

“Augustine and *Caritas*: Friendship That Leads to Community and Understanding”
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Misunderstanding: perhaps no word better describes the relationships between the diverse constituencies of the post 9/11 global village. Indeed, misunderstanding has led to increased attitudes of prejudice, fear, and resentment resulting in continual isolation and, in extreme cases, violence. The torching of the Danish embassy in Beirut in response to insensitive free speech in Danish newspapers is merely symptomatic of the deep-seeded, long-standing misunderstanding that exists between the West and Islam as well as between developed and developing countries.

In the opening lines of their 2004 single “Fast Cars,” the Irish rock group U2 sings:

I got CCTV . . . CNBC,
I got the nightly news
To get to know the enemy.¹

Indeed, U2 makes the poignant observation that the fires of misunderstanding are stoked by the media. Can we really know another person, culture or way of life through the impersonal technology of television and the imposed agendas of the news media? Do we actually at times allow the nightly news to choose our enemies for us?

In light of the present context, Habermas’ paradigm of “communicative action” toward “mutual understanding” is important and necessary. Yet, I argue that the skills and values needed to accomplish mutual understanding (rationality, consensus) are not unique to post-Enlightenment thought. In interacting with Habermas’ paradigm, I propose a look back into the history of ideas at the contribution of the North African thinker,

¹ U2, “Fast Cars” from *How To Dismantle an Atomic Bomb*, Interscope Records, 2004

Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430), and his prescriptions for understanding, which has at its base friendship and community.

In this paper, which crosses the disciplines of history, philosophy, and theology, I would like to: (1) Provide a brief historical context that reveals the ethnic and religious diversities as well as the instabilities that characterized the Roman Empire in Augustine's day (2) Show Augustine's break with the classical Roman notion of friendship (*amicitia*) toward embracing "self denying, neighbor preferring" friendship (*caritas*) while examining the building blocks of Augustine's relational thought that formed his convictions for friendship (3) Suggest applicable principles of Augustinian friendship and community relevant to the contemporary discussion on mutual (mis)understanding.

Who was Augustine?

Aurelius Augustinus was born in Tagaste (modern Souk Ahras, Algeria) in 354. Though ethnically Punic-Berber, he was culturally Roman and spoke only Latin. His father, a functionary in the local Roman administration at Tagaste, was an adherent to the traditional Roman deities while his mother was a committed Christian. Though his parents held different religious views, they both agreed that the key to Augustine's future was education and they sacrificed to send him away to study, most notably in Carthage. After completing his studies in rhetoric, Augustine began to teach the art of speaking in Carthage, briefly in Rome, and then later at Milan.

While in Milan, Augustine, who had been a "hearer" in the Manichean sect for nine years, came under the influence of Bishop Ambrose's preaching and was converted to Christianity in late 386. Resolved to renounce the world and serve God, Augustine resigned his teaching post in Milan and returned to Tagaste intending to live out his days

in the “holy leisure” (*otium sanctum*) of study, prayer and contemplation. In 391, his life’s course drastically changed when he was ordained a priest and later bishop of neighboring Hippo (modern Annaba). For nearly forty years, Augustine served as the most influential church leader in Africa until his death in 430. Augustine’s most significant legacy was probably his writings, which included nearly 1000 sermons, around 300 letters, and 117 books.²

Augustine’s World

Having left the peaceful, contemplative atmosphere of Tagaste to serve as the bishop of Hippo, Augustine often described church ministry as a “burden” (*sarcina*) — albeit one that he was committed to and did not abandon over a period of forty years.³ While Augustine’s burden could be attributed to the difficult nature of caring for recovering sinners in the context of the church,⁴ it was also due to the frequent turmoil that characterized Roman Africa in his day— turmoil that came as a result of ethnic and cultural differences, religious tensions, and political instability.

Having grown up on the Latin fringe of Tagaste, Augustine failed to connect with the majority of his own people in Tagaste.⁵ His experience largely mirrored the cultural divide that existed between the Romanized African cities and the countryside that remained attached to its Phoenician and Berber roots.⁶ This was most apparent during Augustine’s ministry as bishop when he had the dismal task of removing an immoral

² For a concise list see “Augustine’s Works,” in Allan Fitzgerald, *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), xxxv-il. See also Possidius, *Life of Saint Augustine*, 11.5.

³ Cf. *Letters*, 31.4; 69.1; 71.2; 85.2; 86; 101.3; 149.34; 242.1; 20*.4. For his commitment to the burden see *Letter*, 48.2.

⁴ Cf. Lee Bacchi, *The Theology of the Ordained Ministry in the Letters of Augustine of Hippo* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1998), 75-80.

⁵ Cf. John J. O’Meara, *The Young Augustine* (New York: Alba House, 2001), 6.

⁶ Cf. W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 32-59; O’Meara, 1-14.

bishop from the church at Fussala, a Punic speaking town only sixty kilometers from Hippo. Though geographically close, Augustine encountered much difficulty in resolving the situation because of the language and cultural barriers.⁷

The religious mosaic of fourth and fifth century Africa also posed some challenges to a peaceful society. Though groups such as the Jews, Manicheans, Arians, Pelagians, pagans, and Donatists were present in North Africa,⁸ it was the last two groups that caused the greatest trouble for Augustine, the catholic church, and the society in general. The growing Christian presence in Africa had long been a source of irritation for the pagans— those who venerated the traditional deities of the Roman pantheon and at times the emperor himself. As the gods were regarded as Rome’s guardians, it was imperative that every citizen insure the empire’s peace and prosperity through following the traditional religion. When Rome fell to the Vandal armies in 410, it was this charge of impiety that was angrily leveled against the Christians. Augustine, of course addressed the pagan response in the first half of his mammoth work, *The City of God*. Unfortunately, on at least one occasion, the pagans responded to the Christians with outright violence. In 408, Augustine’s close friend and biographer Possidius, the bishop of Calama (Guelma) was physically attacked and beaten by a pagan mob in his city.⁹

Augustine and the North African catholics experienced the most conflict with another Christian group, the schismatic Donatists. With only minor differences in thought on baptism and the nature of the church, the Donatists had split from the catholic church

⁷ For a full account of this affair, see *Letters*, 209 and 20*.

⁸ Cf. Possidius, 6-7.

⁹ Cf. *Letter*, 91; Othmar Perler, *Les Voyages de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1969), 266-69; and Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, 2000), 285-86.

in the early fourth century before Augustine's birth.¹⁰ Through letters, books, personal appeals and church councils between 392 and 411, Augustine sought to bring the Donatists back into unity with the church. Yet, following an imperial decree of unity in 405 and a condemnation at the council of Carthage in 411, the Donatists were declared an illegal sect and ordered by the Roman Emperor to reunite with the catholic church. Hence, the Donatists were not punished for their doctrine but rather because they had resorted to violence to further their aims. While a rather violent Donatist faction known as the Circumcellions emerged in the latter half of the fourth century, the Roman authorities officially intervened in 405 when a catholic bishop was nearly beaten to death by a group of Donatists inside his church.¹¹

Finally, Augustine's world was also marked by political instability. After his conversion to Christianity and decision to return to Africa in 387, Augustine and those traveling with him were delayed for a year in Rome following the usurping general Maximus' closure of the Roman port before being deposed by the Emperor Theodosius.¹² As noted, the greatest political shift during Augustine's lifetime came when General Alaric's Vandal army sacked Rome in 410 which sent refugees pouring into Africa, many of whom came under Augustine's care in Hippo.¹³ In the midst of this in 413, Count Heraclian, the Roman commander of Africa, revolted against his superior, Emperor Honorius. Though the insurrection was quickly suppressed, Augustine's friend and disciple, a Roman official named Marcellinus, was executed in the aftermath.¹⁴ Finally, in

¹⁰ For a thorough treatment of the schism and its history, see Frend, 141-91.

¹¹ Cf. Frend, 257-60.

¹² Cf. Brown, 121.

¹³ Cf. Brown, 288.

¹⁴ Cf. Stewart Oost, "The Revolt of Heraclian," *Classical Philology* 61:4 (October, 1966), 236-42; and Brown, 337.

429 the Vandal armies came from Spain and began overtaking the provinces of Mauretania Caesarea and Numidia and laid siege to Hippo in 430 as Augustine lay dying.¹⁵ In what was probably his final letter, Augustine wrote to his fellow bishop Honoratus in 429 describing the horrific atrocities of the Vandal invasion while urging his colleague to avoid fleeing and remain available to serve the needs of his church members during this volatile time.¹⁶

Hence, Roman Africa in Augustine's day was characterized by tension stemming from political instability and from cultural and religious differences— even differences between religious groups who shared many of the same doctrines. In this sense, the climate of mutual misunderstanding was not altogether unlike that of the present day.

Augustine and Friendship

In light of this context, what did Augustine propose as the means to overcome misunderstanding? Augustine's ideal society— largely articulated in his work *City of God* — was distinguished by friendship. Augustine himself was quite naturally predisposed to friendship. Since his youth, he was nearly always in the presence of friends; some of whom got him into trouble.¹⁷ As a young amateur philosopher, he attempted to gather some friends in a community pursuing a philosophically “happy life” (*vita beata*).¹⁸ Even when he converted to Christianity, he made his profession of faith in the presence of a close friend.¹⁹ After his conversion, he initiated contemplative communities in Cassiciacum near Milan, in Tagaste, and the later at Hippo. As friendship

¹⁵ Cf. Brown, 380.

¹⁶ Cf. *Letter*, 228.

¹⁷ Cf. *Confessions*, 4.9; and Brown, 61, 199-201.

¹⁸ Cf. *Confessions*, 14.24.

¹⁹ Cf. *Confessions*, 11.27.

characterized his life, let us explore Augustine's development from the classical Roman ideal of friendship toward a distinctively Christian view on friendship.

Classical Roman Friendship (amicitia)

The notion of friendship was very important to the Roman worldview and was discussed frequently by philosophers—the most exhaustive work being Cicero's *De Amicitia (On Friendship)*. Convinced that life was meaningless without friends, Cicero asserted that friendship—*amicitia*—was necessarily founded on agreement. That is, two individuals must have the same will, tastes, desires, and thoughts and generally be of the same mind in all matters. Secondly, friendship could not exist without virtue and the more virtuous one was, the more qualified he was to be a friend. Hence, a friendship was initiated cautiously between two virtuous people sharing common interest. Finally, for Cicero, the duties of friendship included truthfulness, a willingness to offer correction, and avoiding suspicion.²⁰

Augustine's earlier life seemed to largely conform to Cicero's model. As noted, from his youth, his life was given much meaning by the constant presence of friends. His involvement in the Manichean sect²¹ as well as the failed "happy life" community involved a group of friends who shared common interest in religion and philosophy. After his conversion in 386, the group of friends and family at Cassiciacum gathered for the mutual goal of spiritual and philosophical contemplation. Similarly, his initial monastic endeavors in Tagaste in 388 and Hippo in 391 were begun with friends whose company he enjoyed and who shared the same spiritual interests.

²⁰ Cf. Mary A. McNamara, *Friendship in St. Augustine* (Staten Island, NY: St. Paul Publications, 1964), 21-22.

²¹ *Confessions*, 5.19.

Christian Friendship (amicitia and caritas)

As Augustine developed as a Christian theologian, particularly following his ordination to church ministry, his thoughts on friendship began to diverge from the Ciceronian model. Though continuing to use the term *amicitia* for friendship, it is clear that he began to appropriate it differently in light of his Christian faith and, in later years, would employ *caritas* to communicate his idea of friendship. Let us consider several aspects of Augustine's thought on friendship, how he breaks with Cicero, as well as how he modeled friendship in his own life.

Perhaps Augustine's biggest divergence from Cicero was his belief that friendship was a gift from God who establishes the bond. In *Confessions* he writes, "There is no true friendship unless you [God] weld it between souls that cleave together through that charity which is shed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us."²² Hence, God initiates friendship among humans. Though Augustine did agree with Cicero that friendship ought to be entered into cautiously, he nevertheless argued that it was better to risk a failed friendship than to not initiate at all.²³ As a bishop, Augustine applied this principle to accepting new monks into the monastery. He writes: "To recognize a man as evil, you must first test him within the monastery. So how do you shut out the man who is about to enter and who is to be tested afterward, but cannot be tested unless he has entered? Will you send all the wicked men away?"²⁴ Indeed, Augustine's monastery in Hippo from 391-430 included some outstanding men of character and others who turned out to be immoral.²⁵

²² *Confessions*, 4.7. English translation from McNamara, 215.

²³ Cf. *On Eighty-Three Diverse Questions*, 71.6; *On Faith in the Unseen*, 2.4.

²⁴ *Expositions in Psalms*, 99.11; English translation from Adolar Zumkeller, *Augustine's Ideal of the Religious Life*, trans. Edmund Colledge (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 389.

²⁵ Cf. *Letters*, 209; 20*; *Sermons*, 355-56.

Secondly, while Cicero asserted that friendship was based on agreement primarily in the way of human interest, Augustine countered that it should be centered on agreement on divine things or a common faith.²⁶ Mary McNamara elaborates that for Augustine, “friendship is a union between persons who, loving God with their whole heart, souls, and minds, and loving each other as themselves, are joined for all eternity to each other and to Christ Himself.”²⁷ Hence, stemming from this divine agreement, the most unlikely people could become friends including masters and slaves, as well as individuals from different social classes, educational backgrounds, and vocations.²⁸ As Augustine continued to oversee the monastery in Hippo, many of his long-time friends left Hippo to serve the needs of the church in Africa while Augustine received new monks from a variety of backgrounds who had little in common except their Christian commitment.²⁹ Eugene Kevane writes that the Hippo monastery attracted “members in considerable numbers” of “various ages and levels of education” including youth, former slaves, peasants, common laborers, as well as those from wealthy and distinguished backgrounds.³⁰

Third, while Cicero had articulated that the motive for friendship was common interest or virtue, Augustine asserted that a friend was loved simply because God or Christ dwelt in them.³¹ As the individual does nothing in their own ability to merit friendship, this motive is not unlike the God originating *agapé* love described in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

²⁶ *Against the Sceptics*, 3.6.13; *Letter*, 258; Cf. McNamara, 218.

²⁷ McNamara, 219.

²⁸ Cf. *On the Instruction of Beginners*, 4.7.

²⁹ Cf. Brown, 467; and Adele Fiske, “St. Augustine and Friendship,” *Monastic Studies* (1964), 133-34.

³⁰ Cf. Eugene Kevane, *Augustine the Educator* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1964), 119; also *Letter*, 209.3; *On the Work of Monks*, 22.25; 25.33..

³¹ Cf. *Confessions*, 4.7; *Soliloquies*, 1.20; McNamara, 218; and Fiske, 130.

Fourth, and related to the last point, friendship is not sustained by human virtue, but rather through the power of God or Christ.³² While individuals may change, it is God’s attribute as unchanging that provides the “glue” for human relationships.³³ With that, friendship is also sustained by friends who are constantly being transformed by God’s grace, which in turn enables the individual to be virtuous. While Cicero’s virtue is based on human ability, Augustine’s notion of virtue is fully the work of God’s grace in the life of a Christian. Because of this, it was not essential for Augustine that people be physically present in the same location to pursue a friendship. While he surely preferred that, Augustine maintained friendships with many colleagues in ministry who had left Hippo to serve elsewhere while also nurturing relationships through letters with men that he had never personally met.³⁴

Fifth, though Augustine’s conception of friendship is generally understood in the context of a group of spiritually minded Christians— the monastery or church— he did believe that this model could also apply to society, which included one’s neighbors, acquaintances, and enemies. Augustine writes: “Obtain from God the gift to love one another. Love all men, even your enemies, not because they are your brothers, but that they may *be* your brothers . . . whenever you love a brother you love a friend.”³⁵ While Augustine’s primary “enemies” were those who held unorthodox theologies, he seems to put this aspect of friendship to work in his relationships with the Donatists and Pelagians in particular. For example he writes to Pelagius:

I thank you very much for your consideration in making me glad by a letter from you, and informing me of your welfare. May the Lord recompense you with those

³² Cf. *Confessions*, 4.18; *Sermon*, 336.1

³³ Cf. *On the Instruction of Beginners*, 25.49; McNamara, 222.

³⁴ Cf. *City of God*, 19.5; *Letters*, 9.1; 58.2; 194.2; McNamara, 230.

³⁵ *Tractates of the First Letter of John*, 10.7; English translation in McNamara, 233.

blessings by the possession of which you may be good for ever, and may live eternally with Him who is eternal, my lord greatly beloved, and brother greatly longed for.³⁶

In *City of God*, Augustine concludes that such friendship could serve as a healing agent for society. He poses: “Is not the unfeigned confidence and mutual love of true and good friends our one solace in human society?”³⁷

Finally, in keeping with his *City of God* thesis, Augustine did not put his ultimate hope in even the most promising earthly friendships. Rather, his notion of friendship could only be perfected in heaven.³⁸ Though never abandoning the ideal of friendship in the “earthly city,” Augustine was comforted in the friendship he would know in the “heavenly Jerusalem” especially as the security of the Roman Empire was crumbling around him in his later years.

Like Cicero, Augustine believed that friendship was not absent of duty. Yet, for Augustine, this duty could be summed up in the single command to love because “friendship exists only through mutual love.”³⁹ In fulfilling Christ’s command to “love your neighbor as you love yourself,”⁴⁰ Augustine asserted that one can love his neighbor *because* he loves himself.⁴¹ Again, because the friend is loved on account of Christ who dwells in him, the obligation to love involves sacrifice.⁴² At other times, loving means being painfully honest with a friend. Such honesty was put on display in letters Augustine exchanged with Jerome of Bethlehem as they debated over the proper interpretation of

³⁶ *Letter*, 146; from *New Advent* (web site) <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102146.htm> (accessed Dec. 26, 2006).

³⁷ *City of God*, 19.8; English translation in McNamara, 234.

³⁸ Cf. *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 77.3-4; *Letter*, 249.1

³⁹ *On Faith in the Unseen*, 4 cited in McNamara, 222.

⁴⁰ Matt. 19:19.

⁴¹ Cf. *Soliloquies*, 1.8.

⁴² Cf. *On the Instruction of Beginners*, 1.1-2.

Paul's letter to the Galatians.⁴³ Finally, the duty to love means praying for friends because Augustine believed that the best thing he could do to serve his friends was to "ask God to speak to them."⁴⁴

Augustine's notion of friendship had three specific outcomes. First, it resulted in an intimate unity or what he called "one heart in God" (*cor unum in Deum*) between friends. This was, of course, one of the key goals of the monastic community where Augustine's thoughts on friendship were practically worked out.⁴⁵ In an effort to define monasticism, he writes:

For *monos* means "one," and not just "one" in any sense . . . They therefore live in unity so as to make up one man, so that they really have what has been written "one soul and one heart" . . . They have many bodies, but not many souls; they have many bodies, but not many hearts. They are rightly called *monos*, that is, "one alone."⁴⁶

Secondly, in addition to unity, friendship resulted in harmony and a generally wonderful experience between believers. In his commentary on Psalm 132, Augustine said: "There He has ordered his blessing; there those who live in harmony praise the Lord."⁴⁷ A final outcome of friendship was that the individuals grew spiritually in their relationship with God. Brockwell, again describing Augustine's monastery wrote, "The more one placed the good of the community before his personal interests, the more rapidly he would progress in the spiritual life."⁴⁸

Though Augustine continued to employ the classical Roman term for friendship, it is clear that the meaning he assigned to *amicitia* was a clear break with Cicero. In this

⁴³ Cf. *Letter*, 82.36.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Letter*, 166.1; also *Letters*, 145.7; 186.41; 211.2; McNamara, 226-27; and Fiske, 132.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Rule*, 1.1; *Letter*, 258.1; and Zumkeller, 124.

⁴⁶ *Expositions in Psalms*, 132.6; English translation from Zumkeller, 400.

⁴⁷ *Expositions in Psalms*, 132.13; English translation from Zumkeller, 404; see also *City of God*, 19.13.1.

⁴⁸ Charles W. Brockwell, "Augustine's Ideal of Monastic Community: A Paradigm for his Doctrine of the Church," *Augustinian Studies* 8 (1977), 100; cf. Fiske, 128.

sense, his later usage of *caritas* allowed him to distinguish his idea of friendship from Cicero's. Ultimately, Augustine's model of friendship is better understood through the aspects observed in this study than in an analysis of words.⁴⁹

The Trinity as a Model for Christian Friendship

Having considered Augustine's model for friendship, what were the primal influences that shaped his thinking? We have already shown that as Augustine grew in his Christian faith and as a minister in the church, his thoughts on friendship diverged from the classical model. As Augustine's notion of friendship necessarily required a community, he was enveloped in two—the church and the monastery.⁵⁰ Yet, while these communities provided a context for friendship to develop, they were not models of friendship *per se*. Rather, let us consider the primary influence on Augustine's thinking on friendship—the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Perhaps no doctrine occupied the thought of the church in the first five centuries of Christianity more than the Trinity—articulating the essence and relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the Latin speaking church, Tertullian of Carthage (160-220), conceived of God as one substance (*substantia*) existing in three persons (*personae*).⁵¹ After much debate in the fourth century, the fathers of the Greek speaking church furthered Tertullian's conclusions at church councils in Nicea (325) and

⁴⁹ To consider more fully the debate on the significance of *amicitia* and *caritas*, see Brockwell, 96-107; Eoin Cassidy, "The Recovery of the Classical Ideal of Friendship in Augustine's Portrayal of *Caritas*," in Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey, eds., *The Relationship between NeoPlatonism and Christianity* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1992), 127-40; J.T. Lienhard, "Friendship in Paulinus of Nola and Augustine," *Augustiniana* 1 (1990), 290-96; John F. Monagle, "Friendship in St. Augustine's Biography: Classical Notion of Friendship," *Augustinian Studies* 2 (1971), 81-92.

⁵⁰ Cf. Brockwell, 91-93.

⁵¹ Cf. Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 2.4.

Constantinople (381) by affirming that the members of the Godhead shared the same essence (*homoousios*) while maintaining distinct personalities (*hypostases*).⁵²

Augustine's most significant theological treatise was *De Trinitate* (*The Trinity*), in which he analyzed the existing work in trinitarian thought toward articulating his own theology of the Godhead. While an exhaustive treatment of Augustine's work is not possible here, let us consider some aspects of his trinitarian thought as it relates to his notion of friendship. First, he affirmed with the Nicene fathers the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He writes: "not three lives but one life, not three minds but one mind, and consequently are not three substances but one substance."⁵³ While unified in essence the members of the Godhead are also unified in their actions.⁵⁴ Secondly, there is equality within the Trinity. Augustine adds: "not only is the Father not greater than the Son in respect of divinity, but Father and Son together are not greater than the Holy Spirit, and no single Person of the Three is less than the Trinity."⁵⁵ Thirdly, though unified and equal, the three are nevertheless distinct. Yet, for Augustine it is not a material difference or even one of function that distinguishes the members of the Trinity; rather, it is their harmonious relationship that most reveals their uniqueness.⁵⁶ Fourth, the Father and Son are united in a mutual bond of love—the gift of the Holy Spirit—and this love is also poured out on mankind.⁵⁷ In fact, Augustine proposes love as the operative analogy for the Trinity. That is, there is love within the lover, the object that is

⁵² Cf. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 2003), 109-37, 223-79; and Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils: Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1983), 33-133.

⁵³ *The Trinity*, 10.18; all English translations are from Edmund Hill, *The Trinity* (New York: New City Press, 1991).

⁵⁴ *The Trinity*, 1.15; cf. Kelly, 273.

⁵⁵ *The Trinity*, 8.1; cf. Kelly, 272.

⁵⁶ Cf. *The Trinity*, 1.19; 5-7; Kelly, 273-75.

⁵⁷ Cf. *The Trinity*, 5.12, 15-17; 8.1; 15.27; Kelly, 274-75.

loved, and the bond of love that unites.⁵⁸ With that, Edmund Hill adds that the members of the Trinity love because there is an inherent self-love within them.⁵⁹

Augustine also believed that there were “vestiges” (*vestigia*) of the Trinity in the created universe.⁶⁰ While such qualities as divine goodness can be observed in creation,⁶¹ the most significant trinitarian traces are in man who, according to Augustine’s reading of Genesis 1:26-27, is created in the “image of God” (*imago Dei*).⁶² While completely denying that this image applied to man on a physical or bodily level, Augustine asserted that the image of God mostly corresponded to the rational human mind.⁶³

While we must be cautious in making sweeping correlations between the Trinity, man, and even society,⁶⁴ some of Augustine’s thinking on friendship does seem to relate to his understanding of the Godhead and the image of God in man. Indeed, as Augustine saw true friendship among humans as a gift from the triune God, we can infer that divine friendship exists within the Godhead. Hence, what is given by God must also be possessed by God. Secondly, as love (*agapé*) is Augustine’s analogy for the Trinity, it becomes the motive for human friendships, which are a gift from the Trinity bound together in love by the Spirit. As Augustine’s primary duty for friends is to love, they, like God, do so out of an inherent self-love. Third, the unity of the Godhead, both in essence and action, seems to model Augustine’s desired outcome for friendship in the monastery— “one heart in God” (*cor unum in Deum*). Finally, the Trinity’s equality seems to also encourage Augustine’s thought on friends being united by “divine things”

⁵⁸ Cf. *The Trinity*, 8.12-9.2; Kelly, 277.

⁵⁹ Cf. Hill, 53, 55.

⁶⁰ Cf. *On True Religion*, Kelly, 276.

⁶¹ Cf. Keith Johnson, “Does Creation Reveal the *Triunity* of God? Augustine on the *Vestigia Trinitatis*,” (paper given at Evangelical Theological Society, Washington, DC, November 16, 2006), 3.

⁶² Cf. Johnson, 5.

⁶³ Cf. *The Trinity*, 8.12; Johnson, 5.

⁶⁴ Cf. Kelly, 276; Johnson, 7.

rather than on common social class, education, interest or vocation. Also, as masters and slaves regarded one another as creatures crafted in the image of God, then a necessary according of dignity and mutual respect ought to follow.

Despite the plausible model in the Trinity for human friendship, we must again cautiously correlate these divine vestiges to humans. Even Augustine admitted that friendship would not find its perfection until heaven. For Augustine, the primary goal of the Christian sojourning in the “earthly city” was to experience the ongoing and painstaking restoration of the image of God in man; that which could not be fully experienced until the believer communed with the triune God in the “heavenly Jerusalem.”

Summary of Augustine and Friendship

With his Christian understanding of the Trinity as a guide, Augustine believed that friendship (*amicitia* or *caritas*) was the answer to resolving misunderstanding among those created in the image of God. Though influenced by Cicero’s conception of *amicitia*, Augustine broke with the classical idea to articulate friendship as a gift from God, based on common faith, motivated by love, constrained to love, sustained by God-empowered virtue, and resulting in unity, harmony, and progression toward God. While Augustine’s notion of friendship largely applied to the community of faith (the monastery or church), it could also be applied to society in general including toward enemies. Yet, this friendship would remain tarnished as long as the “earthly city” lasted. Though Augustine’s ideal of friendship might be criticized as a nice utopian theory confined to the walls of a philosophy classroom, we must remember that his thought was worked out

in the context of the cultural, religious, and political instability of fourth and fifth century Roman Africa.

Modern Implications

What might be gleaned from Augustine's thought and practice that is useful for today in resolving mutual misunderstanding? First, Augustine would encourage us to be friends. That is, instead of allowing the nightly news to make our friends and enemies for us, we should pursue personal and authentic relationships with those who are different from us. This of course goes against the grain of our levels of comfort, yet we must allow our prejudices and fears to be overcome by relationship. Secondly, as Augustine appealed to an agreement on "divine things" or a shared faith, a common set of virtues must bring different people together. Though we live in a pluralistic world with different religions and philosophies, virtues like love, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control among others seem to be welcome in every camp.⁶⁵ Yet, as Augustine looked to God's grace in the life of a believer to bring about virtue, we must also look to something greater than ourselves to produce virtue. Finally, Augustine would have us regard one another as people created in the image of God. No matter our social class, level of education, wealth, poverty, or natural inclination to friendship or to be enemies; we should treat one another with the dignity of one bearing the image of God.

⁶⁵ Cf. Gal. 5:22-23.

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