffy 1999:28).

In Chapter 5, I analyse Books 1 to 9 of the *Confessiones* to establish how the role of the *imago Dei* features in the conversion narrative. Taking into account the conceptual framework of the nature of the *imago Dei* (based on Chapters 2 to 4) as supplemented by the literary framework (based on McMahon (1989)), both of which I posit in this chapter, I then proceed to analyse the text to ascertain the role of the image. The analysis is structured around the six endowments of God's image of man, namely, *personality*, *spirituality*, *rationality*, *morality*, *authority*, and *creativity*, as developed by Hughes (1989:51–64) from Augustine's concept of the divine power or endowment present in the image imprinted in man.

In Chapter 6, I present my findings of the analysis, and conclude that the concept of the *imago Dei* and its divine power with its various attributes gave Augustine new insight into man's personal and spiritual relationship with God and how to attain to Him by repenting of sin. By submitting to the will of God, obeying His moral laws, and using his creative energies to the praise and glory of God, the broken image in man could be healed. The likeness to God is restored through the *Logos*, Jesus Christ. The Son is the perfect Image of God and as such the Mediator and Redeemer of man.

CHAPTER 1

THE CONCEPT OF CONVERSION

...‘My son, as for myself, I now find no pleasure in this life. ... My hope in this world is already fulfilled. The one reason why I wanted to stay longer in this life was my desire to see you a Catholic Christian before I die.’ (*Conf.* 9.x.26)¹

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The conversion narrative of Augustine, as recounted in his *Confessiones*, is one of the best known in the history of the Church in the Latin West. Indeed, its fame spread throughout the Roman Empire of the fourth century C.E. and beyond, and this unique work has had a special interest for Augustinian scholars up to the present day. The spiritual pilgrimage of one of the Doctors of the Catholic Church² has resonated with readers of the *Confessiones* throughout the centuries and is one of the great classics of early Christian literature. It has a timeless message of returning to the Truth of Christ in order to find spiritual meaning and fulfillment in this life, and to be delivered from sin and saved by the grace of God. Augustine’s return to the Catholic faith of his childhood and his mother Monica profoundly influenced his life and world-view, as reflected in the *Confessiones* and other works of his.

¹ All quotes from the *Confessions* are from Henry Chadwick’s English translation (Chadwick 1991).

² According to Rausch (2005:138–139), the adjective “catholic” is derived from the Greek *katholikos*, from *kath’ holon*, meaning “according to the whole.” In Col. 1:24–27 and Eph. 2:16–22, a universal sense was already attributed to the Church as the one body of Christ, where no distinction was made between Jews and Gentiles. The term was probably first used in an ecclesial sense by Ignatius of Antioch ca. 110 C.E. in his letter to the Smyrnaeans (8:2): “Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be; even as where Jesus may be, there is the universal [*katholikē*] church.”

Rausch (2005:140) distinguishes three meanings of the word “catholic.” It refers to (a) the fullness or totality of the Church, which includes everyone reconciled in Christ and united in the Holy Spirit; (b) the universal presence of the Church in a geographical sense; and (c) the one, true Church as set apart from heretical and schismatic sects, a meaning also subscribed to by Augustine. Gaillardetz (2006:60) points out that Augustine also used this term with reference to the various local Christian churches scattered over the then known world, but still in communion with each other.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the most important aspects of the concept of conversion in order to serve as point of departure, within a theological, biblical and philosophical framework, in order to answer the research question: What was the role of the *imago Dei* in Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity, as narrated in the *Confessiones*? Similarly, Chapters 2, 3 and 4, dealing respectively with the concept of the *imago Dei*, the philosophy of Neo-Platonism, and the theology of St Ambrose (Bishop of Milan) and the influence of the Milanese Christian Neo-Platonists, are not meant as exhaustive studies on these topics. Their purpose is to serve as theoretical basis for a conceptual framework of the nature of the *imago Dei*, which will be used for the textual analysis in Chapter 5 of this study.

In order to provide a wider perspective on Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity, this chapter starts with a brief description of the turbulent political and religious circumstances that characterised the period when the *Confessiones* was written. I then attempt to define *conversion* from a theological and biblical perspective, leading on to a discussion of conversion to religion in general and to Christianity in particular. That is followed by a discussion of conversion from the perspective of philosophical³ and Augustinian literature, to help explain the subsequent section, which deals with Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity specifically. I will discuss his return to the Catholic Church by focusing on three aspects: the *Confessiones* as autobiography of a convert; certain major elements in his conversion process; and his mature views on conversion. I will conclude the chapter with a brief explanation of the relation between conversion to Christianity and the concept of the *imago Dei*, to serve as link with Chapter 2 on the image of God.

³ See, for example, the article by Leo Sweeney (1990) for a detailed discussion on whether Augustine was converted to Neo-Platonism, Christianity, or both.

1.2 LATE ANTIQUITY AS THE AGE OF SPIRITUALITY

During the period of Late Antiquity⁴, often called the age of anxiety and spirituality, Christians were persecuted because the emperors believed that Christianity led to the neglect of the Roman gods, incurring their displeasure, and consequently compromised the security of the Empire⁵. During this period in Antiquity, religious questions began to dominate both pagan and Christian cultures⁶ and Christians living in the Mediterranean and Near East experienced numerous political, cultural and social changes that resulted in new ways of thinking, according to Ehrman (2004:1). As Ehrman (2004:1) also points out, the conversion of Constantine in 312 C.E. at the Milvian Bridge in Rome caused a religious revolution by legitimising the Christian faith, which then spread through the later Roman Empire and radically changed the way Christians saw themselves.

Cameron (1993:3, 11) surmises that people, during this tumultuous period of constant warfare and other anxieties, could have turned to religion, including Christianity, as a means of comfort or escape, resulting in an age of spirituality. Burton-Christie (1993:48) argues that the search for God and the quest for holiness meant that religion had become intertwined with daily life to such an extent that it directed all other human actions.

Augustine lived in this age of turmoil and rapid social and political change⁷. He came to be one of the most famous examples of conversion to Catholic Christianity through his description of his spiritual journey to God in his *Confessiones*. He grew up in a home with a Christian mother, Monica, and a

⁴ Scholars disagree on the dates of this period of history. Ehrman (2004:2), for the purpose of studying Christianity during this period, opts for the time-frame 300–450 C.E., starting with the Great Persecution of Christians under the Emperor Diocletian and ending with the meeting of the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon. Cameron (1993:1) broadly agrees, but points out that Late Antiquity could roughly be said to extend from the fourth to the seventh centuries. Some scholars regard this period as extending up to the fall of Constantinople in 1453 (Ehrman 2004:2).

⁵ Maintained by Cameron (1993:11).

⁶ Observed by Burton-Christie (1993:48).

⁷ He was born in 354 C.E. in the small town of Thagaste in the Roman North African province of Numidia (modern Algeria) and died in Hippo in 430 C.E., shortly before the invasion by the Vandals (Teske 2003:850).

pagan father, Patricius,⁸ and from a very young age Monica taught him about the Bible and the Christian faith of the Catholic Church. Burch (1981:xii) maintains that this early exposure to Christianity was Augustine's first encounter with a distinctive system of thought, although he later rebelled against these ideas as being too simplistic for his sophisticated tastes, nurtured on the writings of Cicero and other classical Latin authors. His rebellion as teenager against the Catholic faith and inner turmoil would lead him to embrace Manicheism, Scepticism, and Neo-Platonism (amongst other attempts to find the truth and spiritual meaning in life), until Ambrose and the Milanese Neo-Platonic circle would enter his life and guide him back to the teachings and authority of the Catholic Church. In the section that now follows, I will attempt to define the concept of conversion in order to better understand Augustine's return journey to God and the Catholic Church.

1.3 CONVERSION FROM A THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

The word “conversion” has a number of meanings, depending on the context. The terms “conversion” and “to convert” come from the classical Latin terms *conversio* and *convertere*, in turn derived from the Greek *epistrophē* and *epistrēpho*, referring to the act of returning or becoming, or the result of a spiritual or material change, according to Oroz Reta (1999:239). By changing direction, the individual makes the conscious decision to change his way of thinking and behaving.

Lawrence (2003a:234) gives a succinct overview of the *theological* sense of conversion, which refers to accepting Jesus as one's personal Lord and Saviour during a “psychological experience of dramatic religious change.” Not only does the convert's religious attitude change, but usually also his religious affiliation. That is evident in the case of Augustine, in whose time conversion

⁸ Patricius was baptised on his deathbed in 370 c.E. He and Monica made financial sacrifices to provide Augustine with a good education in the liberal arts in Thagaste and Madura, later enabling him to study in Carthage with a view to enter a career as rhetor (Teske 2003:852).

in the Catholic Church had a simpler meaning than it does today: the aspirant member of the Church became a catechumen, was taught the catechism by an ordained priest, and then baptised and received into the Church (Lawrence 2003a:237).

According to Lawrence (2003a:235–237), the Catholic theologian Bernard Lonergan in the twentieth century, with modern insights, distinguished three types of conversion (intellectual, moral, and religious)⁹ which can occur separately, and three levels on which all three types can be identified (fundamental, revolutionary, and evolutionary).¹⁰ Lonergan's typology is useful for studying Augustine's conversion process, as it makes clear that the conversion of individuals can be characterised in several ways—it depends on what stage in their journey to God they find themselves at a given moment. The various possibilities where an individual conversion may be situated, according to type and level, can be represented by the following matrix:

TYPE / LEVEL	Fundamental	Revolutionary	Evolutionary
Intellectual			
Moral			
Religious			

From a reading of the *Confessiones*, my view is that Augustine underwent all three types of conversion at different stages of his life. These changes were evolutionary in nature, as they had built up over a period of time, each

⁹ **Types** of conversion: *Intellectual*: Radical change in the intellectual horizon by moving from world of perceptions to world of meaning, as revealed through experience, understanding, judging, and believing. *Moral*: Radical change from immediate satisfaction in favour of long-term values. *Religious*: Total and permanent self-surrender and acceptance of the inescapable orientation toward God. In Augustinian terms, the reality of operative or sanctifying grace, where God replaces a heart of stone with a heart of flesh. (Lawrence (2003a:235–237).

¹⁰ **Levels** of conversion: *Fundamental*. The initial act of transcending the self and opening oneself up to a reality beyond the self, creating a horizon. *Revolutionary*: A subsequent, vertical act of self-transcendence opening up to a fuller reality and a wider horizon. *Evolutionary*: An on-going act of self-transcendence that continues the conversion process by exploring the fuller reality, broadening the horizon, and working out the effects of living in this new reality. (Lawrence (2003a:235–237)

triggered by different events, circumstances, and various persons acting as catalysts in his journey back to God.

Closely related to the theological meaning of conversion is the *biblical* context of Christian conversion. Peace (1999:28, 347) cites the Old Testament has having numerous examples of the people of Israel being exhorted to (re)turn to God, indicated by the Hebrew word *shubh*, whose meaning approximates the New Testament Greek terms *epistrophē* and *epistrēpho*. An example is Isaiah 55:7, where the prophet warned: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”¹¹

Moloney (2003) further elaborates on the Scriptural perspective of conversion. When sin entered man after the Fall, man turned away from the holiness of God and His divine plan for communion between human beings and with God, as described in Genesis 1 (Moloney 2003:231). In both the New and Old Testaments there is a call by God for man to turn back to Him and to restore their previous loving fellowship.

The Old Testament, maintains Moloney (2003:233), is “in many ways a continual summons to conversion.” He explains that the nation of Israel was aware that their covenantal relationship with God had broken down, owing to their worship of false gods and idols. Individual and collective confessions of guilt were therefore needed to purify themselves, often done through the intercession of prophets. The Exile was deemed punishment for Israel’s sin and brought about the realisation that they had to return to God’s original design for man and restore his relationship with God. Jeremiah therefore urges the people to repent of their sin and turn back to God. After the Exile had ended, both Ezekiel and Isaiah warned against rebelliousness and begged Israel to turn away from idols in order to restore God’s blessings.

¹¹ All Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Obedience, said Ezekiel, would result in God giving them a changed heart and spirit to help them to continue to obey His laws and thereby prosper.

Regarding the New Testament, Moloney (2003:233) holds that the core of the Old Testament's understanding of conversion is continued in the New Testament. However, in the New Testament, the incarnation of the Son of God effected a radical change in sinful man's position before a holy God: Jesus, as the Christ, was sent to redeem man so that he could enter the Kingdom of Heaven, where Jesus lived. Jesus warned man against relying on himself to be saved and to put his pride aside. Only through conversion could they be saved (Luke 13:1–5), or else they would die like the fig tree¹² that bore no fruit (Luke 13:6–9). All had to recognise the presence of God in the word and person of Jesus, who exemplified total obedience to the Father. By “putting on Christ” (Col. 3:10–11), man could become part of a new life “in Christ” (Gal. 3:27, Rom. 10:12–13, 1 Cor. 12:12–13).

1.4 CONVERSION TO RELIGION

Conversion to religion has numerous aspects, whether it refers to pagan Roman gods and goddesses or to Christianity. Nock (1998) makes an interesting distinction between religious *adhesion* and religious *conversion*, where the former indicates an additional string to one's religious bow, so to speak, as opposed to the latter's exclusive acceptance of a specific religion and form of worship. Conversion has specific characteristics and can take various forms. I will discuss some salient aspects of religious conversion below to place Augustine's own conversion in historical context.

1.4.1 The pagan view

Pagans, used to accommodating various deities and beliefs within their own cultural context, found Christianity strange owing to the polarities it seemed to

¹² It is interesting to note that Augustine cried beneath a fig tree in the garden at Milan shortly before his final conversion, as if to indicate that *his* fig tree would, indeed, be fruitful by witnessing his conversion.

present, where the God of the Christians was engaged in eternal battle with Satan. The individual had to choose between the one or the other, with a corresponding influence on their way of life and their morals, whereas the Roman pagan religions encouraged the worship of a number of deities, each of which was endowed with specific powers to make life on earth easier. What the pagans did accept from Christianity, contends Macmullen (1993:28), was the familiar idea that there was only one Supreme God, echoing Plato's notion of a Supreme Being, who could be either Zeus or Jupiter, for example, who ruled over lesser local deities, the latter being regarded as their reflections. This notion provides an interesting link with the image of the god(s). Pagans converted to Christianity for various reasons, according to Macmullen (1993:36–37, 39), including being impressed by the steadfastness of martyrs in the face of death ("The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church,")¹³ miracles performed and evil spirits driven out by Jesus, hoping to be victorious in battle through the power of the Christian God, and fear of eternal damnation.

1.4.2 Adhesion and conversion

Nock (1998:1, 5, 7–8) notes that in prophetic religions, as in Christianity, the prophet is convinced that the truth about things has been revealed to him and that he is under an obligation to deliver the message to others, who must then decide whether to adhere to these new principles by renouncing their past beliefs. Factors that could play an important role in the individual's decision to follow those principles are political domination and cultural interaction. Whereas *adhesion* is the acceptance of new forms of worship as supplemental to existing beliefs and continuing life more or less as usual (as was the case with pagans in the Roman Empire), *conversion* is the radical turning away from indifference or from an existing form of worship to another, as a result of the individual's soul being completely reoriented. The convert,

¹³ An adapted quote from Tertullian's work *Apologeticus*. (Tertullian lived from ca. 160–230 C.E.) The correct quote from Tertullian's *Apology* (number 50) reads as follows: "The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; *the blood of Christians is seed*" (Tertullian, *The apology* 50 (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers* 3:55) (my emphasis)).

sensing that something is wrong with his present state of affairs, decides to set things right by turning towards a new, positive ideal (characteristic of the prophetic religions). In my opinion, Augustine adhered first to Manicheism and then to other philosophies in his quest for the truth, while never really relinquishing the Catholic faith—it was as if he had merely put his childhood faith on hold, while waiting for something better, more sophisticated to come along to explain divine truth and the path to wisdom. The new Platonism of Plotinus and Porphyry¹⁴ helped him to break with the materialism of Manicheism and enabled him to think of God as Spirit.

1.4.3 Conversion to the Christian faith

For Peace (1999:2–3) conversion to the Christian faith means that the convert changes a nominal Christian existence to a vital, lived Christian experience, although in his experience many people who have had a true conversion experience do not reflect that in their everyday lives. Conversion is a form of spiritual transformation and its “fruits...unfold over time.” However, he concedes that it is difficult to define conversion in the context of the Christian faith, as there are various opinions on how conversion occur: from the radical and instantaneous conversion of Paul on his way to Damascus through a mystical encounter with Christ, to a rapid or gradual decision of the individual to align himself with Christ and His Church, to the participation in certain liturgical events such as baptism and confirmation which become the individual’s moment of conversion.

Paul serves as the New Testament exemplar for conversion, which hinges on discovering who Jesus is and on following Him, as described in Acts (9:1–19, 22:3–21 and 26:1–23). Peace (1999:17, 21–22, 25, 56) analyses these verses and identifies the three central aspects of Paul’s conversion as *seeing*, *turning*, and *transforming*, which he regards as the core elements that form the basic pattern of Christian conversion in the New Testament. With *seeing*, Paul gained insight into his state before God and repented; with *turning*, he

¹⁴ One of the philosophies which crossed his path on his spiritual journey.

acknowledged that he was in the wrong position before God and that he had to change in order to be reconciled to Him; and with *transforming*, he accepted Jesus' offer to be reborn through baptism and vowed to witness to all people.

Nock (1998:7, 9–10) distinguishes two forms that Christian conversion could take. First, the convert returns to the tradition in which he grew up and which he left owing to scepticism, lack of interest, or asserting himself against societal norms. The convert commonly does so since he feels that he now fully understands his childhood faith. This form seems to fit Augustine's conversion, as will become clear in further chapters of this study. Second, the convert turns away from the tradition he grew up in to embrace a new form of worship, feeling either indifference, or holding the opinion that his previous faith is incomprehensible. Both forms of the conversion process are marked by the presence of certain elements in the mind which prepared it and made it receptive to the new message, which appeared at the right psychological moment. Once the conversion process has been completed, the individual typically experiences a feeling of inner peace and joy, as well as a sense that he has penetrated truths unknown to him before. In the case of Augustine, the biblical tuition of Monica and the theological and philosophical tuition of Ambrose and the Milanese Neo-Platonic circle certainly sowed the seeds of conversion to a spiritual God in Augustine's mind, leading up to the decisive moment in his life when he heard the chant *tolle, lege, tolle, lege* and read Romans 13:13 as a consequence. As Nock (1998:266) describes it, Augustine's conversion process already contained all the necessary elements which only needed the right catalysts to obtain the desired reaction and to come full circle in his religious convictions, but now with much greater insight and maturity.

Both Nock (1998) and Peace (1999) describe various examples of conversion in the New Testament, including the dramatic turnaround of Paul, where prophecies and miracles had played an important part in the conversion process. Peace (1999:4–6) points out that the conversion of Jesus' twelve

apostles was a gradual process, as described in Mark's Gospel. Their conversion progressed from a cultural understanding of Jesus as a famous teacher to the conclusion, over time, that he was the Messiah, the Son of God. Their conversion advanced as their recognition and understanding of Jesus as the Son of God increased. The purpose of Mark narrating the story of Jesus was to spread the gospel to unbelievers and to bring about conversion, which in the New Testament is defined as consisting of faith and repentance. Augustine had a similar motive for writing the *Confessiones*: not only to denounce the false teachings of the Manicheans, but also to exhort his readers to do as he had, and convert to the Catholic Church, the one true Church.

Peace (1999:5–6, 10) stresses that conversion must be seen as a process and not only as an event, which is true of most people; even in cases where seemingly sudden conversion occurs, there have often been a preamble and prior inner preparation. During the journey of turning to God, individuals experience a number of smaller turnings, each characterised by some small crisis, until finally their lives have completely changed direction and their perception, reasoning, feelings, and behaviour have been transformed. This description of Peace certainly accords with Augustine's experience. The final turn is possible because God created within man the ability to return to Him and to experience conversion, although the conversion process differs from person to person. In Chapters 4 and 5, I will examine the conversion processes of Victorinus, the three government officials from Trier, as well as St Antony of Egypt, which all preceded Augustine's own conversion process. These figures inspired Augustine to follow their example and served as further catalysts for his conversion, in which Monica, Ambrose, and the circle of Christian Neo-Platonists had played a vital preparatory part.

1.5 CONVERSION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE AND THE WORKS OF AUGUSTINE

It was common for a Roman citizen to adhere to particular philosophical principles in addition to practicing the traditional pagan religion, and a reorientation of his life to these principles often had aspects of both conversion and repentance, as explained by Nock (1998:267). He contends that pagans had no conception of religious conversion: the only context in which conversion appeared was in ancient philosophy, which formulated a distinct idea of a lower and a higher life, and which urged men to convert from the former to the latter to improve their lives. Since both Greek- and Latin-speaking Christian thinkers applied Greek philosophy to help interpret Catholic doctrine, the concept of philosophical conversion entered Christianity.

Augustine first encountered philosophy when he read Cicero's book *Hortensius* (now lost) at the impressionable age of nineteen, which ignited an excitement in him for the higher intellectual things (Nock 1998:261; Crouse 1987:53). This "Platonic-Aristotelian exhortation to philosophy," as Crouse (1987:53) characterises the work, urged Augustine to return to God, and gave him his first taste of Platonic thought. Augustine's problem at that stage was that he did not know which God to turn to, as he had rebelled against the God depicted in the Old and New Testaments of the Catholic Church. He did not know then that he would return to the Catholic Church through the influence of Neo-Platonic philosophy to which he would be exposed in the crucial Milanese period of his life, which I will discuss in greater detail in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

In the context of philosophical literature and the works of Augustine, Oroz Reta (1999:239) explains that the terms *epistrophē* and *epistrēpho* refer to the soul's universal orientation towards the religious or the divine, with the added meaning of changing religious or philosophical doctrine. Whereas pagan philosophers viewed the object of conversion as returning to the self in order to attain transformation in the "One", the Church Fathers regarded conversion

as the return of the soul to God, the Supreme Good, from whom it had been alienated through sin and disobedience. Before the soul could return to God, however, Augustine maintained that it first had to return to itself to gain self-insight, and from there proceed to God, thereby integrating the two modes of conversion and acknowledging the importance of self-knowledge in order to attain to knowledge of God.¹⁵

1.6 AUGUSTINE'S CONVERSION TO CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

The purpose of this section is not to recount the details of Augustine's well-known conversion narrative offered in the *Confessiones*, but to provide an overview of certain major elements in his conversion process which will shed light on the subsequent chapters and advance my argument on the role of the *imago Dei* in his conversion to the Catholic faith.

1.6.1 The *Confessiones* as autobiography of a convert

The *Confessiones* is an extraordinary literary, theological and philosophical accomplishment which provides unusual psychological insight into the mind of one of Late Antiquity's greatest theologians. Henry (1981:72) maintains that the very first sentence of the *Confessiones* offers the key to Augustine's life and works, indicating his total commitment to, and reliance on, God, after his conversion:

'You are great, Lord, and highly to be praised Ps. 47:2): great is your power and your wisdom is immeasurable' (Ps.146:5)...to praise you is the desire of man, a little piece of your creation. You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. (*Conf.* 1.i.1)

¹⁵ "...Lord, you turned my attention back to myself. You took me back from behind my own back where I had placed myself because I did not wish to observe myself (Ps. 20:13), and you set me before my face (Ps. 49:21) so that I could see how vile I was,...And I looked and was appalled, but there was no way of escaping from myself...you thrust me before my own eyes so that I should discover my iniquity and hate it. I had known it, but deceived myself, refused to admit it, and pushed it out of my mind" (*Conf.* 8.vii.16).

Who will enable me to find rest in you? Who will grant me that you come to my heart and intoxicate it, so that I forget my evils and embrace my one and only good, yourself? (*Conf.* 1.iv.5)

For Burch (1981:xvi), Augustine's literary innovation in writing his *Confessiones* was to adapt the external narrative of the encomium to the internal narrative of a soul's journey to God to illustrate what happened in his conversion process, why, and, how. Daly (1993:68) maintains that the main characteristic of the *Confessiones* is its psychological orientation. Augustine was aware that feeling and thinking were both integral parts of life and action and he was therefore able to observe the emotional and intellectual dynamics in his spiritual development. He finally discovered his true self in Milan when he was able to merge his self-image and world view into a personal identity by reconciling his inner with his outer world (Daly 1993:233). Further, Daly (1993:233) contends that Augustine's conversion can be construed as a "web of decisions" where the rational and irrational, the conscious and subconscious, converged in a coherent whole.

Augustine wrote the *Confessiones* for a largely Manichean audience in order to exhort them, as well as others, to believe in Jesus Christ and to accept the teachings of the Catholic Church based on the New and Old Testaments. He therefore had a specific purpose in mind in publicly exposing his own inner turmoil and failings, and using his own life as an example for others to follow in turning to the God of the Bible. His literary technique to accomplish this is well described by Steinhauser (1991:236–240). Augustine used the technique of a triadic relationship to describe his conversion process by creating a dialogue between himself and God in the form of a prayer, where the reader is allowed to "eavesdrop" and to observe the participants in the dialogue. This method allowed Augustine to place himself outside the discussion in order to record it, and it enabled the reader to be privy to his thoughts. Since Augustine addresses God directly, his relationship with his audience (God) may be described as an "autobiographical covenant": Augustine guaranteed the truth of what he told since his life story was in effect an oath with God as witness, as man cannot lie to God. The effect of this triadic technique was

that Augustine dictated his point of view to the reader, making the *Confessiones* a closed text that the reader could interpret in only one way, namely that he or she should find their own way to God, who was the ultimate truth. His autobiography is at once a confession of sin, a confession of faith, and a confession of praise, reflecting the three-fold meaning of the Latin *confiteri*. In exhorting the reader to also enter into a relationship with God and so experience God's grace, his confession becomes a *protrepticus*.

The viewpoint of Crouse (1987:57–58) is that the *Confessiones* gives a full description of three levels of meaning of conversion: the *personal* level, where the historical experience of Augustine the individual is recounted within the context of his activities, interactions, and events that occurred in his life, regarded as the result of divine providence; the *interior* level of the soul's life, concerning memory, intellect, and will, enlightened by the Word of God; and lastly, the level of *philosophical theology* expounded in Books 11 to 13, where the conversion of the whole of creation is explained in terms of Christian and Platonic doctrine.

Augustine's autobiography is selective in the main events he describes in his life, since he wanted to attain a certain goal, as described in the preceding paragraph. Augustine judges these events from a more mature viewpoint (almost twelve years after his conversion), and reflects on their value for his post-conversion life. The major occurrences described in his conversion process (according to Matthews (1980:9–10)) serve to trace the progress in his spiritual journey, and indicate that his conversion was more of an evolution in his thought than a revolution, although the garden scene in Milan was the final, decisive moment in the process. Certain subsequent, major changes in Augustine's life, brought about by his final conversion, are distinguished by Matthews (1980:24–25). First, he underwent a moral change by choosing a life of chastity and obedience. Second, he relinquished his public life as rhetor by retreating to Cassiciacum to devote himself to ponder new truths revealed to him and to deepen his knowledge of the Christian faith. Third, he committed himself to the teachings of the Catholic Church, decided to be

baptised, and asked Ambrose for books to help him prepare for receiving the sacrament. Fourth, his intellectual perspective changed from adhering to Manichean and Skeptic doctrines to adherence of Neo-Platonic and Christian teachings, as a result of the influence of Ambrose and the Christian Neo-Platonic group in Milan (discussed more fully in Chapters 3 and 4).

1.6.2 Some major elements of Augustine's conversion process

The view of Henry (1981:26, 70–71, 80–81, 87) is that Augustine's personality, and the seriousness with which he tried to attain his religious goals, marked him as one of the most perfect prototypes of the Christian convert. His conversion was aided by the fact that he had always been religious and interested in the many forms of divine manifestation. While the Church served as the exterior unifying principle for all his religious and philosophical interests, his intense attraction to the divine formed the interior structure which enabled him to absorb reason, experience, and Christian dogma. His soul had an intense and unusual longing for God, and, at a later stage of his intellectual and moral development, for the divine truths of Christianity. The moment of conversion marks the turning of the soul towards God.

Like the biblical prodigal son, Augustine first had to turn away from God (*aversio*) before, after an interval of sin (*perversio*), he could return to God (*conversio*) by His grace and calling (Oroz Reta 1999:239, 241). Although *perversio* refers to human values that have been destroyed, Augustine held that man retained his in-born inclination to return to the Supreme Good, an impulse that was activated and accomplished by God's grace and mercy (Oroz Reta 1999:241): "So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy" (Rom. 9:16). Augustine's argument that sin does not totally destroy man's tendency toward God, can be linked to his concept of the *imago Dei* (discussed in Chapter 3), according to which he held that the divine spark of God's image in man had not been totally eradicated by the Fall (Clark 1999:441).

In section 1.6.1 above, I pointed out that the garden scene was the climax of an evolutionary conversion process, and that Augustine's personal life would henceforth be completely changed. His personal life *before* the final conversion, however, prepared him for that dramatic moment. Although raised as a Catholic Christian by his mother, he found that Catholic doctrine did not satisfy his increasingly intellectual tastes as he grew older; perhaps it was also a way of rebelling against his mother's strong influence. As Nock (1998:262–263) indicates, in Augustine's quest for a theistic framework of creation that he could deem intellectually acceptable, he moved from his childhood religion by experimenting with various other possibilities of attaining to the truth about God, of which Manicheism¹⁶ and Neo-Platonism would be the most significant. Augustine had to rid himself of Manichean materialism¹⁷ and replace it with a philosophy with a spiritual foundation¹⁸ that would be compatible with the doctrine of the Apostles John and Paul, as maintained by Henry (1981:81). At the back of his mind, however, remained the idea that he could return to Catholic Christianity if and when he came to the conclusion that Catholic doctrine was intellectually adequate and respectable.

Augustine was fortunate in his spiritual journey in that, in addition to Monica, he would meet influential men in Milan who would help to guide him in his search for the truth and to understand the tenets of the Catholic faith. The cooperative efforts of Monica, Ambrose and the Milanese priest Simplicianus enabled Augustine to regard them as performing a sacred function and as worthy representatives of the Catholic Church—their devoutness served as

¹⁶ Augustine fell into the grip of Manicheism when he was still in the phase of feeling repelled by the “crude” texts of Scripture and their style (especially the Old Testament) and perplexed by the idea of God being reincarnated in human form; the Manichees, as well, rejected this anthropomorphism in Christianity (Nock 1998:263). They also disallowed the Old Testament, particularly the creation narratives in Genesis (Teske 2003:858). The result was that Augustine became ashamed of the teachings of the Catholic Church. Further, as Teske (2003:852) points out, the Church in North Africa was strongly anti-intellectual and demanded blind faith without being able or willing to explain the Christian faith and answer Augustine's probing questions. Augustine therefore rejected this authority of the Catholic Church to simply prescribe and not explain, and grasped at the Manicheans' promise of bringing him to God through reason.

¹⁷ Augustine's conception of God and the soul as wholly corporeal would only be rectified at Milan, by listening to Ambrose's sermons and by being instructed in Neo-Platonic philosophy: he would then learn to think of God and the soul as spiritual.

¹⁸ Crucially, he would discover that man's being made in the image of God did not refer to bodily shape (as if God was limited to human form), but to the spiritual soul (Teske 2003:857).

powerful examples¹⁹ which helped to lead him back to the Church (Henry 1981:58). As explained by Nock (1998:264–265), Augustine at first only attended Ambrose's sermons to listen to the quality of his rhetoric. He then became fascinated by the content and message of the preaching, since Ambrose interpreted the Old Testament allegorically to explain in a clear way the concealed truths hidden in the texts. As a result, certain barriers to belief in Catholic doctrine were removed, and he obtained even further clarification on the existence of God as a spiritual substance (in contrast to Manichean insistence on God as a material substance) after reading certain Neo-Platonic texts provided by Ambrose. Coward (1990:19–21) contends that the dynamics of memory and Scripture played a vital role in leading Augustine back to God. Although he was not exposed to Scripture in his formal classical education, his mother Monica did instruct him in the Christian faith to such an extent that he interiorised her Christian teachings. The memory of praying to God stayed with him, as did an early awareness of a spiritual search, which later turned into an intellectual search for the truth, during a period in which he rebelled against his childhood.

Further inspiration to return to the Catholic Church was provided by people Augustine had never met and of whom he heard by chance. A prime example is St Antony of Egypt,²⁰ who lived a secluded life in the desert to devote himself to God. Augustine was astounded by the fact that an unlearned monk

¹⁹ Van Fleteren (1990:65–66) identifies twelve conversion stories in the *Confessiones*, which include those of Alypius, Victorinus, the three government agents, Antony, and Monica, all of which form and inform Augustine's own intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. He distinguishes certain **characteristics** common to all these stories: (1) chance occurrences and a vague description of events leading up to conversion to emphasise divine action and grace; (2) human events which reprove and advise, with a disproportionate effect on the individual, caused by God; (3) contrast between the knowledge of God and man's lack of knowledge; (4) the presence of spoken or written words that caution; (5) the use of friends or other significant persons as God's instrument for conversion; (6) the seemingly instantaneous conversion of the individual subsequent to a life-changing event; (7) release from care and a resolve to change; (8) the involvement of the whole person—mind, spirit and body—in the conversion; (9) a radical change of heart; (10) a Neo-Platonic "arising and returning"; (11) telling others of the conversion experience; (12) outward acting on the interior conversion; (13) comparison between pride and humility and between knowledge and ignorance; (14) celebration of the conversion; and (15) disproportionate reaction of the convert in relation to the event (Van Fleteren 1990:67–73).

²⁰ Antony's life was described by St Athanasius of Alexandria in his *Vita Antonii*. According to Burch (1981:xvii), this work contains Neo-Platonic elements. Augustine heard about this work for the first time in Milan from his friend Ponticianus.

had found a way of living that purified and illuminated him spiritually in his quest for union with God (Burch 1981:xvii). He further made the amazing discovery of men and women dedicating their life to God in monasteries in Milan, whereas he, with all his education, was still undecided in that respect.

1.6.3. Augustine's mature views on conversion

Augustine, in later life, held that conversion entailed changing religious association and basic orientation of life, and implementing that change by adhering to certain cognitional and moral norms (Meynell 1990:4). Man was totally reliant on the grace and decision of God, as a divine gift, for that to happen, but had to reciprocate by totally committing and surrendering his life to serving God (Oroz Reta 1999:239–240). The return of the soul to God implied that God had previously been rejected, and therefore the proposed return resulted in an inner struggle of the soul, a struggle of the will, as Augustine himself experienced:

...as I deliberated about serving my Lord God (Jer. 30:9) which I had long been disposed to do, the self which willed to serve was identical with the self which was unwilling. It was I. I was neither wholly willing nor wholly unwilling. The dissociation came about against my will. Yet this was not a manifestation of the nature of an alien mind but the punishment suffered in my own mind. And so it was 'not I' that brought this about 'but sin which dwelt in me (Rom. 7:17,20), sin resulting from the punishment of a more freely chosen sin, because I was a son of Adam. (*Conf.* 8.x.22)

Stark (1990:46) gives an insightful explanation of how Augustine regarded his will as thwarting his return to God and the role it played in his conversion. Enlightened by Ambrose's sermons and the *libri platonicorum*, he came to understand that God was a spiritual substance and that evil was the privation of good. He realised that evil was caused by man by exercising the free will that God had given him, in contradiction to the Manichean belief that evil was caused by God and that man therefore bore no responsibility for the evil he caused.²¹ Neo-Platonism helped him to move from "intellectual confusion"

²¹ "I directed my mind to understand what I was being told, namely that the free choice of the will is the reason why we do wrong and suffer your just judgment..." (*Conf.* 7.iii.5).

(Stark 1990:47) to enlightenment and to “make the moral and psychological leap” (Stark 1990:47) in accepting responsibility for his transgressions of God’s laws. However, the intellectual-spiritual conversion described in Book 7 still had to be followed by the moral-psychological conversion in Book 8.²²

As Stark (1990:48–49) points out in her excellent discussion on the conflict of the will in Augustine,²³ his mind told him to accept celibacy and to relinquish a distinguished career in order to devote his life to God,²⁴ yet his will prevented him from doing so; he was still chained by worldly ambition and pleasure. The will had the power to form habits, which could easily become a fixed need and a burden. This burden, in a Neo-Platonic sense, dragged him down to a lower level and estranged him from God, as Stark (1990:51) observes. His new-found spiritual will was in conflict with his old, carnal will, and he seemed to be incapable of overcoming the latter in order to move up towards God.²⁵ Although with his mind he was perfectly willing to give up worldly pursuits, his will resisted, and continued to dictate to the body—the material triumphed over the spiritual. He experienced the paradox of the will commanding on the one hand, but resisting itself on the other. He concluded that although the soul commanded the body, it did not command it totally; although enlightened by truth, the soul was wounded by sinful habits and therefore prevented from ascending to God.²⁶

I agree with Stark (1990:54) that, ultimately, this illness of the soul and the inner conflict of the will could only be healed and made whole through the

²² Van Fleteren (1990:65) describes Book 8 as an account of the conversion of the will, in which Augustine renounced the pleasures of the flesh in favour of a monastic type of Christianity.

²³ In my view, Augustine’s inner conflict symbolises the battle between the will of man and the will of God, the struggle in making the right choice (leading to God) and the wrong choice (leading away from God).

²⁴ Augustine was not attracted to the narrow way, involving celibacy, to reach God, since he could not reconcile it with his wish to marry and the inevitable participation in a career and other worldly affairs (Stark 1990:48).

²⁵ “The enemy had a grip on my will and so made a chain for me to hold me a prisoner” (*Conf.* 8.v.10).

²⁶ Stark (1990:52) pertinently remarks that Augustine came to realise that to will something, and the ability to do it, were two different matters. Although the *command* to do something comes from the will (man’s interior realm), *compliance* with that command is dependent on the body and its conditions (man’s exterior domain).

power of the grace of God.²⁷ The familiarity of old habits had to be completely replaced by the new Truth of Jesus Christ, so that the temporal could be substituted by the eternal, and familiarity with the truth (Stark 1990:55). His two, conflicting wills “converged into wholeness”, according to Stark (1990:56) when he consciously decided to forsake his old pleasures and to pursue the vision of continence in the garden in Milan. Oroz Reta (1999:240) maintains that the ultimate object of conversion, once the resistance of the will had been overcome, was to return to God’s Kingdom of light, goodness and truth and to eliminate the distance between man and God. Only with the help of God could the soul return to itself as the first step of conversion, and even then the soul’s eye would not be able to fully comprehend the Light that it saw as it lifted itself up to God.

In my view, the merging of Augustine’s two wills was crucial in healing the divine image imprinted in him and in reconciling him to the will of God. An important insight of Augustine’s in the *Confessiones* which I have identified for the purpose of this study, is his realisation of the active role that God had played in his conversion. Matter (1990:22) points out that Augustine uses the word *conversio* in that sense in certain passages²⁸ of the *Confessiones*. The point here, as Stark (1990:58) argues, is that Augustine recognised that his conversion took place solely by the grace and through the initiative of God: God offered him healing and salvation, and Augustine used his free choice to accept this offer and to pursue a godly way of life. He accepted that he could not save himself and that his salvation totally depended on God, as he acknowledged after his final conversion in the garden in Milan, where he speaks of God converting him to Himself.²⁹

²⁷ Importantly, Stark (1990:54) points out that Augustine developed the insight that he had to be *open* to accepting God’s grace by *wanting* to change his will so that he would always choose good above evil and abandon sin. Man therefore has to humbly accept and cooperate with God’s grace in order to heal the broken image and be saved.

²⁸ The examples Matter (1990:22) provides are the following: *Conf.* 1.vi.7 (“...but you will turn and have mercy on me...”), *Conf.* 4.iv.7 (“...you turn us to yourself in wonderful ways”), and *Conf.* 4.x.15 (“O God of hosts, turn us around and show us your face, and we shall be safe’ (Ps.79:8).”)

²⁹ “The effect of converting me to yourself was that I did not now seek a wife and had no ambition for success in this world” (*Conf.* 8.xii.30).

1.7 CONVERSION AND THE *IMAGO DEI*

I will argue in Chapter 5 that the “unlikeness” expressed by Augustine in *Conf.* 7.x.16 (“And I found myself far from you ‘in the region of dissimilarity’...”) refers to his realisation that he had become far removed from God through sin, which in turn had led to the weakening of the *imago Dei* in him. The reflection of the divine image in him had become more and more faint owing to sin and his inability to choose between a life of sensual pleasure and a spiritual life devoted to serving and loving God and the Christian community.

Augustine's conversion, in my opinion, is therefore closely related to the concept of the *imago Dei* in the *Confessiones*, and I will elaborate on this premise in Chapter 2. The link between conversion and the image of God is encapsulated very well by Sullivan (1963:63) where he points out that, for Augustine, the turning back to God during the conversion process pertained to the return journey of the image to God as its originator and exemplar. Sherlock (1996:33) also points out the link between conversion and the *imago Dei*: when Jesus referred to the likeness of Caesar on the coin in Matthew 22:21, one aspect He was referring to was the fact that man had been made in the image of God and that man therefore owed total commitment and loyalty to his Creator—the same commitment that religious conversion entailed. The significance of man having been created in the image of God is that he should continuously strive to conform his being and behaviour to the perfection of that image, according to Hughes (1989:46) and never waver from his decision to turn to God.

1.8. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I discussed the pertinent aspects of religious conversion in the context of Augustine's return to the Catholic faith of his childhood and within the broader framework of the religious, political and social instability of Late Antiquity. The Bible contains numerous conversion stories and admonitions to repent and return to God, with the New Testament proclaiming that Jesus,

the Christ and Son of God, is the only Redeemer for reconciling man to God the Father. Modern insights have distinguished various kinds and levels of conversion, and the difference between adhesion and true religious conversion, all of which provide insight into Augustine's conversion journey and his intellectual and moral development as he matured in the Catholic Christian faith. It is evident that conversion is not an event, but a process. In the case of Augustine, this process lasted almost twelve years and included his crucial exposure to Neo-Platonic philosophy, which enabled him to reject the materialism and to think of God and the soul as spirit. Monica, Ambrose, Simplicianus, and other Neo-Platonic Christian mentors, as well as various powerful examples of conversions that Augustine heard about, all played a decisive role in bringing about his final conversion in the garden at Milan. Augustine now understood his faith through his reason, and submitted to the authority of the teachings of the Bible and of the Catholic Church. Finally, I briefly pointed out the link between Augustine's conversion and his conception of the *imago Dei*, which made him realise that the only way to return to God, was to restore and strengthen the image of God in him by repenting and purifying himself from sin. Specifically, he had to attain to the image of Jesus, who was the perfect image of God the Father.

In Chapter 2, I will discuss the concept of the *imago Dei* more extensively in order to come to an understanding of its role in the conversion process and its influence on man's personal identity and relationship with the Triune God. I will argue that, as man turns back to God, the image returns to its Creator during a process of purification, so that the broken relationship between man and the personal God is healed and restored—something that would finally bring Augustine inner peace and rest in God through conviction in his faith.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONCEPT OF THE *IMAGO DEI*

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I examined pertinent aspects of the concept of conversion to come to an understanding of how and why Augustine converted to Christianity and to briefly sketch the reasons for his return to the Catholic Church. I concluded Chapter 1 with a short explanation of the link between religious conversion and the concept of the *imago Dei*, with specific reference to Augustine.

In Chapter 2, I will examine the biblical origin and meaning of the concept of the *imago Dei* to provide the theoretical background for an analysis of the role of the *imago Dei* in the *Confessiones*, which has not been discussed in a structured way in the literature. The biblical viewpoint—moving from the conception of man as the image of God in the Old Testament to the conception of Jesus as the image of God in the New Testament—will be followed by an overview of certain influential Church Fathers' interpretation of this concept. I will conclude this chapter with a discussion of the influence of Neo-Platonic philosophy on Augustine's own understanding of the concept of the *imago Dei* and how he related that to conversion. This concluding section will provide a link with the in-depth discussion of Neo-Platonism in Chapter 3.

2.2 THE *IMAGO DEI* IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

2.2.1 Origin of the terms “image” and “likeness”

An informative overview is provided by Grenz (2001:17, 202) of the use of images in the ancient Near East. These ancient cultures held that the gods had created man in order to represent them on earth. The term “image” could

be used to indicate a physical object by means of which a god could make himself or herself visible, although the object did not necessarily have to bear a physical likeness to the god. Images could also represent kings who were physically absent: for example, the ancient Assyrian kings put up statues of themselves in subjugated areas to represent their dominance and presence. This statement is supported by Von Dehsen (1997:260) who points out that Mesopotamian and Egyptian kings were regarded as the images of God in that they served as God's representatives on earth. He notes that the Hebrew word for "image" means "that which is cut out", which has the connotation of an exact physical replica. He further notes that the Hebrew term for "likeness", on the other hand, has a more abstract connotation of a psychological-intellectual resemblance by means of matching spiritual capacities.

According to the Bible, maintains Grenz (2004:622), the God of Israel had created a free world as an external reality to Himself, with man created in His image. Man had the responsibility and vocation of representing God on earth. The term "vocation" implies an orientation to the future and the fulfillment of man's potential in the role of God's representative on earth, as pointed out by Bryant (2000:37–38). In light of the biblical account of the image, I agree with Sherlock (1996:18) that the view one has of God will influence one's understanding of oneself as a human being. In addition, Grenz (2001:202) maintains that man was designated as the *likeness* of God, indicating that he, as image of God, not only represented God on earth, but also resembled the *character* of God. I will further elaborate in par. 2.2.2.1 and 2.3.2 on the concepts "image" and "likeness" (*imago* and *similitudo*) to explain the difference, and the importance of each. Par. 2.5.2 will focus on Augustine's interpretation of these two terms in light of the Neo-Platonic influence.

The creation of man (*'āḏām*) in the image of God is described as the climax of God's work in Genesis (1:26–28, 5:1–2, 9:6–7), Sherlock (1996:31) notes. He also points out that the description of man being made in the image of God, given at the beginning of the Bible, stresses the importance of the image in

understanding what it means to be human. It is the foundation of all other disclosures about human nature and the history of Israel in the Old Testament. A difficulty arises if one tries to understand exactly what the *imago Dei* entails,³⁰ as the concept is not explained in Genesis. Sherlock (1996:31–32) maintains that all that is provided is a negative explanation of the image in other books of the Bible. For example, God commands Israel in Exodus 20:4–5 and Deuteronomy 5:8–9 *not* to make and worship idols, or images, since God cannot be limited physically to a man-made object (Sherlock 1996:32). Also, Isaiah 44:9–20 warns that God cannot be defined, for to attempt that would constitute idolatry. Some of the early Church Fathers, including Augustine, as well as modern scholars (cf. Von Dehsen (1997) and Grenz (2001)), have attempted to further define “image” to improve Christians’ understanding of a complex topic which touches on their identity as individual human beings and their personal relationship with God. I will refer to these attempts to clarify the meaning of “image” in the discussion that follows below.

2.2.2 The creation account in Genesis

According to the Old Testament, every human being was created in the image of God with an original nature, which was corrupted by sin. Howe (1995:25–27) argues that man is remorseful because he consistently falls short of what his Creator had intended him to be, resulting in constant inner and external conflict, as well as conflict with God. “Original” nature should therefore be understood as something that man principally *is*, in that he is contained by principles designed by God to create a framework for him in which to live according to certain normative standards. The image of God in man distinguishes him from other creatures and therefore man is the culmination of the created order. Hughes (1989:4) states it well when he

³⁰ Western thinkers have consequently interpreted the *imago Dei* in various ways. Since the Patristic period, Western theologians have posited that a human being is created in the image of God, that the seat of image is the soul, and that the soul comprises the self (Grenz 2001:142). Attempts to define the image are discussed in detail in Chapter 2 and the various approaches, including Augustine's own, are summarised in Chapter 5 to form a conceptual framework of the nature of the *imago Dei*.

maintains that man cannot exist outside of this reality, since denying God and the image of God stamped on him by willfully asserting his independency and self-sufficiency, would lead to the denial of his constitution and humanness.

Scholars have identified two creation stories in Genesis. I will follow Howe (1995:24–50) in giving an overview of the two accounts, namely the “Priestly” (“P”) account³¹ in Genesis 1:1–2:4 and the “Jahwist” (or “J”) account³² in Genesis 2:4–7. Although the “J” account comes chronologically first in the Bible, I will discuss the “P” account first, as Howe (1995:47) maintains that the latter has become the normative and generally accepted account of man’s creation in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

2.2.2.1 The Priestly tradition

According to Howe (1995:28), the Priestly tradition of the book of Genesis dates back to the exile in Babylon and holds that an understanding of human beings created in the image of God is the point of departure to understand what it means to be human. Indeed, Von Dehsen (1997:261, 265–266) holds that the Priestly author created the expression “image of God” in the sixth century B.C.E to counter the influence on the exiles of Babylonian splendour and gods. Babylonian kings were regarded as representatives of inanimate gods and therefore inspired awe. The Priestly writer hoped to prevent Israel’s worship of Babylonian deities by positing that the people of Israel had been created in the image of the living God of Israel, and that only the God of Israel should therefore be worshiped. The image was therefore situated in the context of the creation of humans, implying that the God of Israel was the divine pattern or norm, and not an artifact made by human hands. The image therefore pointed back to the original—the God of Israel—after which it had been patterned. This implies a special relationship between God and man, between Creator and creature. Von Dehsen (1997:261) points out that some scholars hold that it is this *relationship* that constitutes the image of God in

³¹ The “P” account was compiled five hundred years later, after the Babylonian Exile had ended (Howe 1995:24).

³² The “J” account was written around the tenth century B.C.E. (Howe 1995:24).

man, and not some conferred characteristics. I will argue in my textual analysis of the *Confessiones* in Chapter 5 that both the personal relationship with God *and* the conferred characteristics or endowments³³ constitute the divine image; indeed, *personality* is one of the endowments identified by Hughes (1989:51–54), based on Augustine's conception of the divine power or endowment in the image.

The pertinent texts in Genesis, referring to “image” and “likeness”, are the following verses, as identified by Howe (1995:28) and Grenz (2001:184):

Genesis 1:26	Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our <i>image</i> , after our likeness.’ (<i>my emphasis</i>)
Genesis 1:27	So God created man in his own <i>image</i> , in the <i>image</i> of God he created him, male and female he created him. (<i>my emphasis</i>)
Genesis 5:1	When God created man, he made them in the <i>likeness</i> of God. (<i>my emphasis</i>)
Genesis 5:3	...Adam...fathered a son in his own <i>likeness</i> , after his <i>image</i> ... (<i>my emphasis</i>)
Genesis 9:6	Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own <i>image</i> . (<i>my emphasis</i>)

What is the difference between “image”³⁴ and “likeness”³⁵ and why is an understanding of the distinction important? Howe (1995:28) maintains that the purpose of this differentiation was to highlight the difference between an exact reproduction (“image”) and a less particular resemblance (“likeness”). Whereas “image” refers to the natural or physical, “likeness” pertains to the spiritual or ethical aspect of man’s being. The nuanced difference in meaning serves to give a fuller understanding of the *imago Dei* concept. Hughes (1989:7) notes that not all theologians agree with this distinction, arguing that the two terms in Genesis 1:26–27 convey only one thought, and that the two words are interchangeable, being an example of Hebrew parallelism.

³³ Cf. section 2.5.4 of this chapter and sections 5.3 and 5.4 of Chapter 5.

³⁴ Hebrew *tselem*, Greek (LXX) *eikōn*, Latin (Vulgate) *imago* (Hughes 1989:7 n. 3).

³⁵ Hebrew *d'muth*, Greek (LXX) *homoiosis*, Latin (Vulgate) *similitudo* (Hughes 1989:7 n. 3).

In the Priestly tradition, maintains Howe (1995:36–37, 40) the resemblance of humanity as a whole (and not only of the individual) to God included the aspects of physical form, character, rationality, goodness, wisdom, and liberty. This tradition also held that man was created according to God's image with a specific purpose, namely to represent God on earth and to rule over all the other creatures in His name with care and respect. This authority is exercised by living in communion with God, with other humans, and with the natural order, thereby fulfilling the destiny of man. Extreme individualism can threaten the cohesiveness of a community, therefore harmonious relationships that foster fellowship among individual members of society are vital to retain communion with fellow human beings and God.

2.2.2.2 The Yahwist tradition

As Howe (1995:47) observes, the older Yahwist tradition offers other insights into one's understanding of human nature and of God. Whereas the Priestly tradition focuses on physical form, structure, and closeness with God and community, the Yahwist tradition illuminates the fleetingness of the fragile and temporal human being whom God formed from dust, and to which man will return. Howe (1995:47) refers to Genesis, Psalms and Job to support his statement: "...then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature" (Gen. 2:7). Psalm 104:29 also articulates this tradition, "...when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust", as does Job 34:14–15: "If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust."

I concur with Howe's contention (1995:48, 50) that the Priestly and Yahwist traditions, viewed together, enable us to have a more rounded perspective of our created humanness. It maintains a balance between the two extremes of man viewing himself as a god on the one hand (participating in the ordering of creation), and man regarding himself and his circumstances with despair and cynicism (life is short and temporary).

2.2.3 Man's relationship with a personal God and fellow human beings

A useful insight is provided by Sherlock (1996:35–46) regarding the use of the plural form in Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” He maintains that, besides referring to the Trinitarian nature of God, the use of the plural pronoun is an indication of the fellowship of the personal relationships in which man lives. These relationships have two dimensions: a horizontal or social relationship with fellow human beings, and a vertical relationship in which man acknowledges both his obedience to God and his responsibility to exercise dominion over the rest of creation as God's stewards on earth. He comes to the conclusion that, although Scripture does not disclose exactly what the image of God is, it does reveal that the image involves living in relationships. Although the Fall distorted these relationships, especially man's relationship with God, it was not broken. It did mean, however, that man would be incapable of knowing God and of restoring this relationship by his own efforts, since the corrupted relationships had inverted the image. Sherlock (1996:45–46) notes that Psalm 8 is the closest parallel in the Old Testament to Genesis 1 to 2 in the way it describes humanity and its relationship with God, reiterating man's elevated status before God, almost in grateful disbelief: “What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor” (Ps. 8:4–5).

Whereas the Old Testament describes *man* as made in the image of God in certain passages of Genesis, the New Testament makes an important shift in our understanding of the *imago Dei* by stating that *Jesus*, as the Son of the God, is the *perfect* image of God. I will discuss the implications of this change in perception in section 2.3 below.

2.3 THE *IMAGO DEI* IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

2.3.1 The completion and fulfillment of the *imago Dei*

Since Genesis 1:26–27 did not exactly state in what form man was to represent the image of God, argues Grenz (2004:622), it pointed to a future fulfillment of the search for the complete meaning of the image of God. The absence of a specific definition of “image” opened the way for the transformation of the *imago Dei* to the *imago Christi* in the New Testament. It made it possible to correlate the new humanity with the new image: the new humanity conforming to the *imago Christi* was regarded as the *telos* or end goal to which the Old Testament had pointed and in which the whole history of salvation reached its peak. The true significance of man’s creation in the image of God, as noted by Hughes (1989:3), is only resolved in the New Testament, where it is revealed that Christ,³⁶ as the eternal Son of God, is also God’s eternal image.

2.3.2 The terms “image” and “likeness” in the New Testament

The image of God is central to understanding the theology of the New Testament and is the subject of various passages. In addition to 2 Corinthians 4:4 (cf. n. 36), Grenz (2001:203–204) also refers to 1 Corinthians 11:7³⁷ and James 3:9.³⁸ Howe (1995:50–52) contends that certain New Testament texts illustrate how the Old Testament shaped early Christian thought about man’s existence: for example, in the letter of Paul to the Colossians,³⁹ the Priestly tradition of an original, created nature is transformed by positing the image of God as human nature redeemed by

³⁶ Hughes (1989:3) observes that according to 2 Corinthians 4:4, “The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

³⁷ “For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the *image* and glory of God...” (1 Cor. 11:7) (*my emphasis*).

³⁸ “With it [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the *likeness* of God” (Jas. 3:9) (*my emphasis*).

³⁹ “He is the *image* of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created” (Col. 1:15) (*my emphasis*).

Jesus Christ. Through Christ, the image of God in man has been renewed⁴⁰. James (3:9) (cf. n. 38) uses the term “likeness” rather than the term “image”, although Howe (1995:50) points out that James possibly regarded these terms as more or less synonymous.

2.3.3 The new humanity ushered in by Jesus Christ through a renewed image

The first Christians inherited the testimony of the Old Testament that man was human because he had been created in the image and likeness of God, although that image had been distorted by the Fall. The writers of the New Testament came to a very important new understanding of what it meant to be human, however, namely that the image of God in man had been renewed in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, as the perfect image of God. In that way, a new humanity was created in and through Christ, maintains Sherlock (1996:50). Paul proclaimed the new humanity in 1 Corinthians 15, by stating in verses 47–49 that humanity in Christ was destined to be resurrected to spirit, and in 1 Corinthians (52–54) he assured the faithful that they would lead a full and immortal life with God in heaven (Sherlock 1996:55, 57).

In trying to find an explanation of what exactly the *imago Dei* is (discussed above in section 3.2.1), Grenz (2001:223) argues that the answer is to be found in the “broader biblical narrative” in which the creation story is placed. The New Testament authors regarded the life, death, resurrection and adulation of Jesus Christ as the centre of the whole biblical narrative. They contended that, since Christ revealed the nature and glory⁴¹ of God, He was the perfect image of God and as such the leader of the new community who had been renewed in the image of Christ, and therefore in the image of God.

⁴⁰ “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God...Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the *image* of its creator” (Col. 3:3,9–10) (*my emphasis*).

⁴¹ The connection between the image and glory of God is discussed in section 2.3.4 below.

Augustine came to the insight that justification was possible only through the saving grace of Jesus Christ, as it enabled man to heal the broken image and reconcile himself to God. According to Sherlock (1996:59–67), man's earthly life was transformed by the death of Christ and the promise of resurrection: because Christ had atoned for man's sin, it allowed man to be reconciled to God by being restored in His image *through Jesus Christ*⁴². By means of Christ's gift of grace⁴³, the estrangement between man and God had ended. Man could now set himself right with God, obtain His forgiveness, and bridge the gap between the sinful and the holy to attain to union with God.

The Pauline letters to Ephesus and Colossae, written while in prison, added an extra and important dimension to the new humanity by linking it to the Church. Sherlock (1996:66–70) explains this important concept and its implications for the new humanity very well. He refers to Ephesians 1, which describes the eternal purpose of God, namely that humankind would become His holy sons through Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:5),⁴⁴ and that all things in heaven and earth would be united in Christ (Eph. 1:10).⁴⁵ Sherlock (1996:67) maintains further that Colossians 1:15–16, 18⁴⁶ depicts Christ as the image of God, the Christ through whom man is able to know the invisible God and who is pre-eminent⁴⁷ in all creation. Christ does His reconciling work in the Church⁴⁸, which is a metaphor for His body, the Church being the place where the members of His body have communion in and with Him through the Spirit.

⁴² "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself..." (2 Cor. 5:17–19).

⁴³ "...For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many" (Rom. 5:15).

⁴⁴ "...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will..." (Eph. 1:4–5).

⁴⁵ "...making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:9–10).

⁴⁶ "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation...all things were created through him and for him...And he is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:15–16, 18).

⁴⁷ I discuss Jesus' pre-eminence further in section 2.3.4 below.

⁴⁸ Augustine would gradually be drawn back to the Catholic Church once he had accepted the authority of the Church's teachings.

In order for man to be reconciled to God, man must also replace the old with the new humanity to bring about a complete change in lifestyle,⁴⁹ as Paul exhorted the people in Ephesians 4:22–24.⁵⁰ Paul repeats this exhortation in even stronger terms to the Colossians, with the admonition to let go of earthly concerns⁵¹ so that the image of God in them could be renewed (Col. 3:9–10.⁵²) The restoration of man's right relationship to God, and therefore the restoration of the *imago Dei*, was made possible by Christ's identification with sinners through His reincarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, to sit on the right hand of God.

Grenz (2004:623–264) contends that the importance of these exhortations of Paul lies in the fact that the new humanity not only refers to the future community of saints in heaven who will share in the image of God, but also to the present community of believers on earth. The new humanity already participates in the divine image by being “in Christ”, as explained by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18.⁵³ Since the members of the new humanity are being gradually transformed into the image of God—in fact, being converted and turned back to God—they should accordingly heed the call to live holy lives,⁵⁴ given in Colossians 3:9–10 (cf. n. 52).

2.3.4 Jesus, the perfect image, reflecting the glory of God

The term “first-born” (*prōtotokos*), indicating Jesus' pre-eminence in the salvation history, is key to understanding Jesus' designation as the image of God in the New Testament, according to Grenz (2004:619–620, 627). Man

⁴⁹ Only after his final moral conversion in the garden in Milan would Augustine be able to fully cast off his old, hedonistic way of life,

⁵⁰ “...put off your old self ... to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:22–22).

⁵¹ The pull of material things and earthly pleasures was an obstacle in Augustine's return to God.

⁵² “...seeing that [they] have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Col. 3:9–10).

⁵³ “And we all...are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

⁵⁴ Augustine, after a long inner struggle, would subject himself to the will of God and adhere to continence in order to serve God.

cannot know God except through Jesus Christ, who is the true image of God, and through whom God is revealed. It is also impossible for man to understand what it means to be human without looking to Jesus, who is at the same time truly human, and who embodies God's purpose for humankind.

Paul's declaration in 2 Corinthians 4:4 (cf. n. 36) that Christ is the image of God testifies that the glory of Christ is identical to the glory (*doxa*) of God, and not merely a copy or reflection, according to Hughes (1989:26). The term *doxa* also came to mean "radiance" and "reflection", which brought it closer in meaning to *eikōn* or image, according to Grenz (2001:206). The glory of creation that man lost in the Fall was restored and enhanced in Christ as the image of God: as man conforms more and more to the *imago Christi*, his glory in Christ also increases "from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18). Referring to Psalm 8, the author of Hebrews elevates Jesus, as the founder of salvation, above man as being the glory of God and as being the ruler of the cosmos Grenz (2004:618): "You have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet" (Heb. 2:7–9). Grenz (2001:209–210) points out that Paul made the connection between the glory of God and the image of God, as described in 2 Corinthians 4:4 (cf. n. 36) and 2 Corinthians 4:6.⁵⁵

2.3.5 Man's spiritual renewal in Christ

Besides being the Son of God, Christ is also designated the Word (*Logos*) of God, which is intimately related with the image of God, as held by Hughes (1989:40–41). In the Prologue of John's Gospel, John states that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). John also describes how "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of Grace and truth" (John 1:14). To know Jesus is to know God: "I am the way and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.

⁵⁵ "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

From now on you do know him and have seen him” (John 14:6–7). The spiritual transformation or renewal of man is effected by contemplating Christ (in a Neo-Platonic way), so that the divine image is reflected in the way the believer lives. Man, created in the *imago Dei*, has become the new man who must conform to the *imago Christi* (Grenz 2001:18) in order to enter into a personal relationship with the Father through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

2.3.6 Conclusion

From the above discussion of the New Testament understanding of the *imago Dei*, it is clear to me that the meaning of “image” underwent a radical change from the meaning in the Old Testament, where the focus was on *man* as the image of God. In the New Testament, the focus shifted to *Christ* as the image of God. Since Christ is part of the Trinity, that means that Christ, who is God, is also the perfect image of God. This New Testament perspective, once understood and accepted by Augustine, brought him to the conclusion that Christ was the only way to God, and that the grace of Christ was the only way of healing the broken image and justifying man in the sight of a holy God. I further contend that Augustine came to realise that he could only reconcile himself to God by following Christ’s example of perfect obedience to the Father, and that that required that he should relinquish all interest in earthly matters and devote himself to serving a spiritual God.

2.4 PATRISTIC VIEWS ON THE *IMAGO DEI*

In the discussion that follows, I will provide a brief overview of certain Patristic views on the *imago Dei* that were especially influential in the Church and on the development of Augustine’s understanding of the *imago Dei*. The purpose of this section is therefore to give an indication of the views of certain prominent early Church Fathers whose thoughts would later influence Augustine’s views on the image. I will incorporate these views into a conceptual framework of the nature of the *imago Dei* for the textual analysis in Chapter 5.

2.4.1 The Schools of Antioch and Alexandria

The Fathers⁵⁶ of the School of Antioch⁵⁷ were committed to a literal, historical and rational exegesis of the Bible, and were not disposed to using allegories and philosophical insights (as was the Alexandrian School) to broaden their understanding of Scripture, as noted by McLeod (1999:6, 9). Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 B.C.E. to 42 C.E.), along with others of the Alexandrian School, however, had developed a different hermeneutical approach to studying the Jewish Scriptures. He sought to use the allegorical principles of Plato and the Stoics to discover God's hidden, spiritual truths in the sacred texts (McLeod 1999:13). His allegorical method of interpretation was later endorsed by Clement, Bishop of Rome, Origen of Alexandria, and Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. The Antiochene School emphasised the humanity of Christ and held that the body was an essential element of the image of God—the image could consequently not be a spiritual reality. The School of Antioch therefore adhered to the holistic view of the image as depicted in the Hebrew Bible, according to (McLeod 1999:235).

2.4.2 St Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon

The second-century Church had to contend with Gnostic thought that challenged the union of the material and spiritual universe created by God in the Old Testament, as well as the prominence given by the New Testament to the unity of Christ as man (material nature) and Christ as God (spiritual nature), as Purves (1996:101–104) emphasizes. Irenaeus responded to this threat by developing a theology to counter heretical teachings. According to this theory, the Bible gave a progressive account of how God revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ. The Bishop of Lyon's writings were faithful to the traditions of Paul and John, in which the Son of God incarnate is represented "as the eternal *Logos* come to man" (Purves 1996:102) and as the second Adam restoring man to the original state God had in mind for him.

⁵⁶ Diodore of Tarsus, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius, and Theodoret (McLeod 1999:4).

⁵⁷ The Antiochene School flourished from around 350 to 450 C.E. (McLeod 1999:5).

Irenaeus stressed that it was Christ, as the Son of God, who made salvation possible, and who restored and perfected man as the image of God. Through the humanity of Jesus, God reinstated that which had been lost in Adam.

According to Howe (1995:52), Irenaeus is credited with using the terminology of the Priestly tradition in new ways and in explaining the difference between “image” and “likeness.” Grenz (2001:145–146) points out that, in accordance with this distinction, Irenaeus maintained that man had retained the image (*imago Dei*) after the Fall, but had relinquished the likeness (*similitudo Dei*). Howe (1995:52) explains that Irenaeus held the opinion that man was created *in* God’s image and that man’s capacity for reasoning, taking decisions, and fellowship with his Creator, was located in that image. Further, observes Howe (1995:52–53), man was created *like* God, but this likeness reflected potential development and growth and not his present state; it therefore has an eschatological element. This likeness was bestowed through the Spirit, who worked in and with man to transform his spirit so that man could fulfill his destiny of becoming like God. Man could attain to likeness with God by obeying His will, and in so doing affirm the natural relationship with his Creator and truly embody the image of God in humanity (Howe 1995:55). Man must fashion himself according to the image with which God formed him in order to fulfill His intention for humankind and must therefore live by the standard of God’s *image*, which was created in man by an act of divine grace. If man lived according to this standard out of his own free will, the result would be that man would attain to the divine *likeness*. Finally, Howe (1995:55) argues that Irenaeus’ psychological insight was that the divine image *in* man, which was also the divine image *of* man, served as an in-born capacity to be like God and to communicate with Him. That capacity was activated when man made the correct choices and followed through on them.

The preceding sections have served as an introduction and background to Augustine’s own conception of the *imago Dei*, on which I will elaborate below. An understanding of both the earlier and Augustinian viewpoints on the image and likeness of God will contribute to appreciating the role of the *imago Dei* in

Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity, as narrated in the *Confessiones*.

2.5 AUGUSTINE'S DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF THE *IMAGO DEI*

2.5.1 Introduction

Ambrosian, Plotinian, and Scriptural influences all impacted on Augustine's inner world and spirituality, and in turn on his development of the concept of the *imago Dei*. His understanding of the image reflects both Neo-Platonic influences⁵⁸ and his own unique insights. Sullivan (1963:ix), who regards the concept of the image as the foundation of Augustine's anthropology, points out that Augustine's teachings on this topic are reflected in the *Confessiones*, *De civitate Dei*, and other works, but mainly in the *De Trinitate*. In the discussion below, I will give an overview of some of the most important aspects of Augustine's conception of the image to inform the conceptual framework of the nature of the *imago Dei* which I will use to analyse the text in Chapter 5. These aspects are the concepts of image and likeness, the structure of the soul as image of God, the endowments (qualities) of the image in man, and Neo-Platonic hypostases as they concern image, likeness, and conversion.

2.5.2 “Image” and “likeness” in Augustine's conception of the *imago Dei*

Clark (1999:440–441) argues that Augustine based his conception of the *imago Dei* on Genesis 1:26, and refers to Augustine's assertion in the *Confessiones* (13.xxii.32): “For you did not say ‘Let man be made according to his kind’, but ‘Let us make man according to our image and likeness’”. She explains that Augustine, as had Irenaeus, differentiated between *imago* and

⁵⁸ I will elaborate in par. 2.5.6 on the Neo-Platonic influence on Augustine's understanding of the image, as precursor to Chapters 3 and 4, where Neo-Platonism and the theology of Ambrose will be discussed in more depth.

similitudo, influenced by Plotinus (the founder of Neo-Platonism), who had argued that all things were like their exemplars since they existed by partaking in the world of forms. In a Christian sense, all things bore a likeness to God by participating in, as well as imitating, the ideas of God. Specifically, they participated in the Form of Likeness, whom Augustine equated to the Word. The Word, as the Son of God, was also the perfect Image and Likeness of the Father. From this likeness to God sprung the basis of man's existence and intelligibility. Christ had refashioned the human image in the grace of baptism with the divine gifts of faith, hope, and love (*caritas*).

According to Sullivan (1963:11–20), Augustine often used the term “likeness” to describe how the imperfect image in man could grow in greater likeness to God in the process of attaining to God. Withdrawal from God resulted in decreased likeness to Him. However, man would only be able to attain full likeness to God (as far as was possible for a creature of God), when he reached a state of glory after the resurrection. Sullivan (1963:15) also explains that Augustine maintained that, while every image was a likeness, not every likeness was an image: if one thing did not *derive* its likeness from another, there could be no imaging. Man, as spiritual creature who imaged God, proceeded⁵⁹ immediately from Him, and also returned to Him immediately, owing to his closeness⁶⁰ in nature to God.

⁵⁹ The Neo-Platonic notion of *hypostasis*—procession (emanation) from the One—will be discussed in Chapter 3.

⁶⁰ Sullivan (1963:16–18) explains that Augustine used the expression *nulla natura interjecta* (Sullivan 1963:16) to indicate that no other nature in the hierarchy of beings was closer in likeness to God than man: his rational mind enabled him to turn to God through obtaining knowledge of God by studying His Word and thereby gaining wisdom.

According to Harrison (1992:117), the rational soul of man more closely resembles an image of the Father than anything else in Creation “because between it and God there is *nulla interjecta natura*.” She points out that the phrase itself appears in Augustine's *De Trinitate* XI.5.8 (Harrison 1992:117 n. 102.) The Latin text in which the phrase appears, reads as follows: *Non sane omne quod in creaturis aliquo modo simile est deo etiam imago dicenda est, sed illa sola qua superior ipse solus est. Ea quippe de illo prorsus exprimitur inter quam et ipsum nulla interiecta natura est* (*Trin.* XI.5.8) (my emphasis.)

McKenna (1963:327–328) translates the Latin text as follows: “Certainly, not everything in creatures, which is in some way or other similar to God, is also to be called His image, but that alone to which He Himself alone is superior; for the image is only then an expression of God in the full sense, *when no other nature lies between it and God*” (*Trin.* XI.5.8) (my emphasis).

2.5.3 The structure of the soul as image of God

Augustine agreed with the New Testament that Christ was the true *imago Dei*. Whereas Christ was the perfect image of God, man was not, although he was born with capacity to grow towards a more perfect image by augmenting his likeness to God, as Clark (1999:441) contends. Further, this increase was possible if man lived in such a way that love enabled him to develop in wisdom and virtue. In his later works, Augustine would conclude that the image consisted of reason, regarded as a structure⁶¹ of its own in the soul, according to Grenz (2001:153, 156). Grenz (2001:156) points out that Augustine saw a link between the structure of the soul as the image of God on the one hand, and the reality of God reflected in the soul on the other. This Divine reality refers to the fact that the Triune God is anticipated in the structure of the human mind with its three senses of memory, intellect and will, which together form the soul. The purpose of a permanent structure in the soul was to bring the mind into the proper relationship with the Trinity in order to be true to His image.

Although the trinity of the mind is not the image of God, the mind, because it can remember, understand, and love itself, can also remember, understand, and love God: here Grenz (2001:156) bases his arguments on a reading of the *De Trinitate* 14.16.22. While the mind was aware of external realities, notes Clark (1999:440), its own innermost reality was an in-born spiritual tendency to know and to love God and to ascend to God. Clark (1999:440) also observes that, crucially, the fulfillment of that tendency depended on man's own free will. This insight of Augustine's would also enable him to understand the nature and origin of evil, which originated from man and not from God.

⁶¹ Grenz (2001:17, 142) argues that there are three major interpretations of the *imago Dei*. The *substantial* or structural approach posits that humans are shaped in the image of God in the way a painting or sculpture resembles the original and therefore have a certain structure. The *relational* approach regards humans as reflecting the divine image like a mirror, in a special relationship; this approach gained more acceptance as a result of the Reformation. The *teleological* approach of the image as a *destiny* or end goal that man must fulfill in order to attain the full image of God. I will expand on these three main theological interpretations of the *imago Dei* in section 5.2 of Chapter 5.

2.5.4 The power or endowment of God's image in man

Hughes (1989:51) notes that Augustine regarded the image of God imprinted in man as being characterised by the power⁶² that elevated him above the animals: man was *created* with the image imprinted in him (giving him certain characteristics,⁶³) whereas animals were not. In an attempt to explain these innate characteristics or endowments, Hughes (1989:51–64) interpreted and developed Augustine's concept of divine *power* or *endowment* in the image in a comprehensive discussion, providing a guideline as to what, in his opinion, this concept entails. Hughes (1989:51) argues that this power or endowment could be discerned in the personality, spirituality, rationality, morality, authority, and creativity of man. He maintains that all these endowments (attributes) of the divine image in man are closely related, the one contributing to the other, and the one deriving from the other.

I will follow Hughes' discussion (Hughes 1989:51–63) to provide a concise summary of the six endowments of the image below. The summary will inform the three theological interpretations⁶⁴ of the *imago Dei* and will form part of the overall conceptual framework of the nature of the *imago Dei* posited in Chapter 5. Although I will base my textual analysis of the role of the *imago Dei* in the *Confessions* on the conceptual framework as a whole, I will use the six endowments of the image as a meaningful way to structure the textual analysis of Books 1 to 9.

⁶² Cairns (1953:101), as cited by Grenz (2001:152), credits Augustine as the first thinker who defined the image as a power or an endowment (i.e. natural ability or quality) in man. Augustine developed this insight in an attempt to provide an answer to the question as to what exactly the *imago* entailed (discussed in sections 2.2.1 and 2.3.2 above). Influential thinkers of the Medieval Church (e.g. Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas) would also later view the *imago Dei* as consisting of man's natural powers, particularly the reason and the will, correlating with God's natural characteristics (Grenz 2001:158). Regarding the *similitudo Dei*, they viewed that as an additional gift from God by His grace and which referred to moral righteousness, corresponding to the moral characteristics of God, namely faith, hope and love (Grenz 2001:158).

⁶³ Hughes (1989:51) poses the question: "What are the marks or characteristics by which this image in which man is formed may be discerned?" His response is, "the best summary answer was given long since by Augustine, who asserted that man's formation in the image of God refers to "that power by which he is superior to all the beasts". Here, Hughes (1989:51) quotes from Augustine's *On Genesis against the Manicheans* ii.17.

⁶⁴ Cf. the description by Grenz (2001:17, 142) (n. 31 above) and the more detailed overview in section 5.2 of Chapter 5.

2.5.4.1 **The endowment of *personality***

Man is created in the image of a personal God and is therefore a personal being. God consists of the three Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are united in a relationship with each other. Whereas God is self-sufficient in His personhood (the three Persons being in union), man needs fellowship with other persons to actuate his own personhood. Man is born with an inherent, personal, “I-Thou” relationship with God (Hughes 1989:52), since the divine image imprinted on him is at the heart of his being. God is not only the source of man’s personhood, but also sustains it. Man, imprinted with the image of a personal God, accomplishes his personal I-Thou relationship with God in and through the *Logos*, who is the perfect Image of God. When man sins, he rebels against God and thereby denies God as the origin of his personhood. His pride in his own self-reliance causes a break in his personal relationship with his Creator, since he thinks he can be the source and sustenance of his own personhood. Self-gratification and self-obsessed individualism become more important than living according to God’s moral values and remaining in a close relationship with Him. As a consequence, the image is broken and can only be healed once man has been reconciled to God through His Son and the personal relationship has been restored. (Hughes 1989:52–54).

2.5.4.2 **The endowment of *spirituality***

Although man is a spiritual creature at the core of his being, since his Creator is spirit, it does not mean that he is spiritually self-sufficient and that he cannot be led astray. Man’s spiritual nature means that he is aware of God’s benevolence and majesty and that he should honour and worship Him. Satan tempted man with the lie that he could be independent of, and equal to, God. By yielding to the temptation to worship Satan, a creature of God, man “exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped the creature rather than the Creator...” (Rom. 1:25), thereby losing his likeness to God and harming the image. This disloyalty was corrected and atoned for by Christ

through total obedience to the will of the Father. Owing to the divine image imprinted in him, man is created a religious being with an innate desire to worship. Therefore, if he does not worship the true God, he will necessarily find some false god of his own making to worship and be guilty of idolatry⁶⁵, degrading his God-given humanity in the process. Man's worship of God is marked by both humility and joy, in recognition of his complete dependence on God for a harmonious existence. Man is spiritually connected to God through the image in which he is created and that connection is a life-line that "fulfils the deepest need of the human heart" (Hughes 1989:56). Man fulfils his human destiny and strengthens God's spiritual sustenance by praising and glorifying Him. If spiritual communion with God is broken through sin, man refutes the transcendental aspect of his nature, thereby limiting himself to temporal matters and foregoing the joy of participating in eternal life. (Hughes 1989:55–56).

2.5.4.3 **The endowment of *rationality***

Man is further distinguished from the animals by the fact that he alone is a rational creature with the ability to speak, created in the image of a rational God. The bond between man and God is both spiritual and intellectual and both qualities enable man to communicate with God. Man is created with a mental faculty that enables him to think and reason, to plan and study, and to pursue scientific and philosophical activities. He has the gift of speech and can use language⁶⁶ to express and convey his thoughts in a logical way. Man praises God in thanks for His power and wisdom in speaking a rational creation into existence through His will. Man functions as a being who can reason and who is therefore able to contemplate and grasp the logic and orderliness of a created, rational universe. This logic comes from the *Logos*,

⁶⁵ Hughes (1989:56) observes that idolatry can take many forms, e.g. allegiance to political parties, sports, recreation, wealth, and social position.

⁶⁶ According to Morgan (2010:16), speech not only makes communication with other people possible, but also prayerful communication with God.

the Second Person of the Trinity, through whom⁶⁷ and for whom everything was created. (Hughes 1989:57–58).

2.5.4.4 **The endowment of *morality***

Since man is created in the image of a holy God, it follows that he is constituted a moral being. The image of God cannot be separated from God's holiness, and therefore man must be holy in himself and in his relationships by adhering to God's standard of holiness and obeying his call to holiness: "...You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2) (Hughes 1989:59). Sin causes immorality, which leads to unholiness and ungodliness, which prevents man from fulfilling his potential as a human. If man accepts Jesus Christ, the perfect image of God, and emulate His holy life, his sins can be redeemed and the right way of thinking and living can be restored. Man can reach God's standard of holiness by obeying His Word and by fulfilling His will, thereby showing his love for, and gratitude to, God. Fallen man, however, cannot attain this standard, and in addition wilfully rebels against the holy law of God, thereby choosing the way of death instead of the way of life. Man should not seek self-gratification, but should actively seek to conform to the divine image by honouring and obeying the will of God. Man's humanity is expressed by the fact that he has the moral responsibility to answer to God. The conscience of man, from which he cannot escape, constantly reminds him of that responsibility and is an "internal witness" (Hughes 1989:60) to God's command to live a holy life. Only when the will of man conforms to the will of God, can he be truly human. Only Jesus has attained this harmony through His incarnation and death at the cross, thereby redeeming man and restoring his original morality and relationship with God. (Hughes 1989:59–60).

⁶⁷ "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth...—all things were created through him and for him" (Col. 1:16).

2.5.4.5 **The endowment of *authority***

God gave man the right and responsibility to exert his authority over the rest of creation, but man must bear in mind that he is a creature who is himself under the authority of God. Man's authority is only derived from God's supreme authority. Authority as an aspect of the image is manifested in man's ability to subdue the animals, to cultivate the land for food, and to use his artistic and other skills to develop an orderly human civilization. Adam perverted the endowment of authority by not using it to the glory of God. Christ, as the second and last Adam, rehabilitated that perverted authority when He declared to His disciples on the mountain that "all authority in heaven and on earth" had been given to Him (Mat. 28:18). Jesus Christ is both the origin and destiny of man and as such redeemed mankind through His incarnation and resurrection, thereby re-establishing God's authority in the community of renewed mankind. (Hughes 1989:61–62).

2.5.4.6 **The endowment of *creativity***

Creativity is an expression of the particular character of man as an esthetic being, made in the image of God, who is the supreme Designer and Creator of the harmony and beauty of the universe. Man's creativity can also be discerned in intellectual research or technological innovation. Creation is the work "not only of the supreme intellect but also of the supreme artist" (Hughes 1989:62). The cosmos is a reflection of God's own splendour, since God is the origin of beauty and everything that is good and uplifting. He is the One who bestowed on man the creative ability to bring into harmonious relationship all the potential that exist in forms and colours in the world. Whereas animals can be "creative" by following their instinct according to a set pattern of behaviour, it is only man who can spontaneously create original works of art, literature, music, and architecture. Man's creative efforts can uplift and enrich the spirit of his fellow man and can serve to emphasise the beauty and glory of God's own creative work. It is therefore imperative that man does not, in his fallen state, pervert his creative ability "to serve the cult

of the ugly and the unclean and the ignoble” (Hughes 1989:64). Perverted creativity would dishonour God, distort His call to live a holy life, and lead to defacing the image and distancing man from God. (Hughes 1989:62–64).

2.5.4.7 Conclusion

Augustine reasoned that the image of God in man conferred a certain power or endowment on man to live an orderly life to the glory and honour of God. In an attempt to define the aspects of this power or endowment and to ascertain how the endowment is manifested, Hughes (1989:51–64) interpreted and developed Augustine's concept of divine *power* or *endowment* by distinguishing certain innate characteristics or natural abilities of the image that all depend on, and derive from, one another. These abilities or endowments relate to the *personality, spirituality, rationality, morality, authority* and *creativity* of man, imprinted in the divine image in him. If these endowments are not balance, the image can be harmed and man's relationship with God broken off. For that reason, man needs to obey God's command to lead a holy life by submitting to His will. Damage to any one of these endowments can harm the image as a whole and break man's spiritual link with God.

2.5.5. Neo-Platonic influence on Augustine's conception of the *imago Dei*

2.5.5.1 Introduction

Neo-Platonic thought unquestionably had a decisive and lasting influence on Augustine's theology and world-view, including his conception of the image of God. In an excellent study on the Neo-Platonic influence on Augustine's understanding of the image, Sullivan (1963), whom I will follow in this discussion, argues that Ambrose's spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament enabled Augustine to obtain a new understanding of man as made in the image of God. He further notes that Ambrose and other Christian Neo-

Platonists in Milan introduced him to the Latin translations of works of Plotinus and Porphyry, and that Augustine found special philosophical inspiration in Plotinus' *Enneads*. The reason for his enthusiasm for the *Enneads*, contends Sullivan (1963:5), was that it contained Plotinus' notion and teaching of a similar concept of the divine image in man. Augustine would later adapt that notion to the Christian teaching on the *imago Dei* by concluding that an image could be the equal⁶⁸ of its exemplar, since Scripture taught that the Son, the Word of God, was the perfect Image of the Father (Sullivan 1963:14).

2.5.5.2 Image, likeness, and hypostasis

Sullivan (1963:5–6) convincingly argues that the Plotinian idea of *image* and *likeness* plays such an important role in the Neo-Platonic system, that these two concepts (discussed in par. 2.2.2.1 and 2.3.2 above) in combination seem to encompass the whole material, spiritual, and intellectual universe. Plotinus namely held that every being originates or proceeds (i.e. comes forth or emanates) directly from a single principle, which is its source or origin, and which is called the "One." This process of proceeding has two aspects: the aspect of *prodos* entails the emanation or separation of the being from the One, whereas the aspect of *epistrophē* involves the return of the being to the One.

Further, Plotinus discerned a hierarchy in the process⁶⁹ of a being emanating from the One, where each lower being derives its "hypostasis" (substance or foundation) from the being immediately above it, and of which it is an *image*, although an inferior copy. An image has an inherent *likeness* to its principle, as well as an inherent tendency to return to its principle, which is also its

⁶⁸ In contrast to Plotinian thought, according to which the *Nous* always remained inferior to the One from which it had emanated (Sullivan 1963:15).

⁶⁹ This dynamic process of emanation from, and return to, a higher principle, explains Sullivan (1963:6), is called "the four moments of the psychic life." The first moment is the *beginning of the image*, the second the *return* to its principle, the third the *contemplation* of its exemplar, and the fourth the *generation of an image* of its own through a process of illumination. The image at the level of matter is so faint, that it is more a trace than an image of the One; consequently, its dynamic return to the One is almost impossible, and the best it can aspire to is to return to its closest principle, which is the individual soul.

model or exemplar. From the One emanates the Divine Mind or *Nous* (the second hypostasis), from the Divine Mind the Universal Soul or *psyche* (the third hypostasis), and from there the emanation continues at all levels of being, until the lowest level of matter has been reached. When the lower being looks up to its source (in the process of returning to it), it contemplates it, and, as a result of that “vision”, attains full *likeness* to it: only then is the lower being fully constituted as itself, and can it then generate an *image* of its own.

2.5.5.3 Conversion and the image

According to Sullivan (1963:40–41, 46–47, 49, 51–53), Augustine linked conversion and image as follows: he maintained that the first conversion occurred when God created heaven and earth by recalling spirit and matter to him by giving form to something that was formless. When God spoke the words, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3), the Word activated formation by illumination and the Spirit saw to movement and order. The *image* of creation was then bestowed on Adam. Through the grace of Christ, fallen man was made a new creature, and the image of *re-creation* was the renewal, at a higher level, of the original image lost by man after the Fall. The seat of the image was the soul or *anima* of man, with the *mens* or mind the highest and noblest part of the soul, since it included the rational or intellectual faculty of the soul. God was the object of the divine image in man, since God was the exemplar to whom the image must return, and that return was made possible by the residue of knowledge of God left in the image. Despite man’s fallen state, he was still *capax Dei*, i.e. still able to participate in the life of God, since the basic image of God left in him retained its rational nature, and since God had granted him the grace for this participation.

2.5.5.4 Restoration of the image

How, then, could the weakened image be healed and restored? It is argued by Sullivan (1963:54–68) that Augustine viewed the renewal of the image as

involving man's total spiritual and moral life, which bears on all the elements necessary to purify, strengthen, and perfect the trace of the image of God left in man. He discerns three stages in the Augustinian renewal and reformation process of the image, namely the initial renewal, the gradual reformation, and the perfection of the divine image. The first two stages pertain to life on earth, and the last stage to life after the resurrection. *Initial renewal* was enabled by the grace of Christ, which operated at the moment of baptism and which instantly conferred a renewed image on the person being baptised. Baptism resulted in spiritual rebirth, through which man became the adopted son of God and through which his likeness to God increased. *Gradual reformation* occurred when both man and God participated in the renewal process, with God working in man through grace, and with man cooperating rationally and willingly. Man had to turn inward⁷⁰ to come to know and love himself. Only then would he understand his divine nature as the image of God, and in turn come to know and love God. The more man knows and loves God, the more his likeness to God increases and the closer he attains to divine union. *Perfection* of the image would only be achieved in the afterlife, once man had reached a state of beatitude and glory, in which he would see God face to face, and not merely as a reflected image. Through the grace of Christ, the perfected image would be on a higher level, that of the original image in Adam: the body would be subject to the spirit, the body would be immortal, and the will would be subject to God's will and prevent man from sinning.

⁷⁰ According to Grenz (2001:60–61). Augustine further developed the Platonic sense of a unified self, which is linked to individuality and to an awareness of *personal identity*. That, in turn, is unified in or through interiority. Similar to the ancient Greek philosophers, Augustine sought to come to know himself by turning inward. As a Christian, he was sure that this inward journey would lead him to the eternal God, who alone could give man true happiness, as he posits in the *De beata vita* 2.11. For Augustine, his turn inward to get to know himself was a journey of, and into, the emotional, as well as the knowing and reasoning dimensions of the soul to get to know God. By means of this journey, the soul learnt to love what the mind contemplated, enabling it to come into contact with the eternal life that resulted from knowing and loving God and thereby attaining union with Him. *Knowing* God relates to John 17:3 ("And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent"), and *loving* God relates to Matthew 22:37 ("And [Jesus] said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind'").

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I explored the origin of the concept of *imago Dei* within the context of its origin in ancient Near Eastern cultures and its use in the Priestly and Yahwist accounts of creation in the Old Testament. The former focuses on man as a being with a divine destiny, whereas the latter emphasizes man's frailty and temporal existence. The Fall distorted the image and harmed the relationship between God and man, creating distance between them. The New Testament disclosed that the image would be healed, renewed and restored through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, thereby restoring man's close and loving relationship with God and his fellow man. This reconciling work of Jesus was done in the Church, where believers could have communion with Him through the Holy Spirit. Through Jesus, man was spiritually renewed, since Jesus was the perfect image of God and reflected the glory (*doxa*) of God. In both the Old and New Testaments, the terms "image" and "likeness" are used, generally understood as referring to the natural and physical, and the spiritual and ethical character of man, respectively.

Whereas the Antiochene School interpreted the Bible literally, the Alexandrian School sought deeper truths in Scripture through an allegorical method of interpretation, which would ultimately influence Augustine's theology via Origen of Alexandria and Ambrose of Milan. Irenaeus of Lyon argued in the second century C.E. that the Bible gave a progressive account of how God revealed himself in Jesus Christ, who was the *Logos* and the Savior of mankind. He held that man had retained the *imago Dei* after the Fall, but had lost the *similitudo Dei*, although he still had the capacity to regain the likeness by obeying God's will. Augustine developed the distinction between "image" and "likeness" by holding that, while every image was a likeness, not every likeness was an image. The soul was the seat of the image, and the image of God in man was in fact a power or endowment relating to the personality, spirituality, rationality, morality, authority, and creativity of man. As a result of Neo-Platonic influences, Augustine used the concept of hypostasis to further explain the difference between "image" and "likeness": an image has an

inherent likeness to its principal, and also an inherent tendency to return to its exemplar—God was the object or *telos* of man. Man could participate in the renewal of the image by living a moral and holy life, thereby purifying the trace of the image left. This journey towards perfection of the image was gradual and necessitated self-knowledge and self-love in order to know and to love God.

In Chapter 3, I will investigate in more depth the tenets of the philosophy of Neo-Platonism and its influence on Augustine and his understanding of the *imago Dei*.

CHAPTER 3

THE PHILOSOPHY OF NEO-PLATONISM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The first two chapters dealt with the concepts of conversion and the *imago Dei*, which attempted to lay the theoretical groundwork for answering the research question on the role of the *imago Dei* in Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity, as narrated in the *Confessiones*. In this and the following chapter, I will broaden the theoretical framework by examining the profound impact of Neo-Platonic philosophy, the theology of St Ambrose (Bishop of Milan), and the Christian Neo-Platonic circle at Milan on Augustine's intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. The expanded theoretical framework will serve as a part of a conceptual framework of the nature of the *imago Dei*, on the basis of which I will analyse the *Confessiones* in Chapter 5.

In order to evaluate the theological influence of Christian Neo-Platonism on Augustine's worldview, however, it is first necessary to investigate the origins of Neo-Platonic philosophy and its basic tenets in order to provide an understanding of its impact on Augustine's intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to shed light on the role of an ancient Greek philosophy that came to play a decisive role in the intellectual, moral and religious development of not only Augustine, but the Church in the West as a whole.

For the purposes of this study, I will concentrate in this chapter on three of the main philosophical currents which contributed to the development of Neo-Platonism, namely Neo-Pythagoreanism, Platonism and Middle Platonism.⁷¹

⁷¹ Neo-Platonism also contains elements of Aristotelianism and Stoicism, as pointed out by Ferguson (2003:391).

The three schools of philosophical thought that I will discuss all contain a religious element which regarded the divine as spiritual and the soul as immortal, a fact which greatly influenced Augustine's Christian beliefs.

3.2 PYTHAGOREANISM

According to Ferguson (2003:382–383), Pythagoras, who lived in the sixth century B.C.E., left a philosophical and religious legacy of four very important ideas, which influenced later philosophers, including Plato. He namely believed that the universe obeyed mathematical laws and that the soul transmigrated after death (a belief which influenced Plato's differentiation between body and soul). He understood philosophy as religious and formed a brotherhood with a specific way of life, approaching a primitive form of "church." Lastly, he founded an ascetic way of life with the purpose of purifying the soul. His philosophy was revived in Rome during the first century B.C.E. during the lifetime of Cicero (Ferguson 2003:383). The Neo-Pythagoreans believed that there were intermediary beings ("a chain of beings") between man and God and appear to be the main philosophical source for the later worldview that matter was bad (Ferguson 2003:384). They also subscribed to an ascetic lifestyle which was to be followed by a holy and wise man (Ferguson 2003:384). They reconfirmed the existence of an immaterial (incorporeal) world in a hierarchical system of derivation and maintained that the soul was immortal: man's soul parted from the sensible world at death, to be united with the divine (Gatti 1996:12). This is in contrast to Pythagoras' belief that the soul entered another body after death.

Numenius,⁷² an important philosopher who bridged the period between the Pythagorean revival and Middle Platonism (Ferguson 2003:386), maintained that *being* was immaterial and that it existed in a divine triadic structure, referring to the Neo-Pythagorean doctrine of the One and the Indefinite Dyad (Gatti 1996:13). He therefore, according to Ferguson (2003:386) anticipated

⁷² Numenius of Apamea lived during the late second century C.E. and "anticipated Plotinus' absolutely transcendent One as the first principle of reality" (Ferguson 2003:386).

the concept of Plotinus, who would posit that there existed a transcendent One as the first principle of reality. As explained by Gatti (1996:13), Numenius believed in contemplative creation and conceptualised the mystical union of the individual with the Good. Gatti (1996:13) further points out that Numenius' views influenced Plotinus, and that Porphyry would later report that Plotinus had discussed Numenian writings with his students.

Ferguson (2003:386) comments that Neo-Pythagoreanism and Middle Platonism were some of the philosophical theories which converged during the second century C.E. and which paved the way for Neo-Platonism, which was a synthesis of philosophical thought. In order to understand Neo-Platonism, I provide a brief summary of its antecedents, Platonism and Middle Platonism, in sections 3.3 and 3.4 below.

3.3 PLATONISM

I base the following cursory overview of Platonism mainly on Ferguson's clear and concise exposition (Ferguson 2003:330–335). Plato (429–347 B.C.E.) was the most important of Socrates' disciples and had a lasting impact on the intellectual thought of the West. Socrates' death brought about a religious awakening in him and he founded the Academy in Athens around 387 B.C.E. in order to continue the teachings of his former master. He sought to arrive at the truth through discussions with his pupils (as had Socrates), teaching them to think and find answers to problems themselves, and therefore employed the literary device of dialogues—a device that would be used by Augustine centuries later, at Cassiciacum, for the same purpose. (Ferguson 2003:330–332).

Ferguson (2003:333–335) explains that Plato's theory of ideas (which I summarise in this paragraph) posited that ideas or forms existed beyond space and time. These ideas were actualised (and thereby degraded) when they took on a physical shape in the physical world. The material world was limited by time and space. Ideas or forms were real, but the things that

imitated and represented them in the physical world were only poor copies or *images*. The ultimate ideal of all ideas or forms was the idea of the Good (the impersonal principle of perfection) which indicated a First Principle (a divine Being that was true, absolute, and immutable) who was responsible for cosmic order. Plato maintained that philosophers who had seen and understood the world of ideas, could better clarify reality than those who had not: they could shed light on shadowy images of reality, as illustrated by his allegorical “Myth of the cave”⁷³ in the *Republic* 7 (514A–19A).

Important aspects of Platonism are pointed out by Ferguson (2003:334–335) which helps to understand how Augustine would come to think of God as spirit and not matter. Plato conceived that man had a spiritual as well as material reality, i.e. an invisible soul within a visible, bodily vehicle. The soul understood ideas, the body did not; the soul was therefore part of the spiritual realm of ideas, and the body part of the material realm (as physical representation of the soul). For Plato, the soul was life, the true self which had a divine element, and existed both before birth and after death (as he argued in the *Phaedo*); it was immortal by nature and its home was the celestial realm. This body/soul conception greatly influenced Western thought and it is accepted that the theology of the early Church Fathers was mainly developed within a Platonic framework of spiritual reality, an immortal soul that separated from the body after death, cosmic order, and a fair and moral society. Christian doctrine on the immortality of soul differed in that it held that the body would be resurrected and that eternal life depended on the grace of God.

Platonism was not a closed system, but one that evolved and developed as it was interpreted by Plato’s successors. All of these developments were based on the foundation of certain metaphysical and ethical-ascetic traits (Gatti 1996:14), the most important of which included (a) the distinction between a sensible and an intelligible reality, where the latter is the cause of the first; (b) the definition of man as consisting of a body and a soul, analogous to the two

⁷³ Cited by Ferguson (2003:335).

levels of reality respectively; and (c) the belief that it was necessary to divorce the body from the soul, which had eternal life. Gerson (1996:3, 5) points out that, after Plato's death, his successors at the Academy developed and defined his thoughts in various ways until the Academy ceased to exist in ca. 529 C.E. In the intervening centuries, philosophers like Aristotle, the Stoics, the Epicureans and the Skeptics had all commented on and criticised Plato's works.

3.4 MIDDLE PLATONISM

Gatti (1996) points out that the thought of Plotinus (founder of Neo-Platonism) can only be understood by studying the context in which it developed. A renewed interest in metaphysical, theological and spiritual matters in Alexandria between the first and third centuries C.E. created an environment in which Philo Judaeus and Middle Platonism⁷⁴ thrived. The philosophical school of Ammonius Sacca had been established around 200 C.E. in Alexandria, where Plotinus was to study. Ammonius' school provided a conclusive link between Middle Platonism and the beginnings of Neo-Platonism (Gatti 1996:17). Philo of Alexandria straddled the period between the first century B.C.E. and the first century C.E. and merged aspects of ancient Greek thought with aspects of Hebrew culture and, through his works, influenced Plotinus on such matters as the *logos*, asceticism, the intelligible world, and spiritual powers, as Gatti (1996:12, 17) observes.

Middle Platonism differed from Platonism, but did not yet have the characteristics of Plotinianism, according to Gatti (1996:15). The Middle Platonists used the *Timaeus* as their basic text to reconsider Plato (Gatti 1996:16) and tried to harmonise Plato's and Aristotle's thoughts on the universe and the divine (Ferguson 2003:388). The Middle Platonists, from the end of the first century C.E. onwards, turned more and more to religion as a

⁷⁴ "Middle Platonism" is the scholarly name for Platonism as it developed during the first century B.C.E. and the second century C.E. (Ferguson 2003:387). Cicero (end of 1 B.C.E.), Philo (beginning of 1 C.E.) and Plutarch (end of 1 C.E.) are all associated with the Platonic tradition and their works reflect the capacity of Platonism to absorb various elements of their periods into a new whole (Ferguson 2003:388).

source of clarification in their philosophical quest for the truth, as Ferguson (2003:388) maintains. Important contributions of Middle Platonism to later philosophy and metaphysics include its rediscovery of Plato's concept of immateriality, according to Gatti (1996:15), and its attempt to correlate Aristotle's Supreme Mind (the Unmoved Mover) with Plato's Good (the first principle of the world of forms), as held by Ferguson (2003:388). They considered Plato's ideas or forms (in their transcendent sense) to be thoughts in God's mind, i.e., they identified the intelligible world "with the contents of a supreme Intellect" and regarded the ideas as forms of beings Gatti (1996:16). Importantly, the Middle Platonists conceived man's ultimate goal to be the imitation of God: they reasoned that assimilation to the divine, by attaining to "likeness in God, so far as is possible", would ensure happiness in this life, as argued by Gatti (1996:16).

The purpose of the brief overview of the most important characteristics of Pythagoreanism, Platonism and Middle Platonism (as they bear on Christian Neo-Platonism) was to serve as an introduction to a more extensive discussion on Neo-Platonism. This is essential for the explanation of its influence on Ambrose and the Milanese Christian Neo-Platonists, and ultimately Augustine, which I discuss in Chapter 4.

3.5 NEO-PLATONISM

3.5.1 Introduction

Gatti (1996:25) provides a succinct description of the principal characteristics of Neo-Platonism. There exist various spheres of being, from the highest to the lowest, in hierarchical order, with every lower sphere derived from the one above it. The highest sphere, which is the cause of all being, is therefore beyond being. It is called the "One" and is totally simple, self-contained, and independent.

Neo-Platonism helped Augustine to see God as spiritual and not material, and therefore as eternal and heavenly. It was not seen as some kind of obscure doctrine during Augustine's lifetime, but was well known as many of its central tenets and principles had been disseminated through the works of Plotinus and later through his followers and commentators, as Burch (1981:xvii) points out. The Neo-Platonic movement was compatible with a number of beliefs and was popular because it offered an acceptable way of life and, importantly, a way for finding wisdom. Those Christians who embraced its principles, extracted and adapted meaning from Neo-Platonic thought to suit their own needs, and discarded those points with which they did not agree. The term "Neo-Platonism" was coined in the mid-eighteenth century and it was only in the twentieth century that it came to be regarded as a true form of Platonism (Gatti 1996:23).

Certain Neo-Platonic philosophers, including Porphyry, were hostile towards Christianity. They particularly challenged the Christian doctrines of God, creation, soteriology (the work of Christ), eschatology, and Christology (the person of Christ). The Christological principles of the incarnation, suffering, and resurrection of Jesus Christ were totally unacceptable to them, since these disagreed with Plato's teachings on divine immutability. (Simmons 2000:861).

In the section that follows below, I will consider the various aspects of Plotinus' philosophical system in more detail, as he was founder of Neo-Platonism. My discussion will focus on his clarification of the Plotinian concepts of spiritual reality and its relation to the three hypostases of the One, the *nous*, and the soul, and how these concepts influenced Christian philosophy.

3.5.2 Plotinus, the *Enneads*, and clarification of Plato's philosophy

Plotinus (205–270 C.E.), Roman philosopher and founder and chief exponent of Neo-Platonism, was born of Greek origin in Egypt (Brown 2000:82). While

studying philosophy under Ammonius of Alexandria for ten years, he absorbed the Neo-Pythagorean doctrine of principles and numbers in a metaphysical dimension (Gatti 1996:12). He settled in Rome in 245 C.E. and taught philosophy until his death (Gerson 1996:3). Ammonius' intention was to reconcile Platonism with Aristotelianism and maintained that God was the source of all reality: God comprised the supreme reality, and man and his soul the lowest level of reality (Gatti 1996:16). Plotinus wrote a number of discourses, edited later by his pupil Porphyry into six groups of nine treatises, collectively known as the *Enneads* and published ca. 300 C.E. (Ferguson 2003:391). In the editorial process, Porphyry ignored the chronological order in which the treatises had been written in favour of a thematic arrangement, ranging from the worldly (the concrete) to the heavenly (the abstract) (Gerson 1996:3). Group I deals with human goods, groups II and III with the physical world, group IV with the soul, group V with knowledge and intelligible reality, and group VI with the first principle of everything that exists, called the "One" (Gerson 1996:3). The *Enneads* is the major source of Plotinus' thought and also contains his biography, written by Porphyry.

As a disciple of Plato, Plotinus knew the works of Plato's critics well, with the result that his understanding and expression of Plato's thoughts were mediated through his defences to that criticism, in which he added his own thoughts and explanations. He was therefore more than just a mediator of Plato's work and could be regarded as the leading philosopher in the seven centuries that separated Aristotle⁷⁵ from Augustine. Plotinus regarded himself as a Platonist (as pointed out above, the term "Neo-Platonist" was only coined in the 18th century to designate new developments of Plato's thought since his death) (Gerson 1996:4–5).

Gatti (1996:10) points out the important fact that Plotinus synthesised almost eight centuries of Greek thought in his writings. He was most influenced by Pythagoras (the conception of principles and numbers), Parmenides (who had

⁷⁵ Aristotle lived from 384–422 B.C.E. (Ferguson 2003:338) and is regarded as a disciple of Plato by Late Antique commentators (Gatti 1996:22).

identified being with thinking, and who inspired Plotinus' second hypostasis), Aristotle (who also contributed to the formulation of Plotinus' second hypostasis with his concept of the *nous* (the supreme reasoning part of the soul) and his thoughts on the soul and on categories), and Plato (especially the metaphysical and ascetic aspects of Plato's doctrines.) Although Plotinus criticised the Stoics' materialism, he did utilise the Stoic explanations of God, the soul, and nature in conceptualising the *logos* and his philosophy on human nature and logic. (Gatti 1996:10–11).

Plotinus' writings are complicated and not systematic, although a Plotinian philosophical system does exist in that he (a) discerned three basic entities (called "hypostases") and their principles of operation, and (b) attempted to give a unified explanation of the world (Gerson 1996:1). Rist (1996:390) defines "hypostases" as "types of enduring reality". The first three hypostases, also called "principles" (*archai*), are the One, Intellect, and Soul, according to Bussanich (1996:38). Plotinus insisted, however, that he was only an exegete of Plato and that his formulation of the three transcendent hypostases was merely a new interpretation of an extant theory (Gatti 1996:17–18). Gatti (1996:18) holds that Plotinus' metaphysical theory was anchored in the doctrine that many proceeded from the One, and that the way to the One was through contemplating the Intelligible.

Plotinus' version of Platonism may be deduced from his responses to criticism leveled against Plato (mentioned above) by reformulating and explaining Plato's assertions, and by correcting inaccurate interpretations (Gerson 1996:6). By a careful rereading of Plato, Plotinus, as a mature philosopher, was able to clarify and elaborate on Plato's texts in his own search for the truth and to refute the Gnostics' rejection of the ancient philosophers as sources of truth (Gatti 1996:19–21). In trying to accurately interpret Plato and form an overall synthesis by the systematisation of his dialogues by concentrating on the *meaning* and *intention* of the texts, Plotinus kept in mind that Plato's writings all had a common vision, and that he often posed problems with no exact solutions (Gatti 1996:20–21, 25, 27). Gerson (1996:6)

contends that Plotinus subscribed to the principles⁷⁶ underpinning Plato's theory of ideas or forms.

3.5.3 Spiritual concept of reality

Of importance to this study is the fact that Philo of Alexandria conceptualised the *spiritual* approach of some of the early Church Fathers to the *imago Dei*, according to which man could only reflect the image of God in a spiritual way, since God was wholly Spirit. Plotinus agreed, arguing that human beings were "spiritual intellects who were able to contemplate the Word in his role as the image of the One" (McLeod 1999:234). Plotinus also accorded with Plato that persons were not bodies and that their destiny was also incorporeal, which was superior to a corporeal state on earth (Gerson 1996:7). However, after a "fall", believed Plotinus, humans were encased in a body, limiting their ability to contemplate the One (McLeod 1999:234).

3.5.4 Procreation, contemplation and creation

In my view, Gatti (1996:27–34) gives a very clear explanation of the Platonic concept of *hypostasis*. The two main doctrines of Plotinus' system held that the hypostases proceed from the One according to a circular triad, and that contemplation constituted creation. Plotinus explained the derivation of entities from the first principle by using various examples from the world of the senses, the best-known being the radiation of light from a luminous central source in decreasing degrees to illustrate successive hypostases in hierarchical order. Although the One, as the central source, produced all other things (inferior to itself), it remained stable and undiminished, and was in no need of those things it had produced as the result of the activity *of* being and the activity *from* being. The activity *of* the One (its self-contemplation)

⁷⁶ According to Gerson (1996:6), these principles include (a) the existence of eternal truth, (b) the fact that eternal truths are truths about eternal entities, (c) the fact that eternal truth is not simple, (d) the fact that eternal truths and the reality that underpins them serve as example or paradigm for the world of the senses, so that the latter partakes in the former, and, crucially, (e) the fact that there is a first principle which, although absolutely simple in itself, is the cause of a complex eternal truth.

produces activity *from* the One, i.e. the creation of the second hypostases called the *nous*. The activity *of* the *nous* (its self-contemplation) produces activity *from* the nous, namely the creation of the third hypostasis called the soul. In and through infinite contemplation, the hypostases and the beings are created).

Gatti (1996:31) further explains that, in presenting a circular triadic law, Plotinus postulated a third activity called the *epistrophē*, which pertains to the return (conversion) of the generated hypostasis to contemplate its generator, i.e. the hypostasis hierarchically above it. (I discussed the concept of *epistrophē* in the context of Christian conversion in section 1.3 of Chapter 1). When the lower-level hypostasis contemplates its generating hypostasis, it attains self-determination, enabling it to become something definite: when the *nous* contemplates its first principle, the One, it receives the power from the One to change from shapeless matter into the world of Forms. (Gatti 1996:31).

In the case of man, who had been alienated from the Absolute, it meant that he had to find the right way of returning to the Infinite: his return involved the activity of the soul contemplating the truth, in order to be fed by it, and this activity was expressed in taking the necessary ascetic-religious steps to attain his goal (Gatti 1996:32–33) of union with the source of all being, which would result in man's salvation (Ferguson 2003:392). This union would be the realisation of Ultimate Reality and the end result of contemplation, manifested in the rare experience of ecstasy and bliss, as maintained by Ferguson (2003:392). However, Ferguson (2003:392) points out that, in contrast to Augustine's later view that salvation was the result of the grace of God, Plotinus held that salvation could only be achieved through the will and by continued effort of man himself.

3.5.5 The metaphysical concept of the One

Gatti (1996:28) observes that, in contrast to Plato, Aristotle and all the other Greek philosophers, who had accepted the first principle as the final explanation, Plotinus argued that the One existed because it was “free, self-productive activity.” The One was perfect in itself, and, as the supreme Good, desired in and through itself what it wanted to be: it had conceived and created itself, and contained the choice and will for its own being. All other beings had an innate desire to participate in the Good (Gatti 1996:28–29). Another original insight of Plotinus was the development of the doctrine that the three hypostases proceeded from one another, according to Gatti (1996:19). Plotinus infused Plato’s system with spirituality by adding a mystical-religious element which posited that, through contemplation, man could experience an ecstasy, thereby being assimilated to God, which meant that man could be unified with the One, as pointed out by (Gatti 1996:25).

Bussanich (1996:38–41) points out that, for Plotinus, the pinnacle of human development is mystical union with the One, and to reach that objective, emotional and reasoning abilities are required. All beings come from a single source, the Good or the One (*archē*), a transcendent, infinite being. Although this first principle of reality and reason is unexplainable and unknowable, it is the ultimate object of love, and therefore the final objective or *telos* of all beings is to be reunited with it. The task of philosophy is to arrive at the truth and to attain a grasp of ultimate reality. The phrase used by Bussanich (1996:57), *archē kai telos* (the Good is the beginning and the end) could be seen as a cryptic reference to what Augustine was to discover in his journey of conversion and in his studies of both Scripture and Neo-Platonic thought: man originates from God, is sustained by Him, and returns to Him.

Bussanich (1996:42–47) distinguishes two perspectives of the One on the basis of Plotinus’ description in the *Enneads*. First, the One in itself is simple, self-sufficient, and unique, and has total freedom to be what it necessarily is (Bussanich 1996:43). Since the One is simple and has no parts, it has no

internal relations; nor does it have external relations. It has no form since it is not complex, and cannot be determined or defined. It is therefore infinite and beyond being, and has unlimited power to generate the intelligible world. The One is perfect, since it depends on nothing, although all things depend on it. The One therefore has the character of divine *aseity*,⁷⁷ that is to say, its existence as a necessary being is derived from itself, from its own reality, from no other source and without cause. Second, all other things proceed from the One since the One is the cause of lower realities and the source of being; its continued existence is sustained through continuous participation (efficient cause); at the same time, the One is the reason of being, resulting in the lower realities' desire to return to it as their end goal (the return of the soul to its source) (final cause). These two types of causes are contained in the doctrine of procession (*proodos*) from, and reversion (*epistrophē*) to, the first principle.

3.5.6 The ordering of reality

O'Meara (1996:66–67, 72, 74–75, 79) maintains that Plotinus used the concepts of priority and posteriority to refer to the way reality is structured, with priority by nature regarded as being the most important. Plotinus' view of reality was therefore not merely hierarchical. He understood Plato's conception of priority by nature as a relationship of non-reciprocal dependence: the prior exists independently of the posterior (that which follows it in a numbered series), whereas the posterior cannot exist without the prior (that which comes before it in the series). Even if the posterior was destroyed, the prior would continue to exist. The prior is always more simple than the posterior, and the One is the most simple of all, since it is single and the indivisible cause of everything (Rist 1996:391). Further, the prior forms part of the posterior, and the posterior is contained potentially in the prior. Reality is therefore a structure of dependence, and causes are superior to their effects.

⁷⁷ The philosophical term "aseity" refers to the existence of a being that is derived from itself and that has no other source (*Collins English dictionary: complete and unabridged*. 2003.)

Plotinus maintained that actuality had priority over potentiality: intellect and soul are prior and superior to the body, with the body having the potential to evolve towards them. Intellect and soul (the prior) can therefore exist apart from the body, but the opposite is not possible. By nature, intellect and soul (as intelligible reality) have priority over the body (as material reality). Intelligible (immaterial) reality is not limited by time and space, whereas material reality is. Soul is responsible for various forms and levels of life, and the souls of individuals all relate to one world soul. (O'Meara 1996:74–75).

Plotinus argued that intellect is prior by nature to soul in the intelligible realm, but posterior to the One, which is absolutely simple and on which all things depend. The One is perfect and all-powerful, since by its dignity and power it constitutes reality: everything else depends on it and it is present in everything, yet it is independent from all else and is beyond intellect or intelligible being. This notion corresponds with Plato's explanation in the *Republic* (509b9–10) that the form of the Good is the highest form (O'Meara 1996:76–77).

3.5.7 Soul and intellect

Blumenthal (1996:82–83, 85–86, 92) succinctly describes the way Plotinus regards the most important functions of the soul (*psuchē*) and intellect as being the thinking functions of the mind, and the role of imaging certain relations. Although the three hypostases may be present in each person, only those individuals who have progressed intellectually and morally far enough are able to elevate their souls to contemplate the higher levels of intellect and the One. An individual consists of both soul and body (*sōma*), with body consisting of both form and matter. The individual soul is an image or reflection of soul at the hypostatic level and excludes the intellect. The nature (*physis*) of a body depends on a soul that exists on a higher level than itself (Blumenthal 1996:85).

Plotinus explains the symbiotic relationship of the soul to the body by declaring in the *Enneads* (IV.3.221–4) that “soul is present to the body as light is to air” (Blumenthal 1996:86). The individual intellect is an image of the original hypostasis Intellect,⁷⁸ Soul as such is an image of Intellect, and Intellect is an image of the One. As Edwards (1999:588) puts it, the One is superior to the intellect, since unity, and therefore being, originate from it. Intellect is able to exist because it proceeds from the One, and then again attain unity with the One by returning to it. Soul creates the physical world from matter when it proceeds from Intellect with the purpose of imaging or mirroring ideas in visible form, as the case of man’s body. The fall of the soul is attributed to its attraction to the body (although the world soul remains unfallen), and to its attraction to the beauty of the created cosmos.

3.5.8 Platonism, Neo-Platonism and Christian philosophy

Following the description of Rist (1996:392–402), the last part of this section on Neo-Platonism aims to provide a link between Plotinus’ thought and the Christian doctrine of the second to the fourth centuries C.E., which in turn will provide a link with the Christian Neo-Platonists of Milan.

Before the time of Plotinus, Platonic philosophy had influenced Christian philosophers such as Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria. Platonic thought, as interpreted by Plotinus, influenced not only Plotinus’ contemporaries, but also those who came to know Platonism indirectly by way of Plotinus’ own writings and by his disciples’ further development thereof, later called “Neo-Platonism”. Knowledge of Neo-Platonism was obtained through both pagan and Christian sources. Although Plotinian writings did

⁷⁸ Plotinus uses the term *nous* for both reason and intellect, although he assigns different meanings to these two types of understanding. *Reason* looks at, and moves from, each object individually and then works from logical statement to conclusion. The *intellect* looks at its objects as a whole, taking them in with a single glance. When the process of understanding has been completed, logical activity has stopped, and one has moved from reasoning to intellection. Unity has been attained, and the various objects are no longer separate entities. Whereas reason has to do with propositions, intellect sees (or does not see) the truths of its objects. (Blumenthal 1996:92–93).

enable Christians to become broadly acquainted with Plato's philosophy, it did not mean that they agreed with everything Plotinus had written.

By merging the Platonic principle that goodness is by nature productive, with the Stoic thought of a sympathetic cosmos into his hypostasis of Soul, Plotinus was able to formulate a metaphysical law that consisted of three parts: rest in God (or the One); procession; and return to God. This law played an important role in the development of Christian ethics and asceticism. Plotinus contended that everything that existed, originated from the One, had always existed, and continued to exist only through the One's power of production. Christians, in contrast, believed that everything had been created from nothing by God. Plotinus replaced the basic metaphysical dualism of soul versus matter with a moral dualism according to which the body was not evil in itself, but merely a cause of temptation to the soul.

Whereas Plotinus agreed with Plato that the soul was immortal by nature, Christians believed that God, by His grace, had made the soul immortal, and that the bodies of the faithful would be resurrected to everlasting life. What did attract Christians was Plotinus' explanation that the soul would return from the earthly to the celestial world by the power of love (*erōs*) and ascend to God. In contrast to Plotinus, who believed that man himself could achieve perfection of his soul, orthodox Christian doctrine held that man's soul could only be perfected through Christ the Redeemer in his journey to God.

Christians could have obtained knowledge from sources such as Eusebius, and Plotinus' pupil Amelius. It is surmised that Plotinian thought started to penetrate the Greek East in the mid-fourth century by way of the Cappadocian Fathers,⁷⁹ who mainly obtained their knowledge of (Middle) Platonism from Origen, and whose knowledge was then strengthened by reading Plotinus' Neo-Platonic writings. In the Latin West, declining competence in Greek in

⁷⁹ Basil of Caesarea (who had studied in Athens around 351 C.E.); his brother Gregory of Nyssa, who stated certain Christian themes in a Platonic manner; and Gregory of Nazianzus, who referred to the Platonists as "those who have thought best about God and are nearest to us" in his *Oration* (31.5) and who believed that the power of *erōs* led man back to God (Rist 1996:398–399, 401).

the fourth century led to problems in the Latin translation of Greek philosophical terms.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I investigated the origins and most important tenets of Neo-Platonism in the context of Plotinus' philosophical system and his main extant work, the *Enneads*. Pythagoreanism, Platonism and Middle Platonism were three of the most important philosophical currents which contributed to Plotinus' thought, two others being Aristotelianism and Scepticism. Pythagoreanism held that the soul transmigrated to another body after death and that an ascetic lifestyle would purify the soul. The Neo-Pythagoreans maintained that a spiritual realm existed and that the soul united with the divine after the death of the body, since matter (the body) was evil. Platonism subscribed to the notion that transcendent ideas or forms were imaged by poor copies in the physical world, which had to aspire to attain the perfection of the Good (or First Principle). Middle Platonism turned to religion to help solve the problem of finding the truth and concluded that happiness in this life was only possible by assimilation to God.

Neo-Platonism was founded in an attempt by Plotinus to defend Plato's works against attack and inaccurate interpretation. In the process, he developed his own philosophical system. He identified various spheres of being, with the lower spheres each proceeding (*proodos*) from the one above them. The highest sphere, called the "One", was the cause of all other levels of reality, although itself was simple and uncaused. Plotinus regarded these levels of reality as entities or hypostases and identified the first three as the One, Intellect, and Soul. The One was the cause of a complex eternal truth, which could only be understood when the soul contemplated the intellect, and the intellect contemplated the One. Human beings were spiritual beings who could contemplate the One by means of contemplating the Word, since the Word was the image of the One. Through the activity of *epistrophē*, the lower created being reverted to the entity above it by contemplating it, which gave it

the power to revert to its original spiritual form. If the soul contemplated the Truth of the One, it would return to its source, the Good or the One, and be saved. The One is the embodiment of love and the ultimate goal of all beings is to be reunited with it. Only the souls of individuals who had progressed intellectually and morally to a sufficiently high level would be able to contemplate the Intellect and the One (the Truth).

Neo-Platonic thought had a lasting influence on Augustine and other Church Fathers and they adapted Neo-Platonic doctrine to Christian doctrine. The importance of Neo-Platonism for Augustine and for this study lies in the fact that it taught Augustine to conceive of God as spiritual and not material, as the Manicheans had maintained. Neo-Platonic thought also taught Augustine that man had both a material body and a spiritual soul. Through the soul or mind, man could contemplate the eternal God to attain to knowledge of Him and in that way ascend to Him as First Principle and the origin of man. Sin had defaced the divine image in Augustine and had broken off his spiritual relationship with God. Through spiritual contemplation of God, he would be able to re-establish a personal relationship with God to ascertain His will. By submitting to His will and obeying God's law, his sins would be effaced, the image healed, and his ascent to God made possible, thereby fulfilling his divine destiny or *telos*.

In the next chapter, I will consider the Neo-Platonic influence of the Milanese Christians on Augustine's intellectual, moral and spiritual development and his comprehension of a spiritual God, enlightening him to the fact that man was the spiritual image of God.

CHAPTER 4

THE MILAN PERIOD: ST AMBROSE AND CHRISTIAN NEO-PLATONISM

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 gave an overview of the origin and basic tenets of Neo-Platonism in order to provide the theoretical background to Chapter 4, which will examine the theological and Neo-Platonic philosophical sphere into which Augustine was drawn in Milan. I will consider the following aspects of Augustine's sojourn in Milan from 384 to 387 C.E. which aided his intellectual, moral and spiritual development: Ambrose's episcopal authority and his Neo-Platonic sermons and methodology of Scriptural exegesis; influential members of the Neo-Platonic circle; and the *libri platoniorum* which rekindled Augustine's enthusiasm for philosophy and helped him to understand the Christian faith intellectually.

4.2 ST AMBROSE AND THE CHURCH OF MILAN

Rist (1996:402) observes that St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, was a highly respected and influential philosopher and theologian who made innovative use of Neo-Platonic thought to explain Christian doctrine in his sermons. Milan was the most important centre of Christianity in the West during Ambrose's time, and both Milanese priests and lay people had been interested in Platonism and Neo-Platonism long before Augustine's arrival in 384 C.E. The Cathedral in Milan enjoyed greater prestige than the churches in either Rome or Carthage (McLynn 1999:17). When Augustine arrived in Milan in 384 C.E. (Brown 2000:69), Ambrose had been Bishop of Milan for more than a decade and, as such, played a powerful political role in the Imperial City. He had built a basilica and was a popular and powerful bishop and skilled rhetor. He had enjoyed an excellent classical education in Rome and

was fluent in both Latin and Greek, making him eminently suitable for reading and interpreting the Neo-Platonic works of Plotinus and Porphyry and for the exegesis of the New Testament.

According to Burns (1990:373–374), when Augustine arrived in Milan, he had lost all hope of gaining a true understanding of the nature of God through Manicheism. He still struggled with the problems of the nature of incorporeal reality, the source of evil, and how the divine and human could co-exist in Christ. For him, reality was wholly material and therefore he imagined God as also having a type of physical body, and evil as having a material form of its own, separate from man and extended in space—how then could man be responsible for originating and spreading evil? Also, he thought the Bible erred in describing Christ as a being that was both divine and tainted by matter by taking on the bodily shape of a human. Ambrose was to resolve these problems to a large extent, as I will discuss in section 4.3 below.

Brown (2000:69–71) further sketches Augustine's state of mind on his arrival in Milan, an emotional state which helped to make him susceptible to Ambrose's strong influence. Deprived of the certainty the Manicheans had offered about the reality of the universe and the "wisdom" offered in their sacred books, Augustine read the philosophical dialogues of Cicero shortly after his arrival in Milan and was exposed to the scepticism of the "New Academy". Cicero warned against following any given opinion slavishly and postulated that the search for wisdom was a life-long quest—a lesson Augustine had learnt personally through his encounter with Manicheism. As observed by Brown (2000:70), Augustine at this point experienced great uncertainty about all the philosophies he had investigated in his search for the truth, yet he rejected total scepticism. Brown (2000:70) maintains that Augustine consequently decided to exercise philosophical discipline to help him find an authority—a type of spiritual director—who would help him obtain his goal of wisdom and truth. It was at this crucial moment, argues Brown (2000:71), when Augustine had lost all self-confidence, that he met Ambrose, who would fulfill that role—albeit mostly through his sermons, as he was

usually too busy to see Augustine— and who would eventually baptize him in the Catholic Church. According to Brown (2000:71), at the time of his arrival in Milan, Augustine was under pressure to advance his career and it was therefore politically expedient to conform to the Christian Imperial Court in Milan and to become a catechumen of the Catholic Church. He could not have asked for a better sponsor than Ambrose,⁸⁰ who introduced him to the intellectual circle of Milan. Henry (1981:61) observes that Augustine came to regard Ambrose as the embodiment of the Apostolic tradition, and for that reason held that Ambrose had the authority to teach the revealed doctrine of the Catholic Church.

4.3 AMBROSE'S NEO-PLATONIC PHILOSOPHY AND SERMONS

Fluent in Greek, Ambrose was able to borrow and extract what he needed for his sermons in Latin from the works of illustrious Greek bishops and Christian scholars, as well as from pagan Greek philosophers. Ambrose argued that borrowing from the philosophers was permissible, as they themselves had borrowed their teachings from the Hebrew prophets, and adapted the philosophers' teachings to suit his own teachings of Scripture and morality (Brown 2000:74, 79). According to Rist (1996:403–404), Ambrose was well acquainted with the theology of the Greek East, including that of Origen⁸¹, Athanasius, Philo of Alexandria, and theologians closer to his own time. He had read parts of Plotinus and Porphyry both in Greek and Latin, but is unclear when, and to what extent, the Neo-Platonic writings influenced his basically Alexandrian and Middle Platonic viewpoints. Agreeing with Gregory of Nazianzus as to the importance of the Platonists, Ambrose referred to them as the “aristocrats of thought” in his *Epistula* 34.1 (Rist 1996:403).

Ambrose was also strongly influenced by a dialogue attributed to Plato, *Alcibiades maior*, according to which man should only be identified with his

⁸⁰ McLynn (1999:19) remarks that Augustine had such great admiration for Ambrose, that he asked Paulinus of Milan to write Ambrose's biography after Ambrose had died.

⁸¹ Including Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs* and other Christian writings (Rist 1996:403).

soul, and nothing else (Rist 1996:403). He generally regarded Platonism as important in that it shared the Christian beliefs of the priority of the immaterial world and the separation between body and soul. He agreed with Porphyry's belief that the body was only an instrument of the soul and should be discarded when the soul returned to God. Brown (2000:75–76) argues that Ambrose put great emphasis on the soul as constituting man, with scant regard for the body: this opinion was in contrast to the materialistic view of other ancient thinkers, with the exception of the Neo-Platonists. Ambrose converted Augustine to “the idea of a purely spiritual reality” (Brown 2000:76), which freed him from the Manichean thought that Catholic doctrine had confined God to a physical, human form, as Brown (2000:75–76) maintains. This notion of Ambrose would also enable Augustine to later understand man as the spiritual image of a spiritual God.

Ambrose cited Plotinus either directly or indirectly (from the Greek Fathers) and also utilised Plotinian ideas (but not his main themes) in his sermons, e.g. *De bono mortis* and *De Iacob* (Rist 1996:403–404). Courcelle (1968:94, 96, 97–99, 106–107) contends that Augustine was the recipient of both Christian and Neo-Platonic doctrine through Ambrose's sermons, including the *Hexaemeron*, *De Isaac uel anima*, and *De bono mortis*, which showed a marked Plotinian⁸² influence.

Following Courcelle (1968:99–102), I will briefly discuss the *Hexaemeron* as a representative example of Ambrose's Neo-Platonic-orientated sermons in order to ascertain its probable influence on Augustine. The nine sermons of the *Hexaemeron* deeply resounded with Augustine, as the sermons were anti-Manichean and allegorical in interpreting the Scriptures. The sermons were probably preached over a period of six days during Holy Week in 386 or 387 C.E. (Courcelle 1968:101). In the *Hexaemeron*, Ambrose commented on Genesis 1:26 (“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”) and declared that it did not mean that God resembled corporeal man, but the

⁸² For example, Courcelle (1968:106–107) points out that one of the fundamental themes treated in *De Isaac vel anima* is the notion that evil is the privation of good, which is also a major theme in Plotinus' work *On beauty*.

opposite: man resembled an incorporeal and invisible God and is therefore not essentially body made of dust, but a soul (Courcelle 1968:99). Since only the soul (and not the body) can be united with God through Christ, it has to be freed from the body in order to adhere to Jesus. According to Courcelle (1968:102), Ambrose's sermons affected Augustine in the following way: (a) he was freed of the last Manichean misconceptions of Catholic doctrine; (b) he comprehended that the New Testament was the key to understanding the Old Testament, which previously he had regarded as obscure and difficult; and (c) he turned towards a philosophical system that affirmed (i) the spirituality of God and the soul and (ii) the free will of man.

Courcelle (1968:102) maintains that Augustine did not immediately grasp everything he had learnt from Ambrose's sermons. Burns (1990:374, 377) points out that Augustine gradually came to a more complete understanding of Ambrose's teachings⁸³ by reading Neo-Platonic books. Also, Augustine was also now convinced of the divine authority of Scripture, which was God's instrument of instruction, and that helped him to accept the Bible's explanation of Christ's humanity.

4.4 AMBROSE'S PASTORAL ROLE AND SCRIPTURAL EXEGESIS

Although Augustine met Ambrose when he first arrived in Milan, Ambrose had a very busy schedule, and Augustine was therefore unable to meet him regularly to discuss his theological questions. Still, by attending church and listening to Ambrose's sermons, Augustine learnt a great deal about Christian doctrines, liturgy, and the authority that the Catholic Church accorded Scripture (Henry 1981:62–63). He was now able to learn about the Christian faith in a systematic way and absorbed a Neo-Platonic influence through Ambrose's sermons. Alexander (2008:90) points out that Ambrose was one of the few concrete links Augustine had with the Catholic Church. Satterlee (2002:67–68) describes Ambrose as a diligent pastor who delivered powerful

⁸³ Ambrose's teachings pertained (amongst others) to (a) the nature of incorporeal reality, (b) the origin of evil (i.e. the result of man exercising his free will), and (c) the incarnation (i.e. Christ was indeed fully human and fully God).

sermons on Sundays and feast days and who celebrated the Eucharist daily. He wrote metrical Latin hymns⁸⁴ which were very popular and introduced the singing of psalms and hymns to his congregation. His sermons abounded with quotations from and paraphrases of the Bible and he imitated the rhythm and texture of Scripture in his preaching (Satterlee 2002:92) in order to instruct his congregants, of whom probably very few possessed a Bible which they could read themselves. His rhetorical skills were obvious in his sermons, especially when he preached against heresy, e.g. Arianism (Satterlee 2002:97).

Rist (1996:403) distinguishes three main influences of Ambrose on Augustine: he taught him the Alexandrian way (especially Origen's) of interpreting the Old Testament allegorically, thereby refuting Manichean charges against the Old Testament; he urged him to regard God and the soul in a spiritual, non-material way; and he persuaded him to believe in the Christian faith before trying to understand it. As Henry (1981:86) explains it, Augustine as a young man had been put off from reading the Bible because he had found the style too simple—especially in comparison to Cicero—and the texts full of contradictions. However, Ambrose's spiritual (allegorical) exegesis of the Old Testament solved many of the difficulties that Augustine had in understanding certain passages and enabled him to see the Biblical patriarchs as true philosophers. Burns (1990:375) pertinently observes that Augustine learnt from Ambrose that the Bible could be interpreted on various levels: a literal reading contributed to a more beneficial way of life among the uneducated, while an allegorical interpretation afforded those who already knew Scripture a deeper understanding of the Truth, namely Jesus Christ. Further, maintains Burns (1990:376), Ambrose showed Augustine that the Catholic way of life, like the Bible, was an instrument to teach both the learned and unlearned how to lead a Godly life according to true Christian doctrine.

⁸⁴ Henry (1981:52) observes that, while discussing the philosophy of happiness at Cassiciacum (as reported in the *Beata vita* (4.35)), Monica remembered the inspiring hymns of Ambrose. She recited the pleading last verse of Ambrose's hymn, *Deus creator omnium*, to Augustine and their companions in order to emphasise that man could be happy if he lived in accordance with the fundamental Christian virtues.

4.5 THE CIRCLE OF CHRISTIAN NEO-PLATONISTS AT MILAN

According to Rist (1996:402), Milan in the late fourth century was home to the first important group or circle of Christian intellectuals who studied Plotinus' writings. At the centre of this group was the priest Simplicianus, who had baptised Ambrose⁸⁵ and who both knew and influenced the great African rhetor and translator of Neo-Platonic works, Marius Victorinus (Rist 1996:402–403). All of these figures contributed to Augustine's intellectual, moral and spiritual development, and I will discuss them briefly in this section.

Although Ambrose had helped Augustine to penetrate the spiritual or figurative meaning of the Old Testament, he needed further help in his quest for absolute certainty on certain matters, including the origin of evil (Brown 2000:79). As the official rhetor at the Imperial Court at Milan, Augustine and his friends were within the ambit of influential Milanese citizens, and he made the acquaintance of such intellectually-inclined men as Zenobius, Hermogenianus, and Manlius Theodorus (Brown 2000:81). These intellectuals introduced Augustine to Platonic philosophy,⁸⁶ by means of the works of Plotinus, who had revived Plato's teachings about one hundred years earlier (Brown 2000:82). Brown (2000:82) points out that the members of the Neo-Platonic circle regarded themselves as the direct heirs of Plato, and therefore simply called themselves "Platonists".

According to Brown (2000:84), Simplicianus was the spiritual father of Ambrose and introduced him to Neo-Platonic thought. Simplicianus also influenced Augustine: for example, he told Augustine the inspiring story of Victorinus' conversion to Catholic Christianity (Henry 1981:5), and he discussed with Augustine the similarities between Neo-Platonism and the

⁸⁵ Rist (1996:403) mistakenly asserts that Simplicianus also baptised Augustine. Various other sources confirm that Augustine was baptised by Ambrose, e.g. Brown (2000:117–118) and Markus (1999:500).

⁸⁶ Brown (2000:84–85) remarks that, for the Christian Neo-Platonists, including Augustine, Platonism and Christianity were similar in that both directed man to another, spiritual world, as Brown (2000:84) points out. Platonism was regarded as the only true culture of philosophy of Augustine's time. Augustine had to reconcile ideas gleaned from the *libri platoniorum* with his own traditional religion of Catholicism.

Prologue of John's Gospel (Lancel 2002:83). Burch (1981:xviii) maintains that Simplicianus not only served as exemplar to other non-believers, but that his contribution to the Church also lay in the fact that he was responsible for the first Latin commentaries on the Bible. In these commentaries, he used Neo-Platonism as the source for constructing theological theories. Henry (1981:65) makes the important observation that Simplicianus, as a holy and worthy priest, impressed Augustine with his assurance that the philosophy of the "Platonists" was worth following. In the opinion of Lancel (2002:83), Simplicianus was the direct cause, more than Ambrose, of Augustine's conversion.

Christian Platonism in Milan had its origin in Victorinus' Latin translations of the works of Plotinus and other Neo-Platonists (Brown 2000:84). Rist (1996:402) describes Victorinus as a well-known African rhetor who lived in Rome around 350 C.E. and who was fluent in both Greek and Latin. He was the first Latin author who had an in-depth knowledge of both Plotinus' and Porphyry's works. He wrote treatises against Arius and tried to adapt the metaphysics of Porphyry in his attempts to defend the Nicene decision regarding the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father. In further efforts to reconcile Plotinian ideas with the Nicene Creed of consubstantiality, Victorinus merged Plotinus' first two hypostases and equated the One to Christ, the Son and Word of God. His theology, influenced by Neo-Platonism, was possibly the first systematic explanation of the Trinitarian doctrine, as surmised by Rist (1996:402). His theological works were, however, difficult to understand, and were not as widely read as his Latin translations of Plotinian and other Neo-Platonic writings, which were particularly influential in Milan. Victorinus converted to Catholic Christianity and became a member of the Church at an advanced age (Burch 1981:xviii).

It was, however, according to Henry (1981:66), the humility and sincerity of the famous Victorinus that had the biggest influence on Augustine. In confessing his newly-found Christian faith publicly to the whole congregation, he served as a corrective to the intellectual pride of Plotinus and other Neo-

Platonists. Victorinus became for him a deeply impressive example of Christian piety, since he had renounced his chair in rhetoric (in accordance with a law of the Emperor Julian) rather than renounce his faith. Henry (1981:67) further observes that the fact that both Simplicianus and Victorinus were prominent members of the well-organised Catholic Church *and* recommended the study of Neo-Platonic philosophy, carried serious weight. Beatrice (1989:263) argues that, for Augustine, Victorinus' conversion thirty years earlier mirrored the anguish of his own conversion to Catholic Christianity, the more so since both were well-known rhetors.

4.6 THE *LIBRI PLATONICORUM*

Augustine read certain Neo-Platonic books⁸⁷ in Milan, which he failed to identify in the *Confessiones*, simply stating that God had brought to his attention "some books of the Platonists, translated from Greek into Latin" (*Conf.* 7.ix.13) (Beatrice 1989:248). As pointed out by Beatrice (1989:248), various scholars had tried to identify these books, veering from the *Enneads* of Plotinus (majority opinion); to the works of Plotinus *and* Porphyry (here he refers to the conclusion of Courcelle (1963:42)); to solely the works of Porphyry (minority opinion). Beatrice (1989:249) contends that Augustine's use of the term *Platonici* referred to a specific group of Plato's disciples who lived close to Augustine's own period, and of these, by the process of elimination, only Plotinus and Porphyry qualify (Beatrice 1989:249). Porphyry, also a Greek, was both Plotinus' pupil and biographer and organised Plotinus' teachings on Plato into a logical system of thought in a work called the *Enneads*, as discussed in Chapter 3. According to Brown (2000:83), a lost work of Porphyry, *De regressu animae*,⁸⁸ could be used to encapsulate religious life in Milan during Augustine's time, when the emphasis was on the return of the soul to heaven.⁸⁹ Although initially positively disposed towards

⁸⁷ Henry (1981:4) points out that the reading of these books liberated Augustine from his doubts and revealed to him a new inner, spiritual world, distinct from the physical world.

⁸⁸ O'Meara (1959), as cited by (Beatrice 1989:255–256), identifies the *libri de regressu animae* with *Philosophy from oracles* or part of it.

⁸⁹ For example, Theodorus' sister was a nun in the Ambrosian Basilica, where she had isolated herself from worldly concerns (Brown 2000:83).

Christianity, Porphyry later would become infamous for his work *Against the Christians*⁹⁰ (Brown 2000:83).

Beatrice (1989) explains at some length the problem of identifying the specific titles of the *libri platoniorum* which were read by Augustine and which profoundly influenced his Christian thought, as reflected in the *Confessiones* and his other writings. The difficulty arises owing to the fact that Augustine so thoroughly rethought and transformed the ideas gleaned from these books that it is almost impossible to pinpoint his original sources, since “his language is saturated with Neo-Platonism” (Beatrice 1989:250). One way of tracing his sources, however, is to note his direct citations of specific Neo-Platonic works, especially numerous citations from the *Enneads* in works other than the *Confessiones*. Beatrice (1989:251) maintains that the deep impression the Neo-Platonic ideas made on Augustine greatly contributed to his severance of the links with Manichean dualism and materialism and his conversion to Catholicism. The effect of reading the *libri platoniorum* on Augustine was electrifying: it fired the same enthusiasm in him as when he had read the *Hortensius* of Cicero while still a teenager (Lancel 2002:84).

Despite the numerous citations from the *Enneads*, there is no proof that Augustine had access to the complete Latin translation by Victorinus, according to Beatrice, who maintains that Augustine had access to Greek wisdom through other *libri platoniorum*, and that he used those parts of Plotinus’ thought which substantially agreed with the Catholic Christian faith (Beatrice 1989:252). Further, Beatrice (1989:255–257) conjectures that Augustine, by reading Porphyry’s *Philosophy from oracles*⁹¹ in Victorinus’ Latin translation⁹², was exposed to parts of various Greek philosophical and religious works, including those of Plato, Plotinus, and the Egyptian Hermes

⁹⁰ Beatrice (1989:261) contends that both the *De regressu animae* (Epistle 102) and *Contra christianos* (*De civitate Dei* X.29) are not the Latin titles of individual works of Porphyry, but are only expressions used by Augustine to indicate two different ways of referring to specific aspects of the anti-Christian contents of the *Philosophy from oracles*.

⁹¹ Porphyry’s object with this work was to explain various philosophical doctrines in order to enlighten those searching for truth and the salvation of the soul (Beatrice 1989:254–255).

⁹² As attested by Augustine in *De civitate Dei* XIX.23 (Beatrice 1989:255).

Trismegistus. Finally, since Augustine also relied on this work for explaining matters related to salvation and mediation between man and God, Beatrice (1989:255) concludes that this was the *only* Neo-Platonic work read by Augustine in Milan, and that he obtained from it his knowledge of the *Enneads* and Plotinus' Neo-Platonic philosophy.

Rist (1996:406), however, argues that Augustine actually read parts of the *Enneads*⁹³ in Latin translation, with the purpose of finding the way to a good life grounded in truth, and that that reading opened his eyes to the fact that Ambrose's sermons were supported by philosophical arguments from Plotinus. Lancel (2002:84) points out that "there is now fairly general agreement that Augustine first of all read Plotinian texts and if he read Porphyry it was afterwards, and not in Milan or at Cassiciacum in 386."

4.7 AUGUSTINE AND NEO-PLATONISM

Augustine, although impressed by certain similarities between the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the First Intelligence and John's teaching on the Word of God (Henry 1981:65), detected, almost from the beginning, certain defects in Neo-Platonism (from a Christian point of view), e.g. it did not mention Jesus' name nor did it indicate how the soul could ascend to the Intelligible World. Still, it was Neo-Platonism that led him to a spiritual and transcendent God, away from the Manichean focus on material matter (Henry 1981:65). Augustine realised the intellectual growth afforded him, by the grace of God, in reading the *Philosophy from oracles*, since its strong Neo-Platonic spiritualism set him free from Manichean dualism and materialism (Beatrice 1989:262). Beatrice (1989:362), referring to *Confessions* 8.ii.3,⁹⁴ points out that Simplicianus convinced Augustine that all the Neo-Platonic writings contained the Word of God. That reassurance was enough to satisfy

⁹³ It is uncertain exactly which parts of the *Enneads* Augustine read at the time of his conversion, according to Rist (1996:406), who surmises that Augustine continued his study of Neo-Platonism after his conversion and later ordination.

⁹⁴ "...whereas in all the Platonic books God and his Word keep slipping in" (*Conf.* 8.ii.3).

Augustine that the Christian Trinitarian theology essentially agreed with the Neo-Platonic hypostases (Beatrice 1989:362).

According to Rist (1996:404, 408), it was Augustine who realised that Neo-Platonism could help philosophical intellectuals convert to Christianity by serving as an intellectual aid to explain much of Christian belief and doctrine. Neo-Platonism was the only philosophy⁹⁵ of Augustine's time which presented two important beliefs to Christians: a belief in an immaterial world ruled by divine influence, and a belief that man's love (*erōs*) of, and desire for, the Good, could guide him back from the material to the spiritual world. Matthews (1980:4, 8) is of the opinion that Augustine did not suddenly change from being predominantly Neo-Platonist in 386 C.E. to being solely Christian after his ordination in 391 C.E. Rather, the Neo-Platonic tone of his writings immediately post-conversion gradually matured as he grew in the Christian faith, and his works came to be characterised by distinct Christian views.

How did Augustine's conversion to Neo-Platonic philosophy help to convert him to Catholic Christianity and the authority of the Catholic Church? Matthews (1980:29) summarises three scholarly positions on the matter. First, it is held that Neo-Platonism helped Augustine to renounce Manichean dualism and to regard God in a spiritual and not a material sense. Second, it is argued that Augustine was a Christian from birth and only read the *libri platonicorum* after he had submitted to the authority and doctrines of the Catholic Church. Third, it is reasoned that Augustine absorbed Neo-Platonic and Christian teachings simultaneously through the Neo-Platonic-influenced sermons of Ambrose. Matthews (1980:30) concludes that each of these positions depends on how to decide when someone has become a Christian. In the case of Augustine, the *Confessiones* testify to his decision to become a catechumen (introducing him to systematic theology), the life-changing experience in the garden in Milan to accept the authority of Christ, and his subsequent wish to be baptised (Matthews 1980:31, 71), all of which contributed to finally and irrevocably convert him to Catholic Christianity.

⁹⁵ Matthews (1980:8) points out that Neo-Platonism has a religious character.

Augustine defended his Christianised and rightful use of the pagan Neo-Platonic philosophy by referring to Paul's missionary speech to the Athenians⁹⁶ and to the fact that gold belonged to God, even if it came from pagan Egypt,⁹⁷ he was therefore justified to use the "treasures" of Neo-Platonic doctrine (Beatrice 1989:262). He went so far as to say in *De doctrina christiana* II.40.60 (written roughly at the same time as the *Confessiones*) that those Platonic doctrines and theological truths (the gold and silver of liberal pagan culture) which were in harmony with the Christian faith, should be re-appropriated by Christians, and put to their rightful use of preaching the gospel (Beatrice 1989:263).

Augustine used Neo-Platonic philosophical principles as an intellectual tool to help develop and clarify Christian doctrine for himself and others (Burch 1981:xxiv). According to Crouse (1987:54–55), Augustine explained the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, creation, and incarnation in terms of the Neo-Platonic mediation between the One and finite beings, the latter characterised by multiplicity and changeability. He absorbed Neo-Platonic thought on such problems as divine unity and divine hypostases, the nature of the soul and the nature of matter; and, in doing so, formed the way he understood Scripture and the main tenets of Christian doctrine as taught by the Catholic Church. Crouse (1987:55–56) elucidates how Augustine used the Neo-Platonic doctrine of illumination to posit that the soul of man was enlightened by the eternal Word and the eternal reasons of God's thought, and how the Word was made flesh to directly reveal knowledge of God to man in the person of Jesus Christ. According to Edwards (1999:589), Augustine saw the main purpose and achievement of the soul as a means of salvation. The fact that the soul possesses eternal knowledge, is an indication of its immortal character.

⁹⁶ In Acts 17:28, Paul told the Athenians that God was close to everyone, and that in Him we lived, moved, and existed, as even some of their own [pagan] poets had proclaimed.

⁹⁷ In Exodus 3:22 and 11:2, it is told that the Hebrews took silver and gold jewelry from Egyptians when they left Egypt. Chadwick (1991:123 n. 16) points out that both Irenaeus and Augustine regarded this as an allegory of the right of Christians to discern and use truth [gold] from non-Christian texts.

Crouse (1987:55–56) maintains that Augustine did not distinguish between philosophy and theology:⁹⁸ philosophy was the study of knowledge (*studium sapientiae*), and that knowledge was finally the eternal Word of God. Augustine's Christian thought on this matter echoes Platonic philosophy, which was always theological in that it progressed from belief to understanding, by allegorically interpreting the oracles and visions of divinely inspired prophets and philosophers. The purpose of that interpretation was to obtain a coherent understanding and knowledge of the highest and transcendent Good, so that man could attain divine likeness (*homoïōsis theou*). Edwards (1999:590) observes that the mature Augustine believed the Biblical revelation that the *imago Dei* was only found in man, whereas the Neo-Platonists believed that the beauty of matter was the image of the divine intellect.

4.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I built on the theoretical framework of origin and basic tenets of Neo-Platonism by investigating how these philosophical concepts, as mediated by St Ambrose and other Christian Neo-Platonists in Milan, influenced Augustine morally and intellectually. On his arrival in Milan, Augustine was totally demotivated, since it appeared that no one could solve his problems pertaining to the nature of spiritual reality, the origin of evil, and the co-existence of a divine and human nature in Christ. Ambrose guided him to an understanding of God as spirit and the role of man's free choice in deciding whether or not to do evil. His allegorical exegesis of Scripture, especially the New Testament, opened Augustine's eyes to the spiritual meanings contained in the Old Testament and he therefore accepted the authority of the Bible which described Jesus as both fully human and fully God. Ambrose's sermons contained Neo-Platonic concepts and these further helped Augustine to understand the spiritual nature of God. The fact that such influential figures as Ambrose, Simplicianus and Victorinus were all members of the Catholic Church convinced Augustine to submit to its

⁹⁸ This distinction would only be made in the late Middle Ages (Crouse 1987:56).

authority. With the aid of Ambrose and other influential figures in the Milanese Neo-Platonic circle, as well as reading certain Neo-Platonic books, Augustine further came to understand that the world was ruled by a spiritual God and that man could attain to God—and divine likeness—through love of the eternal Word of God, who was Jesus Christ.

In the next chapter, I will analyse Books 1 to 9 of the *Confessiones* with the insights gained in the preceding chapters in order to determine how the *imago Dei* features in the work as it relates to his conversion to Catholic Christianity.

CHAPTER 5

THE *IMAGO DEI* IN THE *CONFESSIONES*

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters, I attempted to create a theoretical basis as point of departure for analysing the role of the *imago Dei* in Augustine's conversion process to Catholic Christianity, as narrated in Books 1 to 9 of the *Confessiones*. From my study of the secondary literature, I gained certain insights into the process of religious conversion and an understanding of the importance of the divine *imago* and *similitudo* in man's conception of God as his Creator, in whose image he was created, and to whose image he must return. I discussed the early Church Fathers' three approaches to the *imago Dei* and the divine power or endowment that Augustine subsequently attributed to the image in his attempt to come to an understanding of what the *imago Dei* entails. I also explained the Neo-Platonic influence on Augustine's understanding of the concept of the image of God in man.

Regarding Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity and the factors that contributed to the healing of the broken image in Augustine, my insights were informed by the decisive role of St Ambrose and fellow Christian Neo-Platonists in Milan, who led Augustine to acknowledge the spiritual nature of God and of man's soul. Ambrose taught Augustine the allegorical method of biblical exegesis, allowing him to penetrate the deeper truths of Scripture and helped him to understand the Old and New Testaments in a spiritual way, with Jesus as both the beginning and the end goal of the *Verbum Dei* (Word of God). The Neo-Platonic-infused sermons of Ambrose and a study of certain *libri platoniorum* further opened Augustine's eyes to the immaterial nature of God and the fact that the soul, and not the body, was the seat of the divine image, and that man should attain to God through the mind. This realisation allowed him to finally break with the Manichean dualistic conception of God

and its skewed interpretation of Scripture. The powerful example set by Ambrose, as well as other leading figures in Milan who were both Christian Neo-Platonists and converts to the Catholic Church (if not already members), convinced Augustine to return to his childhood faith. Monica was one of the main driving forces. After a long journey, he was now able to accept the teaching authority of Scripture and of the Catholic Church as the only acceptable means of guiding him to reconciliation with a spiritual God.

The Catholic Church, as the Body of Christ, would, through its teachings, guide Augustine to turn back to God so that the broken image of God could be healed and the divine likeness restored. Both Scripture and the Church taught that Jesus Christ was the Redeemer of mankind and that man could only be reconciled with God through the *Logos*, who was the perfect image of God. By living a virtuous and moral life through the grace of God, man would attain to the perfect image of Jesus Christ and, through Him, be restored in likeness with God the Father. The healed divine image and the restored divine likeness would reconcile man with God and so ensure his eternal salvation and rest in the eternal Sabbath.⁹⁹

In this chapter, I will analyse the first nine Books of the *Confessiones* to illustrate the role of the *imago Dei* in Augustine's spiritual journey back to Catholic Christianity through his repentance of his sins (which had defaced the image), his gradual acceptance of the authority of Scripture and the Catholic Church, and his growing insight that God is spirit and not matter. My analysis of the text will be based on two theoretical frameworks I have devised. These frameworks inform one another and shed light on the nature of the *imago Dei* and its role in Augustine's conversion:

- (a) The conceptual framework in section 5.2 recapitulates insights of the early Church Fathers, Augustine, and the influence of the Neo-

⁹⁹ “‘Lord God, grant us peace, for you have given us all things’ (Isa. 26:12), the peace of quietness, the peace of the sabbath, a peace with no evening (2 Thess. 3:16)...after our works...we may also rest in you for the sabbath of eternal life” (*Conf.* 13.xxxv:50–51).

Platonists on understanding the nature of the *imago Dei*¹⁰⁰ (all discussed in the preceding chapters).

- (b) The literary framework within the context of the *imago Dei* in section 5.3 is based on the insights of McMahon (1989) and Stephany (1982), supplemented by my own understanding of specific **factors** that contributed to the defacement and subsequent healing of the image, as evidenced in Books 1 to 9.

5.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE NATURE OF THE *IMAGO DEI*

My conceptual framework of the nature of the image consists of three parts (based on my discussion in the preceding chapters), namely:

- (a) The three **theological interpretations** of the early Church Fathers of the *imago Dei*, as identified by Grenz (2001)¹⁰¹;
- (b) Augustine's development of the Church Fathers' interpretations and his later identification of the **divine power** imprinted in the image¹⁰². Augustine's concept of *power* or *endowment* in the image was interpreted and developed by Hughes (1989:51–64); and,
- (c) the over-arching **influence of Neo-Platonism**¹⁰³ on Augustine's conception of the image and the Neo-Platonic motif of the descent (to the material level) and ascent (to the spiritual level) of the soul to a spiritual God.

¹⁰⁰ As I pointed out in section 2.3.1 in Chapter 2, the concept of the image of God was not defined in Genesis. As a result, the Early Church Fathers, including Augustine, as well as later Western thinkers, attempted a definition.

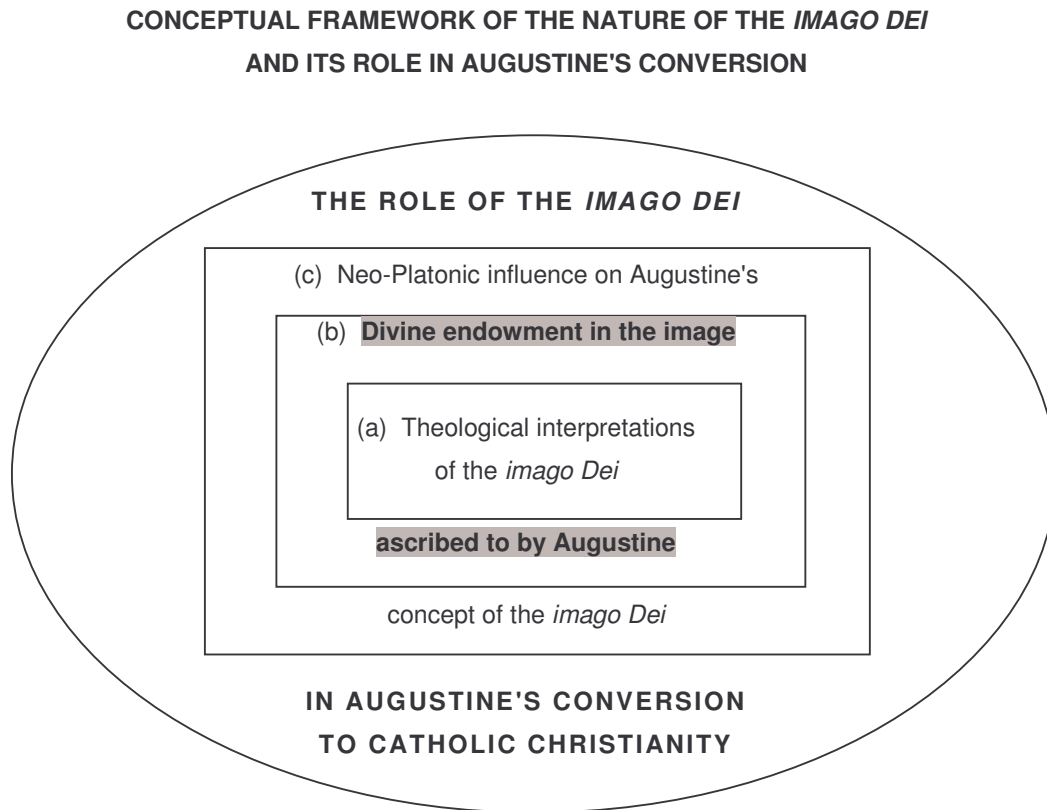
¹⁰¹ Cf. note 30 under section 2.2.1, Chapter 2, upon which I expand in this framework.

¹⁰² Cf. section 2.5.4, Chapter 2. In my opinion, all these divine endowments impact on the healing of the broken image and the attainment of a loving, personal relationship with God.

¹⁰³ Discussed in Chapter 3 and section 6 of Chapter 4.

My point of departure for the textual analysis of the *Confessiones* will be Augustine's divine power or endowment¹⁰⁴ that he ascribed to the image (as interpreted¹⁰⁵ and further developed by Hughes (1989:51–64)), **within the broader context** of the three theological interpretations of the Church Fathers preceding Augustine and the Neo-Platonic influence on Augustine's conception of the *imago Dei*.

The relationship between the three parts of the conceptual framework, and the relationship of the framework to the role of the image in Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity, could be represented graphically as follows:



On the following page, I summarise the most salient aspects of the three parts of the conceptual framework, which inform one another, in table format:

¹⁰⁴ Discussed in section 2.5.4 of Chapter 2.
¹⁰⁵ Discussed in section 2.5.4 of Chapter 2.

SUMMARY OF THE MOST SALIENT ASPECTS OF THE THREE PARTS OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE NATURE OF THE *IMAGO DEI*

Part 1: The three main theological approaches to understanding the <i>imago Dei</i>¹⁰⁶	
Structural / substantial approach	The image is composed of certain characteristics a person is born with. These characteristics match divine qualities and are responsible for making man resemble God. Reason and will are two generally accepted features of the image as structure. Irenaeus held that reason and will were central to the image and were not lost as a result of the Fall. Reason, however, was weakened and man would henceforth live irrationally. Man was created with a free will and could choose to obey God or not. Redemption by God comprised body, soul and spirit. Christ was the true Image of God. The aim of the reincarnation was to bestow the complete divine image and likeness on man. Augustine subscribed to the structural approach, but his model shows similarities with aspects of the relational approach (Grenz 2001:17, 142–148).
Relational approach	This approach started to gain acceptance after the Reformation. There is a fundamental relationship between man and his Creator. Man stands in a certain position before God, where he “images” God (as if looking into a mirror) and where he reflects God’s will in the way he lives and acts. The right ordering of his life and proper conduct are essential to reflect the righteousness and glory of God. Man lost the right relationship in which he stood to God, owing to the sins of pride and disobedience, and that loss separated him from the Source of life. The fullness of the image and the likeness (and therefore the right relationship to God) was restored by Christ, as the perfect image and Word of God. This relationship with God is

¹⁰⁶ Cf. note 30 under section 2.2.1, Chapter 2.

¹⁰⁷ Other scholars confirm the vital link between love and the actualisation of the divine image in man and the restoration of man’s right standing before God:

(a) **Howe** (1995:80, 83, 85, 112, 114) maintains that the main premise of the New Testament witness is that the eternal nature of God is to be loving, and the Creator’s purpose for man is to love all that God loves. A loving relationship with others prepares man for a loving relationship with God and nurtures and strengthens man’s capacity for communication and communion. Man was created to recognise God’s love by listening for a trusted voice (the Good Shepherd) (John 10:1–5), by seeing the love on God’s face (Rev. 22:4), and by watching for the protecting hand of God (Isaiah 40:11).

	one of faith and love. ¹⁰⁷ (Grenz 2001:17, 162–169).
Goal- or destiny-oriented approach	Man has the capacity to grow to full perfection as a future promise and event through continuous growth to spiritual maturity, by responding to God's grace and by submitting to His will. Attainment of the fullness of the divine image and likeness are therefore linked to man's destiny ¹⁰⁸ . Irenaeus was of the opinion that Adam was an immature being in whom the divine image was eschatological (<i>telic</i>). God's intention was that man should grow in His likeness and God gave Adam the potential to do so by exercising his free will. Human beings were being transformed into the divine image through a process in which they participated under the guiding hand of God and through His grace, as they could not reach this goal without help. God was both the origin and destiny of man. In trying to reach his goal or <i>telos</i> of communion with God, man was also helped by his fellow human beings with whom he interacted and who were all on a similar journey to fulfill their divine destiny. The eschatological community of saints will be resurrected and glorified by the power of the Holy Spirit to join Jesus Christ as Head of the community of the <i>adelphoi</i> of Christ. (Grenz 2001:17, 177–232).

(b) **Gunton** (1991:55, 58–59) refers to the perfect and loving relationship of the Persons of the Trinity. If man conforms to the image of Jesus, he will conform to the image of the Trinity and therefore be able to stand in the right relationship of love before God.

(c) **Zizioulas** (1991:42,43–46) holds that *caritas* is what makes it possible for a person to enter into a relationship with God and other people, and thereby establish his or her own identity. When man is baptised, his identity is renewed, with his new identity anchored in the loving Trinitarian relationship.

(d) **Schwöbel** (1991:147–151) pertinently observes that God's reconciling and creative love is the primary guideline for orientation and meaning in the world, since the Christian faith regards love as the essential attribute of the being of God. Sin, the opposite of faith, is more than disobedience: above all, it is the breach of the relationship between man and his Creator. Only through the reconciling work of the Son, effected in the power of the Spirit, could God heal this broken relationship and replace the disorientation of sin with the new orientation of faith.

¹⁰⁸ Grenz (2001:224) maintains that two New Testament texts specifically explain the notion of the *imago Dei* as an eschatological goal: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom. 8:29), and "Just as we have born the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven" (1 Cor. 15:49).

Part 2: Augustine's concept of divine power imprinted in the image of man (as interpreted and developed by Hughes (1989:51–64)) ¹⁰⁹	
Personality [relationship between man and God, and between man and his fellow man]	The Persons of the Trinity are in a relationship with each other. Man is created by a personal God in His image and is therefore a personal being. Man's likeness to God is located in the mind (or soul). An individual can only actuate his personhood and identity in an in-born relationship with God (in and through the Son) and through personal relationships with other human beings, also created in the image of God. Through these relationships, man participates in the life of God. If man sins, ¹¹⁰ the relationship with God is broken as man turns away from God, the Source of his personhood. (Hughes 1989:51–54).
Spirituality [as opposed to matter and bodily passions, which prevent man's goal of ascent to God]	As man is created in the image of a spiritual ¹¹¹ God, he is a religious being by nature. Should he not worship the true God, he will find some false god of his own making to worship. Since man's nature is both carnal and spiritual, it is easy for him to stray from God's law and to sin. ¹¹² Out of gratitude for the blessing of life, man should model his life on Jesus ¹¹³ . Man should be loyal and obedient to God and praise and worship Him. In order to find self-fulfillment, man must know and love ¹¹⁴ God, himself, and others. (Hughes 1989:55–56).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. my summary of Hughes' discussion on the endowments in section 2.5.4, Chapter 2.

¹¹⁰ Withdrawal from God results in decreased likeness of the image, which is the result of sin. Man can only draw close to God again through a life of grace (Sullivan 1963:12, 67). Referring to Augustine's view on man's relationship with God, Bonner (2007:52) concludes that "all created things exist only by participating in God, and if they cease to participate [through sin] they perish and pass out of existence. Man enjoys a special relationship, because he is in *the image and likeness of God*. Because of this, he can participate not only in his creator but in the divine Wisdom."

¹¹¹ According to (Sullivan 1963:13, 17) Augustine argued that creation was organised according to the model of divine ideas, which existed in the mind of God. (His thought here is linked to Plato's notion of participation in the divine ideas). Man, as *spiritual* creature who imaged God, proceeded immediately from Him, and also returned to Him immediately, owing to his closeness in nature to God.

¹¹² Augustine held that the renewal of the image entailed the purification of every aspect of the spiritual and moral life of man (Sullivan 1963:54).

¹¹³ Baptism, through the grace of Christ, resulted in spiritual rebirth and the beginning of the renewal of the image (Sullivan 1963:55).

¹¹⁴ For Augustine, both man and God participated in renewing the image and restoring the likeness. Man became spiritually closer to God through increased knowledge and love (first of himself, by turning inward, and then of God, by turning upward and journeying towards God) (Sullivan 1963:62). Augustine postulated that the renewal of the divine image would reach earthly perfection with the seventh beatitude: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Mat. 5:9). This perfect state therefore lay in inner and outer peace and harmony, when man subjected the passions of his spirit to God (Sullivan 1963:64–65).

Rationality [structural feature of the image]	God is not only personal and spiritual, but also rational. Man was therefore also created a rational being with an intellect that enables him to think, plan and execute. The Trinitarian image was manifested according to the reasoning mind ¹¹⁵ , and not the body. Through his mind ¹¹⁶ or soul, man communicates with God. Through language, he communicates with his fellow humans. Man must use his reason responsibly in order to take decisions that would conform to the will of God and enable one to live an orderly life. (Hughes 1989:57).
Morality [growing to spiritual maturity by obeying God's moral laws]	Man was made in the image of a holy God. As God's creature, man is under a moral obligation to be devout, virtuous and Godly in his life and his relationships. Sin is immoral and results in an unholy way of living. God created man with a conscience ¹¹⁷ to help him distinguish between right and wrong and to submit to God's will, so that he could strive to attain God's standard of holiness. (Hughes 1989:59–60).
Authority [man's <i>telos</i> of spiritual ascent enabled by obeying the <i>Verbum Dei</i> and the Church]	Man, as the apex of God's creation, was given authority over the rest of creation, which should be exercised responsibly and lovingly, and to the glory of God. As creature, man himself is under divine authority to use his talents and skills to develop and maintain an orderly civilisation, also to the glory of God. Since Adam had failed in this, God's authority was rehabilitated in Jesus, who was given all authority over creation. (Hughes 1989:61–62).

¹¹⁵ Illingworth (1894) as cited by Horne (1991:66–67), located the image of God in the tripartite nature of human consciousness (being, knowing, willing), in accordance with Augustine's theory of personhood formulated in *Conf.* 13.xi.12: "Who can understand the omnipotent Trinity? ... I wish that human disputants would reflect upon the triad within their own selves. These three aspects of the self are very different from the Trinity, ... The three aspects I mean are being, knowing, willing. For I am and I know and I will. Knowing and willing I am. I know that I am and I will. I will to be and to know."

¹¹⁶ The mind or *mens*, being the highest part of the soul, was regarded by Augustine as the eye or face of the soul, and as such also pertained to the will and intellectual memory (Sullivan 1963:47). The mind enabled man to obtain knowledge of God by studying the Bible and thereby gain wisdom (Sullivan 1963:16–18). Augustine linked the *mens* to Paul's concept of the inner man, which Paul associated with the *imago Dei* (Sullivan 1963:48). Despite the Fall, the mind retained a trace of the image (Sullivan 1963:52–53).

¹¹⁷ Augustine regarded the sixth beatitude as closely linked to the seventh: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mat. 5:8). Man's conscience helps him to purify the heart (which is the mind) in order to see and contemplate God in this life, so that the divine image will be reflected back to him, as in a mirror. Only in the afterlife, once man has reached a stage of beatitude and glory, will he be able to see God face to face (and not only as a reflection): "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12). (Sullivan 1963:67–68).

Creativity [the goal of man's creative actions should be to glorify God and not to pursue worldly ambition]	God created man with the ability to bring order and harmony to creation, and by designing works of art and architecture, composing music, and writing literature. All of these creative actions must serve to glorify God and uplift the spirit of humankind. The fruits of man's creative ability should help man to live a noble and holy life, and thereby honour a holy God (Hughes 1989:62–64).
Part 3: The influence of Neo-Platonism on Augustine's conception of the <i>imago Dei</i>¹¹⁸	
Spiritual conception of God	The works of the Neo-Platonists enabled Augustine to conceive of God as spiritual ¹¹⁹ and not material (as the Manicheans had led him to believe.)
Hypostasis: the descent and ascent of the soul	Neo-Platonism helped Augustine to understand that man both proceeded from and returned to God; God was his origin and <i>telos</i> (the motif of descent and ascent of the soul). In the process of emanating from God, man derived his hypostasis (substance or foundation) from God, of Whom he is an image. It convinced Augustine that man's innate love of and desire for God would enable the soul to ascend from the material to the spiritual realm from which he had descended.
<i>Imago</i> and <i>similitudo</i>	Augustine conceived that the image of God had an inherent <i>likeness</i> to God, as well as an inherent tendency to return to God as his model or exemplar. This return—in Augustine's case, his conversion to Catholic Christianity—was prompted by the image of God imprinted in the soul of man: the image was faint, but not lost after the Fall, and contained a remnant of knowledge of God. As man looked upwards, to contemplate his Origin by using his mind (the noblest part of the soul) in order to obtain wisdom by increasing his knowledge of God, his vision ¹²⁰ of the Divine enabled him to draw closer to God and to regain

¹¹⁸ Discussed fully in section 2.5.5, Chapter 2, as well as in Chapter 3 and section 4.6 of Chapter 4. Part 3 of this conceptual framework is my own synopsis of various scholars' views drawn upon in the preceding chapters.

¹¹⁹ In contrast to many of the early Christians, who believed that God was human-like with a physical form, later Christian theology came to be dominated by the Platonic concept of an incorporeal, spiritual God. Augustine as a young man also believed in the anthropomorphic concept of God, and that belief was a stumbling block in his conversion to Catholic Christianity. (Griffin & Paulsen 2002:97–98).

¹²⁰ As observed by Griffin & Paulsen (2002:99), some of the early Christians assumed that a beatific vision was a literal visual and bodily sensation, instead of a "perfect intellectual contemplation"—the latter an important distinction made by the Neo-Platonists and Augustine.

	his divine likeness as far as was possible in this life. The full likeness with God and the full healing of the broken image would only be restored in the afterlife when man would see God face to face (and not only as a reflection) and experience the full beatific vision.
Jesus as Mediator	The Neo-Platonic concept of mediation between the One and finite beings afforded Augustine the insight that Jesus had been reincarnated ¹²¹ to mediate between man and God and to reveal knowledge of God. Jesus was the equal of His exemplar, since the Bible taught that Jesus was the perfect image of God the Father. Through Christ the Mediator, man would be converted to God and reconciled to Him.
Reason and will	Plotinus held that man could be saved by his own will and efforts. Initially agreeing, Augustine later argued that the renewal of the image involved all aspects of man's spiritual and moral life and was enabled by God's grace and man's willing, rational participation in the process of submitting the body to the will of the spirit in order to submit to the will of God.
Intellectual instrument for exegesis	Neo-Platonic philosophy served as an intellectual means for Augustine to understand and explain much of Christian belief and doctrine (e.g. the creation and the incarnation) and, with Ambrose's help, to interpret Scripture allegorically (especially the Old Testament), enabling him to ascertain hidden truths.
Intellectual respectability of the Christian faith and the Catholic Church	Neo-Platonism helped Augustine to accept the authority of Scripture (as taught by the Catholic Church), as well as the ecclesiastic authority of the Church itself. Some of the foremost leaders of the Church and society in Milan (e.g. Ambrose, Simplicianus and Victorinus) were Christian Neo-Platonists who served as powerful examples who drew him to the Church.

¹²¹ Mauser (1970:343), as cited by Griffin & Paulsen (2002:102), makes the following pertinent observation: "The New Testament is entirely dominated by the conviction that in Jesus Christ God has come, lived, and acted as a man. It is, therefore, true to say that the New Testament presents God's act radically and fully as a human act: in Christ, God has acted anthropomorphically." For Augustine, the incarnation was crucial in God's plan of redemption.

5.3 LITERARY FRAMEWORK THAT COMPLEMENTS THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE NATURE OF THE *IMAGO DEI*

For the purpose of this thesis, McMahon (1989:136–140) and Stephany (1982) (as cited by McMahon (1989)), offer a very useful and broader literary and thematic structure of the *Confessiones* within which the conceptual framework of the image (posited in section 5.2 above) can be explored. Their literary framework will aid my discussion on the role of the *imago Dei* in Augustine's conversion in two ways. First, it enables me, in a structured way, to summarise factors I have identified which influenced the image both negatively (Books 1 to 4) and positively (Books 6 to 9). Their framework also gives a clear indication of Book 5 as a turning point in the healing of Augustine's image and his conversion journey. Second, the literary framework helps to explain the influence of the Neo-Platonic motif of man's spiritual descent and ascent on Augustine's conception of the image and his return to God.

I have summarised McMahon's and Stephany's views on the literary framework of the *Confessiones* in **Part 1** of the table on the following page. **Part 2** of the table contains my own insights and summarises the various factors that lead to the defacement and healing of the image, as narrated in Books 1 to 9.

**LITERARY FRAMEWORK OF THE *CONFESSIONES* THAT COMPLEMENTS THE
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE NATURE OF THE *IMAGO DEI***

Part 1: Augustine's falling away from and return to God (McMahon 1989)		
Books 1 to 4	Book 5	Books 6 to 9
<i>Aversio</i> and <i>perversio</i> Spiritual descent	Turning point Disillusionment and scepticism	<i>Conversio</i> Spiritual ascent
Turning away from God Sin and spiritual descent	Inner turmoil: where to turn to? Acknowledgement of sin	Turning toward God Redemption and spiritual ascent
Disease and perversity	Realisation that something is wrong Change of direction needed	Gradual intellectual and moral healing
Part 2: Factors that contributed to the defacement and healing of the image (own summary)		
The broken image of God in Augustine and the loss of his likeness to God	Green shoots of recovery	The healing of the broken image of God in Augustine and the restoration of his likeness to God
Factors that estranged him from God: defacement of the image and elimination of the likeness:	Emergence of remedial agents acting as catalysts for healing the image and restoring the likeness: <i>Faustus</i> <i>Ambrose</i>	Factors that reconciled him to God: healing of the image and restoration of the likeness:
<i>Pride</i>	→	<i>Humility</i>
<i>Worldly ambition</i>	→	<i>Devoted to serving God</i>
<i>Concupiscence</i>	→	<i>Continence and celibacy</i>
<i>Worldly pleasures</i>	→	<i>Transcendent experiences</i>
<i>Being self-willed</i>	→	<i>Submission to the will of God</i>
<i>Lack of knowledge of self and of God</i>	→	<i>Knowledge of self and of God</i>
<i>Belief that man is independent of God</i>	→	<i>Realisation that man depends on God and must return to Him</i>
<i>False religion (Manicheism)</i>	→	<i>The one true religion (Catholicism)</i>
<i>False philosophies and scepticism</i>	→	<i>Neo-Platonic philosophy and certainty</i>
<i>Following the wrong ways to find God</i>	→	<i>Realising that following Jesus is the only way to God</i>
<i>Rejection of Scripture (literal exegesis)</i>	→	<i>Acceptance of Scripture (allegorical exegesis)</i>
<i>Regarding God and the soul as matter</i>	→	<i>Viewing God and the soul as spiritual</i>
<i>Regarding evil as matter existing in man (man therefore not responsible for sinning)</i>	→	<i>Viewing evil as part of the spiritual nature of man (man sins out of his own free will)</i>
<i>Rejection of the authority of the teachings of the Catholic Church</i>	→	<i>Acceptance of the authority of the magisterium of the Catholic Church</i>
<i>Restless search for the true God</i>	<i>Movement towards rest in God</i>	<i>Rest in God attained through Jesus Christ</i>

In the section that follows, I analyse Books 1 to 9 of the *Confessiones* according to the six endowments conferred on man by the image, as developed by Hughes (1989:51–64) from his interpretation of Augustine's concept of divine *power* or *endowment* imprinted in the image. These six endowments¹²² or attributes, as distinguished by Hughes (1989:51–64), are: *personality, spirituality, rationality, morality, authority, and creativity*. Since the term “image” is seldom used in the first nine Books of Chadwick's English translation of the *Confessiones* (Chadwick 1991), I will use the six endowments¹²³ of the divine image in man, as discerned by Hughes (1989:51–64), to deduce the role of the *imago* by identifying and discussing relevant passages in the text as I understood them. My discussion of each endowment will be augmented by referring to the various factors¹²⁴ I identified in the literary framework above. These factors, in my opinion, contributed to the defacement (estrangement) and the healing (reconciliation) of the image).

It needs to be noted that not all these six endowments feature to an equal extent in all nine Books. I have interpreted the views of Hughes (1989:51–64) on these endowments by adding my own insights as to how the endowments feature in the *Confessiones* by extrapolating from Hughes' argument.

5.4 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO THE SIX ENDOWMENTS OF THE DIVINE IMAGE IN MAN

5.4.1 Introduction

I contend that one of man's biggest problems in his personal relationship with God is that he could succumb to the danger of idolatry¹²⁵ and worship false gods. These counterfeit gods are not always easy to distinguish and often only become visible with hindsight, when man realises that he has fallen away

¹²² Cf. Part 2 of the conceptual framework of the nature of the *imago Dei* in section 5.2 above.

¹²³ Within the context of Parts 1 and 3 of the conceptual framework of the nature of the *imago Dei* posited in section 5.2 above.

¹²⁴ Cf. Part 2 of the literary framework of the *Confessiones* in section 5.3 above.

¹²⁵ Cf. n. 65 in section 2.5.4.2 of Chapter 2 on the various forms of idolatry.

from God for certain reasons,¹²⁶ and tries to turn back to God in order to be reconciled to Him and to restore his personal relationship with God. For example, Augustine would gradually realise that his extreme pride and self-reliance had come between him and God. The idolatry problem arises when something is done to excess and to the exclusion of God in order to obtain happiness, wealth, love, and other earthly pleasures, which serve as proxies for man's love of God. In my view, all six endowments of the divine image in man are equally subject to harm by any of the factors¹²⁷ that could deface the image. Since all these attributes of the image form an integral whole, harm done to one endowment would weaken the others as well, leading to the overall defacement of the image.

In the textual analysis that follows, I focus on the most important aspects pertaining to each endowment as it features in the *Confessiones* and as it impacts on the development of the *imago Dei* in Augustine's image. I also indicate how he came to that realisation and how factors that harmed the image were replaced by corresponding healing factors.

5.4.2 The endowment of *personality*

As Hughes points out (1989:52–54), man is created in the image of God and is therefore a personal being with a unique personality. He needs fellowship with both God and other human beings to be fully human. Man can only establish a personal relationship with God through the Son, who is the perfect image of God. Sin leads to rebellion against God, which denies God as the source of man's personhood.

In my view, the most important aspect of the endowment of personality as it features in the *Confessiones* and which I will discuss below, is Augustine's search for a God whom he did not know and with whom he therefore was unable to establish a personal, loving relationship in order to find happiness

¹²⁶ Cf. Part 2 of the literary framework above, which identifies various factors that could give rise to idolatry and deface the image.

¹²⁷ Cf. Part 2 of the literary framework above.

and fulfillment. Hand in hand with this goes the fact that he did not know *himself*, which is a prerequisite for knowing God. His lack of knowledge of self and of God hampered his relationship with others and his relationship with God. Related aspects of this endowment that I have identified are the role of the incarnation and the teachings of the Catholic Church that helped Augustine to come to know God. These I will discuss more fully under the endowment of *spirituality*.

Reflecting on his childhood years and the start of his subsequent stray from, and restless search for, the eternal wisdom and truth of God, Augustine acknowledges that man was created to love and desire God in order to live in a personal relationship with Him. He realises that only God can grant the inner peace that he so desperately seeks, but that his pride is an obstacle to that ideal, as Scripture points out:

‘You are great, Lord, and highly to be praised (Ps. 47:2): great is your power and your wisdom is immeasurable (Ps. 146:5). Man, a little piece of your creation, desires to praise you...carrying with him the witness of his sin and the witness that you ‘resist the proud’ (1 Pet. 5:5)...you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. (*Conf.* 1.i.1).

Augustine admits that he did not yet know God and how to attain to Him, as reflected in his anxious plea, “Who then are you, my God?” (*Conf.* 1.iv.4). He wants God to enter his heart in order to flood him with love. He wants to see God face to face¹²⁸ to establish a loving relationship, but knows that he must first die to self (that is, his sinful human nature must die) before he can be redeemed by a holy God and his eternal soul can be saved:

Who will enable me to find rest in you? Who will grant me that you come to my heart and intoxicate it, so that I forget my evils and embrace my one and only good, yourself?..What a wretch I am! In your mercies, Lord God, tell me what you are to me. ‘Say to my soul, I am your salvation’ (Ps. 34:3). Speak

¹²⁸ “‘I have sought your face; your face, Lord, I will seek’ (Ps. 26:8). To be far from your face is to be in the darkness of passion” (*Conf.* 1.xviii.28). Cf. “Of your eternal life I was certain, though I saw it ‘in an enigma and as in a mirror’ (1 Cor. 13:12)” (*Conf.* 8.i.1), which indicates that Augustine was still prevented by his passions from establishing a personal relationship with God, since he was not yet morally and spiritually strong enough to see Him face to face.

to me so that I may hear...Do not hide your face from me (cf. Ps. 26:9). Lest I die, let me die so that I may see it. (*Conf.* 1.v.5)

When a dear friend of his in Thagaste died, whom he had led astray “from the true faith” (*Conf.* 4.iv.7), he knew that he should turn to God to help lessen the misery this death had caused him, but did not have the will to do so.¹²⁹ He was unable to approach God for consolation, as he did not yet know Him and only had a “mental image” (*Conf.* 4.vii.12) of God as “a vain phantom” (*Conf.* 4.vii.12). Since he was unable to have a personal relationship with the eternal God, which would have made him happy, he focused his affections on his friends, making the mistake of basing his happiness solely on mortal things:¹³⁰

I was in misery, and misery is the state of every soul overcome by friendship with mortal things and lacerated when they are lost. Then the soul becomes aware of the misery which is its actual condition...I found myself heavily weighed down by a sense of being tired of living and scared of dying... (*Conf.* 4.vi.11)

Augustine was to learn that true happiness could only be found in a loving relationship with the true God.¹³¹ All material things pass away and should not be the focus of one's affections and admiration, since they are of temporary and not eternal value. Man should avert his eyes and ears¹³² from worldly things and concentrate instead on eternal spiritual values, which would bring him closer to God and which would save his soul:

For wherever the human soul turns itself, other than to you, it is fixed in sorrows..Things rise and set:...everything dies...transient things...pass along the path of things that move towards non-existence. They rend the soul with pestilential desires; for the soul loves to be in them and take its repose among the objects of its love. But in these things there is no point of rest: they lack permanence. (*Conf.* 4.x.15)

¹²⁹ “I should have lifted myself to you, Lord, to find a cure. I knew that, but did not wish it or have the strength for it” (*Conf.* 4.vii.12).

¹³⁰ “I had become to myself a place of unhappiness in which I could not bear to be; but I could not escape from myself” (*Conf.* 4.vii.12).

¹³¹ “‘Happy is the person who loves you’ (Tobit 13:18) and his friend in you...And ‘your law is truth’ (Ps. 118:142) and truth is you” (John 14:6)” (*Conf.* 4.ix.14).

¹³² “But let [my soul] not become stuck in them and glued to them through the physical senses” (*Conf.* 4.x.15).

His sins had led him to a “state of disintegration” (*Conf.* 2.i.1) where he knew neither himself nor God and was therefore “lost in multiplicity” (*Conf.* 2.i.1), being no longer in communion with God and separated from Him. Pleasing his friends and being in good standing with them became more important than being in the right position before God, with the result that he became “putrid” (*Conf.* 2.i.1) in God’s sight because he was so “ambitious to win human approval” (*Conf.* 2.i.1). He got caught up in the pride of the meaningless praises of false role models¹³³ and was therefore cast into a “whirlpool of shame” (*Conf.* 1.xix.30), away from God.

Owing to his pride and lack of self-knowledge, he was unaware of this “mortal condition” (*Conf.* 2.ii.2) of his soul being alienated from God. He therefore “traveled very far” (*Conf.* 2.ii.2) from Him, adhering increasingly to “sterile things” (*Conf.* 2.ii.2) of the world that made him unhappy, full of self-pity, and unable to find mental rest. His flouting of the authority of the moral laws of God (discussed in sections 5.4.5 and 5.4.6 below) contributed to harming the divine image in him. Augustine cautions his soul against vanity and urges it to listen to the voice of God, so that the broken image can be healed and his relationship with God restored:

The Word himself cries to you to return. There is the place of undisturbed quietness where love is not deserted if it does not itself depart...The decayed parts of you will receive a new flowering, and all your sicknesses will be healed (Matt.4:23; Ps. 102:3). (*Conf.* 4.xi.16)

If used wrongly, man’s relationship with others could lead him away from God and distort man’s relationship with God. The senseless theft of the pears also points to the danger of submitting to peer pressure to obtain excitement in everyday life:

The theft itself was a nothing, and for that reason I was the more miserable. Yet had I been alone I would not have done it...I would not have needed to inflame the itch of my cupidity through the excitement generated by sharing

¹³³ At that stage, he set great store on the certain persons’ approval, which was his “criterion of a good life” (*Conf.* 1.xix.30).

the guilt with others...friendship can be a dangerous enemy, a seduction of the mind lying beyond the reach of investigation. (*Conf.* 2.viii.16–2.ix.17)

As a result of the senselessness of the theft, he feels that he is in “a region of destitution” (*Conf.* 2.x.18), linking up with the cultural desert that was lifeless (because God was absent) described in *Conf.* 2.iii.5 and referred to in section 5.4.7. His relationships with his friends harmed himself and his relationship with God, since it was changed into “something twisted and distorted” (*Conf.* 3.ii.3).

Augustine was first instructed in the Catholic religion by Monica and knew the name of Jesus from earliest childhood. In fact, his search for the truth was a search for Christ. It took Augustine a long time to come to a true understanding of Christ’s redeeming work and the crucial role of the incarnation (which the Neo-Platonists disdained) in the salvation of mankind, and that Jesus was indeed the Truth and the way to a personal relationship with God:

I had a different notion, since I thought of Christ my Lord only as a man of excellent wisdom which none could equal...But the mystery of the word made flesh I had not begun to guess...So because the scriptures are true, I acknowledged the whole man to be in Christ, ...a fully human person. I thought that he excelled others not as the personal embodiment of the Truth, but because of the great excellence of his human character and more perfect participation in wisdom. (*Conf.* 7.xix.25)

Augustine realises that when God became flesh, He used His Word, the *Verbum Dei*, to nourish him (Augustine) and to make him spiritually strong enough to conceive of God¹³⁴. With this understanding of the incarnation came the realisation that Alypius and others had a wrong conception of the doctrine of the Catholic Church. They thought that Christ only had the *appearance* of being, without having a human soul and mind:

¹³⁴ “The food which was I was too weak to accept he mingled with flesh, in that ‘The Word was made flesh’ (John 1:14), so that our infant condition might come to suck milk from your wisdom by which you created all things” (*Conf.* 7.xviii.24).

Alypius, on the other hand, thought Catholics believed him to be God clothed in flesh in the sense that in Christ there was only God and flesh. He did not think they held him to possess a human soul and mind. But later when he knew that this was the error of the Apollinarian¹³⁵ heretics, he was glad to conform to the Catholic faith. For my part I admit it was some time later that I learnt, in relation to the words 'the Word was made flesh', how Catholic truth is to be distinguished from the false opinion of Photinus¹³⁶. (*Conf.* 7.xix.25)

Augustine's lack of knowledge of God made it impossible for him to acknowledge God as the source of his own personhood, as he relied on his own resources, and not on God, to solve his problems in his quest for the truth.¹³⁷ Consequently, he gave himself over to self-gratification and to following his own will, as is further evidenced by the way the five other endowments feature in the text, which I discuss below. In my view, all the other endowments can either strengthen or weaken the endowment of *personality*, which I regard as over-arching since it pertains to establishing a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, the *Logos* and *Verbum Dei*.

5.4.3 The endowment of *spirituality*

According to Hughes (1989:55–56), man is a spiritual creature since he is created by a spiritual God. By humbly recognising his total dependence on God through praise and worship, he strengthens his spiritual bond and communion with God and fulfills his human destiny.

In the *Confessiones*, I have identified a number of aspects that impact on the development of the endowment of spirituality: There are certain factors that impeded the development of this endowment, namely: Augustine's love of material pleasures and his spiritual weakness; his conception that God was

¹³⁵ Ambrose rejected this belief of Apollinaris of Laodicea, which was taught during the second half of the fourth century C.E. (Chadwick 1991:129, n. 28).

¹³⁶ Photinus held that Christ had not existed before the incarnation. He believed that His wisdom came from the inspiration of God, and not from the fact that Christ was the personal presence of the wisdom of God. Photinus was condemned for heresy in 351 C.E. (Chadwick 1991:128, n. 27).

¹³⁷ "I had not yet come to groan in prayer that you might come to my aid" (*Conf.* 6.iii.3).

physical and not spiritual; and his notion that sin was caused by something physical and external to himself. Certain other factors enhanced the development of the endowment of spirituality: Ambrose's allegorical interpretation of Scripture; the spiritual nature of God; the spiritual nourishment provided by the Bible and teachings of the Catholic Church; and the spiritual vision he and Monica experienced at Ostia.

Since infancy, Augustine had a struggle to conceive of God as spiritual and not material, since he could only conceive of *himself* as material. As a baby, he was wholly governed by bodily sensations and desires.¹³⁸ His participation in boyhood activities which kindled his ambition and love of material, worldly pleasures, such as games and public spectacles, led him away from God and spiritual matters, including his own spiritual development:

In competitive games I loved the pride of winning. I liked to tickle my ears with false stories which further titillated my desires (2 Tim. 4:3–4). The same curiosity mountingly increased my appetite for public shows...Look with mercy (Ps. 24:16–18) upon these follies, Lord, and deliver us (Ps. 78:9) who now call upon you. (*Conf.* 1.x.16)

At a later stage, Augustine recognised the moral danger of these shows and cautioned his friend Alypius, who had become almost addicted¹³⁹ to the carnality and gore of the gladiators fighting in the circuses. In effect, Augustine was beginning to be concerned about his own spiritual health and his friend's. These worldly distractions alienated them from God to such an extent that he describes Alypius as having "imbibed madness" (*Conf.* 6.viii.13) as a result of attending the spectacles.

He was spiritually empty as a result of his waywardness and "suffered from a subconscious poverty of mind" (*Conf.* 3.1.1). The further he drifted away from God, the less he felt he needed God, as in a vicious circle. Again using the

¹³⁸ "For at that time I knew nothing more than how to suck and how to be quietened by bodily delights, and to weep when I was physically uncomfortable" (*Conf.* 1.vi.7).

¹³⁹ "...the whirlpool of Carthaginian morals, with their passion for empty public shows, sucked him into the folly of the circus games" (*Conf.* 6.vii.11). Alypius had developed an unhealthy and "incredible obsession for gladiatorial spectacles" (*Conf.* 6.viii.13) where men were killed for the pleasure of the crowds.

metaphor of nourishment,¹⁴⁰ Augustine admits that he was spiritually too weak and immature to eat the food of God's wisdom and truth and still had to grow in faith. The notion of "spiritual food" and therefore dependence on God is also present in Augustine's description of man being saved by the abundance¹⁴¹ of God's love for him:

"My hunger was internal, deprived of inward food, that is of you yourself, my God. I was without any desire for incorruptible nourishment, not because I was replete with it, but the emptier I was, the more unappetizing such food became" (*Conf.* 3.i.1). ...He who for us is life itself descended here and endured our death and slew it by the abundance of his life. (*Conf.* 4.xii.19)

In his spiritual poverty, Augustine was easily misled by the Manicheans¹⁴² on the nature of evil and the nature of God, believing both to be material. He consequently regarded both as physical manifestations and had no insight in the spiritual aspect of the *imago Dei*:

I did not know that evil has no existence except as a privation of good...I had not realized God is a spirit (John 4:24)...I was wholly ignorant of what it is in ourselves which gives us being, and how scripture is correct in saying that we are 'in God's image' (Gen. 1:27). (*Conf.* 3.vii.12)

Augustine's learning, strongly influenced by Manichean thinking, enforced the wrong ideas he had about the nature of God and led him further away from the true God:

But what good did this for me? I thought that you, Lord God and Truth, were like a luminous body of immense size and myself a bit of that body. What extraordinary perversity! But that is how I was... (*Conf.* 4.xvi.31)

Although his meeting with Faustus had lessened his taste for Manicheism, upon his arrival in Rome, he was still under Manichean influence regarding

¹⁴⁰ "My hunger was internal, deprived of inward food, that is of you yourself, my God. I was without any desire for incorruptible nourishment, not because I was replete with it, but the emptier I was, the more unappetizing such food became" (*Conf.* 3.i.1).

¹⁴¹ *Conf.* 4.xii.19 refers to Plotinus' notion of hypostasis and the Neo-Platonic motif of descent and ascent from, and to, the abundance of the One.

¹⁴² As indicated by Augustine's admission: "...while traveling away from the truth I thought I was going towards it" (*Conf.* 3.vii.12).

the cause of sin, regarding it as something physical and external to himself against which he had no protection:

I still thought that it is not we who sin, but some alien nature which sins in us. It flattered my pride to be free of blame and, when I had done something wrong, not to make myself confess to you that you might heal my soul; for it was sinning against you (Ps. 40:5). I liked to excuse myself and to accuse some unidentifiable power which was with me and yet not I. But the whole was myself and what divided me against myself was my impiety. That was a sin the more incurable for the fact that I did not think myself a sinner. (*Conf.* 5.x.18)

At a time in his life when he “had lost any hope that a way to [God] might lie open for man” (*Conf.* 5.xiv.24), the deeper, spiritual meanings that Ambrose revealed in the Bible gave him new hope. The main obstacle in completely breaking with Manicheism was his inability “to conceive of spiritual substance” (*Conf.* 5.xiv.25). Through Ambrose, God’s “holy oracle” (*Conf.* 6.iii.4), Augustine heard him every Sunday “‘rightly preaching the word of truth’ (2 Tim. 2:15)” (*Conf.* 6.iii.4) and thereby gained important new insights regarding Scriptural authority, the spiritual nature of God, and the Catholic Church’s true view on the *imago Dei*. Problems that he had thought insoluble, suddenly started to diminish, clearing the way for his return to Catholic Christianity, which had gained intellectual respectability in Augustine’s eyes:

More and more my conviction grew that all the knotty problems and clever calumnies which those deceivers of ours had devised against the divine books could be dissolved. I also learnt that your sons, whom you have regenerated by grace through their mother the Catholic Church, understood the text concerning man being made in your image (Gen. 1:26) not to mean that they believed and thought you to be bounded by the form of a human body. Although I had not the least notion or even an obscure suspicion how there could be spiritual substance, yet I was glad, if also ashamed, to discover that I had been barking for years not against the Catholic faith but against mental figments of physical images. You are certainly not our physical shape. Yet you made man in your image... (*Conf.* 6.iii.4)

Ambrose’s allegorical explanation of certain Scriptural passages taught Augustine that the spiritual Word of God was life-giving: “The letter kills, the spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:6)” (*Conf.* 6.iv.6). His prior, literal reading of the Bible

had made no sense to him, since the Scriptures were “of mountainous difficulty and enveloped in mysteries” (*Conf.* 3.v.9). The *Verbum Dei* would later enable Augustine the bishop to pass on the spirit of life to his parishioners by preaching the truth of God’s Word and warning against the dangers of material, worldly things in their spiritual journey to God and eternal life. Augustine’s spiritual¹⁴³ “offspring”, in the sense of converting others to Catholic Christianity, gave Monica far more joy than the fact that Augustine had given her a grandson of flesh and blood.

Exposure to the Christian Neo-Platonism of prominent Milanese citizens, chief among them the Bishop of Milan, resulted in Augustine’s intellectual conversion and final severance with Manicheism. It enabled him to reconcile his love of philosophy with his regained faith in the Catholic Church, since many of the Neo-Platonic teachings accorded with Catholic doctrine. Most importantly, Neo-Platonism afforded Augustine the insight that God was spiritual¹⁴⁴ and not material, and therefore not corruptible and not the cause of evil.

From the time that I began to learn something of your wisdom, I did not conceive of you, God, in the shape of the human body. I...was glad when I found the same concept in the faith of our spiritual mother, the Catholic Church. With all my heart I believed you to be incorruptible, immune from injury, and unchangeable. (*Conf.* 7.i.1)

During Augustine’s “period of contemplation” (*Conf.* 9.iv.7) with his mother,¹⁴⁵ son, and friends at the country villa at Cassiciacum,¹⁴⁶ they regularly debated various philosophical and theological questions, which deepened¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Referring to Monica after his conversion in the garden in Milan, Augustine remarks: “You ‘changed her grief into joy’ (Ps. 29:12) far more abundantly than she desired, far dearer and more chaste than she expected when she looked for grandchildren begotten of my body” (*Conf.* 8.xii.30).

¹⁴⁴ “At that time, after reading the books of the Platonists and learning from them to seek for immaterial truth, I turned my attention to your ‘invisible nature understood through the things which are made’ (Rom. 1:2)” (*Conf.* 7.xx.26).

¹⁴⁵ Augustine reverently describes Monica as someone “in the clothing of a woman but with a virile faith, an older woman’s serenity, a mother’s love, and a Christian devotion” (*Conf.* 9.iv.8). This illustrates his deep love and respect for her and his gratitude for the tireless role she played in his conversion to Catholic Christianity.

¹⁴⁶ “...where we rested in you from the heat of the world...” (*Conf.* 9.iii.5).

¹⁴⁷ “I was but a beginner in authentic love of you...” (*Conf.* 9.iv.8).

Augustine's understanding of the spiritual nature of God and his love for Him. He repented of his self-glorification and of having both told and believed lies¹⁴⁸ about God, realising that the truth should not be sought in the "external realm" (*Conf.* 9.iv.10) of temporary, worldly values.¹⁴⁹ Shortly before her death, Monica and Augustine experienced a spiritual vision¹⁵⁰ at Ostia while contemplating¹⁵¹ what the afterlife¹⁵² with a loving, eternal God would be like. I would argue that this mystical experience could be regarded as a climax of Augustine's spiritual growth and conception of God as Spirit. Mother and son agreed that "the pleasure of bodily senses" could not be compared with "the life of eternity" (*Conf.* 9.x.24). Looking at the garden from the window of the house where they were staying on their way back to Africa, they experienced the loving closeness of God when their minds ascended to Him in a transcendent experience during an intimate discussion on their spiritual future:

Our minds were lifted up by an ardent affection towards eternal being itself. Step by step we climbed beyond all corporeal objects and the heaven itself...We ascended even further by internal reflection and dialogue and wonder at your works, and we entered into our own minds. We moved up beyond them so as to attain to the region of inexhaustible abundance where you feed Israel eternally with truth for food. There life is the wisdom by which all creatures come into being...this wisdom...is eternal...And while we talked and panted after it, we touched it in some small degree by a moment of total concentration of the heart. (*Conf.* 9.x.24). ... at that moment we extended our reach and in a flash of mental energy attained the eternal wisdom which abides beyond all things. (*Conf.* 9.x.25)

The above passage illustrates how, by turning inward, mother and son managed to get a momentary glimpse of the eternal wisdom of God. Augustine movingly thanks God for granting them the "inward joys" (*Conf.*

¹⁴⁸ "As I heard the Psalm, I trembled at words spoken to people such as I recalled myself to have been. For in the fantasies which I had taken for truth, there was vanity and deceit" (*Conf.* 9.iv.9).

¹⁴⁹ "We derive our light from you...If only they could see the eternal to be inward!" (*Conf.* 9.iv.10).

¹⁵⁰ Chadwick (1991:171, n. 25–26) suggests that Augustine's description of his and Monica's ecstatic vision has Neo-Platonic characteristics and that it bears similarities to Plotinus' use of language in the *Enneads* (5.1.2.14 ff.)

¹⁵¹ "...we were searching together in the presence of the truth which is you yourself" (*Conf.* 9.x.23).

¹⁵² "We asked what quality of life the eternal life of the saints will have, a life which 'neither eye has seen nor ear heard...' (1 Cor. 2:9)" (*Conf.* 9.x.23).

9.x.25) of their vision and allowing them to experience the quality of eternal life in a “moment of understanding” (*Conf.* 9.x.25).

Augustine’s love of philosophy would lead him to develop his powers of reason and to investigate problems in a rational manner. I discuss his progress in this regard under the endowment of *rationality* below.

5.4.4 The endowment of *rationality*

Man is also created a rational being, argues Hughes (1989:57–58), since he is created by a rational God who spoke a rational universe into creation. His bond with God is therefore both spiritual and intellectual and that enables him to communicate with God through the *Logos*. As a rational being, man has the mental faculty to reason and think logically and convey his thoughts through speech. I have distinguished certain aspects that influence the development of the endowment of rationality, as follows: Augustine’s earlier impulsive and unquestioning behaviour, leading him to act irrationally; the illumination of his mind by the Word of God; the development of his reasoning mind through exposure to Neo-Platonism and Ambrose’s rational discourse; and his reading of the Bible in the correct way to clarify the significance of the incarnation and solve problems of interpretation.

I agree with Hughes (1989) and contend that Augustine’s decisions and wrong actions were carried out without any reasoning and desire to do God’s will, and that he yielded to carnal impulses without considering the consequences of his irresponsible behaviour.¹⁵³ However, reading Cicero’s *Hortensius*¹⁵⁴ inflamed him with a passion for philosophical reasoning and the search for truth. It planted a small but life-changing seed for inner change and his return to the authority of God by encouraging him to use his rational mind to

¹⁵³ “Yet sin is committed...and...in consequence of an immoderate urge towards those things which are at the bottom end of the scale of good, we abandon the higher and supreme goods, that is you, Lord God, and your truth and your law (Ps. 118:142)” (*Conf.* 2.v.10).

¹⁵⁴ Only the fact that “the name of Christ was not contained in the book” (*Conf.* 3.iv.8) tempered the esteem in which he held the *Hortensius*.

distinguish between unimportant and important, between worldly knowledge and spiritual wisdom:

The book changed my feelings. It altered my prayers, Lord, to be towards you yourself. It gave me different values and priorities. Suddenly every vain hope became empty to me, and I longed for the immortality of wisdom with an incredible ardour in my heart. I began to rise up to return to you. (*Conf.* 3.iv.7)

A further positive result of reading Cicero's "exhortation to study philosophy" (*Conf.* 3.iv.7) was that he turned to the Bible to find wisdom in God's Word, which *did* contain the name "Jesus Christ" (in contrast to the *Hortensius*). Regrettably, he found the Old Latin translation too difficult and "unworthy in comparison with the dignity of Cicero" (*Conf.* 3.v.9) and was too proud and impatient to persevere in penetrating its deeper meanings. Instead, he succumbed to the Manichean "false statements" (*Conf.* 3.vi.10) about God and His creation. Because the Manicheans professed to believe in Jesus Christ, he did not rationally question their teachings at that stage. In searching for the truth about God, he did not use his "intelligence of the mind" (*Conf.* 3.vi.11) but only "the eye of the flesh" (*Conf.* 3.vi.11). He "professed a false religion" (*Conf.* 4.i.1) and wrongly thought that adhering to the Manichean religion would bring him "liberation" (*Conf.* 4.i.1) from his transgressions.

Augustine did not use his intellect¹⁵⁵ to arrive at the truth about who God was and was unable to sift the wheat from the chaff—he reacted emotionally to various opinions and philosophies and depended on his own judgement. His mind and soul needed to be illuminated¹⁵⁶ by *God's* truth—not that espoused by man—before he could come to a rational understanding of the Being of God. The soul itself was devoid of the truth and needed divine help to rise above itself and ascend to God. Since he thought of God as an unstable and

¹⁵⁵ The reason being that "obsession has captured the mind's affective part which is at the root of the impulse to carnal pleasures, so also errors and false opinions contaminate life if the reasoning mind itself is flawed" (*Conf.* 4.xv.25).

¹⁵⁶ "For I did not know that the soul needs to be enlightened by light from outside itself, so that it can participate in truth, because it is not the nature itself of truth. You will light my lamp, O Lord" (*Conf.* 4.xv.25).

changeable, physical mass,¹⁵⁷ he remained “a wandering spirit (Ps. 77:39)” (*Conf.* 4.xv.26) who was searching in vain for God, as it was impossible for him to perceive of God as spiritual. Owing to the influence of Manicheism, he could only think of God¹⁵⁸ and evil¹⁵⁹ as material and had no notion of their spiritual nature. Erroneous reasoning¹⁶⁰ was principally to blame for these misconceptions—an important insight that Augustine gained in his spiritual development.

Eventually Augustine was repulsed by Mani’s vanity and impiety.¹⁶¹ A personal meeting with the supposedly learned Manichean bishop Faustus¹⁶² allowed the scales to drop from Augustine’s eyes. He was disillusioned by Faustus’ ignorance and his inability to convincingly answer his questions on troublesome aspects of the Manichean religion, with the result that his interest in Manicheism waned¹⁶³ considerably. God’s “hidden providence” (*Conf.* 5.vii.13) and grace enabled Augustine to use his intellect to weigh and critically consider the claims of Mani and Faustus. His subsequent, rational rejection of certain of their teachings protected him from “a snare of death’ (Ps. 17:6)” (*Conf.* 5.vii.13) and contributed towards his salvation.¹⁶⁴ Faustus therefore acted as a remedial agent in turning him away from Manicheism and back towards the Catholic Church. The first green shoots of Augustine’s

¹⁵⁷ “...turning over in my mind fictitious physical images” (*Conf.* 4.xv.27) of God.

¹⁵⁸ “I thought it shameful to believe you to have the shape of the human figure...When I wanted to think of my God, I knew no way of doing so except as a physical mass” (*Conf.* 5.x.19)

¹⁵⁹ “For the same reason I also believed that evil is a kind of material substance with its own foul and misshapen mass...” (*Conf.* 5.x.20).

¹⁶⁰ Nor did I think anything existed which is not material. That was the *principal* and almost sole cause of my inevitable error. (*Conf.* 5.x.19) (*my emphasis*).

¹⁶¹ “‘See, piety is wisdom’ (Job 28:28)...But his impudence in daring to teach a matter which he did not understand shows that he could know nothing whatever of piety. He did not wish the opinion of his abilities to be low. He even tried to persuade people that the Holy Spirit, the comforter and enricher of your faithful people, was with plenary authority present in himself” (*Conf.* 5.iv.8).

¹⁶² Augustine described Faustus as “a great trap of the devil (1 Tim. 3:7) by which many were captured as a result of his smooth talk” (*Conf.* 5.iii.3).

¹⁶³ “In consequence the enthusiasm I had for the writings of Mani was diminished...So the renowned Faustus...without his will or knowledge had begun to loosen the bond by which I had been captured” (*Conf.* 5.vii.13).

¹⁶⁴ “How can salvation be obtained except through your hand remaking what you once made?” (*Conf.* 5.vii.13).

spiritual recovery had appeared and the start of the healing process in restoring God's image in him had begun.

The religious and philosophical influence of Ambrose, the next major remedial agent, would only gradually¹⁶⁵ penetrate his mind and replace fixed Manichean tenets.¹⁶⁶ Ambrose's rational discourse and reasoned allegorical exegesis of the Bible (especially of the Old Testament), given with the authority of the most powerful representative of the Catholic Church in Milan, answered many of Augustine's most important theological questions¹⁶⁷.

Augustine's "rashness and impiety" (*Conf.* 6.iii.4) were the reasons for not first investigating the things of which he had accused the Church¹⁶⁸, based on the false teachings of the Manicheans. He had been so desperate for certainty about the nature¹⁶⁹ of God in order to know Him, that he had been "deceived with promises of certainty" (*Conf.* 6.iv.5). He had not used his rational mind to think things through properly, but had relied on emotion and the desire to please his Manichean friends¹⁷⁰ instead to make value judgements. He could now rejoice that the Catholic Church taught its members correctly about the nature of God and henceforth gave his "preference to the Catholic faith" (*Conf.* 6.v.7):

And I was glad, my God, that your one Church, the body of your only Son in which on me as an infant Christ's name was put, did not hold infantile follies, nor in her sound doctrine maintain that you, the Creator of all things, occupy a vast and huge area of space and are nevertheless bounded on all sides and confided within the shape of the human body. (*Conf.* 6.iv.5)

¹⁶⁵ "While I opened my heart in noting the eloquence with which he [Ambrose] spoke, there also entered no less the truth which he affirmed, though only gradually" (*Conf.* 5.xiv.24).

¹⁶⁶ "I began to like him, at first indeed not as a teacher of the truth, for I had absolutely no confidence in your Church..." (*Conf.* 5.xiii.23).

¹⁶⁷ "I used enthusiastically to listen to him preaching to the people...as if testing out his oratorical skill...but remained bored and contemptuous of the subject matter...[yet] Ambrose taught the sound doctrine of salvation" (*Conf.* 5.xiii.23).

¹⁶⁸ "...I contended against your Catholic Church with blind accusations...so I was confused with shame. I was being turned around" (*Conf.* 6.iv.5).

¹⁶⁹ "Being ignorant what your image consisted in, I should have knocked (Matt. 7:7) and enquired about the meaning of this belief" (*Conf.* 6.iv.5).

¹⁷⁰ "Deceived with promises of certainty, with childish error and rashness I had mindlessly repeated many uncertain things as if they were certain" (*Conf.* 6.iv.5).

As a consequence of carefully listening to the contents of Ambrose's sermons and his allegorical interpretation of texts, Augustine was able to read and understand the Old Testament without thinking it "absurd" (*Conf.* 6.iv.6). Ambrose therefore taught Augustine to think rationally and use his intellect to solve his problems in understanding the Word of God.¹⁷¹ Yet a certain perversity persisted in Augustine, who was still trapped in his Manichean mindset: in his quest for certainty about the truth, he doubted whether that which Ambrose preached was really *true*. His lack of faith and knowledge of "spiritual matters" (*Conf.* 6.iv.6) served to increase his inner torment and hesitation in fully embracing the Catholic Church and the truths it taught about God:

Fearing a precipitate plunge, I kept my heart from giving any assent, and in that state of suspended judgement I was suffering a worse death...By believing I could have been healed. My mind's eye thus purified would have been directed in some degree towards your truth which abides for ever and is indefectible. But just as it commonly happens that a person who has experienced a bad physician is afraid of entrusting himself to a good one so it was with the health of my soul. While it could not be healed except by believing, it was refusing to be healed for fear of believing what was false. (*Conf.* 6.iv.6)

As he grew in understanding his own weaknesses and the true, spiritual nature of God, Augustine questioned his initial decision to give an "unqualified judgement" (*Conf.* 7.xvii.23) on things that changed and became corrupted. During this internal inquiry on his "value judgements" (*Conf.* 7.xvii.23), he discovered that he was able to go beyond the limitations of his changeable mind¹⁷² to rise up to the soul and from there to the "power of reasoning" (*Conf.* 7.xvii.23) with "its own intelligence" (*Conf.* 7.xviii.23). This enhanced his ability to think and argue rationally, and thereby arrive at the truth.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ "Those texts which, taken literally, seemed to contain perverse teaching he would expound spiritually, removing the mystical veil" (*Conf.* 6.iv.6).

¹⁷² "...I found the unchangeable and authentic eternity of truth to transcend my mutable mind" (*Conf.* 7.xvii.23).

¹⁷³ This change in Augustine's intellectual sharpness increased his intelligence and led his "thinking out of the ruts of habit. It withdrew itself from the contradictory swarms of imaginative fantasies, so as to discover the light by which it was flooded" (*Conf.* 7.xviii.23). This is a reference to the Neo-Platonic notion of divine illumination of the mind (the soul).

In my view, Neo-Platonism contributed to an immense extent to shape Augustine as rational being. He learnt many insights from Neo-Platonic philosophy and acknowledged that the Neo-Platonists had attained a high level of knowledge of God. However, he rationally argued that their intellectual pride¹⁷⁴ was the reason why the *libri platonicorum* did not mention the incarnation¹⁷⁵ of Jesus and why they did not acknowledge His unique role as the only Way to God. Jesus' humility in becoming flesh—the divine descending to the level of matter—and dying a criminal's death on the cross offended their sense of the exaltedness of a spiritual God to whom material man ought to subject himself:

What will wretched man do? 'Who will deliver him from this body of death' except your grace through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 7:24), who is your coeternal Son, whom you 'created in the beginning of your ways' (Prov. 8:22)...one of this in the Platonist books. Those pages do not contain the face of this devotion, tears of confession, your sacrifice, a troubled spirit, a contrite and humble spirit (Ps. 50:19), the salvation of your people...the cup of our redemption...No one there hears him who calls 'Come to me, you who labour' (Matt. 11:28). They disdain to learn from him, for 'he is meek and humble of heart'. (*Conf.* 7.xxi.27)

The Neo-Platonic books also gave Augustine the insight to reason out for himself what the origin of evil was. Putting paid to the Manichean notion of the origin of evil,¹⁷⁶ Augustine finally comes to the conclusion that man sins out of his own free will¹⁷⁷ and he himself was the cause of his sin. He only had himself to blame if he was then judged by a righteous God.

¹⁷⁴ "Through a man puffed up with monstrous pride, you brought under my eye some books of the Platonists, translated from Greek into Latin" (*Conf.* 7.ix.13).

¹⁷⁵ "But that he 'took on himself the form of a servant and emptied himself, was made in the likeness of men and found to behave as a man, and humbled himself being made obedient to death...so that God exalted him' from the dead 'and gave him a name which is above every name...and every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord in the glory of the Father' (Phil. 2:6–11)—that these books do not have" (*Conf.* 7.ix.14).

¹⁷⁶ "...they thought it more acceptable to say your substance suffers evil than that their own substance actively does evil" (*Conf.* 7.iii.4).

¹⁷⁷ "I directed my mind to understand what I was being told, namely that the free choice of the will is the reason why we do wrong and suffer your just judgement. I was brought up into your light by the fact that I knew myself both to have a will and to be alive. Therefore when I willed or did not will something, I was utterly certain that none other than myself was willing or not willing. That there lay the cause of my sin I was now coming to recognize" (*Conf.* 7.iii.5).

Augustine, however, acknowledges that Platonism had also had a negative influence: he had succumbed to the intellectual pride conveyed through the Neo-Platonic works, and thanked God that he had read those works before reading Scripture. Intellectual pride pertained to the fact that a small group of philosophers and intellectuals were of the opinion that they alone had the knowledge and wisdom to attain to the truth about God. They did not regard Scripture as a source of wisdom in that respect. However, by reading the Bible himself with his intellect sharpened by philosophical debate and Ambrose's sermons, Scripture now acted as a lens which corrected his erroneous view of the incarnation and other theological questions. Biblical knowledge replaced his own inadequate knowledge with the truth, namely that man could only reach God through Jesus as Mediator. Through Scripture, he was taught to be discerning by using his intellectual abilities to think and reason for himself:

For my part I admit it was some time later that I learnt, in relation to the words 'The Word was made flesh', how Catholic truth is to be distinguished from the false opinion of Plotinus (*Conf.* 7.xix.25) ... Worse still, I was puffed up with knowledge (1 Cor. 8:1)...I believe that you wanted me to encounter them [the Platonist books] before I came to study your scriptures...so that...I would learn to discern and distinguish the difference between presumption and confession, between those who see what the goal is but not how to get there... (*Conf.* 7.xx.26).

Although Augustine's intellectual advancement had solved many of his problems relating to the nature of God and the doctrine of the Catholic Church, he still had to contend with the problem of continence, which I discuss as part of the endowment of *morality* below.

5.4.5 The endowment of *morality*

Hughes (1989:59–60) correctly observes that man is constituted a moral being since he is the image of a perfect, holy God. He must therefore live a holy life by adhering to God's standard of holiness. The obligation is on man to avoid sin, which leads to immorality and ungodliness. He should obey his conscience and emulate the life of Jesus Christ, who is the perfect Image of

God, by submitting to His will. In this section, I will discuss the following factors which I believe had an impact on the development of the endowment of morality: Augustine's reading of immoral classical literature; his concupiscence (a major moral problem for Augustine); and his final moral conversion in Milan, when he totally submitted to the will of God.

Monica delayed Augustine's baptism for fear of the moral sins that Augustine might still commit as he grew up, which would put him beyond the pale of God's mercy:

My cleansing [baptism] was deferred on the assumption that...I would be sure to soil myself; and after that solemn washing the guilt would be greater and more dangerous if I then defiled myself with sins. (*Conf.* 1.xi.17)

It appears Monica's fears were well-founded. I contend that Augustine's struggle with moral issues may well be due to the struggle of his will against God's, which would have repercussions throughout his life until his moral conversion in Milan. In Book 2, Augustine confesses to God the true reason for his wrongful actions and immoral behaviour, which reveals a certain perversity: he did what he did because he liked it and because he wanted to, and for no other reason:

I had no motive for my wickedness except wickedness itself. It was foul and I loved it. I loved the self-destruction. I loved my fall...My depraved soul leaped down from your firmament to ruin. I was seeking not to gain anything by shameful means, but shame for its own sake. (*Conf.* 2.iv.9)

When Augustine left Carthage to start a new life in Rome, he was "full of the abominable filth" (*Conf.* 5.viii.15) of heresy and rebellion, yet God ensured his safe passage across the Mediterranean so that he could later be baptised in Milan by His grace.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, the "many great waves"¹⁷⁹ of temptation" (*Conf.* 1.xi.18) did impact negatively on the divine image in Augustine. His study of pagan literature merely taught him to weep "over the death of Dido dying for

¹⁷⁸ "...so as to bring me to the water of your grace [in baptism]. This water was to wash me clean..." (*Conf.* 5.viii.15).

¹⁷⁹ Chadwick (1991:14, n. 20) points out that the restless sea is Augustine's standard image for man estranged from God.

love of Aeneas" (*Conf.* 1.xiii.21), but not about the moral danger to his soul that could die owing to "his lack of love for...God" (*Conf.* 1.xiii.21). The result of his love of this world and its immoral literature was that he "committed fornication against [God] (Ps. 72:27)" (*Conf.* 1.xiii.21), thereby alienating himself from his Creator. His study of the classics and their embedded culture corrupted his morals, since he tried to model his life on those of classical heroes, who acted immorally with the approval of the pagan gods:

...Homer indeed invented these fictions, but he attributed divine sanction to vicious acts, which had the result that immorality was no longer counted immorality and anyone who so acted would seem to follow the example not of abandoned men but of the gods in heaven. (*Conf.* 1.xvi.25).

The classical texts were poison to his soul, since they contained "the wine of error...poured into them...by drunken teachers" (*Conf.* 1.xvi.26). Augustine drank this toxic drink "with pleasure and...delight" (*Conf.* 1.xvi.26), as he was then unaware of the dangers these texts posed. They enticed him to feel pride in reading the classical Latin authors, which resulted in his imbibing their cultural values and following the wrong moral examples, to the detriment of "the eternal contracts of lasting salvation" (*Conf.* 1.xviii.29):

When one considers the men proposed to me as models for my imitation, it is no wonder that in this way I was swept along by vanities and traveled right away from you, my God. (*Conf.* 1.xviii.28)

One of Augustine's main problems in staying close to God was his concupiscence.¹⁸⁰ In disobeying the moral laws of God, he defaced the image of God in himself. From being united to God in a personal relationship, he descended into moral alienation from his Creator because he could not distinguish between "love's serenity and lust's darkness" (*Conf.* 2.ii.2) and therefore fell prey to "muddy carnal concupiscence" (*Conf.* 2.ii.2), leading to moral deformation. His immoral conduct was made worse by the fact that he

¹⁸⁰ Augustine refers to his concupiscence as the "hellish pleasures...[where he] ran wild in the shadowy jungle of erotic adventures" (*Conf.* 2.i.1).

took pride in his sexual conquests in order to be accepted by his friends¹⁸¹, who were guilty of the same practices in “the streets of Babylon”¹⁸² (*Conf.* 2.iii.8)—a classic example of peer pressure. His personal life was in turmoil after becoming intoxicated with love and other worldly pleasure while a student of rhetoric at Carthage¹⁸³. The result was that his “soul was in rotten health” (*Conf.* 3.i.1) and his perversity robbed him of peace and tranquillity¹⁸⁴. Although admiring Ambrose, Augustine was still chained to fleshly desires and struggled with moral issues, and therefore found Ambrose’s “celibacy...painful” (*Conf.* 6.iii.3). He was not yet prepared to emulate Ambrose’s abstinence. He therefore continued to be chained to “the flesh’s morbid impulse and lethal sweetness...” (*Conf.* 6.xii.21). Augustine’s lack of continence indicates his inability to restrain his carnal appetites and passions, which led to moral and intellectual problems in his search for God.

Although Augustine longed to follow Victorinus’ example by dedicating his life to God¹⁸⁵, his will was not strong enough to renounce earthly passions in favour of serving God only, and obeying His will. The reason was that he could not give up his sexual habit, which had him in a grip of “iron of [his] own choice” (*Conf.* 8.v.10). An internal struggle¹⁸⁶ raged between his old will, tied to his habit born out of passion, and his new will, longing to be free from that “harsh bondage” (*Conf.* 8.v.10). Augustine begs God for mercy and to explain the “monstrous fact” (*Conf.* 8.ix.21) why his mind does not obey the commands of his own mind, whereas his limbs immediately obey when his

¹⁸¹ “But I...went on my way headlong with such blindness that among my peer group I was ashamed not to be equally guilty of shameful behaviour when I hear them boasting of their sexual exploits” (*Conf.* 2.iii.7).

¹⁸² Babylon is used as symbol of moral depravity and excesses.

¹⁸³ “I came to Carthage and all around me hissed a cauldron of illicit loves...I longed to live...I therefore polluted the spring water of friendship with the filth of concupiscence” (*Conf.* 3.i.1).

¹⁸⁴ “I was glad to be in bondage...with the result that I was flogged with the red-hot iron rods of jealousy, suspicion, fear, anger, and contention” (*Conf.* 3.i.1).

¹⁸⁵ “...I sighed after such freedom...” (*Conf.* 8.v.10).

¹⁸⁶ “The new will, which was beginning to be within me a will to serve you freely and to enjoy you, God,...was not yet strong enough to conquer my older will, which had the strength of old habit. So my two wills, one old, the other new, one carnal, the other spiritual, were in conflict with one another, and their discord robbed my soul of all concentration” (*Conf.* 8.v.10).

mind commands them to move.¹⁸⁷ He comes to the conclusion that there are two wills,¹⁸⁸ one good and one evil, one trying to reach the truth, the other trying to prevent it, dividing the self in the process.¹⁸⁹ The cause of this struggle between the two wills is the fact that man, in his conceit, wants to be enlightened¹⁹⁰ not by God to discern divine truth, but by his own soul, which man arrogantly maintains has the same divine nature as God. This arrogance removes man from God. Once Augustine had finally submitted to the will¹⁹¹ of God in the garden in Milan,¹⁹² he experienced a deep sense of peace, since he had come to rest in God.

While Augustine wanted to emulate the life of Jesus¹⁹³ by living a perfectly moral life, he was still confronted by his old problem¹⁹⁴, namely that he “was still firmly tied by woman” (*Conf.* 8.i.2) and the “violence of habit” (*Conf.* 8.v.12). He kept deferring from leading a celibate life since he was “weighed...down with a sweet drowsiness” (*Conf.* 8.v.12). The inspiring stories Poncticianus told him and his friends about the holy man, Antony of Egypt, and about people leading virtuous lives in various monasteries, all dedicating their lives to serving God,¹⁹⁵ spurred Augustine on to finally

¹⁸⁷ “The mind commands the body and is instantly obeyed. The mind commands itself and meets resistance...The willing is not wholehearted, so the command is not wholehearted” (*Conf.* 8.ix.21).

¹⁸⁸ “We are dealing with a morbid condition of the mind which, when it is lifted up by the truth, does not unreservedly rise to it but is weighed down by habit. So there are two wills. Neither if them is complete, and what is present in the one is lacking in the other” (*Conf.* 8.ix.21).

¹⁸⁹ “...the self which willed to serve was identical with the self which was unwilling. It was I. I was neither wholly willing nor wholly unwilling. So I was in conflict with myself and was dissociated with myself” (*Conf.* 8.x.22).

¹⁹⁰ “But they wish to be light not in the Lord but in themselves because they hold that the nature of the soul is what God is. They have in fact become a thicker darkness in that by their horrendous arrogance they have withdrawn further away from you—from you who are ‘the true light illuminating every man coming into this world’ (John 1:9)” (*Conf.* 8.x.22).

¹⁹¹ “Thereby I submitted my neck to your easy yoke and my shoulders to your light burden (Matt. 11:30), O Christ Jesus ‘my helper and redeemer’ (Ps. 18:15)...What I once feared to lose was now a delight to dismiss...Already my mind was free of the ‘biting cares’ of place-seeking, of desire for gain, of wallowing in self-indulgence, of scratching the itch of lust” (*Conf.* 9.i.1).

¹⁹² “...after my conversion and regeneration by your baptism...” (*Conf.* 9.ii.6).

¹⁹³ “I was attracted to the way, the Saviour himself, but was still reluctant to go along its narrow paths” (*Conf.* 8.i.1).

¹⁹⁴ “...at the beginning of my adolescence...I prayed...: ‘Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet.’” (*Conf.* 8.vii.17).

¹⁹⁵ “...in orthodox faith and in the Catholic Church” (*Conf.* 8.vi.13).

break¹⁹⁶ with his habit in order to also devote his life to God—but still his “soul hung back” (*Conf.* 8.vii.18), resulting in a renewed inner struggle.¹⁹⁷ Although lacerated by guilt for his inability to take the final step, he thanks God for helping him to persevere by putting mental pressure on him,¹⁹⁸ although it was “torture” (*Conf.* 8.xi.25). He finally realises that he could only make the final commitment to celibacy with the grace of God and the moral courage and spiritual strength granted by Him:

...For from that direction where I had set my face and towards which I was afraid to move, there appeared the dignified and chaste Lady Continence...enticing me in an honourable manner to come and not to hesitate. To receive and embrace me she stretched out pious hands, filled with numerous good examples for me to follow...And she smiled on me with a smile of encouragement as if to say: ‘Are you incapable of doing what these men and women have done? Do you think them capable of achieving this by their own resources and not by the Lord their God?...Why are you relying on yourself, only to find yourself unreliable? Cast yourself on him, do not be afraid...Make the leap without anxiety; he will catch you and heal you. (*Conf.* 8.xi.27)

Augustine's final conversion to Catholic Christianity was to be a *moral* conversion, which took place in the garden of his lodgings in Milan and carries echoes of Adam's creation in the Garden of Eden. Although Neo-Platonic philosophy had enlightened his mind and helped him to understand spiritual matters, it did not free him from bodily urges. However, that was to change. Just as Adam was created in the image of God to be in a close, personal relationship with Him, the *imago Dei* in Augustine is healed and recreated by the grace of God in a Milanese garden, enabling him to renounce the sins of the flesh forever and be reconciled to God. The *tolle, lege, tolle lege*¹⁹⁹ of a

¹⁹⁶ “But while [Poncticianus] was speaking, Lord, you turned my attention back to myself...you set me before my face (Ps. 49:21) so that I should see how vile I was, how twisted and filthy, covered in sores and ulcers” (*Conf.* 8.vii.16).

¹⁹⁷ “What is wrong with us?...Uneducated people are rising up and capturing heaven (Matt. 11:12), and we with our high culture without any heart—see where we roll in the mud of flesh and blood...Do we feel no shame at making not even an attempt to follow?” (*Conf.* 8.viii.19).

¹⁹⁸ “You, Lord, put pressure on me in my hidden depths with a severe mercy wielding the double whip of fear and shame, lest I should again succumb...” (*Conf.* 8.xi.25).

“...it becomes sweet for me, Lord, to confess to you by what inward goads you tamed me; how you leveled me by ‘bringing down the mountains and hills’ of my thoughts and ‘made straight my crooked ways and smoothed my roughnesses’ (Isa. 40:4);...” (*Conf.* 9.iv.7).

¹⁹⁹ “As I was saying this and weeping in the bitter agony of my heart, suddenly I heard a voice from the nearby house chanting...‘Pick up and read, pick up and read’” (*Conf.* 8.xii.29).

child's sing-song voice, almost like a ringing church bell urging sinners to come to worship in the house of God, urged the weeping²⁰⁰ Augustine to pick up the Bible where he had put it down in despair and open it at random. In a flash of illumination after reading a passage from Romans, he won the battle against the concupiscence and love of earthly things that had fettered him and kept him²⁰¹ from God:

'Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts' (Rom. 13:13–14). (*Conf.* 8.xii.29)

In my opinion, Augustine's moral victory in Milan is closely linked to his acceptance of the will and authority of God and the Catholic Church, as discussed below.

5.4.6 The endowment of *authority*

It is a sober reminder that comes from Hughes (1989:61–62), namely that God gave man the authority to rule over creation, but man remains subject to the authority of God. Man perverts his derived authority when he does not exercise it to the glory of God. I have distinguished the following factors that affected the development of the endowment of authority in the *Confessiones*, namely the importance of obeying the will of God's laws with the same humility that Jesus bowed to the will of the Father; the authority of Scripture as taught by the Catholic Church; the authority of the Church's doctrines; and the authority of the sacrament of baptism to seal man's bond with God.

Obedience to the authority of God's law protects the image of God in man and his likeness to God. Augustine confesses that "in their perverted way all humanity imitates [God]" (*Conf.* 2.vi.14), trying to create their own laws by which they live which conflict with their Creator's laws and authority. Man's

²⁰⁰ "I threw myself down somehow under a certain figtree, and let my tears flow freely" (*Conf.* 8.xii.28). Chadwick (1991:152, n. 19) speculates that this figtree could be a symbolic reference to Adam's figtree mentioned in Gen. 3:7 and John 1:48.

²⁰¹ "The effect of your converting me to yourself was that I did not now seek a wife and had no ambition for success in this world" (*Conf.* 8.xii.30).

personal relationship with God is constantly marred by transgressions of His moral laws, contained in the Ten Commandments and elsewhere in the Bible. Augustine identifies three “chief kinds of wickedness” (*Conf.* 3.vii.16) which harm man’s soul and the image of God in him when men “brazenly delight in the collapse of the restraints of human society” (*Conf.* 3.vii.16). These three sins are the lust for power, the lust of the eyes (by looking at public spectacles which are not performed to the honour and glorification of God, for example), and the lust of the flesh.²⁰² Man must humble himself before God’s authority in order to return to Him as the Source of life and true happiness:

That is the outcome when you are abandoned, fount of life and the one true Creator and Ruler of the entire universe...Return to you is along the path of devout humility. You purify us of evil habit, and you are merciful to the sins we confess. You hear the groans of prisoners (Ps. 101:21) and release us from the chains we have made for ourselves... (*Conf.* 3.vii.16).

Humility is a virtue that man must learn and acquire, since the Son humbled Himself to obey the will of the Father by being incarnated and dying on the cross. Since Jesus is the perfect image of God, man must follow Jesus’ example of humility in order to conform to Him. Being in God’s image means that man has to obey the authority of “the most righteous law of almighty God” (*Conf.* 3.vii.13) and therefore “good and holy people were obliged to submit” to His justice (*Conf.* 3.vii.13) to honour the sacred bond between God and man. If man ignores the authority of God’s laws, he is rudderless, and will guide himself to his “own self-destruction” (*Conf.* 4.i.1), like a ship without a captain.

It was chiefly Manicheism that swayed Augustine against the authority of the Catholic Church²⁰³ and its doctrines, and denied the authority of Scripture²⁰⁴ with their erroneous interpretations. Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan and the

²⁰² These three major sins “spring from the lust of domination or from the lust of the eyes or from sensuality” (*Conf.* 3.vii.16).

²⁰³ In particular I had no hope that truth could be found in your Church...the Manichees had turned me away from that” (*Conf.* 5.x.19).

²⁰⁴ “I did not think there was any defence against the Manichees’ criticisms of your scriptures” (*Conf.* 5.xi.21).

antithesis of the Manichean bishop, served to act as catalyst (after Faustus²⁰⁵) to guide Augustine into submitting to the authority of the teachings of Scripture and of the Catholic Church. Augustine regarded his meeting with Ambrose²⁰⁶ as a providential act:

And so I came to Milan to Ambrose the bishop, known throughout the world as among the best of men, devout in your worship...I was led to him by you, unaware that through him, in full awareness, I might be led to you. That 'man of God' (2 Kgs. 1:9) received me like a father and expressed pleasure at my coming with a kindness most fitting in a bishop. (*Conf.* 5.xiii.23)

Initially, however, Augustine remained indecisive about formally submitting to the authority of the Catholic Church²⁰⁷ and decided to test the waters by becoming a catechumen, without any commitment, which would not harm his career prospects in a city with prominent pagan and Manichean citizens. Slowly, his scepticism concerning whether Catholicism was the true faith was replaced by certainty²⁰⁸ about the authority of the teachings of the Bible and of the Catholic Church. Owing to Ambrose's Neo-Platonic sermons and the books of the Neo-Platonists which he had read, Augustine decided to study the Bible again, especially the writings of Paul,²⁰⁹ and found that his former problems of understanding the apostle "simply vanished" (*Conf.* 7.xx.26), possibly because his teachings broadly accorded²¹⁰ with those of the Neo-

²⁰⁵ Monica, of course, had been a major catalyst all along, devoutly praying for her son's salvation, yet often merely tolerated by Augustine in his rebellious state. Only with hindsight would he realise her true worth and the role she had played in saving his soul.

²⁰⁶ Upon learning that it was Ambrose who had brought Augustine to the point of becoming a catechumen, Monica thought of him "as an angel of God (Gal. 4:14)" (*Conf.* 6.i.1) and attended all his services, since she regarded him as "the fount of water bubbling up to eternal life" (John 4:14)" (*Conf.* 6.i.1) who would be God's instrument in her son's salvation. She was "full of confidence...[and]...faith in Christ that before she departed this life, she would see [Augustine] a baptized Catholic believer" (*Conf.* 6.i.1).

²⁰⁷ "However, even so I did not think the Catholic faith something I ought to accept. Granted it could have educated people who asserted its claims and refuted objections with abundant argument and without absurdity...There could be an equally valid defence for both" (*Conf.* 5.xiv.24).

²⁰⁸ This signifies a milestone in coming to rest in God.

²⁰⁹ "With avid intensity I seized the sacred writings of your Spirit and especially the apostle Paul...the holy oracles now presented to me a simple face, and I learnt to 'rejoice with trembling'" (*Conf.* 7.xxi.27).

²¹⁰ "I began reading and found that all the truth I had read in the Platonists was stated here together with the commendation of your grace..." (*Conf.* 7.xxi.27).

Platonists. Augustine came to realise that God had used heresies to open his eyes to the fact that the teachings of the Catholic Church were correct.²¹¹

Despite his lingering doubt about the veracity of Scripture, Augustine decided to accept the authority of the Catholic Church²¹² and its teachings on the basis of faith. God, in His mercy, was working with and in Augustine, leading him towards the tranquility that would bring him the certainty he so desperately desired. He forcefully testifies to the value and authority of the Word of God (as taught by the Catholic Church)²¹³ in his salvation. He had come to realise that man's acceptance by faith of "the authority of the sacred writings" (*Conf.* 6.v.8) was of the greatest importance precisely because humankind was "too weak to discover the truth by pure reasoning" (*Conf.* 6.v.8) and for that reason the Bible is instrumental²¹⁴ in healing the broken image of God and restoring man's likeness to God. The authority and esteem of the Bible was underscored by the fact "that it was open to everyone to read" (*Conf.* 6.v.8), regardless of their level of education, with the result that it attracted "crowds to the bosom of its holy humility" (*Conf.* 6.v.8). For Augustine, Scripture serves as the antidote to his pride and self-reliance, humbling himself before his Creator in order to return to Him. His pride signified rebellion against the authority of God.

Augustine's final submission to the will of God and the authority of the Catholic Church²¹⁵ and its teachings came at the joyous moment when he

²¹¹ "The rejection of heretics brings into relief what your Church holds and what sound doctrine maintains" (*Conf.* 7.xix.25).

²¹² "I thought it more modest and not in the least misleading to be told by the Church to believe what could not be demonstrated—...rather than from the Manichees to have a rash promise of knowledge with mockery of mere belief...Then little by little, Lord, with a most gentle and merciful hand you touched and calmed my heart" (*Conf.* 6.v.7).

²¹³ "I was seeking the origin of evil and here was no solution. But you did not allow fluctuations in my thinking to carry me away from the faith I held...that in Christ your Son our Lord, and by your scriptures commended by the authority of your Catholic Church, you have provided a way of salvation where humanity can come to the future life after death" (*Conf.* 7.vii.11).

²¹⁴ "...I now began to believe that you would never have conferred such pre-eminent authority on the scripture...unless you had willed that it would be a means of coming to faith in you and a means of seeking to know you" (*Conf.* 6.v.8).

²¹⁵ "How I wept during your hymns and songs! I was deeply moved by the music of the sweet chants of your Church. The sounds flowed into my ears and the truth was distilled into my heart" (*Conf.* 9.vi.14).

was baptised in Milan by Ambrose, who had recommended beforehand that Augustine should read certain Scriptures to make him “readier and fitter to receive so great a grace” (*Conf.* 9.v.13). The baptism²¹⁶ of Augustine, according to one of the sacraments of the Catholic Church, placed the seal on their bond with God and symbolised his commitment and obedience to Him and his faith in the eternal life. This was the crown on the process of the healing of the divine image in Augustine. In the years that would follow, he would grow in his faith and thereby help the process of restoration of the *similitudo* to Jesus Christ, the Word of God and therefore the perfect image and likeness of God.

Augustine's acceptance of the will of God and the authority of Scripture and the Catholic Church is an important breakthrough in his conversion and the healing process of the defaced image. This change in Augustine's attitude towards, and perception of, the authority of the true God, rehabilitated his former perversity in following his own will and humbly submitting to the will of the Father, as Jesus had done. In discussing the final endowment, *creativity*, below, Augustine will also learn humility by renouncing worldly success in favour of devoting his life to God.

5.4.7 The endowment of *creativity*

Hughes (1989:62-64) argues that man is an esthetic being with the power of creativity, made in the image of a God who is the supreme Designer and Maker. The Creator is the origin of all beauty and everything that is good. Man should therefore use his own creative abilities to uplift and enrich his own spirit and that of his fellow man, and to glorify the beauty of God's own creative work. If man perverts his creativity, he dishonours God. In my view, the following aspects influence the development of the endowment of *creativity* in Augustine's autobiographical work: the creative energies of athletes and actors that are not used to honour and glorify God; Augustine's pride and ambition in preparing for a lucrative career as rhetor; his pride in his

²¹⁶ “We were baptized, and disquiet from our past life vanished from us” (*Conf.* 9.vi.14).

classical education; and his inner change when he realised that he had used his skills and knowledge for self-glorification.

In Augustine's time, competitive games and theatrical shows were very popular and always well attended. Athletes and actors channeled their creative energies into entertaining the crowds, without any consideration as to whether they were doing it to the glory of God or not. In common with most other people, Augustine was "captivated by theatrical shows" (*Conf.* 3.ii.2), which encouraged his "love of worldly things" (*Conf.* 3.ii.2). In Augustine's opinion, the fact that the actors did not use their artistic creativity to honour God influenced him and the other spectators negatively, leading them to focus on the bodily and not the spiritual, the temporary thrill and excitement and not the eternal peace of God. He relied on his corporeal senses and not his rational mind (soul), making it impossible to communicate with God. His love of fame and the theatre was based on material, worldly values:

...we pursued the empty glory of popularity, ambitious for the applause of the audience at the theatre when entering for verse competitions to win a garland of mere grass,²¹⁷ concerned with the follies²¹⁸ of public entertainments and unrestrained lusts. (*Conf.* 4.i.1)

Augustine castigates himself for using his God-given ability of speech and his accomplishments in creative writing and rhetoric not to love and praise God, but to feed his pride and ambition and prepare himself for an illustrious career:

The objective they had in view was merely to satisfy the appetite for wealth and for glory, though the appetite is insatiable, the wealth is in reality destitution of spirit, and the glory something to be ashamed of. (*Conf.* 1.xii.19)

He did not use God's gifts to develop his creative powers as a means of growing closer to Him by praising God, but to obtain praise from created

²¹⁷ Here Augustine alludes to the temporality of popularity, which inevitably withers away in the same way as grass does.

²¹⁸ Augustine recognises the foolishness, even madness, of his youthful attraction to vulgar public spectacles.

beings. Because he did not use his talents²¹⁹ to the glory of God, he “plunged into miseries, confusions, and errors” (*Conf.* 1.xx.31), turning him away from God. Patricius, like many other pagan fathers, only cared that his son should obtain the best education to carve out a lucrative career as rhetor.²²⁰ For Augustine, in that respect, Patricius was not a good parental model for a relationship with God, in contrast to Monica. In fact, the culture which Augustine was taught to emulate “really meant a desert²²¹ uncultivated by...God” (*Conf.* 2.iii.5). His pride in, and reliance on, his own power as rhetor came between him and God and contributed to his *aversion*.²²²

His studies in the liberal arts were “deemed respectable” (*Conf.* 3.iii.6) and were designed to prepare him for a distinguished career in law,²²³ but also succeeded in inflating his ego and in blinding himself to the value of spiritual matters with lasting value. Augustine describes his career as a teacher of rhetoric as being “overcome by greed” (*Conf.* 4.ii.2) and as selling his knowledge of that art to students who then used it to plead for the freedom of a guilty man, thereby enabling them to thwart justice and the authority of God’s moral laws. His pride was able to rule him since his soul “was not yet attached to the solid rock of truth” (*Conf.* 4.xiv.23). Indeed, all his knowledge gained from studying the liberal arts²²⁴ and his creative skills did not illuminate his soul because he did not use them to glorify God.²²⁵ His God-given talents

²¹⁹ “...I developed a good memory, I acquired the armoury of being skilled with words, I avoided...ignorance...But every one of these qualities are gifts of my God: I did not give them to myself. They are good qualities, and their totality is my self” (*Conf.* 1.xx.31).

²²⁰ “But this same father did not care what character before you I was developing, or how chaste I was so long as I possessed a cultured tongue...” (*Conf.* 2.iii.5). Patricius did not give “a thought to [God] at all, and his ambitions for [Augustine] were concerned with mere vanities” (*Conf.* 2.iii.8).

²²¹ Cf. the “sterile things” (*Conf.* 2.ii.2) referred to in section 5.4, which also indicate death (of the soul) and estrangement from God.

²²² “My stiff neck took me further and further away from you” (*Conf.* 3.iii.5).

²²³ “...in the law courts, where one’s reputation is high in proportion to one’s success in deceiving people. The blindness of humanity is so great that people are actually proud of their blindness. I was already top of the class...and was inflated with conceit” (*Conf.* 3.iii.6).

²²⁴ “I enjoyed reading them [books on the liberal arts], though I did not know the source of what was true and certain in them. I had my back to the light and my face towards the things which are illuminated...I learnt about the art of speaking and disputing...with no great difficulty and without a teacher to instruct me” (*Conf.* 4.xvi.30).

²²⁵ “You know, Lord my God, that quick thinking and capacity for acute analysis are your gift. But that did not move me to offer them in sacrifice to you. And so these qualities were

instead alienated him from his Creator because he wasted his energies on temporary and, ultimately unimportant, worldly gains and fame.²²⁶

Humility²²⁷ did not come easily to Augustine, who continued to travel “along the broad way of the world” (*Conf.* 6.v.8). He used his skill and talent as rhetor not to honour the God of truth, but to flatter the pagan Emperor.²²⁸ Instead of using his God-given creativity to glorify God, he debased his creative powers and defaced the image through hypocrisy and lying.²²⁹ He still clung to “secular successes” (*Conf.* 6.xi.11), such as “the governorship of a minor province” (*Conf.* 6.xi.11) which necessitated “a wife with some money” (*Conf.* 6.xi.11) and which he could obtain by means of his skill as rhetor and his social connections. However, his conscience²³⁰ had come alive to the fact, whereas previously it would not have troubled him: this reflected an important inner change. Meeting a beggar in the streets of Milan, he was struck by the destitute man’s cheerfulness, despite his poverty and low station in the world. Still, he was not prepared to change roles with him, since he was still consumed by the ambition that his superior education had kindled in him. It was ironical that an ignorant beggar had already reached the state of happiness for which Augustine had been searching, while Augustine, his mind crammed with knowledge with commercial value, remained restless:

There was no question that he was happy and I racked with anxiety. He had no worries; I was frenetic; and if anyone had asked me if I would prefer to be merry or to be racked with fear, I would have answered ‘to be merry’. Yet if

not helpful but pernicious, because I went to too much pain to keep a good part of my talents under my control” (*Conf.* 4.xvi.30).

²²⁶ “...I traveled away from you into a far country to dissipate my substance on meretricious lusts (Luke 15:13)” (*Conf.* 4.xvi.30).

²²⁷ In contrast to the “holy humility” (*Conf.* 6.v.8) of the Bible, Augustine “aspired to honours, money, marriage...in those ambitions [he] suffered the bitterest difficulties...” (*Conf.* 6.vi.9).

²²⁸ “How unhappy I was, and how conscious you made me of my misery, and that day when I was preparing to deliver a panegyric on the emperor! In the course of it I would tell numerous lies and for my mendacity would win the good opinion of people who knew it to be untrue” (*Conf.* 6.vi.9).

²²⁹ “My education enabled me to seek to please men, not to impart to them any instruction, but merely to purvey pleasure. For that reason you ‘broke my bones’ (Ps. 41:11; 50:10) with the rod of your discipline (Ps. 22:4)” (*Conf.* 6.vi.9).

²³⁰ “How unhappy I was, and how conscious you made me of my misery...The anxiety of the occasion was making my heart palpitate and perspire with the destructive fever of the worry” (*Conf.* 6.vi.9).

he asked whether I would prefer to be a beggar like that man or the kind of person I was, I would have chosen to be myself, a bundle of anxieties and fears. What an absurd choice! (*Conf.* 6.vi.9)

However, an inward change had started: he felt self-disgust at the unholy use to which he had put his expensive education²³¹ for the purposes of self-glorification. A growing self-knowledge and insight enabled him to recognise the same moral fault in his friends²³² and was therefore an important step towards inner reform and healing of the divine image in him. Victorinus' decision to be baptised in public,²³³ and not privately, as told to him by Simplicianus,²³⁴ further brought home to him the virtue of humility. There were clear parallels between the life of Victorinus and Augustine's, which made Victorinus' extraordinary example all the more powerful a role model²³⁵ for Augustine. Both were well-known rhetors²³⁶ in Rome and Milan respectively, and proud of their prowess in the oratorial field and knowledge of

²³¹ "My "education enabled me to seek to please men, not to impart any instruction, but merely to purvey pleasure" (*Conf.* 6.vi.10).

²³² "...I sought an arrogant success by telling lies...I often observed their condition to be the same as mine, and my state I found to be bad; this caused me further suffering and a redoubling of my sense of futility" (*Conf.* 6.vi.10). It is ironical that Augustine, who was searching for the truth in order to find happiness, should admit that he told lies to succeed in life to find worldly happiness.

²³³ "He was afraid to offend his friends, proud devil-worshippers" (*Conf.* 8.ii.4). "Finally the hour came for him to make the profession of faith...Simplicianus used to say that the presbyters offered him the opportunity of affirming the creed in private...But he preferred to make profession of his salvation before the holy congregation. For there was no salvation in the rhetoric which he had taught...He proclaimed his unfeigned faith with ringing assurance" (*Conf.* 8.ii.5).

²³⁴ "Then, to exhort me to the humility of Christian, hidden from the wise and revealed to babes (Mat. 11:25), he recalled his memory of Victorinus..." (*Conf.* 8.ii.3). By humbling himself to obey the will of God, Victorinus associated himself with the humility Jesus Christ showed in obeying the will of the Father by being incarnated and dying on the cross to serve His redemptive purpose.

²³⁵ "As soon as your servant Simplicianus told me this story, I was ardent to follow his example" (*Conf.* 8.v.10).

²³⁶ So highly did the Roman elite regard Victorinus for his teaching that "he was offered and accepted a statue in the Roman forum, an honour which the citizens of this world think supreme" (*Conf.* 8.ii.3).

various disciplines and philosophies.²³⁷ Both had worshipped proud²³⁸ and empty, false religions²³⁹ before being converted to Catholic Christianity.²⁴⁰

By emulating Ambrose, Victorinus and many other examples of virtuous lives, he was able to break the chain of imprisonment²⁴¹ that had bound him to his spiritually sterile “post as a salesman of words in the markets of rhetoric” (*Conf.* 9.ii.2). Only now was Augustine free to use his creative abilities to the glory of God. After his final conversion in the Milanese garden, Augustine lost all worldly ambition²⁴² and quit the teaching profession in order to devote his life to God. He would do so subsequent to Monica’s death, preaching and writing sermons, as well as writing theological discourses that refuted heresies and that affirmed that the doctrines of the Catholic Church were correct.

5.5 CONCLUSION

In this, the penultimate chapter of my study, I analysed the role of the *imago Dei* in Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity on the basis of relevant passages in the *Confessiones*. My analysis was based on a meta-framework consisting of a conceptual framework of the nature of the *imago Dei*, as well as a literary framework which served as the basis for examining the *imago Dei* in a structured manner as it is treated in the conversion narrative recounted in Books 1 to 9 of the *Confessiones*.

²³⁷ “Victorinus was extremely learned and most expert in all the liberal disciplines. He had read and assessed many philosophers’ ideas, and was tutor to many noble senators” (*Conf.* 8.ii.3).

²³⁸ “...the sacrilegious rites of proud demons, whose pride he imitated when he accepted their ceremonies. He became ashamed of the emptiness of those rites and felt respect for the truth” (*Conf.* 8.ii.4).

²³⁹ Victorinus, “until he was of advanced years,...was a worshipper of idols and took part in sacrilegious rites” (*Conf.* 8.ii.3).

²⁴⁰ Augustine describes Victorinus’ conversion as a return from a “hell of blindness” (*Conf.* 8.iv.9) after being illuminated by God’s truth.

²⁴¹ “The day came when I was actually liberated from the profession of rhetor, from which in thought I was already freed” (*Conf.* 9.iv.7).

²⁴² “My secular activity I held in disgust, and now that I was not burning with my old ambitions in hope of honour and money it was burdensome to me to tolerate so heavy a servitude. By now those prizes gave me no pleasure...” (*Conf.* 8.i.2).

The conceptual framework brought together insights from the first four chapters of my thesis to serve as theoretical basis for the analysis. This framework amalgamated the three main theological approaches to understanding the *imago Dei* (as formulated by the Church Fathers preceding Augustine), Augustine's own development thereof by identifying a power or endowment of the divine image in man (as interpreted and developed by Hughes 1989: 1, 51–64), and the broad Neo-Platonic influence on Augustine's conception of the *imago Dei*. The literary framework indicated Augustine's progress from *aversio* and *perversio* (Books 1 to 4) to *conversio* (Books 6 to 9), with Book 5 serving a pivotal purpose as Augustine moves towards the healing of the image and rest in God. In addition, in the literary framework I identified a number of factors that led Augustine away from God, and indicated how these negative factors changed into positive factors that helped him to overcome his sins so that the image could be healed and the likeness to God restored.

I structured my analysis around the six endowments conferred on man by the divine image, as developed by Hughes (1989:51–64) from his interpretation of Augustine's concept of *power* or *endowment* imprinted in the divine image in man. These endowments²⁴³ or attributes are: *personality*, *spirituality*, *rationality*, *morality*, *authority*, and *creativity*. Since the term “image” seldom features in Books 1 to 9 of Chadwick's translation of the *Confessiones* (Chadwick 1991), I used these endowments as a springboard to deduce the role of the image in Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity. I added my own interpretation of these endowments in analysing the text and substantiated my argument with passages that I considered relevant.

Having done the analysis, I maintain that the first endowment, *personality*, is over-arching, since the other five endowments all contribute to building a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, who is the perfect image of God and the Mediator and Redeemer of man. Ambrose and other Christian

²⁴³ Cf. Part 2 of the conceptual framework of the nature of the *imago Dei* in section 5.2 above.

Neo-Platonists opened Augustine's eyes to the *spirituality* of man and of God. Ambrose instructed him in the allegorical interpretation of the Bible, solving various problems that Augustine had with understanding Scriptures in a literal way. In his quest for the truth and wisdom of God, Neo-Platonic philosophy especially taught him to use his intellect and *rationality* to help him discern the true God from counterfeit gods and to reason for himself that man, not God, was the origin of evil. His mind and soul needed to be illuminated by God's truth in order to understand God as a rational Being. Regarding the endowment of *morality*, Augustine won the struggle against his concupiscence and love of earthly things once he realised that he could only be continent with God's grace and by submitting to His will. Concerning *authority*, Augustine accepted the authority of the Bible and the teachings of the Catholic Church as his faith grew and as the misconceptions originating from Manicheism were cleared up. He was able to channel his *creativity* into a means of praising and worshiping God by using his oratorical talents to preach and write sermons, in a life totally devoted to God. His pride in his coveted post as rhetor had vanished and been replaced by the humility of a dedicated servant of God.

Once Augustine had decided to obey the will of God after his final moral conversion in the Milanese garden, the die was cast, and he was able to make the correct moral choices which would henceforth enable him to live according to the law of God in a close and loving relationship. At last he had found happiness and personal fulfillment by worshiping and glorifying the eternal God and not the false gods of his own making. The defaced image of God in him had been healed and his likeness to God restored through the love and grace of Jesus Christ, the perfect Image of God.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this study, I attempted to determine the role of the *imago Dei* in Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity, as recounted in his *Confessiones*. My interest in this research problem was sparked by the fact that Augustine wrote quite extensively, especially in the *De Trinitate*, on the importance of the *imago Dei* for the salvation of mankind. Yet, a survey of the literature showed that there had been no structured investigation into how the image features in the *Confessiones* and how the defacement and healing of the image impacted on his soul's journey back to God. I therefore resolved to investigate those aspects that pertain to the *imago Dei* in Books 1 to 9 (the autobiographical part of the work) in order to address the research problem and to come to a conclusion.

In order to proceed to the analysis in Chapter 5, I followed four lines of enquiry to create a theoretical framework for my textual analysis. First, I investigated the concept of *conversion* to establish the context of Augustine's own religious conversion and the link between conversion and the *imago Dei* (Chapter 1). Second, I examined the concept of the *imago Dei* to ascertain its origin and to consider the importance of the shift in emphasis of *man as the image of God* in the Old Testament to *Jesus as the perfect image of God* in the New Testament (Chapter 2). Third, I reviewed the origin and tenets of Neo-Platonic philosophy (Chapter 3) and aspects of the remarkable, Neo-Platonic-inspired sermons and allegorical Scriptural exegesis of Ambrose (Chapter 4), as the literature had pointed to their decisive philosophical and theological influence on Augustine's intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. Below, I summarise the insights gained from my four fields of enquiry regarding the role of the *imago Dei* in Augustine's conversion, which enabled me to analyse the first nine Books of the *Confessiones* in a meaningful way.

I started out by discussing the pertinent aspects of religious conversion in the context of Augustine's return to the Catholic faith of his childhood and within the broader framework of the religious, political and social instability of Late Antiquity (Chapter 1). The Bible teaches that man should repent of his sins in order to be reconciled to God the Father through Jesus Christ, the *Logos* and *Verbum Dei*. This process of reconciliation and healing of the defaced image in man is not an event, but a gradual learning process which has a certain duration, varying from individual to individual—almost twelve years in the case of Augustine. Various remedial agents acted as compelling examples and role models for Augustine to follow, including Monica, Ambrose, Simplicianus, and Victorinus. As he grew intellectually, morally and spiritually, Augustine came to understand the Catholic faith intellectually by using his mental powers. This allowed him to accept the teachings of the Bible and the Catholic Church as pointing the way to salvation. Augustine came to realise that he could only be reconciled to God by renouncing the sin that had defaced the divine image imprinted in him. This represents the link between conversion and the *imago Dei*.

In my exploration of the origin of the concept of the *imago Dei* (in Chapter 2) I established that its source lay in Ancient Near Eastern cultures. In the Old Testament, the earlier Yahwist account and the later Priestly account of creation, respectively stresses man's weakness and temporal existence on the one hand, and man's destiny to be reunited with God on the other. The Priestly account has become the normative account in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Both the terms *image* and *likeness* occur in Genesis and in the New Testament. Whereas the Fall defaced the divine image and deprived man of the divine likeness, alienating him from God, the New Testament offers new hope for the healing of the image and restoration of the divine likeness. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, ushered in a new humanity when He was incarnated and the image of God in man was renewed in Him through the Holy Spirit. He was the perfect Image of God since he fully revealed the nature and glory of the Father. Through total obedience to the Father and his atoning death, he became the Mediator and Redeemer of man, who could now be spiritually

renewed. Since Christ had atoned for the sins of humankind, it enabled man to be reconciled to God by being renewed in His image through the gift of grace of the *Logos*. Importantly, the reconciling work of Jesus is done in the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. Realising the importance of the *imago Dei* in Christ's reconciling work and the salvation of man, the Church Fathers preceding Augustine attempted to define the image, since the concept was undefined in Genesis. They posited structural, relational and teleological interpretations of the image. Augustine subscribed to the structural approach, although his conception had characteristics of the relational approach. In developing these three interpretations further, he came to regard the soul as the seat of the image. Using the Neo-Platonic concept of *hypostasis*, Augustine held that an image has an inherent likeness to its immediate origin (God) and that being reunited with God was therefore the *telos* of man. He further argued that the image bestowed on man a divine power or endowment that elevated him above the animals. Hughes (1989:51–64) interpreted Augustine's understanding of the divine power or endowment in the image as relating to the attributes of *personality*, *spirituality*, *rationality*, *morality*, *authority* and *creativity* of man. I used these attributes or endowments around which to structure the textual analysis in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 3, I investigated the history and tenets of Neo-Platonism in the context of its founder, Plotinus, and his main extant work, the *Enneads* (in which his teachings are expounded), in order to understand the influence of Neo-Platonism on Augustine and his conception of the *imago Dei*. Plotinus synthesised almost eight centuries of Greek thought in his discourses and Neo-Platonism therefore had a profound impact on Augustine, who was a neophyte regarding Greek philosophy. Neo-Platonism, itself influenced by Neo-Pythagoreanism (amongst other philosophies), was the result of Plotinus' attempt to explain and clarify Platonism. In Plotinus' philosophical system, there existed various spheres of being in a hierarchical order, with each lower sphere derived from the one above it. The highest sphere, which is the cause of all being, is called the "One", because it in itself is simple and self-contained, existing independently from any other sphere. It is therefore

beyond being. Plotinus discerned three *hypostases* (basic entities or types of enduring reality) called the One, Intellect, and Soul, in descending order of importance. From Soul, further entities emanated until the lowest level or sphere, that of matter, was reached, where the image of the original entity was at its faintest. A lower created being could revert to its superior entity or principle through contemplation, and thereby attain its original spiritual form. If the soul contemplated the Truth of the One (the First Principle, or the Unmoved Mover), it would return to its source (the Good or the One), and be saved. Plotinus held that man was a spiritual intellect who was able to contemplate the Word in His role as the image of the One. The One personifies love and all beings long to return and be reunited with it through the process of *epistrophē*. However, only the souls of individuals who had progressed intellectually and morally to a sufficiently high level would be able to contemplate the Intellect and the One (the Truth). The value of Neo-Platonism regarding its influence on Augustine is that it helped him to see God as spiritual and not material, as eternal and not temporary. Augustine learnt that he could ascend spiritually to God by using his intellect (the mind). He, too, longed to return to the one true God, transcendent and infinite, the origin of everything, since the One was the ultimate object of man's love and therefore his destiny or *telos*. He would learn from Ambrose and other Christian Neo-Platonists in Milan, however, that man could only be reunited with God through Jesus Christ, the Son and Word of God.

The influence on Augustine was chiefly mediated through Ambrose and his fellow Christian Neo-Platonists in Milan and impacted on his further intellectual, moral, and spiritual development and on his conception of the *imago Dei*. As the Bishop of the Imperial City of Milan, Ambrose enjoyed great ecclesial and political prestige. He became Augustine's spiritual mentor, amongst other things through sermons infused with Neo-Platonism. Augustine met Ambrose at the lowest ebb of his life, having given up all hope of gaining an understanding of the true nature of God and how he could attain to Him. The false religion of Manicheism had taken its toll. Ambrose, who was fluent in Greek and who had studied Greek philosophy in general and

Platonism and Neo-Platonism in particular, guided him to an understanding of God as spirit and the role of man's free choice in deciding whether or not to do evil. Ambrose's allegorical exegesis of Scripture, especially the New Testament, opened Augustine's eyes to the hidden spiritual meanings contained in the Old Testament and he therefore accepted the authority of the Bible which described Jesus as both fully human and fully God. The Bible had become intellectually acceptable in Augustine's eyes. The Neo-Platonic concepts contained in Ambrose's sermons further helped Augustine to understand the spiritual nature of God, as opposed to the Manicheans' conception of God as material. The fact that such influential figures as Ambrose, Simplicianus and Victorinus were all members of the Catholic Church, was also instrumental in convincing Augustine to submit to its authority. The humility displayed by Victorinus when he publicly converted to Catholicism led Augustine to question his own intellectual pride which had prevented him from accepting the authority of the Church and the Bible.

In the last chapter, I drew the insights gained from my four lines of enquiry together in the form of a meta-framework within which to analyse Books 1 to 9 to ascertain how the *imago Dei* featured in Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity. My meta-framework consisted of a conceptual framework of the nature of the *imago Dei*, as well as a literary framework of the *Confessiones* which enabled me to do the textual analysis in a structured manner. The conceptual framework amalgamated the three main theological approaches to understanding the *imago Dei* (as formulated by the Church Fathers preceding Augustine), Augustine's own development thereof by identifying powers or endowments in divine image in man (as interpreted and developed by Hughes 1989: 1, 51–64), and the broad Neo-Platonic influence on Augustine's conception of the image. The literary framework allowed me to track Augustine's progress from *aversio* and *perversio* to *conversio* as he moved from doubt and uncertainty to peace and rest in the wisdom of God. I augmented the literary framework by identifying various factors that had estranged Augustine from God, and how the gradual healing process of the image cancelled out these factors as he repented of his sins. I structured my

textual analysis around the six endowments conferred on man by the divine image in him, based on Hughes' (1989:51–64) interpretation of Augustine's concept of *power* or *endowment* in the image. These endowments or attributes are: *personality*, *spirituality*, *rationality*, *morality*, *authority*, and *creativity*. As the term “image” appears rather seldom in the first nine books of Chadwick's English translation of 1991, I used these endowments as a point of departure for deducing the role of the image in Augustine's conversion to Catholic Christianity, as it features in Books 1 to 9 of the *Confessiones*.

My analysis allowed me to come to the main conclusion that Augustine's chief problem in his own mind had been that the divine image was harmed and his likeness to God diminished through the worship of false gods. This impacted in various ways on the six endowments of the divine image in Augustine. It broke off his intimate and loving relationship with the true God, whom he had regarded as physical and temporal and not as spiritual and eternal; he used his emotions and not his intellect to discern the true God from the false gods; and his concupiscence, over-weening pride and other vices kept him from obeying God's moral laws and from accepting the authority of Scripture and the Catholic Church and from glorying God. Once he had started to grow in his faith, aided by powerful role models and the spiritual insights gained from Neo-Platonism, his inner vision of God was adjusted and he radically changed his life after the garden scene in Milan so that he could be wholly devoted to serving and worshipping God. Owing to various positive influences and inner changes, he was able to conceive of God in a totally new way. This enabled him to repair the damaged image and restore the divine likeness, which in turn made it possible for him to return to God to find blessed peace and rest in God through the grace of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, my research has shown that the gradual healing of the *imago Dei* and the restoration of the *similitudo Dei*, as narrated in the autobiographical part of the *Confessiones*, played a decisive role in Augustine's acceptance of the authority of Scripture and of the Catholic

Church and its doctrines. This allowed him to fully embrace Catholic Christianity, fulfilling Monica's dearest wish.

Finally, I conclude that further research should be done in exploring the role of the *imago Dei* in Books 10 to 13, as these books expound and explain Augustine's personal conversion narrative in the first nine Books. A textual analysis of these Books could shed further light on the role of the *imago Dei* in the conversion process, since these Books pertain to the conversion of the whole of creation.

LIST OF REFERENCES CITED

- Alexander, David C. 2008. *Augustine's early theology of the church: emergence and implications, 386–391*. New York, N.Y.: Peter Lang.
- Augustine, Saint, Bishop of Hippo. 1968. *Sancti Aurelii Augustini: De Trinitate. Libri 15. (Libri 1-12)*. Cura et studio W.J. Mountain, Auxiliante Fr. Glorie. Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 50. Aurelii Augustini Opera, pars 16, 1. Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii.
- Beatrice, Pier Franco. 1989. Quosdam Platoniorum Libros: the Platonic readings of Augustine in Milan. *Vigiliae Christianae* 43:248–281.
- Blumenthal, Henry J. 1996. On soul and intellect. Pages 82–104 in *The Cambridge companion to Plotinus*. Edited by Lloyd P. Gerson. Series of Cambridge Companions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bonner, Gerald. 2007. *Freedom and necessity: St. Augustine's teaching on divine power and human freedom*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America.
- Brown, Peter. 2000. *Augustine of Hippo: a biography*. New ed. with an epilogue. Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Bryant, David J. 2000. *Imago Dei*, imagination, and ecological responsibility. *Theology Today* 57:35–50.
- Burch, Francis F. 1981. Introduction to *The path to transcendence: from philosophy to mysticism in Saint Augustine*. Pages ix–xxix in Henry, Paul. *The path to transcendence: from philosophy to mysticism in Saint Augustine* The Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 37. Pittsburgh, Penn.: The Pickwick Press.

- Burns, J. Patout. 1990. Ambrose preaching to Augustine: the shaping of faith. Pages 373–386 in *Augustine: “second founder of the faith.”* Editors Joseph C. Schnaubelt & Frederick Van Fleteren. *Collectanea Augustiniana*. New York, N.Y.: Peter Lang.
- Burton-Christie, Douglas. 1993. *The Word in the desert: scripture and the quest for holiness in early Christian monasticism*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.
- Bussanich, John. 1996. Plotinus’s metaphysics of the One. Pages 38–65 in *The Cambridge companion to Plotinus*. Edited by Lloyd P. Gerson. Series of Cambridge Companions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cairns, David. 1953. *The image of God in man*. London: SCM.
- Cameron, Averil. 1993. *The later Roman Empire AD 284–430*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Capps, Donald. 2007. Augustine’s *Confessions*: the story of a divided self and the process of its unification. *Pastoral Psychology* 55:551–559.
- Chadwick, Henry (trans.) 1991. *Augustine: Confessions*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Henry Chadwick. Oxford World’s Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clark, Mary T. 1999. Image doctrine. Pages 440–442 in *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*. General Editor, Allan D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Collins English dictionary: complete and unabridged*. 2003. 6th ed. Glasgow: HarperCollins.

- Courcelle, Pierre. 1963. *Les Confessions de Saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire: antécédents et postérité*. Paris: Études Augustiniennes.
- Courcelle, Pierre. 1968. *Recherches sur les Confessions de Saint Augustin*. Paris: Éditions E. de Boccard.
- Coward, Harold G. 1990. *Memory and Scripture in the conversion of Augustine*. Pages 19–30 in *Grace, politics and desire: essays on Augustine*. Edited by Hugo A. Meynell. Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary.
- Crouse, Robert D. 1987. 'In aenigmate trinitas' (*Confessions*, XIII,5,6): the conversion of philosophy in St. Augustine's *Confessions*. *Dionysius* 11:53–62.
- Daly, Lawrence J. 1993. Psychohistory and St. Augustine's conversion process. Pages 67–90 in *Conversion, catechumenate, and baptism in the early church*. Edited by Everett Ferguson with David M. Scholer and Paul Corby Finney. Studies in early Christianity vol. 11. New York, N.Y.: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Drobner, Hubertus R. 2007. *The Fathers of the Church: a comprehensive introduction*. Translated by Siegfried S. Schatzmann. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Duffy, Stephen J. 1999. *Anthropolgy*. Pages 24–31 in *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*. General Editor, Allan D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Edwards, Mark J. 1999. Neoplatonism. Pages 588–591 in *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*. General Editor, Allan D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

- Ehrman, Bart D. 2004. *Christianity in Late Antiquity, 300–450 C.E.: a reader*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.
- Ferguson, Everett. 2003. *Backgrounds of early Christianity*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Gaillardetz, Richard R. 2006. *The Church in the making: Lumen Gentium, Christus Dominus, Orientalium Ecclesiarum*. Rediscovering Vatican II. Series editor: Christopher M. Bellitto. New York, N.Y.: Paulist Press.
- Gatti, Maria Luisa. 1996. Plotinus: the Platonic tradition and the foundation of NeoPlatonism. Pages 10–37 in *The Cambridge companion to Plotinus*. Edited by Lloyd P. Gerson. Series of Cambridge Companions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gerson, Lloyd P. 1996. Introduction. Pages 1–9 in *The Cambridge companion to Plotinus*. Edited by Lloyd P. Gerson. Series of Cambridge Companions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grenz, Stanley J. 2001. *The social god and the relational self: a Trinitarian theology of the imago Dei*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Grenz, Stanley J. 2004. Jesus as the *imago Dei*: image-of-God Christology and the non-linear linearity of theology. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47(4), December:617–628.
- Griffin, Carl W. & Paulsen, David L. 2002. Augustine and the corporeality of God. *The Harvard Theological Review* 95:97–118.

- Gunton, Colin. 1991. Trinity, ontology and anthropology: towards a renewal of the doctrine of the *imago Dei*. Pages 47–61 in *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays in theological anthropology*. Edited by Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Harrison, Carol. 1992. *Beauty and revelation in the thought of Saint Augustine*. Oxford Theological Monographs. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hawkins, Anne Hunsaker. 1985. *Archetypes of conversion: the autobiographies of Augustine, Bunyan, and Merton*. Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press.
- Henry, Paul. 1981. *The path to transcendence: from philosophy to mysticism in Saint Augustine*. Introduction and translation by Francis F. Burch. Originally published as *La vision d'Ostie* in 1938. The Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 37. Pittsburgh, Penn.: The Pickwick Press.
- The Holy Bible: ESV: English Standard Version: containing the Old and New Testaments*. 2007. The ESV™ Classic Reference Edition. Wheaton, Ill.: Good News Publishers.
- Horne, Brian L. 1991. Person as confession: Augustine of Hippo. Pages 65–73 in *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays in theological anthropology*. Edited by Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Howe, Leroy T. 1995. *The image of God: a theology for pastoral care and counseling*. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press.
- Hughes, Philip Edgcumbe. 1989. *The true image: the origin and destiny of man in Christ*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

- Illingworth, J.R. 1894. *Personality, human and divine: being the Bampton lectures for the year 1894*. London: Macmillan.
- Lancel, Serge. 2002. *Saint Augustine*. Translated by Antonia Nevill. London: SCM Press.
- Lawrence, R.T. 2003a. Conversion, II (Theology of). Pages 234–238 in vol. 4 of *New Catholic encyclopedia*. Project Editors Thomas Carson & Joann Cerrito. 15 vols. 2nd ed. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, in association with the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.
- Lawrence, R.T. 2003b. Conversion, III (Psychology of). Pages 238–239 in vol. 4 of *New Catholic encyclopedia*. Project Editors Thomas Carson & Joann Cerrito. 15 vols. 2nd ed. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, in association with the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.
- Macmullen, Ramsay. 1993. Two types of conversion to early Christianity. Pages 26–41 in *Conversion, catechumenate, and baptism in the early church*. Edited by Everett Ferguson with David M. Scholer and Paul Corby Finney. Studies in early Christianity vol. 11. New York, N.Y.: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Markus, Robert A. 1999. Life, culture and controversies of Augustine. Pages 498–504 in *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*. General Editor, Allan D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Matter, E. Ann. 1990. Conversion(s) in the *Confessions*. Pages 21–28 in *Augustine: "second founder of the faith."* Editors Joseph C. Schnaubelt & Frederick Van Fleteren. Collectanea Augustiniana. New York, N.Y.: Peter Lang.

- Matthews, Alfred Warren. 1980. *The development of St. Augustine from Neoplatonism to Christianity 386–391 A.D.* Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, Inc.
- Mauser, Ulrich. 1970. Image of God and Incarnation. *Int* 24:343.
- McKenna, Stephen (trans.). 1963. *Saint Augustine: The Trinity*. In vol. 45 of *The Fathers of the Church: a new translation*. Editorial Board: Hermigild Dressler et al. Translated by Stephen McKenna. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press.
- McLeod, Frederick F. 1999. *The image of God in the Antiochene tradition*. Washington, D.C. The Catholic University of America Press.
- McLynn, Neil, 1999. Ambrose of Milan. Pages 17–19 in *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*. General Editor, Allan D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- McMahon, Robert. 1989. *Augustine's prayerful ascent: an essay in the literary form of the Confessiones*. Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press.
- Meynell, Hugo A. 1990. Augustine and the norms of authentic conversion. Pages 3–15 in *Grace, politics and desire: essays on Augustine*. Edited by Hugo A. Meynell. Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary.
- Moloney, F.J. 2003. Conversion, I (in the Bible). Pages 231–234 in vol. 4 of *New Catholic encyclopedia*. Project Editors Thomas Carson & Joann Cerrito. 15 vols. 2nd ed. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, in association with the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.
- Morgan, Edward. 2010. *The incarnation of the Word: the theology of language of Augustine of Hippo*. London: T&T Clark International.

- Nock, A.D. 1998. *Conversion: the old and the new in religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933. Repr. Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- O'Meara, Dominic J. 1996. The hierarchical ordering of reality in Plotinus. Pages 66–81 in *The Cambridge companion to Plotinus*. Edited by Lloyd P. Gerson. Series of Cambridge Companions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oroz Reta, José. 1999. Conversion. Pages 239–242 in *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*. General Editor, Allan D. Fitzgerald. Translated by Augustine Esposito, edited and revised by Allan Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Peace, Richard V. 1999. *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Purves, James G.M. 1996. The Spirit and the *imago Dei*: reviewing the anthropology of Irenaeus of Lyon. *The Evangelical Quarterly: an International Review of Bible and Theology in Defence of the Historic Christian Faith* 68:99–120.
- Rausch, Thomas P. 2005. *Towards a truly Catholic Church: an ecclesiology for the third millennium*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press.
- Rist, John. 1996. Plotinus and Christian philosophy. Pages 386–413 in *The Cambridge companion to Plotinus*. Edited by Lloyd P. Gerson. Series of Cambridge Companions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Satterlee, Craig Alan. 2002. *Ambrose of Milan's method of mystagogical preaching*. Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press.

- Schwöbel, Christoph. 1991. Human being as relational being: twelve theses for a Christian anthropology. Pages 141–165 in *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays in theological anthropology*. Edited by Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Sherlock, Charles. 1996. *The doctrine of humanity*. Contours of Christian theology. Series Editor: Gerald Bray. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Simmons, Michael Bland. 2000. Graeco-Roman philosophical opposition. Pages 840–868 in Esler, Philip F. (ed.). *The early Christian world*, vol. 2. London: Routledge.
- Stark, Judith Chelius. 1990. The dynamics of the will in Augustine's conversion. Pages 45–64 in *Augustine: "second founder of the faith."* Editors Joseph C. Schnaubelt & Frederick Van Fleteren. Collectanea Augustiniana. New York, N.Y.: Peter Lang.
- Steinhauser, Kenneth B. 1991. Augustine's autobiographical covenant: a contemporary reading of his *Confessions*. *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 18:233–240.
- Stephany, William A. 1982. Thematic structure in Augustine's *Confessiones*. Paper presented at the 1982 Patristics, Medieval, and Renaissance Conference held at Villanova University, November 1982. [Villanova, Pa.] Unpublished.
- Sullivan, John E. 1963. *The image of God: the doctrine of St. Augustine and its influence*. Dubuque, Iowa: Priory.
- Sweeney, Leo. 1990. "Was St. Augustine a Neoplatonist or a Christian?": old question, new approach. Pages 403–420 in *Augustine: "second founder of the faith."* Editors Joseph C. Schnaubelt & Frederick Van Fleteren. Collectanea Augustiniana. New York, N.Y.: Peter Lang.

- Teske, R.J. 2003. Augustine, St. Pages 850–868 in vol. 1 of *New Catholic encyclopedia*. Project Editors Thomas Carson & Joann Cerrito. 15 vols. 2nd ed. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, in association with the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.
- Tertullian. *The apology*. Pages 17–60 in vol. 3 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: translations of the writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, editors. Revised and chronologically arranged, with brief prefaces and occasional notes, by A. Cleveland Coxe. American edition. 1971–1976. 10 vols. Revised reprint of the Edinburgh edition. Grand Rapids, Mich: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Van Fleteren, Frederick. 1990. St. Augustine's theory of conversion. Pages 65–80 in *Augustine: "second founder of the faith."* Editors Joseph C. Schnaubelt & Frederick Van Fleteren. *Collectanea Augustiniana*. New York, N.Y.: Peter Lang.
- Van Fleteren, Frederick. 1999. *Confessiones*. Pages 227–232 in *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*. General Editor, Allan D. Fitzgerald. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Von Dehsen, Christian D. 1997. The *imago Dei* in Genesis 1:26–27. *Lutheran Quarterly* 11(3):259–270.
- Zizioulas, John D. 1991. On being a person: towards an ontology of personhood. Pages 33–46 in *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays in theological anthropology*. Edited by Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Zumstein, Jean. 1998. Bekehrung/Konversion: III. Bibel: 2. Neues Testament. Pages 1231–1232 in vol. 1 (A-B) of *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*. Herausgeber Hans Dieter Betz et al. 4., völlig neu bearb. Aufl. 8 vols. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
