

« Imago » and « similitudo » in Augustine

Soon after becoming bishop of Hippo, Augustine had gathered together into a single collection a variety of questions discussed between him and his *fratres* since his return to Africa. There is among these eighty-three questions a concise discussion of the concepts of image, likeness and equality¹. The paragraph, though well-known to all who have studied Augustine's ideas of the image and likeness of God in man, has a significance in the development of his ideas which has not, to my knowledge, been appreciated. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the significance of the distinctions made between these concepts in this passage, and the relations established between them. It will be best to begin with a summary :

The three ideas are not the same, though they are related. Their relations may be tabulated thus : the concept of image includes the idea of likeness, for nothing can be said to be an image of something else unless it is in some way like it. Something may, however, be like something else without being its image — as two eggs are like each other, but are not one the image of the other ; hence the idea of likeness does not include that of image. The special feature which distinguishes an image-likeness from any other likeness is that an image is somehow dependent on an original, which it 'expresses' (Augustine uses the passive : 'from which it is expressed'). Examples of likeness which are also images are the likeness of a child to its parents, or of a painting or mirror-image to its original. In all these cases the image is in some way 'dependent' on the original which it also resembles.

Equality is also logically connected with likeness in virtue of the meaning of the term. If two things are equal, they are necessarily alike, though the converse is not the case. Two objects are equal when some decisive feature in both is actually identical, as is the shape, sometimes, of two eggs, or, perhaps, the bodily features of a father and his son (provided that we ignore the time-interval required for the realisation of this equality in the son). There is, however, no logical relation between equality and being an image. Two things may be equal without being related as image and original (two equal eggs) ; they may be image and original without the image being an equal likeness of its original (father with a

1. *De div. quaest. LXXXIII* (henceforth : *DDQ83*). 74 On its composition, see *Retr.* I. 26.

son bearing some likeness to him) ; or, finally, they may be equal as well as being image and original.

The paragraph closes with a few lines sketching the applicability of these concepts to God and his Son. With these we are not immediately concerned. Augustine's mapping of the logic of the three terms is a model of lucidity. His analysis of their meanings appeals to their ordinary use and does full justice to this. It has a quality one would be inclined to call obviousness, but for the fact that it cuts clean across the tangled pre-history of these concepts, their meanings and their relations in previous patristic literature.

The doctrine of man as the image of God and its development in the work of individual Fathers has received a good deal of attention in recent years, and there can be no question of surveying here the conclusions which emerge from these studies. Broadly speaking, however, it may be said that two trends can be distinguished in the patristic tradition : one which distinguished the concepts of image and likeness, and one which, more or less effectively, identified them. The former tradition can be traced back, among Christian writers, to Irenaeus². It may be crudely but not unjustly described as asserting that man's image-relation to God was given at the beginning, whereas his likeness is to be realised at the end. The ideas of image and of likeness are sharply distinguished, in a way different from Augustine's. According to this view, an image need not necessarily be like its original ; indeed in the case of man, God's image, likeness is an ultimate goal, a task to be realised. The concept of image is wider than that of likeness, contrary to Augustine's definitions, and " likeness " is held to add something to the bare notion of being and Image. To a Greek-speaking reader of Genesis 1, 26 in the LXX this way of looking at things would be quite natural. The Greek ὁμοίωσις bears a more distinctively active, dynamic sense than the Latin *similitudo*, and whereas linguistic usage makes it difficult to think of an *imago* which is not *ipso facto* also a *similitudo*³, it is beyond doubt that ὁμοίωσις adds something not included within the meaning of εἰκών. *Similitudo*, however, had established itself as the equivalent of ὁμοίωσις in the verse of Genesis, and this accident served to relate within the one theological framework ideas born of expressions with divergent linguistic orientations. It is not surprising, then, that Augustine's way of drawing the distinction between *imago* and *similitudo* should have been unknown to Greek patristic literature ; but I have looked in vain for any precedent for it even

2. Also, in a different sense, to Gnostic anthropology. The distinction between εἰκών and ὁμοίωσις is clearly stated, contrary to what is often asserted, e.g. by T. Camelot, 'La théologie de l'image de Dieu', *Rev. des Sc. phil. & théol.*, 40 (1956) 443-71 at p. 460, n. 13 (following H. Crouzel), by Philo, *De opif. mundi* 71. The distinction is made in a comment on Genesis 1. 26 and hinges on the explicit assertion that images are not necessarily like their archetypes.

3. Difficult but not impossible ; Tertullian, for instance, could speak of *imago* and *similitudo* in much the same way as Irenaeus ; cf. *De bapt.* 5. 7.

in the works of his Latin predecessors. I can only conclude that his analysis of the meanings in question is a product of his own logical acumen, brought to bear on the language he spoke and wrote. When he had become acquainted with a wider range of patristic writings, he realised that he was departing from a long tradition of thought according to which " likeness is something more than image, and is reserved for the man reformed by the grace of Christ " ⁴ ; and his sole reason for departing from this tradition appears to be his awareness of its linguistic inappropriateness in Latin, for it would do violence to Latin usage (as to English) to speak of an image which was not like its original. He had no wish to reject the substance of the doctrine that man was created in the image of God, that he retained something of this image in his sinful state, and that he was called to perfect his God-likeness through grace. It is clear, indeed, that he carried very much further in his own work the stress laid on the dynamic character of the image in much of the Greek patristic tradition ⁵.

I shall be concerned here to study the interplay of forces in Augustine's mind which brought about both the changes in linguistic expression and the continuity of direction in doctrine. The first question I wish to examine is the preliminary one : why did Augustine depart from the terminology of both the traditions encountered in patristic literature with regard to the usage of *imago* and *similitudo* ? Was it simply, as his words suggest, that he perceived the tension between the normal usage of the words and the meaning given them by commentators on Genesis 1, 26 ? And if this really was the reason, why did Latin theology have to wait for Augustine to undertake what is, after all, quite a simple piece of linguistic analysis ?

4. *Quaest. in Hept.* V. 4. On Augustine's sources for the exegesis of Genesis 1, 26, cf. H. Somers, 'Image de Dieu : les sources de l'exégèse augustinienne', *Rev. des ét. august.*, 7 (1961) 105-25. Père Somers may be right in suggesting (*loc. cit.*, p. 124) that Augustine's rejection of the *imago-similitudo* dichotomy is bound up with his *Auseinandersetzung* with Origen. But it should be noted that this rejection can be traced back to at least 419, and that it is implied in Augustine's treatment of the concepts in the 390's. On this see my argument in what follows, especially notes 24 and 25. I should prefer to say that Augustine's views and terminology had already crystallised when he encountered Origen. This is not, of course, to deny Augustine's wide knowledge of patristic treatments of this subject, so ably demonstrated by Père Somers.

5. His teaching on this subject is of no direct interest to me in the present investigation. I may refer on this point to J. Heijke, 'The image of God according to Saint Augustine (*De Trinitate* excepted)', *Class. Folia* 10 (1956) 3-11 ; *id.*, 'St Augustine's comments on « imago Dei »', *Class. Folia, Suppl.* 3 (1960) (texts) ; H. Somers, 'La gnose augustinienne : sens et valeur de la doctrine de l'image', *Rev. ét. august.*, 7 (1961) 1-15 ; and, above all, to G.B. Ladner, *The idea of reform*, 1960, 185-203 ; also E. Hendrikx, *Augustinus Verhältnis zur Mystik*, 1936, section 2. I have not seen the recent work by J.E. Sullivan, *The image of God in man*, 1963.

1. THE DISTINCTION : *IMAGO-SIMILITUDO*

Augustine, it must be clear to any attentive reader, was very much more self-conscious and deliberate in the examination of his terminology on this topic than, for instance, Ambrose, who quite unreflectively treats *imago* and *similitudo* as equivalent, and conceives both as the goal of spiritual development⁶. A more instructive comparison, therefore, is afforded by Marius Victorinus, a thinker at least as habitually attentive to precise definition of terms as Augustine. M. Hadot has compared Augustine's and Marius Victorinus's views on the image of God in man in an important and distinguished paper⁷; with his study, and indeed with the doctrine itself we are not here concerned. The relation of *imago* and *similitudo* as conceived by the two writers, a subject treated by M. Hadot in passing, may, however, hold the clue to our questions. It is worth taking a closer look at Victorinus's treatment of the distinction.

Victorinus, too, drew a distinction between the two concepts. It is drawn in a way quite different from Augustine's, except that it resembles his in the deliberate logical rigour brought to bear. Likeness, according to Aristotle's *Categories*⁸, which clearly stands behind Victorinus's treatment, exists between like things in virtue of their respective qualities, not of their substances. Victorinus paraphrases Aristotle when he writes that " a substance is not said to be similar [to another] in virtue of its substance ; rather, if it is of the same substance, it is said to be the same substance, not like. For likeness is asserted of things in respect of their qualities... " ⁹ Hence, so he argues against his *homoiousian* opponents in the Christological debate which called forth his work, it is meaningless to speak of things being " of like substance " (ὁμοιούσιον) ; they are either of the same substance or not, and in the latter case they are like or unlike¹⁰. This far Victorinus's argument is no less and no more than an application of the Aristotelian categorical analysis to the trinitarian problems of the mid fourth century, and contains nothing that Augustine would not have found acceptable had he read these works of Victorinus.

But Victorinus develops his ideas in a different direction, and one which M. Hadot has not sufficiently distinguished from his " Aristotelian " definition. God had made man, Victorinus believed, not his *imago*, but *ad* (or *iuxta*) *imaginem et similitudinem suam*. Victorinus's argument here is the classical one that only Christ is the perfect image of the Father,

6. On Ambrose, see below.

7. P. Hadot, 'L'image de la Trinité dans l'âme chez Victorinus et chez saint Augustin', *Stud. patr.* 6 (1962) 409-42.

8. *Categ.* 11a17, referred to by Hadot in his commentary to Victorinus in the edition by P. Henri et P. Hadot (*Sources chrétiennes*), vol. 2, 767.

9. *Adv. ar.* I. 41.9-19 (references to this are given in the edition of Henry & Hadot.)

10. *Ibid.*, I. 23. 7-12.

and that man is made to this image, or is the image of an image¹¹. The distinction between man's being made to God's image and his being to God's likeness, likewise, rejoins a traditional line of thought which we have already sketched. The soul, Victorinus argues, is not itself the λόγος : but it is nevertheless rational (λογικός), and self-moving as is the λόγος. These characteristics belong to both λόγος and soul in virtue of what they are, their substance. What the soul has in virtue of being *iuxta imaginem Dei* is therefore of its essence and cannot be lost and regained ; whereas its likeness, which concerns not what it is but how it is, its qualities, can be lost and regained. " *Iuxta imaginem*, therefore, the soul is here and now ", concludes Victorinus ; " *iuxta similitudinem* it shall be hereafter, through faith in God and Jesus Christ, as it would have been had Adam not sinned. In so much as it is rational, it is *iuxta imaginem* ; in so much as it is perfected in the future, it is *secundum similitudinem*. "¹² Though starting from very different premises, Victorinus rejoins the tradition which reaches back to Irenaeus, the tradition rejected, as we have seen, by Augustine.

The premises of Victorinus's argument are not only (as M. Hadot appears to suggest) the Aristotelian definition of likeness as belonging to the category of quality. This needs to be supplemented by the further proposition that being an image belongs to the category of substance, a view whose metaphysical background does not concern us here. This further assertion is, of course, far from being Aristotelian, who would have treated an image as resembling its original in virtue of some or other of its qualities ; as a special kind of likeness, in other words-as it was to be for Augustine. We need not consider the consequences of this view of Victorinus's, the linguistic paradoxes at variance with normal usage to which it leads if pressed. It is enough to note that Augustine's analysis, though he was in all probability not acquainted with Victorinus's anti-Arian treatises, was dominated primarily by a concern to avoid such paradoxes and to follow the implications of usage.

The main reason for Victorinus's peculiar doctrine that the image belongs to the order of substance stares us in the face on almost every page of his *Adversus Arium* : the Scriptures and the Church's long tradition are at one in calling Christ the image of the Father. Whatever confirmation Victorinus might have drawn from Platonic views about the εἰκών, the overwhelming reason for his insistence that it belongs to the order of substance and not of quality is clear. Had he admitted, as his Latin language inevitably suggests, that an image is a special kind of likeness of its original, he would in effect have conceded precisely what he was fighting against : that the Son could be said to be like the Father. Athanasius, writing in the course of the same debate, could deny that

11. E.g. *ibid.*, I, 20 ; I, 63.

12. *Ibid.*, I, 20, 24-68 ; lines 59-64 quoted in the text.

the Word was like the Father, even κατ' οὐσίαν, not to mention in part, as we men are¹³; Victorinus went even further: a resemblance κατ' οὐσίαν was a logical impossibility in his vocabulary, a contradiction in terms which neatly ruled out the homoiousian position as self-contradictory.

Close as Victorinus had come to the Augustinian analysis of the concept of likeness, excelling Augustine's only in its fuller Aristotelian precision, the immediate needs of theological controversy had swayed him to adopt his view of image as a useful shortcut in polemic. Augustine's distinction of the concepts of likeness and image allows an overlap: some likenesses are images and all images are likenesses (of a special kind). Victorinus, however, cut away the overlap in the interest of his polemical purposes: no image can be a likeness, the two concepts are mutually exclusive. It is a metaphysical *tour-de-force*, implying a heroic piece of linguistic surgery. It is not surprising that it should have had no future once the pressing needs of controversy were past. To answer the question: what lay behind Augustine's originality in defining these concepts in the way he did?, it is therefore perhaps better, first, to put our question another way: what prevented Augustine's definitions, with their clarity and closeness to actual usage, or definitions similar to them, from emerging earlier? And put in this way, the answer is clear: far as Victorinus had moved towards a view of the Augustinian type, so far as the notion of likeness is concerned, it was too difficult for him, in the full heat of the trinitarian debates between 355 and 363, to take the step of defining "image" in terms of the wider concept of "likeness"¹⁴.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUGUSTINE'S THOUGHT:

AD IMAGINEM, IMAGO, AEQUALITAS

By the time that Augustine began writing, the controversies which had shaped Victorinus's work were very much a matter of the past. It is safe to say that they played no direct part in shaping his thought, and there is no reason to suppose that he had read Victorinus's trinitarian works. Being free, therefore, of these particular pressures which had worked in his predecessor's mind, he adopted the novel views on image and likeness which we have already summarised. It remains now to examine how Augustine used his own and apparently entirely novel conceptions of image and likeness.

13. *Ep. ad Afr.* 7 (PG 26, 1041 b).

14. In another context G. B. Ladner has pointed out that the trinitarian controversies of the fourth century encouraged the identification of image and original in their natures. Cf. 'The concept of image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine iconoclastic controversy', *Dumb. Oaks Papers* 7 (1953) 1-34, at p. 8.

If we list the passages in his work where he is in some explicit way concerned with the concepts of *similitudo*, *imago* and *aequalitas* in their chronological order, or as near as we can get to it, and tabulate their themes, we get the following result, summarised in a table :

Work	Date	Concepts discussed
1. <i>De Genesi ad litteram liber imperfectus</i> 16, 55-60	393	<i>similitudo, imago</i>
2. <i>De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII</i> , 51, 4	388-96	<i>similitudo, imago</i>
3. Do. 74	388-96	<i>similitudo, imago, aequalitas</i>
4. <i>De Trinitate</i> VII, 6, 12	399-419	<i>similitudo, imago, aequalitas</i>
5. <i>Quaestiones in Heptateucham</i> , V, 4	419	<i>similitudo, imago</i>
6. <i>De Genesi ad litteram liber imperfectus</i> , 16, 61-2	426 (?)	<i>similitudo, imago, aequalitas</i>
(7. <i>Retractationes</i> I, 26	426 (?)	— included as reflecting on no 2).

The chronological order is, of course, rendered dubious in the case of works written over a number of years. I shall suggest, however, that no. 3 in my list does in fact show a later stage of Augustine's thought than 1 and 2.

The first feature of Augustine's treatment of the two concepts of image and likeness which is noteworthy is that from the very start they are related in his mind in the same way in which we have found them to be related in no. 3, already summarised. For the rest of his life he thought of image as a special kind of likeness. These two ideas come on the scene ready made and never change in his works. It will be best to trace the changing elements in Augustine's thought as they appear in the contexts in which the ideas of image and likeness are formulated.

In no. 1 Augustine is commenting on Genesis 1, 26 and seeks to find a reason for the apparently unnecessary duplication in it. Why should it say that God made man to his image *and* likeness, "as if there could be an image which is not like [its original] ?"¹⁵ Perhaps the writer had in mind a special *similitudo* here, Augustine suggests ; perhaps the scripture means to speak not just of any likeness, but of the absolute Likeness itself, through which all things have been made, by participation in which other likenesses of God are like God. Perhaps then we should interpret the

15. *De Gen. ad litt. lib. impf.* [henceforth *GLLI*] 16. 57.

verse — Augustine is tentative — as hinting that the being which is said to be God's image is like God not " by participation of any likeness whatsoever, but that it is itself the Likeness in which all things which are said to be like participate "16. The whole passage is rich in characteristic expressions of Augustinian Platonism, and we shall have to look at it again. Let us for the present note only that the ideas of image and likeness are found in it (in the form already analysed) embedded in what we might call an " ordinary " context. Their primary reference is the world of every-day language and experience in which some things are like others and some of these are, further, images of others. The application of these ideas to man in relation to God in Genesis 1, 26 raise only one difficulty, and this arises from the mysteriously superfluous repetition. This is the problem discussion of which leads Augustine into the world of trinitarian theology and to speak about the absolute Likeness of the Father which is the Son. The ideas of image and likeness are originally clearly not part of a trinitarian context. On the contrary, it is Augustine's exegesis of Genesis 1,26 that introduces them into a trinitarian context.

This text, as well as the second in our list, illustrates Augustine's manner of dealing at this stage with the problem raised by introducing his habitual treatment of image and likeness into a trinitarian context. Both texts identify the image and likeness spoken of in Genesis 1,26 with the divine Word. This is the image and likeness of God, and man is made *ad imaginem et similitudinem*, and Augustine carefully refrains from speaking of man as God's image and likeness in these passages. Indeed, he distinguishes the two things explicitly in our second passage : " it is one thing to *be* the image and likeness of God (which is also called his Son) ; and quite another thing to *be to* God's image and likeness, as we believe men to be " ; and thus he endorses this traditional distinction, which we have also noticed in Victorinus, as made " not *inscite* "17. The dichotomy of being image and likeness (the Son) and being to the image and likeness (man) is forced on Augustine by his exegesis of the Genesis verse ; we shall notice its disappearance in the next phase of Augustine's thought. Before we leave our second passage, however, we must notice another of its features. Here, once again, we find the distinction, already familiar to us, between image and likeness, though more hurriedly and incompletely stated : all images are likenesses, we are told, but not all likenesses can be said to be images, except by an abuse of language. This familiar distinction is introduced here in the course of a curious aside, in which Augustine tells us that some people have held that man's mind

16. *Ibid.*, 16, 57-8. The same exposition is also found in *DDQ* 83, 23, without the notion of 'image' being there brought into the discussion. I have allowed myself the luxury of a capital L in the text where the unique likeness which is the Word or Son of God is referred to.

17. *DDQ* 83, 51, 4.

was made to the image of God, but his body only to his likeness. I do not know whom he has in mind here ; but with growing awareness of earlier Christian thought on this theme he soon came to see that there were more important differences between his views and those of his predecessors. The line of thought with which he later goes out of his way to dissociate himself is that there could be an image which was not *ipso facto* a likeness, and that likeness to God would be realised by man only hereafter, through grace¹⁸. It looks as if Augustine had been less well versed in the earlier tradition of thought on this theme when composing our second passage than he was certainly by the time he wrote no. 5. The whole passage bears many marks of belonging to a comparatively primitive stage in the development of Augustine's thought on this subject. The most striking feature of this early stage, reflected in the first two of our texts, is the fact that they show clearly that Augustine's ideas of image and likeness and their mutual relations had been formulated, in sharp contrast with Victorinus's ideas, without reference to their use in trinitarian contexts, and that they were only introduced into such contexts already fully-fledged.

We may now turn to the third text in our table. It follows, in this miscellany of " notes and queries ", a note concerned with Christ's equality with the Father, and is a commentary on the great christological verses of Philippians 2, 6-7 which speak of Jesus Christ, who *non rapinam arbitratur esse se aequalem Deo sed... in similitudinem hominum factus et habitu inventus ut homo*¹⁹. It may be no more than sheer coincidence that our text, question 74, should follow in the collection an enquiry concerned with the equality of Son and Father. Curiously, our second text, question 51 of the same collection, also follows a question entitled by Augustine *De aequalitate filii*²⁰ ; but whereas in this case the texts of the two questions have no links, the links between questions 73 and 74 are close ; indeed the latter ends with what we might call another enquiry *de aequalitate filii*. Whether the juxtaposition is an accidental result of the way the original notes scribbled on many bits of paper²¹ were gathered into the book, or whether it reflects an original sequence of discussion, it does, at any rate, indicate that Augustine had been occupied with Christ's " equality " with the Father during the years to which these texts belong. With our question 74 we may go further and say with confidence that its careful and elaborate mapping of the logical relations between the concepts of *imago*, *similitudo* and *aequalitas* arose directly from a christological-trinitarian discussion. For Augustine, listing the individual items of his eighty-three notes and queries in his

18. *Quaest. in Hept.* V, 4 ; *GLLI* 16, 22.

19. *DDQ* 83, 73.

20. *DDQ* 83, 50 ; cf. *Retr.* I, 26.

21. Cf. *Retr.* I, 26.

Retractationes, simply describes²² this one as a comment on Colossians I, 14-15, *in quo habemus redemptionem et remissionem peccatorum qui est imago Dei invisibilis*. To the words of the text commented, however, the article contains not the slightest allusion; nor does the first part of the text appear to have been discussed on this occasion. The discussion does end with an explanation of how God's Son can be his image, his likeness and his equal; but only an extremely vivid memory — his own or somebody else's — could have identified the article on the strength of this as a commentary on these Pauline verses. Perhaps Augustine found this description as the title of the original notes taken down from the discussion; but wherever he got it from, he could not have thought it up as a suitable description either at the time of the book's compilation or when he was reviewing it some thirty years later; the text just does not give the necessary clues. The title, we must conclude, reflects the actual theme Augustine and his *fratres* were busy with that evening. They had settled down to elucidating one of the great christological passages of St Paul; but Augustine's actual answer to his brethren's enquiry is constructed in terms of a set of ideas, those of image and likeness, whose roots lay in quite another context and reach back, as we shall see, to the remotest origins of his thought. Furthermore, on the two occasions when he had previously connected these ideas with the relation between Father and Son, he had got into minor difficulties and had had to adopt *ad hoc* solutions to the problems raised by suddenly transplanting the ideas of image and likeness into a field where they did not originally belong. And now, on this particular occasion, these are the very ideas which he chooses in order to elucidate the relation between Father and Son.

It was a momentous evening in the development of Augustine's thought on our theme, and a decisive turning point in it. My account has so far assumed that the order in which I have enumerated our first three texts in the table above corresponds with their chronological order, despite the doubt which forbids us to date the individual components of the collection of eighty-three queries. It is now time to defend this assumption, and to defend it on grounds additional to the fact that this sequence and this alone enables us to make sense of the growth of Augustine's thought. My grounds are as follows: no. 2 belongs with no. 1 (their order does not matter). They both speak of man not as God's image but as being *to* his image and likeness; they both identify the absolute likeness with the Word of God; and no. 2 has further archaic features already noticed. No. 3 differs from nos. 1 and 2 in all these respects. It belongs with all the subsequent passages in that it allows one to speak of man as God's image without any hesitation; and, with the sole exception of no. 5, it shares with all our subsequent passages the feature that *imago* and *similitudo* are brought into relation with *aequalitas*. The exception of no. 5

22. *Ibid.*

is, however, without significance. Inspection of the passage will show what it would be a waste of space to argue here, that to include an excursus into matters of trinitarian theology and to bring in the notion of equality would have been very far fetched indeed *à propos* of Deuteronomy 4, 16. I do not think there can be any serious doubt that the order of my table is also the chronological order of the texts.

If this is the case, it is not difficult to reconstruct Augustine's thought at this turning-point in its development. He had already experimented, as we saw, with discussing man's and the Son's image- and likeness-relation to God ; he had noticed that there was something not quite satisfactory about these attempts, for although his perfectly lucid conceptions of image and likeness indicated that the latter was a more inclusive idea than the former which was a sub-class within the wider class of likenesses, Genesis nevertheless repeated the terms. Rather than credit the scripture with vain repetition, he interpreted its *ad similitudinem* in a special sense, as we have seen. Now all this was possible only so long as he spoke of man as being *to* God's image and likeness and reserved for the Son *being* God's image and likeness. But his renewed and deepened reading of Saint Paul in the mid 390's — of which we have many indications — had brought him face to face with Pauline texts which asserted uncompromisingly that man *is* the image of God. We see this in our present text (no. 3), which is prompted by Colossians 1, 15, and also in the fact that it is another Pauline text, I Cor. 11, 7, that he quotes whenever he wishes to resolve any doubt about the propriety of speaking of man as being God's image as well as being *to* his image²³. St Paul, then, in all probability, had shown him the direction for his new thoughts ; and the concept of "equality", which he had already utilised, repeatedly, in another setting, showed him the actual route to take. What we can see in no. 3 of our series of texts is the cross-fertilisation of two contexts of discussion. The idea of equality, hitherto unrelated with the contexts to which image and likeness had belonged in Augustine's mind, now becomes part of the same context, and also changes it decisively in becoming thus linked. Its logical relations to the two other concepts are carefully mapped out here. Having already summarised these, we need only observe here that equality is a special, limiting case of likeness. It can occur either in the kind of likeness which is an image or the kind which is not. The Son, and he alone, is the Father's image and his equal, and of course, in virtue both of his equality and of his image-relation to him, also his likeness. Man is also God's image, and therefore, necessarily, his likeness ; but naturally, an unequal likeness²⁴.

23. *De Trin.* VII, 6, 12 ; *GLLI* 16, 61 ; *Retr.* I, 26.

24. The three terms also appear in the course of *Solil.* II, 9, 11-12, a diffuse passage with quite different orientation, in which there is no exploration of the meaning of the terms or their mutual relationships.

These are henceforth the fixed points of Augustine's treatment of this theme, and our remaining texts may be disposed of more briefly. They add nothing new to no. 3. To no. 4 I shall return presently ; no. 5, as already noted, repeats the substance of what no. 3 says about *imago* and *similitudo* without mentioning — as it scarcely could, in its setting — *aequalitas*. It brings nothing new except Augustine's conscious rejection of the classical tradition of Greek patristic thought according to which " likeness is something more than being an image, and is reserved for the man reformed by the grace of Christ " ²⁵. This rejection is a clear logical consequence of the way in which he formulates the concepts and their relations, and though first made explicit here, is implied from the start. It is repeated in the next of our texts I wish to examine, no. 6, in almost identical terms ²⁶.

This text consists of two paragraphs added to the incomplete commentary on Genesis originally written in 393. Augustine added these paragraphs at the time he was reviewing this work for his *Retractationes*. There was much in it, he tells us there ²⁷, that displeased him or that others, misunderstanding, had found objectionable ; but it seemed unnecessary to note or to correct these things — people could always turn, he said optimistically, to his twelve volume commentary on Genesis which contains his mature, episcopal views. But even so he could not resist the impulse to correct what he had said about man as being made to God's image and likeness at the point where he had broken off in 393 (our text no. 1). And he took the unusual step of not only criticising himself in his *Retractations*, but adding two new paragraphs to the old work. In that, he now says, he had expounded the words of Genesis in such a way " that the likeness of God to which man is made may be taken as the Word of God itself, that is to say, as the only-begotten Son ; not taking man himself as that image and equal likeness of the Father. But nevertheless, man, too, is God's image... " ²⁸ It would be tedious to analyse the passage, and the few lines just quoted are enough to show the shift in Augustine's thought between 393 and c. 426 : all hesitation about speaking of man as God's image is gone ; and it has been resolved — for all the brevity of its appearance the term plays a vital part — with the aid of the idea of equality brought into relation with those of image and likeness. Thanks to our investigation we have been able to pinpoint this shift of thought more closely, to the years between 393 and 396, and we have watched the forces at work which had brought it about decisively in the composition of our text no. 3. If my conjecture that this shift is to be related to Augustine's *lecture approfondie* of St Paul is accepted, we may date this text even more closely to 395-6.

25. *Quest. in Hept.* V, 4.

26. *GLLI* 16, 62. This is the passage in which Père Somers detects an allusion to *Origen, De princ.* III, 1. On this see my note 4, above.

27. *Retr.* I, 18.

28. *GLLI* 16, 61.

We may look briefly at the remaining two texts of our series. In no. 7 Augustine simply warns that no. 2 is not to be understood to deny that man is God's image, as the Apostle clearly testifies ; man is God's image, and so is his only-begotten Son. But only man is also made to his image.²⁹ Augustine never rejected the validity of speaking of man as being made to God's image and likeness. Indeed, notwithstanding his readiness from text no. 3 onwards to speak of man as God's image and likeness, his earlier mode of speech never lost its power over his mind, and enshrined, as we shall see, an important side of Augustine's thought about man's image relationship to God. Our only remaining passage, no. 4, furnishes a fine example of the manner in which the old way of speech is accommodated within the new. Commenting, once again, on the verse " Let us make man in our image and likeness " (Gen. 1, 26), Augustine says " but because this image of God is not an altogether equal one, being not begotten from him but created by him, for this reason it is an image in such a way as to be also to his image ; that is to say, it does not attain its original by equality but approaches it by likeness " (*ita imago est ut ad imaginem sit, id est, non aequatur parilitate sed quadam similitudine accedit*)³⁰. We may say that man is made to God's image ; but we may not say — and Augustine is conscious of rejecting a weighty tradition of thought — that he is not his image.

3. THE BACKGROUND OF AUGUSTINE'S IMAGE-THEOLOGY : SIMILITUDO-DISSIMILITUDO

According to his own testimony³¹, Augustine had been particularly struck with one of the themes of Ambrose's preaching in Milan in the year 386, the theme of man's being made in the image of God. In view of this it is of special interest to discover what had particularly appealed to Augustine in Ambrose's views on this subject, and whether this accounts for the earliest shape of Augustine's views. In the *Confessions* he says that it was Ambrose who had first enabled him to understand what had been incomprehensible to him as a Manichee : how man could be to the image of God, how this could be understood without implying a corporeal, man-shaped deity. What Augustine had learned among the Christian Platonists at Milan was not so much a new understanding of the meaning of " image ", but of spirit. This is born out by the orientation of thought in his earliest works. Here the idea of man as made to God's image is

29. *Retr.* I, 26.

30. *De Trin.* VII, 6, 12. I refrain from multiplying references to passages in which Augustine speaks of man as made *ad imaginem*. One, however, *In Ep. Joann. tract.* 9, 3, may be referred to as being of some interest in that it links *imago*, *similitudo* and *aequalitas*.

31. *Conf.* VI, 3, 4.

by no means a central one, and occurs rarely. When it does, as for instance in the early, anti-Manichaean commentary on Genesis³², its bearings are exactly what one would expect from the narrative of the *Confessions*: God is not circumscribed by bodily form, and the Catholic belief that man is made to his image does not imply that he is thus circumscribed, for the belief refers to the interior man, the seat of reason and understanding. It need scarcely be added that this theme was of lasting importance to Augustine.

Ambrose's preaching on this theme may however, also have influenced Augustine's approach in further and sometimes in less permanent ways. Thus it is striking that Ambrose generally speaks of man being made to God's image and likeness, and tends to avoid saying that he *is* God's image and likeness, though he does say this on occasion. A passage in one of his sermons³³ reveals both his readiness to adopt both forms of expression, and his marked preference for the first of them: alluding to the Pauline text *Vir... imago et gloria Dei est* (I Cor. 11, 7) he slips in a qualification: *vir enim perfectus imago et gloria est Dei*. And when he goes on to explain what constitutes likeness to God, he says that this consists in possessing justice, wisdom and perfect virtue, for God is without sin; and therefore he who shuns sin is *ad (l) imaginem Dei*. He has a clear preference for this latter mode of speech, with its strong overtones of image and likeness of God conceived as a task to be accomplished, a goal to be reached. On another occasion³⁴ he adopts explicitly the classical distinction between the two forms of expression and says that the just man is *ad imaginem Dei*, since only Christ is fully *imago Dei*. Ambrose follows a hallowed tradition here, whose power over Augustine's mind — which we have seen at work in his earlier writings — need occasion no surprise.

In all these passages Ambrose speaks of man's being to God's image and likeness, without distinguishing the two concepts of image and likeness. His mind lacked the analytical interests of Augustine's, and in the contexts of his sermons where he deals with this theme, the words could quite suitably act as synonyms. He used them jointly or interchangeably to state the goal of man's spiritual life and moral development. "Let us flee these evils [the bodily passions] and raise our minds

32. *De Gen. c. Man.* I, 17, 28.

33. *De fuga saec.* 4, 17. Cf. also *Hexam.* VI, 8, 50, though in the rest of the sermon Ambrose keeps to *ad imaginem, ad similitudinem*. This is one of the sermons which Courcelle (*op. cit.*, n. 36) has given good reason to think was heard by Augustine in Holy Week 386. The closest anticipation of Augustine's ideas occurs in *Hexam.* III, 7, 32, where Christ is spoken of as the Father's *imago*; and being his *imago*, he cannot be (as the Eunomians think) be *dissimilis*, and is indeed his equal. In the previous paragraph Ambrose speaks of man as *ad imaginem*.

34. *Exp. En. Luc.* X, 49.

to that image and likeness of God. This flight from evil is the likeness of God ; by the virtues is the image of God acquired "35. " To flee [from this world] is to abstain from sin, to assume the form of virtue unto the likeness and image of God, to stretch our powers of imitating God to the limit of our human abilities... "36. It is the old theme of ὁμοίωσις Θεοῦ beloved of all Platonists that Ambrose is voicing in this language. The vocabulary of Genesis and of the Platonic tradition are here married into a harmonious union, and they serve to delineate the itinerary of the human soul on its way to God.

We know what deep response a spirituality cast in these moulds found in Augustine. His analytical mentality, his concern to define key-concepts with some precision, and also, perhaps, a greater gift for returning to common speech and meeting the exigencies of normal usage led Augustine to break not only with Ambrose's rather vague identification of image and likeness, but also with other and older theological ideas derived from the way in which the terms were thought to be related. This new departure, I suggested, appears to have been Augustine's own personal contribution, and it is present in his writings from the start. At the first appearance of the theme in his writings his mind is clear on the relation of image and likeness. Augustine also drifted away, within ten years of hearing Ambrose preach, from the tendency to think only of Christ as God's image, properly speaking, and of man as made to this image, and from the corollary of this tendency, the preference for thinking of image and likeness exclusively as tasks to be accomplished. Augustine's mind changed in many ways, rarely perhaps as profoundly as in the mid 390's ; but as is generally the case, changes of mind often take place against the background of a stable ground-bass. Ambrose's spirituality of flight from the world and ascent to God, for all the differences of mentality and language, is what made the most lasting impression on Augustine's mind. It was within the framework of this spirituality that Ambrose had used the ideas of image and likeness of God ; it remains, finally, to examine how this framework had affected Augustine's employment of them³⁷.

Here we enter on a large field, and one which it is difficult to separate from even wider questions. Many of them have been amply and more than adequately studied. We shall have to deal with this theme in more summary and perhaps in even more arbitrarily restricted fashion than we have done this far.

35. *De bono mort.*, 5, 17.

36. *De fuga saec.* 4, 17.

37. I have not been able to learn much from G. McCool, 'The Ambrosian origin of St Augustine's theology of the image of God in man', *Theol. Stud.*, 20 (1959) 62-81. It adds little to what M. Courcelle has taught us in his *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, 1950, especially p. 93 f., except the suggestion that Ambrose was the source of Augustine's acquaintance with the Alexandrian tradition. This cannot be sustained.

We have noticed that when the conceptual pair image and likeness first appears in Augustine's writings, it seems, so to speak, to be already leading a fully adult life in his mind. Now we know, whether or not he had devoted any close thought to the concept of image itself, that it had at least some part in his reflection from his earliest days since his conversion, for the theme of man being made to the image of God had been one of those foremost in his mind since at least 386. With the idea of likeness we can go much further than this. This had been a component, not only of his thought about man (as was the idea of image); it was also one of the seminal ideas of his Platonist metaphysics which had served to focus different sides of his thought. The contrast of absolute likeness itself and absolute unlikeness defined the two poles of existence³⁸. Augustine was following here a traditional scheme of neo-Platonic thought, and the scheme needed no stretching to accommodate what Augustine wished to say about man as made to God's image and likeness. All it was necessary for him to do was to identify the absolute Likeness with God's Word, and to keep formless matter, the absolutely unlike, as the opposite pole of existence. And so man, far from God in a place of unlikeness, is required to return to himself and to likeness with God. It was a theme which Ambrose had already preached on³⁹, and which has every appearance of being well-known to Augustine, even something of a common-place, from the start of his literary career⁴⁰.

The idea of likeness, then, was central to Augustine's conception of man's place in the world, between God and matter, poised between absolute Being and non-being; he thought in its terms of man's destiny, which he saw as being the progressive approach to God, not in space, but by the love of the mind⁴¹. Augustine's earliest discussions of the theme of image and likeness (nos. 1 and 2 in our table above) are conducted closely within the framework of the Platonic scale of being extending from unlikeness to absolute Likeness. The *similitudo* to which man is made according to Genesis is identified, in both passages, with God's Word: nothing could give a clearer indication of the background of ideas which Genesis 1.26 suggested to Augustine. He could not speak of likeness without the term mobilising a far-reaching metaphysical context which enriched its meaning. Likeness was inevitably a matter of degree

38. Cf. E. Gilson, '*Regio dissimilitudinis* de Platon à St Bernard de Clairvaux', *Med. stud.*, 9 (1947) 108-30. Of the long and still growing dossier on *regio dissimilitudinis* I need here refer only to F. Chatillon, '*Regio dissimilitudinis*', *Mél. Podechard*, Lyon, 1945, 85-102. References to passages in Augustine's works relevant to this theme will be found in these two articles.

39. Cf. especially *Exp. Ev. Luc.* VII, 214.

40. Cf. *De mus.* VI, 13, 40; among later passages, *En. in Ps.* 75, 3; 94, 2; 166, 14; *De Trin.* VII, 6, 12, and, of course, *Conf.* VII, 10, 16. On the soul's return to the *regio originis*, cf. *C. Acad.* II, 9, 22.

41. Cf. *De Trin.* VII, 6, 12; *Conf.* XII, 28. 38 on the cosmic process of which man's journey is a special case.

and placed on a scale of likenesses extending through the *cosmos* to God ; and advance along this scale was the task of man's spiritual pilgrimage towards his home from this " place of disaffection... in this twittering world ".

Augustine's reflection on man as God's image and likeness had its roots deep in this picture of man's present condition in the " region of unlikeness ", which lent itself easily to identification with the dereliction of man in his state of sin. His own experience served as an illustration of the general condition : " I trembled with love and with dread, and found myself far from Thee, in a place of unlikeness "⁴² — the dramatic inwardness of the description is Augustine's own ; the condition is that of fallen man. Augustine's views on man as God's image and likeness began as part of a larger vision of man's condition and of his calling ; and throughout their development they never lost this character. They had their origin in a context which led Augustine to lay great stress on the dynamic character of likeness. His later views on image and likeness never lost this. The importance of this can scarcely be exaggerated. For the Greek tradition repudiated by Augustine had the great virtue of emphasising that if the image could be regarded as a given, starting-point, likeness was a task, a destiny to be realised. And even when the two concepts of εἰκών and ὁμοίωσις were not so distinguished, as for instance in the work of Gregory of Nyssa, the stress on the active nature of the process of ὁμοίωσις Θεοῦ allowed the doctrine to be the central theme of the theology of Christian spirituality. But *similitudo* in Latin lacked the strong active connotation of ὁμοίωσις ; and Augustine's repudiation of the distinction according to which " likeness " added something to the idea of being an image, so that likeness could be thought of as the goal of development, might well have brought with it the risk of image and likeness being conceived in a static manner. But the earliest, deepest and most lasting associations of the idea of likeness in his mind prevented this from happening with Augustine. From the start we find his view of man as God's image closely linked with what Dr Ladner calls his idea of reform. In one of earliest works, the *De quantitate animae* (388) Augustine speaks of putting off the old man and putting on the new. The soul effects this by gathering itself together from its dissipation in the world of the senses ; this is man's process of returning to himself and — so Augustine corrects himself in an afterthought on the passage⁴³ — thereby returning himself to God to whom he owes himself. " 'This is altogether impos-

42. *Conf.* VII, 10, 16.

43. *Retr.* I, 8, 3. I have dealt with related aspects of Augustine's views on man's estrangement from himself and from God in a paper read at the Fourth International Conference on Patristic Studies in Oxford, 1963, entitled '*Alienatio* : philosophy and eschatology in the development of an Augustinian idea'.

sible except we be reformed to his image, the image he gave us to be well kept as something most dear and precious "44.

Augustine's language might fluctuate ; he might, at times, allow himself to speak as if man's dereliction were total and the image of God wiped entirely from his soul⁴⁵. His fundamental intention, however, is clear and explicitly stated : man has never lost the image of God so entirely that there is nothing left in him to be re-formed ; the image is deformed and in need of reformation, not lost⁴⁶. Image and likeness are there at the beginning — both at man's primordial beginning in his paradisaical integrity, and at his own individual beginning disfigured by sin — and at the end. What changes is the degree of likeness between the image and original. Hence Augustine is able to speak in terms at first sight very reminiscent of the Greek tradition which he had rejected : we acknowledge in ourselves, he writes, for example, " an image of God, unequal though it is and separated by a great distance [from its original] ... [an image] still to be perfected by reformation, so that it might also be close to God in likeness " (*ut sit etiam similitudine proxima*)⁴⁷. The text is in no way a reversion to the view he had rejected and does not imply that he had revised his insistence that to be an image implies likeness to an original. It is simply a highly condensed statement, which we might expand and paraphrase thus : the image of God in man, being an image, is like him ; but in sinful man the likeness is distant and deformed and needs reforming to be brought closer to God in greater likeness. Likeness does not " add anything " to the idea of being an image ; closer likeness does " add something " to the idea of a deformed and distant image. The second half of his great work *De Trinitate* is a study, from within, of the image of God in man and its progressive reformation in the course of the soul's *renovatio*, beginning in baptism and consummated only in the perfect likeness to God in the perfect vision of God⁴⁸. Far though a man may advance along this road, he will, of course, always remain what he was : God's *impar imago*.⁴⁹ For there are many degrees of likeness and " imparity " ; One only is God's equal, *par imago*⁵⁰.

If this reconstruction of the development of Augustine's thought is right, we may conclude that nothing much of value has been lost in the course of it. The first stage, characterised by a reluctance to call man

44. *De quant. anim.* 28, 55.

45. E.g. *DDQ* 83, 51, 1 ; 67, 4, and sometimes even in later texts ; cf. Ladner, *op. cit.* (n. 5), p. 189, where several of the references, however, are incorrectly given.

46. *Retr.* I, 26 (on *DDQ* 83, 67), and II, 24, 2 ; *De spir. et litt.*, 28, 48, and Ladner, *op. cit.*, (n. 5), p. 189, n. 11, 12.

47. *De civ. Dei* XI, 26.

48. On this, cf. especially XIV, 16, 22-19, 25.

49. *De Trin.* IX, 2, 2 ; X, 12, 29 and elsewhere in other formulations.

50. *Ibid.*, XV, 16, 26 ; 23, 43.

God's image *tout court*, and by reserving this to the Son, has been superseded. The concept of equality had helped Augustine to fill the gap left by abandoning his earliest manner of distinguishing the Son's from man's image-relations to the Father. Furthermore, use of the notion of equality was very much more in line with his original, strongly Platonic conception of a scale of likenesses. His whole thought gained in richness and coherence from this change, without sacrificing the dynamic character which had characterised the theology of the image in the work of writers such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. I have not tried to estimate, this not being to my purpose, how much Augustine's own contribution, especially in the *De Trinitate*, added to this theology. It is not negligible, on any reckoning.

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