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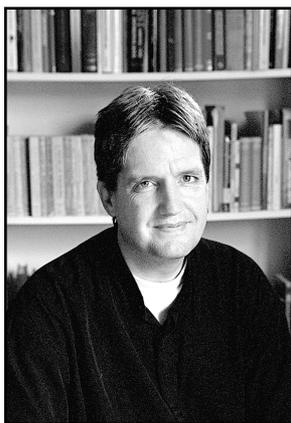
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Getting In Line: Justin Martyr, St. Augustine, and the Project of Integral Christian Scholarship



by Dr. Robert Sweetman

Christianity did not begin as the religion of philosophers, grammarians, experts in the law and forensic rhetoric, i.e., as the religion of the scholastic professions in the ancient Mediterranean world of the New Testament. However, early on it did attract people of that sort. We know, for example, of some early converts who were interested in and gave themselves to philosophy, or the love of wisdom. They asked questions about the relationship between the wisdom of their new-found faith and the schooled love of wisdom they took with them into it. The second century Christian Justin Martyr provides us an example in his *Dialogue with Trypho the*

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*Jew.*¹ Let us look over his shoulder.

As Justin tells the story, he is walking along one day when a man and his friends salute him. They address him as philosopher, for he is dressed as such, bearing the pallium or philosopher's cloak. Justin asks the man what he wants, and the man says that a renowned Cynic had taught him to engage philosophers in conversation at every opportunity, for, in doing so, he will either learn something of benefit or the philosopher will, and, whatever the case, it will be well for both.

Justin next asks the man who he is, and the man identifies himself as Trypho, a Jewish refugee. At this, Justin's eyebrows rise, and he asks why Trypho would think to benefit from a philosopher when he has Moses and the prophets. The question could equally be asked of Justin himself, as he well knows, adding or perhaps substituting Jesus Christ and the Apostles.

Trypho's answer begins by identifying common ground between philosophy and the revelation of Moses and the prophets: "do not the philosophers [too] speak always about God? Do they not constantly propose questions about his unity and providence? Is this not the task of philosophy, to inquire about the Divine?"²

Justin admits the common ground but then insists that it is not neutral ground. His admission and insistence are designed to point out that the philosopher's theological inquiry and the prophets' inspired reception of divine revelation do indeed share a common subject, the divine and its ways in the world, but that the philosopher's theological inquiry constitutes a getting rather than a receiving of knowledge and that this pos-

ture or attitude orients one's whole approach to the shared subject in ways that make a substantive difference. Justin gets at his point by emphasizing the relative fallibility of the philosophers' theological inquiry. "But," he says, "the majority of the philosophers have simply neglected to inquire whether there is one or even several gods, and whether or not a divine providence actually takes care of us, as if this knowledge were unnecessary to our happiness."³ He goes on to list other important mistakes that are made even by those who do deal with these issues, mistakes that cut the ground out from under right, wrong, and the just relations between human beings and with respect to God.

Trypho plays out his role as straight man and asks Justin to explain where he stands on these central issues. He gladly tells his story. He begins by praising philosophy as "one's greatest possession," and as "most precious in the sight of God to whom it alone leads us and to whom it unites us"; as a consequence, Justin views those who apply themselves to philosophy as "in truth . . . holy men."⁴ However, there are many schools of philosophy, and they bicker over how one is to love wisdom. Justin accounts for these many schools in a story of gigantic beginnings whittled down to size. We who come after the larger-than-life founders mistake our giantish heroes for wisdom herself. Hence, we parcel up their common enterprise, preserving the founders' opinions as if they were wisdom's, full stop.

Indeed, Justin's own biography illustrates the point.⁵ He had begun his pursuit of wisdom with a Stoic but learned nothing new about God. He then turned to an Aristotelian who insisted on tuition for his instruction. Justin judged this insistence as evidence that the Aristotelian was not a philosopher, for one does not sell access to divine things. Doing so is sophistry and, as such, foolishness, the very antipode of wisdom. Justin next turned to a Pythagorean teacher who demanded that Justin first study mathematics, geometry and astronomy. He had no stomach for such demanding preconditions and so turned to the Platonists. From his Platonic teacher he learned of incorporeal things. He named the effect of this learning in classically Platonic fashion: "it added wings to my mind."⁶ However, only folly resulted: "I fully expected immediately

to gaze upon God, for this is the goal of Plato's philosophy."⁷

At this point, Justin met an old man who introduced him via Socratic irony to the Christian religion. The old man begins by asking after the purpose of Justin's earnest pursuit of wisdom. "Is it just about lingual facility as the sophists teach," he asks, "or is it about living well?"⁸ Justin's response contests the disjunction: "To prove that reason rules all and [then] to rule it and be sustained by it is precisely to be enabled to live well."⁹

In short, philosophy for Justin, in these, his Platonic days, unites all other human pursuits into a unity and gives them value. And that means that philosophy produces or at least aims to produce happiness, or the flourishing life—*eudaimonia*. Of course, he does not mean just any philosophy but the philosophy of Plato. And so the old man engages this Platonic way of seeing philosophy and its connection to happiness, and he exposes its vanity. His arguments come down to this: Even if Platonic claims are true, what good does philosophy do? How does it increase our *eudaimonia*?

Justin's Christian Socrates is here exhibiting a fine sense of irony and knowledge of philosophical argument, for this argument is an adaptation of Aristotle's against Plato's account of the causal force of the Forms. Aristotle, in *Metaphysics* 1.9, had granted to Forms what he called a formal causality as the exemplars of things or sources of what-things-are within our sensible world. Nevertheless, he denied that their formal causality could in any way account for the movement of bodies and, hence, account for the continuity and change that we experience in our day-to-day embodied living. After all, formal causes are not efficient causes, and it is efficient causes that act as movers in our world of concrete experience or perception (991a.8-33).

In this passage, Justin is forced to acknowledge slowly but unavoidably in the course of conversation that Platonic claims do not and cannot increase our *eudaimonia*. This answer leaves Justin asking where he is to go in his pursuit of wisdom if the philosophers, even the Platonic philosophers, do not know the truth? The old man turns him to the scriptures and the God revealed there as Father-Creator and Christ-Son.

The old man admonishes him to “examine these writings with your philosopher’s questions and you will learn at last the true answers to those questions.”¹⁰ Moreover, he insists that Justin keep at least one Platonic habit and come to his examination in prayer: “beseech God to open to you the gates of light, for no one can perceive or understand these truths unless he has been enlightened by God and His Christ.”¹¹

Here, we see already a pattern of Christian thinking about Christian scholarship that will witness a dizzying number of variations throughout subsequent Christian experience. The deepest impulses of scholarly inquiry find and can only find their fulfillment in a lived relationship with the Scriptures, or rather the God they reveal. All Christian scholarship is then in some sense scriptural scholarship, i.e., scholarship not so much about the Scriptures as aligned to them. This sense of things marks out a common ground throughout the Christian era and among all of the academies that Christian communities have cultivated. Of course, common ground is not the same thing as neutral ground. For what precisely constitutes this alignment with the Scriptures? In particular, what role do assumptions about life and knowing that come from outside of the scriptures play? What, for example, are we to make of Justin’s old man’s missionary playing on platonic identification of knowing with illumination, and of sight with Truth?¹² How do we map this playing with Plato onto the datum of scriptural revelation that the Christ whom we meet in the Gospel of John is at one and the same time the Truth and the Light?¹³ Where does Plato end and St. John begin? Can there be no St. John without Plato? And what of Plato himself? Can there be Plato without at least Moses and the prophets?¹⁴ Such are the sorts of questions that have punctuated Christian debate in and since Justin’s day.

Of course, it could be argued that Justin lets us see a second thing as well, another through-line, it might be said, knitting the hundred or so generations of Christian scholars and their scholarship together. When Justin looks to scripture in order to align his own thinking, he does so as one already formed to a philosophical lexicon of Greek and pagan origin. When he meets homonyms in the Scriptures, he assumes that they are in fact the same word. Thus he can be said at

times to have read his antecedent Greek and pagan meanings into the words of Scripture and then to have aligned his thinking with the sense of life, of right and wrong, of flourishing and failing that emerged from this philosophically intinctured reading. The resultant pattern of eisegesis, followed by exegesis and subsequent application, marks out a leitmotif in the history of subsequent Christian scholarly endeavour.¹⁵

We next alight in Augustine’s Hippo. We do so because Christian scholars in the Latin tradition (i.e., Catholic and Protestant) have made much of our Augustinian heritage, in particular his insight that human understanding of the central mysteries of life is built upon a foundation of belief, or what Augustine called “thinking with assent.”¹⁶ Our enthusiasm is unsurprising. If all understanding is predicated on belief, then an understanding of the world that is predicated upon Christian belief is easily imaginable and in fact almost inevitable. The plausibility of Christian scholarship hardly necessitates any stretching of the imagination. It takes its rightful place within the tournament of ideas alongside all other belief-based understandings of the world. And other such understandings there must be, for without belief, there is no understanding.

Augustine shares with Justin Martyr a sense that Christian faith exists in a world that is culturally older than it and hence in relation to two antecedent sources of wisdom: Moses and the prophets on the one hand and the (pagan) philosophers on the other.¹⁷ In the light of Christ, Christian scholars are able to bring each of these wisdoms to its proper fulfillment. Moses and the prophets are fulfilled in the Gospel, in the person of Christ there revealed, and in Christ’s communal presence in this our aging world, the one holy catholic church. The philosophers are fulfilled, in turn, in the scriptural revelation of the absolute origin, end, and proper media of all things. Christianity’s antecedent wisdoms, then, are superseded by the faith of the Christian community and by the revelation to which the Christian community extends its faith even as the God who reveals makes that faith and community possible. That is, antecedent wisdom’s aspirations to truth and happiness are taken up in the Christian religion and realized. Moreover, Augustine shares with Justin the sense that Platonic philosophy is

superior to that of the other schools of philosophy, though its claims are equally vulnerable to Christian criticism. Indeed, Augustine pens just such a criticism in books 8-10 of his *City of God*.

What Augustine adds to Justin's enterprise is a deeper sense of what thinking in alignment with the Scriptures amounts to. At several points in his early philosophical writings, he meditates on a scriptural pericope that he finds in the Old Latin version of the Book of Isaiah: 7: 9—"Unless they will believe, they will not understand." In most of these citations, he ties the relationship of belief to understanding to that which authority enjoys with respect to reason.¹⁸ In matters of faith, belief and authority lay claim to a priority that is proper to the Christian religion. To believe, says Augustine, is to hold something to be true (to think with assent), whether or not that truth can be demonstrated argumentatively; i.e., to believe is to take something to be true on authority. Belief is a prior condition for the exercise of reason within the Christian religion. Subsequent use of reason leads to understanding. We Christians properly believe in order to understand.¹⁹

Later generations, most notably Reformed scholars, will capture this Augustinian inflection in a pseudonymous slogan: *credo ut intelligam*. However, is this invocation of Augustine exhaustively Augustinian? Is he always thinking, when he invokes Isaiah 7: 9, what, for example, Reformed scholars are thinking when they intone *credo ut intelligam*?

On several occasions, Augustine's meditation on the priority of belief with respect to understanding and of authority with respect to reason is the first half of a conceptual diptych.²⁰ In these passages, Augustine begins by coming to a first and, I dare say, perfectly "Reformed" conclusion. But then he stops, as it were, and starts again. He muses that in order to hold something to be true, that is, to believe, one must already understand the terms in which that belief is expressed. Or rather, in order for the priority of faith to be reasonable, there must be some reason, however small, that precedes faith.²¹ So it is simultaneously true that we must understand in order to believe.

In these latter passages, Augustine is simultaneously affirming that we must believe in order to understand and that we must understand in order

to believe. So it appears that the widespread and approving read of this ancient North African bishop on belief and understanding may have been a trifle inattentive. What are we to make of him and it when we look at the entire diptych in which Isaiah 7:9 appears?

The juxtaposition of apparently opposite claims has a recognizable philosophical pedigree in Augustine's world, a pedigree that makes sense in his life as we shall see. It is a philosophical strategy of the Late Academy, i.e. of ancient Platonic skepticism.²² The skeptic of the Late Academy collects arguments of various kinds and logical forces and practices endlessly employing them against each other. The point is not to sift à la Aristotelian philosophy the things we say about the world so as to be able to judge which claims and arguments are first and most universal and hence most securely to be accounted as true. Rather, the point is to achieve a perfect cognitive equiposition in which every claim is balanced against a counterclaim of the exact same logical texture and force, an *aporia* (to give it its currently fashionable name). The point is not to facilitate but to impede intellectual judgment and to suspend belief. What is to result from this cognitive labour is an affective state of mind, tranquility, the very condition of a flourishing life under a skeptical description. So, what did Augustine think he was doing in playing with a scriptural pericope to create an apparently skeptical *aporia* or equiposition of claim and counterclaim?

Augustine was born into a North African Christian community that could not imagine either the world of day-to-day experience or the world encountered in the scriptures in any way other than in materialist terms.²³ North African Christians were not materialist in the religiously impious sense of a Karl Marx. Rather, they were materialist in a religiously pious sense that was similar to and undoubtedly dependent upon the religious piety intrinsic to Stoic philosophy.²⁴ That is, North African Catholics tended to be drawn from the small Latin elites spread throughout the African provinces, elites whose heavily grammatical and rhetorical education was focussed upon Virgil, Cicero and a narrow supplement of canonical texts.²⁵ In this body of authoritative texts, its most philosophical passages were either influenced by, or reflected the

world that produced, Roman Stoicism. The Roman Stoic assumed that the material cosmos itself was intelligent, eternal, and hence divine. It was a fitting subject of human reverence and prayer, a fitting object of the human longing for revelation. Consequently, it is perhaps not surprising that North African Catholics felt it unproblematic to understand the God whom they encountered in the Scriptures in any other terms, and so they found, to us, strangely imaginative ways to express their intrinsically Christian sense of the transcendence, immanence, and omnipresence of the provident Creator-God.²⁶

Augustine grew up accepting what he would later view as this impoverished or carnal Christianity. Thus, when, as an adolescent, he read Cicero's exhortation to the love of wisdom at school and felt a strange new longing within his breast, he took materialistic habits of thought and imagination with him on his new quest.²⁷ If he did not know what wisdom was, and Cicero had failed to inform him, he might yet ask after its opposite, folly. And indeed he received an answer to this question in stories artfully told by Faustus and his intrepid band of Latin Manichees. Folly, or evil, was substantial, a tangible and primary component of our every-day experience. As such, folly, or evil, was in principle intelligible to the inquiring human mind. If one could but conceive the nature of folly-evil, one could move out toward wisdom by a process of conceptual inversion. This search by inversion is what Augustine was attempting in his nine questioning years as a Manichaean "auditor."²⁸

Nevertheless, his gadfly efforts to explore the logical consequences of the stories of folly and evil to be heard among the Manichees met with Faustian resistance. Augustine became disenchanted but continued to hang on to what he was coming to suspect were fallacious beliefs. For, how else was he to move toward wisdom, since he did not know already what wisdom was? The skeptics of the Late Academy eventually freed him from his Manichaean beliefs, and sent him inadvertently toward the books of the Platonists and the reality of the spiritual understood as other than material.²⁹ These books and their teaching in turn opened him to the preaching of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, and his eloquent, spiritual understandings of the Scriptures.³⁰ All of this

coalesced in his mind to produce a mighty conundrum.

From the Platonists he learned of the philosophical power of introspection, of the great philosophical project captured in the Delphic slogan, "Know Yourself," and its coyly hidden codicil, "to be divine." He was convinced that only via this inner way does one arrive at a knowledge that is sure; only so does one access the divine and see, as it were, what lies at the origin of the things of our experience and of what we say about the world. From Ambrose he learned of the prior authority and luminous power of the Scriptures spiritually understood. And they were external. One accessed them via an outer way—literary studies—and a grounding authority located outside oneself in the assembly of believers. How were these outer and inner sources of knowledge, these two loves of wisdom, to be understood in relation to each other? The struggle to answer this question constitutes the dynamic animating much of Augustine's early philosophical writing, as a look at two early treatises, the *Soliloquia* and the *De Magistro*, make clear.

In the *Soliloquia*, Augustine begins by examining our access to the divine within and does so via a classically introspective and Platonic analysis of geometric figures: in relation to bodily figures, on the one hand, and in Truth, on the other.³¹ He does so in response to a contingent conundrum or aporia. If he is to save up what he learns so as to be able to pass it on to others, he must commit it to memory. But memory is not able to contain all that one thinks about, and he is not strong enough to take everything down onto papyrus and should not employ a scribe, for what he is seeking demands solitude. This personal conundrum drives him to his knees in prayer—a prayer in which he explores by confessing the desires of his heart (1.1.1). Indeed, in prayer he discovers what he longs to know: God and himself and nothing more (1.2.7).

However, if he is to come to know God and self, he needs to know what form such knowledge is to take. Implicit is an adaptation of the Aristotelian sense that one comes to know what one does not know via what it is like among the things one does know. The Aristotelian principle is then employed in a Platonic project of introspection. What type of internal knowing will

knowledge of God and self be like? What is knowing God to be like among the set of knowings I already contain in my memory? Does my memory have a capacity for God?

The initial segment of the *Soliloquia* represents a meditation on the types of knowing Augustine recognizes in his memory and their suitability as a mode of knowing God. He considers, among other “knowings,” his knowledge of friends (1.2.7), of astronomical states of affairs (1.3.8), or of the quotidian awareness of what he had for dinner the day before (1.3.8). Each knowing proves insufficient to some belief that he holds about God. Each is insufficient either because of a disproportion between God as object and the creaturely object being considered (1.3.9), or because of a disproportion between the act of knowing and God as its potential object (1.6.12-13).

At one point, he comes to consider knowledge of geometrical states of affairs (1.4.10-1.5.11). In the context of this inquiry, he discovers that such knowledge is separable from corporeal things. Moreover, it is stable or immutable. So, he asks himself, is such a knowing sufficient for knowing God? He thinks not, despite reason’s urging,³² for he cannot believe that God is like a line or a circle. On the other hand, our capacity for knowing things eternal allows us to understand ourselves as in some sense eternal.³³ Such an understanding does raise the possibility that we have a(n as yet undiscovered) capacity for knowing God. Thus bolstered, he can continue the search for a knowing fitted to the reality of God. In the course of continued inquiry, Augustine makes a pregnant move. He turns to literary science (*grammatica*) to see if such science also accesses the changeless divine (2.11.19). He later expands this examination to include the liberal arts as a whole (2.20.35). The assumption of literary focus is significant, for if literary science in particular and the textually and exegetically enclosed liberal arts in general arrive at knowledge of Truth, and if the memory can contain them and the Truth they access, then the aporia of external and internal wisdom can be resolved, at least in principle. In other words, I take Augustine to be exploring whether we contain or can come to contain the written revelation of God within ourselves. The *Soliloquia* ends inconclusively. Platonic introspection and Christian thought in line with the

exterior scriptures remain in antipathetic tension. They form a stubborn aporia.

In *De Magistro* Augustine takes up the same great Platonic theme of the *Meno*—How do, or even can, you learn what you do not already know? Augustine asks whether a human teacher in fact teaches. It was in and through inquiring into the possibility of learning what one does not already know that Plato developed his understanding of knowing as *anamnesis*, or remembering. Augustine’s conclusions in the *De Magistro* have strong family resemblances to this Platonic doctrine. Nevertheless, he makes important changes. In particular, he replaces Platonic remembrance of our divine pre-existence with the regulative existence “within” of Christ our Inner Light and Teacher (11.38-14.46). Moreover, he arrives at this Christ from literary studies, i.e., from an examination of a teacher’s words as signs (1.1-11.37).

The *Soliloquia* and *De Magistro* can be understood, then, to form together a chiasm or A-B/B-A pattern. The *Soliloquia* start by considering and rejecting a variety of “knowings” until they arrive at what can be called the “internal divine” of geometrical figures understood in and of themselves rather than in terms of corporeal figures bearing their impress. They then move to literary studies. *De Magistro* starts from literary studies, or the science of signs both spoken and written and the things they signify, and moves to the “internal divine” of Christ the Inner Teacher. But even *De Magistro* leaves Augustine with the aporia brought to light in the *Soliloquia*. For we are left asking the question: what is the relationship between the interior Christ caught sight of in philosophical introspection and the exterior Christ we encounter in the scriptures?

In the *Confessions*, Augustine wrestles with this aporia again along with or, better, in terms of others. For example, already in the first chapter of the first book Augustine moves interrogatively from one conundrum to another until a circle has been circumscribed. He moves from praise to knowledge or understanding and back. He moves from invocation and confession to believing in and back again to invocation and confession (1.1.1). Having identified confession with invocation, he moves on to ask where God and his Christ are to be called into since God is ubiqui-

tous. This question leads him to the conundrum of whether God is best understood as in the creature or the creature in God (1.2.2). And this question leads in turn to a consideration of what containing might mean in this context: our containing God and God's containing us (1.3.3). God prompts a plethora of further aporias: never new/never old; making all things new/working ever ancient of days, always acting/always at rest, seeking/though nothing is ever absent, loving/though never languishing, striving/though never anxious, wrathful/but at peace, changing works/not counsel, receiving what is found/though nothing is lost, never penurious/though taking joy in profit, never greedy/though demanding usury, taking on debt/though all others have only what is his, paying debt/owing nothing (1.4.4). And the mystery of a God who can only be invoked aporetically leads to questions of loving and being loved (1.5.5-6). How is such a God to be loved? Why should such a God demand my love? Surely only such a God can peel back the shrouds that veil him in mystery?

The *Confessions* can be understood as Augustine's search for answers to the questions thrown upon his conscious mind by his opening prayer. Augustine answers that Christ, the Word of God, who holds within his bosom the original secret of every creature, is to be found introspectively in the darkest recesses of our deepest selves, our memory (10.17.26). When we come upon him, however, we find ourselves no longer exactly within but vertiginously elevated in and by light radiating from above. That is, we come to be in and to gaze at the light of the Word through a gauzy firmament marking the boundary between our deepest within and the divine above (13.15.16-18). And what might that mediating boundary be? The Scriptures received in our memory through Christian formation—catechesis, preaching, disciplined meditation upon scriptural phrasings (13.12.13)—constitute that mediating boundary. In and through the internalized words of Scripture, we access the light of the Word above where the inspiring sun shines without limit. This supernal Word encountered introspectively is the ultimate source of all that is and is the regulator or measure of our understanding of all that is (13.16.19). Thus, the search of self for knowledge ends up, if so blessed, in a know-

ing of God and the creation in God, but only as that divine knowing is mediated by the Scriptures written on the heart.

This is Augustinian Christian scholarship, what Augustine himself termed *philosophia christiana*. Again, we see Christian learning as a project of thinking in line with the scriptures, themselves understood as divine revelation. Moreover, in a much more reflective way than we see Justin Martyr, we see Augustine importing Platonic habits of thought into this scriptural learning. In general, the process of importation is ruled to the aporia of believing and understanding that we observed in several of Augustine's treatments of Isaiah 7: 9. We believe the claims of the scriptures in order to understand ourselves, our God, and the world of creatures implicit in understanding our God. However, we must first understand the words that the Scriptures use in order to make their claims. And it is on this side of the aporia that Plato, Aristotle, and the wisdom of Egypt or of the East could be of crucial, limited service.

As with Justin, we see Augustine working within a hermeneutic that has been termed the eisegesis-exegesis method of reading the Scriptures. Some have seen this method as constitutive of the Christian community's mortally flawed first attempts to capture the conceptual clarity of pagan philosophical modes of expression and inquiry and to put them at the service of the Christian community in its living with the Scriptures.³⁴ The intent is clear and honourable: to think in line with the Scriptures. The result is often far less happy. Forms of understanding are identified with the Scriptures themselves that produce discourse, making it hard, if not absolutely impossible, to say what one knows in one's bones that a Christian must say.³⁵

In all of this, I have yet to address the role Augustine assigns to aporias, i.e., to equipositions of claim and counterclaim, in his *philosophia christiana*. As noted above, in the Late Academy, aporias were the conceptual means to a non-conceptual end, the tranquillity that resulted from the suspension of belief. Augustine's aporias serve an analogous function.

The seat of human personhood is identified in Augustinian parlance with "mind" (*mens*).³⁶ Augustine does not mean thereby our cognitive powers, narrowly conceived. Rather, his is an

altogether grander notion. Mind is the seat of all those capacities we have that allow us to be agents of our actions. In Augustinian shorthand, mind is the intrinsic principle of life, our kind of life. Mind can be thought of in its relation to our bodily living. Then we name it soul. It can be thought of in relation to our spiritual living. Then we name it spirit. It can be thought of in terms of our cognitive functions. Then we call it reason or intellect. It can be thought of in relation to our affective functions. Then we call it will or appetite. It can be thought of in relation to our perceptual functions. Then we call it sense or sensuality.

When we think of mind in its depths, we think of memory. And when we think of mind in its culminating height, we call the mind “heart” (*cor*).³⁷ The proper act of the heart, the seamless fusion of intellection and desire, is called love (*amor*), the very end of which is enjoyment (*fruitio*).³⁸ We properly enjoy only God. All else we relate to in our search for God; all else we merely use.³⁹ Intellection alone cannot attain to enjoyment, nor can desire alone. Only the concert of intellection and desire, when directed toward its properly divine object, achieves the enjoyment of love. So a cognitive or intellectual search for knowledge of self and God cannot succeed. Such a search must be wedded to desire if it is to meet the conditions of its end. In the love of God, you could say, love, true love, only begins in “the failure” of intellect. This is the context in which aporias have a role to play. When our intellects encounter them, in all earnestness, the fires of longing are stoked. In those fires, affect is smelted together with an intellect that has learned to bow to its own failure with humility and without regret. What is produced is love, that cordial, you might say, that we enjoy by the grace and mercy of God.⁴⁰

Conclusion

From Justin we learn that Christians have always understood Christian scholarship to be a matter of thinking in line with the Scriptures in their witness to divine revelation. Augustine agrees, if in his own and far more prolix way. And from Augustine we learn two other things that are equally enduring assumptions of Christian scholars. First, Christian scholarship is never the end; it is always but a means to non-

scholastic ends, ultimately, the love of God, i.e., the love of God and the love of self, neighbour, and all creation as the joyfully excessive gift of that first love. Second, because Christian scholarship is always a means, it is always understood, in some sense, as in the middle of the middle; its results are always provisional. Scholarship occurs always too late to see the origin of what it would understand, and always too early to see the implications of the understanding it produces. This observation entails three implications. First, scholarship always emerges out of what is prior and deeper than itself. It flows from hunches, prejudices, or presuppositions; out of intuitions, circumspective conceptions, or ground-ideas; out of control beliefs, principles, or articles of faith. There are many philosophically and religiously loaded ways of identifying the “what” we are talking about here. Augustine refers to this complex as authority (*auctoritas*). Second, because it is made possible by what is prior and deeper—the distillate of one’s individual and communal living with the Scriptures (or rather the God revealed there)—Christian scholarship is always willy-nilly an integral expression or better extension of what one understands that distillate to be. Third, the scholarship, so produced because it is produced for an end that transcends itself, is to be judged in some measure by the outcomes it fosters. Such posterior judgments can be directed in two ways. They can fall on any element intrinsic to the scholarship itself. Alternatively, scholarship can be directed at the prior sense of what it means to think in line with the Scriptures or whatever else one thinks in line with.

My claim here is that all of what I have just been listing stakes out a common ground that all Christian scholars of whatever era and Christian academy share *at the level of deepest intention*. We all intend our scholarship to be a seamless piece of our total living with the Scriptures and our total worship of the God revealed therein. So we are all one at the level of intention, despite our differences. There are differences of import, of course. There are differences of orientation and strategy that divide persons and communities committed to the project of integral Christian scholarship. In light of these differences and their importance, it is good to be reminded from time to time of the astonishingly trans-temporal and

trans-communal oneness hidden at the level of deep intention. Indeed, that is a unity well worth remembering.

ENDNOTES

1. An easily accessible edition of the Greek text is to be found in the *Patrologia Graeca* VI: 471-800. The English edition consulted here for the purposes of providing a translation is *The Writings of Justin Martyr*, trans. Thomas B. Falls, in the Fathers of the Christian Church Series (New York: Christian Heritage Inc., 1948), 147-366. The work is divided into 142 chapters, the first 10 of which set the scene for the dialogue or dispute proper and contain the biographical sketch used here. (Henceforth cited as *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter #.page # from Falls' translation.)
2. *Dialogue with Trypho*, 1.148.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Dialogue with Trypho*, 2.149.
5. *Dialogue with Trypho*, 2.149-151.
6. *Dialogue with Trypho*, 2.150-151.
7. *Dialogue with Trypho*, 2.151.
8. *Dialogue with Trypho*, 3.152.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Dialogue with Trypho*, 7.159.
11. *Dialogue with Trypho*, 7.160.
12. This is, of course, a way of speaking about knowing and Truth that recalls Plato's famous "Cave Analogy" from *Republic VII* (514a-518c).
13. See, for example, John 9: 5 (Light) and John 14: 6 (Truth).
14. Justin includes a discussion of Plato's dependence upon Moses in chapter 29 of his *Exhortation to the Greeks*. The Greek text can be found in *Patrologia Graeca* 6. 241-312. An English version of the text can be found in *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr*, trans. Thomas B. Falls, The Fathers of the Church (New York: Christian Heritage, Inc.), 373-423 (Ch. 29 = 411-412).
15. One Christian philosopher of note, D.H.Th. Vollenhoven saw this pattern (which he termed the eisegesis-exegesis method) as the very dynamic of a fatal synthesis of Christian understanding with the pagan spirit of Hellenic thought which he understood to have dominated every era in the long story of Christian scholarly culture. See, Vollenhoven's *Kort overzicht van de Geschiedenis der Wijsgegeerte voor den Cursus Paedagogiek M.O.A.* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij THEJA, 1956), 23.
16. See, for example, the following passage of Augustine's *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 2.5: "For who does not see, that to think is prior to the act of believing. Indeed, no one believes anything unless one first thinks that it is believable . . . For to believe is nothing other than to think with assent. For not all who think believe since there are many who think but do not believe. Nevertheless, all who believe think: each both thinks in believing and believes in thinking." (Quis enim non videat, prius esse cogitare quam credere? Nullus quippe credit aliquid, nisi prius cogitaverit esse credendum . . . Quamquam et ipsum credere, nihil aliud est, quam cum assensione cogitare. Non enim omnis qui cogitat credit; cum ideo cogitent plerique, ne credant; sed cogitat omnis qui credit, et credendo cogitat, et cogitando credit.)
17. What follows in this paragraph was the burden of Augustine's relatively early *De vera religione* to make plain to Augustine's patron and fellow-traveller Romanianus. The Jews and their Scriptures are dealt with summarily in the context of the treatise but the pagans, and Plato in particular, receive extensive treatment in 1.1-5.9.
18. For the theme of authority and reason, see, for example, *De vera religione* 24.45. The crucial passage here reads, "Therefore, the medicine of the soul that divine providence enacts out of its unspeakable favour, is beautifully ordered as to its constituent and discrete stages. For it is distinguished into authority and reason. Authority stokes up faith, and so prepares one for reason. Reason carries the person through to understanding and knowledge. Nevertheless, reason is never wholly absent from authority since one necessarily considers whom one is to believe. Moreover, the highest authority belongs to a truth that is always already known and permeating." (Quamobrem ipsa quoque animae medicina, quae divina providential et ineffabili beneficentia geritur, gradatim distincteque pulcher-

rima est. Distribuitur enim in auctoritatem atque rationem. Auctoritas fidem flagitat, et ratione praeparat hominem. Ratio ad intellectum cognitionemque perducit. Quanquam neque auctoritatem ratio penitus deserit, cum consideratur cui sit credendum; et certe summa est ipsius jam cognitae atque perspicuae veritatis auctoritas.)

19. Augustine returns to Isaiah 7:9 time and again in the course of his writing career. Overwhelmingly he uses the verse to confirm the point that belief is prior to understanding. The claim that belief is prior to understanding, in turn, is put to different uses. He uses the claim to console fellow Christians who do not understand. Or, he will exhort them to stick with belief. He will use the same claim to mark out the future shape of his text; it will proceed from the claims of belief to an understanding of what is believed. Or, more darkly, he will use the claim in polemical contexts with Manichees and Donatists, for example, to discredit understandings that diverge from what he identifies as catholic. Since the heretics believe falsehoods they cannot be believed to understand truly; they are not credible. Examples of this usage can be found in *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 8.6, *Epistolae* 2.7; *De utilitate credendi* 1.2; *De libero arbitrio* 2.1.5 and 2.2.6; *Contra Faustum* 5.un., 12.46 and 22.53; *Sermones de quibusdam lectionibus evangeliorum* 39.1, 41.9, 68.1, 76.1, 89.1, 90.6; *De trinitate* 7.6.12 and 9.1.1; *Tractatus in evangelium sancti Joannis* 15.24, 27.7, 29.6, 45.7, 69.2; *De doctrina christiana* 2.12.17.
20. Examples of the kind of double-edged use I describe and analyse in what follows (constituting parallels to the text from *De vera religione* cited above) are to be found in *Epistolae* 120.1.3; *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 118.18.3; and *De Trinitate* 15.2.2.
21. *Epistolae* 120.1.3. “But if it is reasonable that faith precede a certain great reason which cannot yet be grasped, there is no doubt that, however slight the reason which proves this, it does precede faith.” (Si igitur rationabile est ut ad magna quaedam, quae capi nondum possunt, fides praecedat rationem, procul dubio quantulumcumque ratio quae hoc persuadet, etiam ipsa antecedit fidem.)
22. See the chapter entitled “Skeptic Purgatives: Disturbance and Life without Belief” in Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 280-315.
23. See the chapter “Martyrdom, Prophecy and Continenence: Hermas to Tertullian,” in Peter Brown’s *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 65-82, esp. 77 on Tertullian.
24. See A.H. Armstrong, “Gnosis and Greek Philosophy,” in B. Aland, ed. *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1978), 87-124, especially 94.
25. See H.I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956). For the North African church and education of Augustine’s day, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) 19-45.
26. See Augustine’s account of one such way in his *Confessions* 7.1.1-2.
27. See *Confessions* 3.4.7-8.
28. See *Confessions* 3.6.10-3.10.18. For Augustine’s confrontation with Faustus, see *Confessiones* 5.3.3-5.9.17.
29. Augustine speaks of the importance of the skeptics of the Late Academy (presumably as mediated to him via Cicero’s *Academica*) in *Confessions* 5.10.19 and 5.14.25.
30. For the effect of Ambrose on Augustine, see *Confessions* 5.13.23.
31. The resonance with Plato’s *Meno* is undeniable, both in the *Soliloquies* and in the *De Magistro*.
32. Augustine responds to the pressure he feels from the voice of reason as follows: “Honestly, though you urge me forcefully and move to compel my assent, still I do not dare to say that I want to know God as I know these things [various geometrical figures—sw.]. For not only do the things themselves seem unlike each other, the knowing too seems dissimilar” (1.5.11). (Quaeso te, quamvis vehementer ufgeas atque convincas, non audio tamen dicere ita me velle Deum

scire, ut haec scio. Non solum enim res, sed ipsa scientia mihi videtur esse dissimilis.)

33. This discussion takes up most of the second book of the *Soliloquia* (2.1.1-2.23.24).
34. See the reference to Vollenhoven's judgment as cited in note 20, above.
35. Augustine provides a particularly poignant example of the tension I am referring to in the first book of his *De doctrina christiana*. I am grateful to Daniel Napier, doctoral candidate in the history of philosophy in the ICS/Vrije Universiteit program, for this example. After using neo-Platonic and eudaimonistic notions to build up a sense of the proper mode of love encoded within the distinction between use (*uti*) and enjoyment (*frui*), Augustine struggles to say that and how God loves us in the fullest and most perfect way (*frui*). Indeed, a scriptural pericope such as John 3: 16 becomes an anxiety-producing mystery, because human beings are not properly objects of the fullest and most perfect love. Indeed, Augustine feels forced to explore how we can yet be assured of God's love for us within his chosen framework. His solution is as ingenious as it is twisted and unlovely: God cannot be said to enjoy us, for only God is the proper object of enjoyment. Therefore, God must use us, for God's own sake; otherwise, as Augustine admits, "I cannot discover how He loves us" (1.13.34). God uses us for God's sake, but such use is simultaneously productive of our greatest good. Thus his use is identical to enjoyment of us, for his use simultaneously produces its end or object's sake. Indeed, we are so accustomed to this Augustinian ingenuity that it might not strike the reader as odd. What Augustine is saying is that divine use does not love us for our own sake and nevertheless that it does; divine use-love turns out to be most profoundly enjoyment, i.e., for our sake. Moreover, our enjoyment of God, because it is at one and the same time our ultimate end, turns out to be identical to a use-love of God, for in loving God we achieve our own distinct end. However, when use and enjoyment are identical, they are not distinct. Has Augustine succeeded in understanding anything intelligible about divine love via his distinction?
36. See, in this regard, *De trinitate* 9.4.7; and 9.12.18.
37. See, in this regard, the analysis of Alberto Pincherle in "'Et inquietum est cor nostrum.' Appunti per una lezione auostiniana," *Augustinus* 13 (1968): 353-368.
38. For the connection between love and enjoyment see Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* 1.4.4.
39. For the distinction between use and enjoyment, see *De doctrina christiana* 1.3.3.
40. Louis Mackey makes a very similar point about the "failure" of the *Confessions* as an intellectual inquiry and its success as a text in "From Autobiography to Theology: Augustine's *Confessions*," in *Peregrinations of the Word: Essays in Medieval Philosophy* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 7-55.