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THE "PSYCHOLOGICAL" PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD DEVELOPED BY SAINT AUGUSTINE

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The best-known proofs for the existence of God are the classic Quinque Viae, most carefully developed by St. Thomas Aquinas. However, these proofs do not represent the only efforts of thinkers to arrive at so important a fact. The proof from the universal consent of mankind found wide favor among the Fathers of the Church. St. Anselm attempted an approach through our concept of God. Other men, philosophers and theologians, have made other efforts. It is our purpose in this paper to discuss one such effort. We seek to record, to appreciate, and to criticize what may be called the psychological proof for the existence of God advanced by St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo.

It is true that the elements of all the classic proofs are to be found in St. Augustine. It is true that he attached special importance to the proof from the consent of the human race. But the argument which he developed most fully and most carefully is this psychological proof. We may profitably study this argument, not only because it may be a Sixth Way to prove God's existence, but because, as Cayré says, "The

idea of God is the central point in Augustine's thought."[1] Examining this argument, we may learn much of the method and the thought of this great Doctor. For, although he considered a proof for God's existence one of the easiest of tasks, and although he thought that those who are ignorant of God's existence must be very few in number; nevertheless, he systematically worked out this proof from reason.

Our task, then, will be to record as faithfully as possible the route taken by St. Augustine. First, we will trace out the argument as it appears in fullest form, in the De Libero Arbitrio. Then we will follow the same itinerary in the De Vera Religione. And yet again we will attempt to set down the whole proof with texts drawn also from other works than these two. This task accomplished, we will form an opinion with regard to the principle on which the proof is based. We will seek to answer the questions: Is it ontological? Does it have an essential connection with St. Augustine's doctrine of illumination? After criticizing the proof along these lines and after forming a judgment on its validity, we will look into its spirit, pointing out the characteristic touches of St. Augustine of which it gives evidence.

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1 F. Cayré, A.A., Précis de Patrologie et d'Histoire de la Théologie, Desclée et Cie, Paris, 1931, I, 655: "L'idée de Dieu est le point central de la pensée augustinienne."

CHAPTER I

THE PROOF IN THE DE LIBERO ARBITRIO

The De Libero Arbitrio was written in Rome and Africa between the years 388 and 395. It is done in dialogue form: Augustine discusses the question of evil, its nature and particularly its source, with Evodius, a member of his household who later became Bishop of Uzala. The discussion is rather extended. Although the argument we are handling occurs in the second book, it seems well to summarize the first book, so as to give something of the context, for this procedure will aid the understanding of the proof.

Evodius introduces the question by asking whether God is the author of evil. Augustine points out the distinction between the evil that one does and the evil that one suffers; and adds the comment that God, since He is just,[1] cannot be the author of the former type. Moreover, since evil-doers are

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1 Aurelius Augustinus, De Libero Arbitrio, editor J.P. Migne, Garnier Fratres, Paris, 1877, Book I, Chapterl, Number 1; Patrologiae Latinae Cursus Completus, Tome 32, Column 1222: "...si Deum justum fatemur, nam et hoc negare sacrilegium est..." All references to Augustine's works will be to this edition (PL).

punished by the just God, they must be the authors of their own evil deeds.

How then, asks Evodius, does man learn to commit evil deeds? Augustine answers that man does not learn this from any evil teacher. "For if he is evil, he is not a teacher; if he is a teacher, he is not evil."[2] The question, therefore, remains: Whence does it come about that we should do evil?

Augustine admits that this is a knotty problem, since God is the author of all things that exist and yet cannot be the author of sin. He points out some of God's perfections: His goodness, His omnipotence, His creative activity. This he does to encourage Evodius to pursue the inquiry. "For God will be present and will make us understand what we have believed."[3] This method of calling upon God to help the investigation and this praise of God should be underlined. It is a method typical of St. Augustine, and it will recur in the second book, where the proof for the existence of God begins. Furthermore, one should note the fact that Augustine wants to understand what he believes by faith; that is, he wants to

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2 Ibid., I, 1, 3; PL 32: "Si enim malus est, doctor non est; si doctor est, malus non est." (Col. 1223)

3 Ibid., I, 2, 4; PL 32, 1224: "Aderit enim Deus, et nos intelligere quod credidimus, faciet."

proceed by way of reason, taking his starting point from that which he believes by faith. This purpose he repeats in the next chapter: "But now we are striving to know by understanding and to hold firmly that which we have taken on faith."[4] Again in the fourth chapter he recalls to Evodius' mind their desire to investigate the problem by reason: "But you must recall that we have undertaken to understand that which we believe."[5] This reminder is constantly on St. Augustine's lips. He is endeavoring to make a philosophical investigation.

The remainder of the first book need not delay us long. Taking up the question of the source of evil, Augustine says that it seems to come from libido or cupiditas. He then mulls over some objections: first, whether killing out of fear for one's own life is inspired by cupidity (and this leads to a discussion of culpable cupidity); secondly, whether the homicide permitted by law, as in a just war or to defend one's virtue or to protect one's life against an unjust attacker, can be traced to cupidity. Evodius' reply includes a distinction between man-made law and the divine law. This distinction Augustine takes up for the purpose of showing that

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4 Ibid., I, 3, 6; PL 32, 1225: "Sed nunc molimur id quod in fidem recepimus, etiam intelligendo scire ac tenere firmissimum."

5 Ibid., I, 4, 10; PL 32, 1226: "Sed meminisse te oportet id nunc a nobis susceptum, ut intelligamus quod credimus."

man-made law is temporal and mutable, whereas the divine law is eternal and immutable and the norm according to which man-made laws are to be judged.[6]

Since the divine law states that it is proper that all things be well-ordered, man must be ordered properly in himself. But the highest faculty in man is his reason. Therefore he is well-ordered in himself if everything in him is subject to reason. This right order is true wisdom; lack of it marks the foolish man.

St. Augustine has now begun to speak more directly of his principal subject, free will. He continues. No mind can be forced to the service of cupidity, because cupidity of itself is not stronger than the mind. Consequently, the man who has forsaken wisdom to serve his cupidity is justly punished. He has indulged his own will. His punishment here consists in the errors, wanderings, and stupid decisions into which he falls. Moreover, he rightly suffers the loss of eternal life, because he has willingly taken up the service of cupidity which he could have refused.

This idea Augustine repeats again and again in chapters 12-15 of the first book, in which he answers objections, amplifies and illustrates his proof, points out some of its

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6 Ibid., I, 6, 15; PL 32, 1229.

consequences. In chapter 16 he presents a summary of the argument given:

> Quocirca licet nunc animadvertere et considerare, utrum sit aliud male facere, quam neglectis rebus aeternis, quibus per seipsam mens fruitur, et per seipsam percipit, et quas amans amittere non potest, temporalia et quae per corpus hominis partem vilissimam sentiuntur, et numquam esse certa possunt, quasi magna et miranda sectari.[7]

Evodius agrees that they have indeed discovered what evil is and whence it comes; namely from man's free will. He is, however, disturbed by the further problem of why God gave man free will, since man would not sin if he were not free.

> Sed quaero utrum ipsum liberum arbitrium quo peccandi facultatem habere convincimur, oportuerit nobis dari ab eo qui nos fecit. Videmur enim non fuisse peccaturi, si isto careremus; et metuendum est ne hoc modo Deus etiam malefactorum nostrorum auctor existimetur.[8]

Augustine promises to take up, with God's help, the problems of whether God gave us our free will and whether He ought to have done so; but puts them off until another time.

True to his word, he does resume the discussion in the

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7 Ibid., I, 16, 34; PL 32, 1240.
8 Ibid., I, 16, 35; PL 32, 1240

second book of the De Libero Arbitrio, the book with which we are really concerned, inasmuch as it contains the argument we are examining.

Evodius first returns to the attack by asking why God gave man free will, since, if man did not possess this faculty, he could not sin. In answer, Augustine elicits the fact that God made us what we are. But it is also true that God would not give us anything evil, anything we ought not have. And yet, as we have seen, it is by means of this free will of ours that we sin; and we know (on authority) that we are justly punished for our sins. Augustine then gives the preliminary response that God, by punishing man for sin, indicates that man used his free will for another reason than that for which it was given. Hence he argues that the reason for which it was given is that man might live properly. Hence too, free will is a good and it is fitting that God give it to man.

Evodius thereupon objects. If God gave man free will that he might live properly, why can it be turned aside to evil? Augustine replies that, if it is uncertain whether or not God gave us this gift, we must seek to determine whether it is a good gift: if it is, it certainly came from Him; if not, it certainly did not come from Him. But, says Evodius, although I know with unshakable faith that God gave

us this gift; nevertheless, since by reason I am not certain that it is a good gift, I am also uncertain by reason that God gave it.

Ah, says Augustine, let us then begin with what we hold for certain. Are you certain that God exists? Evodius answers that he is certain with the certainty of faith. However, he reminds Augustine of their original purpose: "But now we seek to know and to understand that which we believe."[9] Thereupon Augustine, agreeing that believing and understanding are two different things, launches forth on his famous proof for the existence of God. First, however, he demands faith in God's existence, for "no one becomes capable of finding God, unless he first believe what he is afterwards to know."[10] This demand is, in reality, a request for good will on the part of the listener or reader, as can be seen from a reading of the entire chapter.

Before Augustine plunges into the problem with which we are here concerned, he pauses for one important moment. He proves to Evodius, from the very fact of his existence, that the human mind is capable of attaining truth. Even if

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9 Ibid., II, 2, 5; PL 32, 1243: "Sed nos id quod credimus, nosse et intelligere cupimus."

10 Ibid., II, 2, 6; PL 32, 1243: "...neque quisquam inveniendo Deo fit idoneus, nisi antea crediderit quod est postea cogniturus."

Evodius doubts this ability, he knows for certain that he exists. For one cannot doubt unless he exists. This insistence upon so fundamental a fact may be due to St. Augustine's previous acquaintance with the Manichaeans, who said that man could know nothing for certain. At any rate, it is a point of capital importance to be made at the outset of a proof from reason.

Continuing his plan of taking a start from that which is held for certain, Augustine elicits from Evodius the facts that Evodius is, that he is alive, and that he has understanding. Together they arrive at the conclusion that understanding is the highest of these three. "Tenemus etiam id esse in his tribus praestantius, quod homo cum duobus caeteris habet, id est intelligere, quod habentem sequitur et esse et vivere."[11]

The next step is to show--or rather merely to get Evodius' consent--that man has five senses, each of which has its own proper object, some of which have also a common object. However, in addition to these external senses, there is a certain interior sense whose function it is to gather the data brought in through the external senses in such a way that the possessor seeks what is good for itself and avoids

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11 Ibid., II, 3, 7; PL 32, 1244.

what may harm it.[12] Although this interior sense is superior to the exterior senses,[13] it is not the reason, since it is clear that brutes also possess it. That it is superior to the external senses is shown by the fact that, whereas no exterior sense can be aware of itself, the interior sense both senses corporeal objects by means of the exterior senses and also is aware of the sense itself. For if it did not have this power, if it did not sense the difference, for example, between seeing and not seeing, how would it control the eye? Again, if it were not aware of its own life, how would it flee from what is harmful to that life? All this, however, can be explained on the sense level.[14]

Of course a difficulty at once arises: if all this can be explained on the sense level, how can the interior sense be called superior to the exterior senses? Here Augustine, recognizing the difficulty, pauses to recapitulate, to give his argument in a different way, and to lay down a principle which is of the first importance in his proof.

It is true that both the exterior senses and the interior sense must be placed in the class of things which exist and are

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12 Ibid., II, 3, 8; PL 32, 1244: "...ille autem intus in ipsa anima."
13 Ibid.: "...omnibus communiter praesidet."
14 Ibid., II, 4, 10; PL 32, 1246.

alive. It is also true that this interior sense is not reason, for it does not understand. Can we say, then, that it is superior to the exterior senses in that it has these senses as its object? This is not a criterion, since the object of sense--or of intelligence, for that matter--is not, simply because it is the object, inferior to the subject. What, then, can our criterion be? It is this. Just as the bodily senses in some way (quodammodo) "judge" their object, so the interior sense "judges" and "advises" the exterior senses, recognizing and seeking what they need, directing them to action. Since that which judges about something is superior to that which is judged, the interior sense excels the exterior senses. This important principle is stated clearly in the last sentence of the following significant quotation.

> Quia moderatorem et judicem quemdam hujus [the exterior sense] illum [interior sense] esse cognosco. Nam et si quid huic in officio defuerit, ille tamquam debitum a ministro flagitat, sicut paulo ante disputatum est. Non enim se videre, aut non videre sensus oculi videt, et quia non videt, non potest quid sibi desit, aut quid satis sit judicare; sed ille interior, quo admonetur et anima bestiae aperire oculum clausum, et quod deesse sentit implere. Nulli autem dubium est eum qui judicat, eo de quo judicat esse meliorem.[15]

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15 Ibid., II, 5, 12; PL 32, 1247.

Making use of the principle, Augustine ascends higher in the hierarchy of beings. Reason in man is clearly seen to be above external corporeal objects, the exterior senses, and the interior sense. For as the exterior sense in some way judges its object, and as the interior sense in some way judges the exterior senses, so reason in the strictest sense judges all these things. In fact, this principle gives justification to the original hierarchy which Augustine and Evodius had employed, namely, esse, vivere, intelligere; because living beings judge non-living beings and intelligent beings judge irrational beings, both living and non-living. Hereupon, they come to the conclusion that nothing in man is superior to reason.[16]

Now that this point has been philosophically established to Evodius' satisfaction, Augustine rather surprisingly asks whether Evodius will be willing to admit that God exists if only it is proved to him that something exists superior to man's intellect. Evodius is at first unwilling to grant this; for, he says, this being might still be inferior to God. Augustine then asks if Evodius is willing to admit that an external and immutable being--if such can be proved to exist

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16 Ibid., II, 6, 13; PL 32, 1248: "A. Quare vide, obsecro, utrum aliquid invenire possis, quod sit in natura hominis ratione sublimius. E. Nihil omnino melius video."

above our intellects--is God, for corporeal beings and the senses and reason itself are all subject to change. Evodius grants this. Then Augustine promises to demonstrate that an eternal, immutable being does exist above our intellect and that either this being is God, or, if some being is superior, this latter is God.[17] In any case, once he has shown that this being superior to our intellects does exist, he will have shown that God exists. This will be the course the remainder of the proof will take.

A pause here is in order that three important statements may be given proper attention. The first is that the principle to be used in determining one being's superiority to another is that that which judges is superior to that about which it judges. The second is the insistence upon God's immutability. "Sed, quaeso te, si non inveneris esse aliquid supra nostram rationem, nisi quod aeternum et incommutabile est, dubitabisne hunc Deum dicere?"[18] The third is, again, that the proof is to proceed by way of reason, that is, it is to be philosophical.

> Quae si nullo adhibito corporis instrumento,
> neque per tactum, neque per gustatum,

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17 Ibid., II, 6, 14; PL 32, 1248: "Bene habet, nam mihi satis erit ostendere esse aliquid hujusmodi, quod aut fateberis Deum esse, aut si aliquid supra est, eum ipsum Deum esse concedes. Quare sive supra sit aliquid, sive non sit, manifestum erit Deum esse, cum ego, quod promisi, esse supra rationem, eodem ipso adjuvante monstravero."

18 Ibid., II, 6, 14; PL 32, 1248.

> neque per olfactum, neque per aures, neque per oculos, neque per ullum sensum se inferiorem, sed per seipsam [ratio] cernit aeternum aliquid et incommutabile, simul et seipsam inferiorem, et illum oportet Deum suum esse fateatur.[19]

The next step in the proof for the existence of God is begun by an analogy. Our senses and our reason belong to us alone; we do not all share, for example, in one great sense of hearing. Augustine's sense of hearing is distinct from that of Evodius. However, the objects of sense are, in varying degrees, the common property of all. For, although two men tasting the same honey cannot taste the identically same portion of that honey; nevertheless, the same sound can at the same time be heard by all in its vicinity. Some objects of sense, therefore, are not changed by being perceived by the senses; hence, they do not belong to the nature of the sense but are rather common property.

> Proprium ergo et quasi privatum intelligendum est, quod unicuique nostrum soli est, et quod in se solus sentit, quod ad suam naturam pertinet: commune autem et quasi publicum, quod ab omnibus sentientibus nulla sui corruptione atque commutatione sentitur.[20]

The point of the analogy is this: just as there are some objects which can, while remaining unchanged in themselves,

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19 Ibid., II, 6, 14; PL 32, 1248. Italics mine.
20 Ibid., II, 7, 19; PL 32, 1251.

be perceived by the senses, and which are common to all sentient beings perceiving them; so there will be an object or objects of the reason which can be perceived by all intelligent beings and yet be in no wise changed by the fact that they are intellectually perceived.

Is there some being which every intelligent being apprehends by his reason alone and which, whether apprehended or not, remains one and unchangeable? One such being is number. Since number is built up of unity, it cannot be perceived by the senses. For the senses perceive only bodies, all of which are made up of innumerable parts. Moreover, the laws of number are eternally true and immutable; for example, "...quotus quisque numerus est ab ipso principio, totus post illum sit duplus ejus."[21] Finally, these laws are common to all who have understanding, but remain true whether or not they are rationally apprehended. Hence, we have established the fact that number is one of the kind of being we are seeking.[22]

It occurs to Augustine that number and wisdom are joined together in Ecclesiasticus: "Circuivi ego et cor meum, ut

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21 Ibid., II, 8, 23; PL 32, 1253.

22 Ibid., II, 8, 24; PL 32, 1253: "His et talibus multis documentis coguntur fateri, quibus disputantibus Deus donavit ingenium, et pertinacia caliginum non obducit, rationem veritatemque numerorum et ad sensus corporis non pertinere, et invertibilem sinceramque consistere, et omnibus ratiocinantibus ad videndum esse communem."

scirem et considerarem, et quaererem sapientiam et numerum." Hence he investigates wisdom to determine whether or not it too is the kind of being he is trying to find above the intellect.

In the first place he wants to know if wisdom is common to all men. It would seem not, says Evodius, for different men consider themselves wise while engaging in very different enterprises: the military art, business, philosophy, etc. Augustine points out that wisdom is the truth in which the Supreme Good is perceived and grasped.[23] For all men seek what appears to them as good in all that they do, even though they are mistaken in regard to what actually is good. But the more men err in this respect, the less wise they are; for they go farther from the truth in which the Supreme Good is perceived and grasped. They are wise in proportion as they approach the Supreme Good which gives real happiness.[24] Hence, as all men wish to be happy, all have some notion of wisdom. Can we now say that one wisdom is common to all rational beings, or are there as many wisdoms as there are intellects? Evodius, still bothered by the fact that different

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23 Ibid., II, 9, 26; PL 32, 1254: "Num aliam putas esse sapientiam nisi veritatem, in qua cernitur et tenetur summum bonum?"

24 Ibid.: "Et quanto magis in via vitae quis errat, tanto minus sapit. Tanto enim magis longe est a veritate, in qua cernitur et tenetur summum bonum."

men pursue different objects as their Supreme Good, is not yet convinced that there is one wisdom; nor does the analogy with the sun, in whose light are seen many different objects, completely win him over.

Accordingly, Augustine gives several examples to prove his argument. He runs through several truths, several rules of wisdom, upon which all men agree: that the incorruptible is to be preferred to the corruptible, that the eternal is to be preferred to the temporal, that like things should be compared with like. With each new example, he asks: "These truths go to make up wisdom and are held by all men, aren't they?" To each question Evodius is forced logically to answer: "Prorsus sine dubio," "Certissimum est," or "Manifestissime." Hence it is clear that, just as the true and unchangeable rules of number are common to all men, so too there are true and unchangeable rules of wisdom common to all.[25]

To Evodius' inquiry whether or not wisdom and number are the same thing, Augustine devotes some time. He says that it

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25 Ibid., II, 10, 29; PL 32, 1257: "Quam ergo verae atque incommutabiles sunt regulae numerorum, quorum rationem atque veritatem incommutabiliter atque communiter omnibus eam cernentibus, praesto esse dixisti; tam sunt verae atque incommutabiles regulae sapientiae, de quibus paucis nunc singillatim interrogatus respondisti esse veras atque manifestas, easque omnibus qui haec intueri valent, communes ad contemplandum adesse concedis."

seems that they are different in that, while number is found in all things, true wisdom is found only in some men. But, he concludes, be that as it may, the point to seize is that both are incontrovertibly true.

Having, then, shown that wisdom is common to all men, Augustine must show that it is immutable and that it is superior to our minds. It is one and common to all intelligent beings, as we have shown, just as a sound is common to all who are present to hear it. It is unchangeable, as can best be seen by some examples: eternal things always were, are, and always will be superior to temporal; seven plus three always did make, do make, and always make ten. The mind also gives recognition to this fact by immediately accepting such truths rather than judging them.[26] Finally, the truth which is wisdom is superior to our minds. It is not inferior, since we do not judge it, saying that it ought to be thus and thus; but we judge according to it, using it as a norm. But if it were inferior we would judge about it, not according to it.[27] It is not equal to our minds, since it is immutable, whereas our minds are forever

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26 Ibid., II, 12, 34; PL 32, 1259: "Cum enim quis dixerit aeterna temporalibus esse potiora, aut septem et tria decem esse, nemo dicit ita esse debuisse, sed tantum ita esse cognoscens, non examinator corrigit, sed tantum laetatur inventor."

27 Ibid.: Sed si esset inferior, non secundum illam, sed de illa judicaremus."

changing. Indeed, we even judge our own minds according to the norm of this truth.[28] It remains, therefore, that this truth, this wisdom, is superior to our minds. Consequently we see that above our intellects there are at least number and wisdom, both of which are eternal and immutable.

Instead of completing his proof immediately, Augustine first devotes some time to the praise of wisdom. He exhorts Evodius to rejoice in the truth which alone suffices for beatitude, to rejoice in it as other men rejoice in lesser goods. For this truth alone can be possessed securely at all times and in all places; it alone can be grasped wholly by many men at the same time. In a beautiful passage, reminiscent of Cicero's praise of the liberal arts in his Pro Archia,[29] Augustine sings the praises of this truth.

> At illa veritatis et sapientiae pulchritudo tantum adsit perseverans voluntas fruendi,

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28 Ibid., "Si autem esset aequalis mentibus nostris haec veritas, mutabilis etiam ipsa esset. Mentes enim nostrae aliquando eam plus vident, aliquando minus, et ex hoc fatentur se esse mutabiles: cum illa in se manens nec proficiat cum plus a nobis videtur, nec deficiat cum minus, sed integra et incorrupta, et conversos laetificet lumine, et aversos puniat caecitate. Quid, quod etiam de ipsis mentibus nostris secundum illam judicamus, cum de illa nullo modo judicare possumus."

29 Marcus Tullius Cicero, Oratio pro Archia: "Nam ceterae neque temporum sunt neque aetatum omnium neque locorum; at haec studia adulescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant, secundas res ornant, adversis perfugium ac solacium praebent, delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur."

> nec multitudine audientium constipata secludit venientes, nec peragitur tempore, nec migrat locis, nec nocte intercipitur, nec umbra intercluditur, nec sensibus corporis subjacet. De toto mundo ad se conversis qui diligunt eam, omnibus proxima est, omnibus sempiterna; nullo loco est, nusquam deest; foris admonet, intus docet; cernentes se commutat omnes in melius, a nullo in deterius commutatur; nullus de illa judicat, nullus sine illa judicat bene.[30]

This passage is included, not because of its literary beauty (although that would be sufficient to justify the insertion), but because it aptly illustrates St. Augustine's affective method. Augustine continually reaches out to grasp with his will that which he has apprehended by his intellect. True, he has insisted throughout the De Libero Arbitrio that he is proceeding by way of the reason--and so he is. However, at the same time he is anxious to seize and possess with his will the eternal truth at which his reason has arrived. His philosophizing has a practical purpose too.

To return to the argument itself, we have only to see how St. Augustine brings it to its conclusion. This he does very briefly. He reminds Evodius that the latter had granted that God's existence would be proved if it were shown at length that some being exists above our intellects, provided

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30 Ibid., II, 14, 38; PL 32, 1262.

that no being is superior to this latter. Augustine says that he has, by demonstrating that some being does exist above our intellects, already proved that God exists; for either this being is itself God, or, if sone still higher being exists, this latter is God. In any case, God exists. This they knew by faith; now they know it by reason also.[31] Thus is the proof concluded.

It appears unnecessary to give what follows in the De Libero Arbitrio. What preceded seemed important in order that we might see in what context the argument was set. But to give, even briefly, all that follows would draw us away from our main point. Suffice it, therefore, to say that Augustine proves that free will is a good thing and comes from God, that he answers the difficulty about the will's being able to be turned to evil, and that he discusses the nature of evil.[32]

The course that the proof has taken may now be given briefly. Beginning with a demand for faith in God's existence, which is really an assurance of good will, Augustine proceeds by way of reason to prove that God exists. After he has

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31 Ibid., II, 15, 39; PL 32, 1262: "Quod non jam solum indubitatum, quantum arbitror, fide retinemus, sed etiam certa, quamvis adhuc tenuissima, forma cognitionis attingimus."

32 For a well-developed summary of the entire three books of the De Libero Arbitrio, see Vernon J. Bourke, Ph.D., Augustine's Quest of Wisdom, Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, 1945, 91-101.

proved the aptitude of the mind for truth, he takes his start from certain, evident facts: that Evodius is, that he is alive, that he has understanding. Then he sets up a hierarchy of beings in order to see if God exists at the top of this scale. First, there are non-living corporeal beings; then in sentient beings the exterior senses, above which is an interior sense; then in man comes reason, man's highest faculty. If above man's reason there is some immutable and eternal being, says Augustine, then God exists. Employing the principle he has used all along (id quod judicat eo de quo judicat est melius), he shows that number and wisdom are superior to man's reason. Whether or not these two are distinct is not here pertinent. The important point is that they exist, that they are common to all men, that they are immutable, and that they are superior to man's reason. Therefore, since some such thing exists above our minds, God exists. For God is either this thing, or, if there is another still higher, then the latter is God. In any case, God exists.

This is the proof as St. Augustine presents it in his De Libero Arbitrio.[33] It must be admitted that it seems unfinished and that it gives rise, if not to objections, at least to demands for a fuller explanation. It is evident that

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33 In the Libri Retractationum nothing is said which affects the proof.

it is sinuous and discursive. These questions, however, will be taken up in later sections of this paper.

CHAPTER II

THE PROOF IN THE DE VERA RELIGIONE

In this section St. Augustine's proof for the existence of God will be taken as it stands in the De Vera Religione and will be treated in much the same manner as was that contained in the De Libero Arbitrio. That is, the thought which Augustine developed will be stated as faithfully and accurately as we can present it, with little added. No criticism of the argument will be given here, no judgment concerning its validity and only that comment which seems necessary in calling attention to some particularly significant point. Fewer references to the text are required in this section, since the argument in this work is quite brief and compact.

The De Vera Religione was written at Tagaste between 389 and 391, and the work is addressed to Romanianus, the kindly gentleman whose generosity had made it possible for the young Augustine to continue his studies at Carthage after his father's death. The purpose of the treatise is to present some of the most fundamental truths of Catholicism and at the same time to refute the Manichaeans; in fact, it is the last of those five works of Augustine which Paulinus of Nola referred

to as the Pentateuchum contra Manichaeos.[1]

It seems necessary here, not to present the whole argument which precedes the proof for the existence of God, but merely to point out some of the statements which are pertinent to our later discussion. The first of these statements is the reiterated insistence upon the immutability of God, in distinction to all else which is mutable.

> Quamobrem sit tibi manifestum atque perceptum, nullum errorem in religione esse potuisse, si anima pro Deo suo non coleret animam, aut corpus, aut phantasmata sua, aut horum aliqua duo conjuncta, aut certe simul omnia: sed in hac vita societati generis humani sine dolo temporaliter congruens, aeterna meditaretur, unum Deum colens; qui nisi permaneret incommutabilis, nulla mutabilis natura remaneret. Mutari autem animam posse, non quidem localiter, sed tamen temporaliter, suis affectionibus quisque cognoscit. Corpus vero et temporibus et locis esse mutabile, cuivis advertere facile est. Phantasmata porro nihil sunt aliud quam de specie corporis corporeo sensu attracta figmenta: quae memoriae mandare ut accepta sunt, vel partiri, vel multiplicare, vel contrahere, vel distendere, vel ordinare, vel perturbare, vel quolibet modo figurare cogitando facillimum est, sed cum verum quaeritur, cavere et vitare difficile.[2]

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1 Bourke, Augustine's Quest of Wisdom, 117-121, contains an excellent précis of the whole work.

2 De Vera Religione, 10, 18; PL 34, 130.

And it is to this attribute of God that Augustine constantly appeals in his proof.

The second notable point is Augustine's discussion of the respective places of reason and of authority. In chapters 24-28, inclusive, he treats of authority, even showing that reason must be used to establish the validity of authority. Then, in chapter 29, where he begins the proof for the existence of God, he shows how man is led to God by reason.

> Et quoniam de auctoritatis beneficentia, quantum in praesentia satis visum est, locuti sumus; videamus quatenus ratio possit progredi a visibilibus ad invisibilia, et a temporalibus ad aeterna conscendens.[3]

He begins the process by noting that every living substance is to be set above every non-living substance. But there is a hierarchy even among living substances, for that power is outstanding in the human soul, not by which it senses sensible things, but by which it forms judgments about sensible things. Brutes may have more acute sense perceptions than humans; but they cannot judge what the senses bring to them, whereas we can judge even the senses themselves. And it is clear that the one judging is more excellent than the thing about which the judgment is made.[4] Hence, as sensitive life

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3 Ibid., 29, 53; PL 34, 145.
4 Ibid., 29, 53; PL 34, 145: "...praestantiorem esse judicantem quam illa res est de qua judicatur."

is higher than mere inanimate existence, so is rational life higher than both.

This would make our rational nature the highest of natures, if it judges according to itself; that is, if it is itself the final norm for judgment. However, the reason is mutable, now knowing more, now less, judging better the more it participates in science or wisdom. Therefore, we must look into this science or wisdom--not that gained by sensible experience, but that gained by reasoning. For a certain lack of harmony in construction, say, may offend our senses, while a symmetrical arrangement pleases them. Why is this? Is it merely due to experience? No, it cannot be. For it is harmony in beautiful objects which givesus pleasure. This harmony depends upon unity, equality, a gradation of unlike parts. However, since bodies are not simply one, this unity cannot be seen by bodily eyes nor by any sense. It can be perceived by the mind alone. We would not seek equality in bodies nor be able to judge that a corporeal object is imperfect, if the mind could not see what is perfect and so be able to compare and to judge.[5]

Now all sensibly beautiful objects are changeable in

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5 Ibid., 29, 55; PL 34, 146: "Unde enim qualiscumque in corporibus appeteretur aequalitas, aut unde convinceretur longe plurimum differre a perfecta, nisi ea quae perfecta est, mente videretur?"

space and time; but the unity and equality, according to which the mind judges these objects, is independent of space and time. For according to this unity and equality we judge all things, whatever their location in space and time: a round cartwheel or a round vase or a round coin. Equal years, equal months, equal days--all are judged "by the one identical and unchangeable equality."[6] Moreover, since greater and smaller figures or motions are judged according to the same law of similarity or equality, this law is greater potentially than all these things. In space of place or time, however, it is neither greater nor smaller: not greater, for then we could not judge lesser things according to the whole law; not smaller, for then we could not judge greater things by it. Hence this law is entirely immutable. Hence too we see that the mutable human mind does not judge according to itself, but according to this law. Therefore, there is something above the human mind: an unchangeable law, which is called truth.[7]

So far, St. Augustine has shown that sensitive life is above inanimate creation; that rational life is above sensitive life; that there is an unchangeable law, called truth, above

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6 Ibid., 30, 56; PL 34, 147: "...eadem una et incommutabili aequitate."

7 Ibid.: "Haec autem lex omnium artium cum sit omnino incommutabilis, mens vero humana cui talem legem videre concessum est, mutabilitatem pati possit erroris, satis apparet supra rationem nostram esse legem, quae veritas dicitur."

the mind and according to which the mind judges. Now he states that this immutable nature above the rational soul is God Himself.

> Nec jam illud ambigendum est, incommutabilem naturam, quae supra rationalem animam sit, Deum esse; et ibi esse primam vitam et primam essentiam, ubi est prima sapientia.[8]

The reason for this is that the mind, which does not judge of bodies according to itself, must acknowledge the superiority of that nature about which it cannot judge, but according to which it judges. Since my mind recognizes equality, I can say why similar parts of any body ought to correspond to one another. Accordingly I judge that those things are better in so far as they are closer to the law which I see mentally. But I cannot say why these things which I understand ought to be as they are. Why these things please us and why we love them, we cannot say.[9]

As we judge inferior beings according to the truth, so only the Truth judges us. Even the Father judges according to this standard of truth; "non enim minor est quam ipse."[10] According to the same law of truth does the Son judge men.

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8 Ibid., 31, 57; PL 34, 147.

9 Ibid., 31, 58; PL 34, 148: "Quare autem nobis placeant, et cur ea, quando melius sapimus, vehementissime diligamus, ne id quidem quisquam, si ea rite intelligit, dicere audebit."

10 Ibid., 31, 58; PL 34, 148

"Ita etiam, quantum potest, lex ipsa etiam ipse fit, secundum quam judicat omnia, et de qua judicare nullus potest."[11] In this He acts much the same as men, who judge of temporal laws when they make them; but once these laws have been established, a judge does not judge about these laws, but according to them. Moreover, good men consult the eternal law, about which they cannot judge, when they decide what must be ordered or forbidden. To understand the difference, let it be noted that, when we cognize something, it suffices to see that that thing is such or such; but, when we judge, we add that it ought to be such or such.

Actually the argument was completed when Augustine said that the immutable nature above reason is God Himself. Augustine adds an explanation of the difference between judging about something and judging according to it. He does this, it would seem, to bring out the fact that the eternal, immutable truth above our minds is God Himself.

However, this fact does not seem really to be proved here. God is truth, but we do not use Him directly as a norm for judging. Perhaps St. Augustine here would say that God is the only sufficient reason for the truth existing above our intellects. Perhaps he confuses the abstracted truths which

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11 Ibid.

we know with the subsistent Truth which is God. He certainly proceeds quickly and without explanation from the rule of truth above our intellects to the existence of God. Since it is the purpose of succeeding chapters to discuss the principle on which the argument is based and the validity of the proof, in this place the procedure which St. Augustine employed is simply set down.

The course, then, that the argument takes is this: sensitive creatures are higher in the scale of being than inanimate things; rational beings are higher than irrational; but above the rational soul is the truth, according to which the soul judges, but about which it cannot judge. This eternal, immutable truth is God Himself.

About this statement of the argument certain features may be noted. First the argument is philosophical, given in answer to the question: How can the reason lead us to God? Second, the procedure is up the scale of being to that which is immutable. Third, the approach is through the soul, the soul's realization that there is something superior to itself. Fourth, the last step--that the immutable Truth is God--is brief, quick, and by no means immediately evident. It seems that some previous knowledge of God is required, at least the vulgar notion of Him. Finally, the principle used to determine the superiority of one being to another is the same as that used

in the De Libero Arbitrio; namely, that that which judges about another is superior to that about which it judges.

The chapters of the De Vera Religione which follow are not pertinent to our present argument, and so may be dismissed without comment here.

CHAPTER III

COMPLETE SYNTHESIS OF THE PROOF

In this section, the argument will be put together in its fullest form. Although it is nowhere presented by St. Augustine more completely than in the De Libero Arbitrio, it will help to gather the various presentations so as to form one complete statement of it.[1] Hence, various texts--drawn from De Vera Religione, De Libero Arbitrio, De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII, Confessiones, De Ordine-- will be adduced in order. It is hoped thus to round out our presentation of the argument in St. Augustine himself.

The great Bishop regularly begins his argument from a consideration of the different grades of being, showing in what way one is higher than another. His purpose is to arrive

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1 Charles Boyer, S.J., Essais sur la Doctrine de Saint Augustin, Gabriel Beauchesne et Ses Fils, Paris, 1932, 62: "L'ascension tout entière avec tous ses degrés, que saint Augustin reprend si souvent d'une façon vraiment identique, forme un unique tout, une seule démonstration. Le sensible, le sens, la raison, la vérité qui est au-dessus de la raison, voilà les étapes nécessaires de l'itinéraire, quand il est tracé avec le souci d'être complet."

at God at the summit of all beings.[2] Some beings merely exist, some have life, some have intelligence. Living beings are higher than those merely existing, since they have the two perfections of existence and life.[3] Rational beings are higher in the scale, since they have intelligence as well as existence and life.[4]

Further to prove this gradation, St. Augustine sometimes even goes through the exterior senses and the interior sense, which so gathers the data brought in through the exterior senses that its possessor seeks what is good for itself and avoids what is harmful. The interior sense is superior to the exterior senses, since it both senses corporeal things and also is aware of the sense itself. However, since all this activity is on the sense level, how can it truly be said that the interior sense is superior? It is superior ultimately, not because it has the exterior senses as its object, but because it in some way "judges" them, recognizing what they need and

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2 Let it be noted again, however, that in the De Libero Arbitrio he first demonstrates the aptitude of the mind for truth.

3 De Vera Religione, 29, 52; PL 34, 145: "Quaelibet namque viva substantia cuilibet non vivae substantiae, naturae lege praeponitur."

4 De Libero Arbitrio, II, 3, 7; PL 32, 1243-4: "Quia cum tria sint haec, esse, vivere, intelligere; et lapis est, et pecus vivit, nec tamen lapidem puto vivere, aut pecus intelligere; qui autem intelligit, eum et esse et vivere, certissimum est; quare non dubito id excellentius judicare, cui omnia tria insunt, quam id cui unum vel duo desit."

directing them to action. The important principle used here and to be used again is often reiterated: "Nulli autem dubium est eum qui judicat, eo de quo judicat esse meliorem."[5] Again, "Jam vero illud videre facillimum est, praestantiorem esse judicantem, quam illa res est de qua judicatur."[6] And it is made use of in the statement: "Mens enim humana de visibilibus judicans, potest agnoscere omnibus visibilibus seipsam esse meliorem."[7]

Up to this point, St. Augustine has proved the superiority of sentient life to inanimate creation, and, among the senses, the superiority of the interior to the exterior. He then pushes the argument further, in order to demonstrate that there is something in man higher even than the interior sense. Applying the principle just stated, we see that reason is higher than anything else in man.[8] The proof of this is: "Non solum autem rationalis vita de sensibilibus, sed de ipsis quoque sensibus judicat."[9]

Therefore, the best part of man, that which is highest in the scale of being, is human reason. Why is St. Augustine so

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5 Ibid., II, 5, 12; PL 32, 1247.
6 De Vera Religione, 29, 53; PL 34, 145.
7 De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII, q. 45; PL 40, 28.
8 De Libero Arbitrio, II, 6, 13; PL 32, 1248: "A. Quare vide, obsecro, utrum aliquid invenire possis, quod sit in natura hominis ratione sublimius. E. Nihil omnino melius video."
9 De Vera Religione, 29, 53; PL 34, 145.

anxious to establish this fact? The reason is that he wishes to prove that, if there exists a reality superior to the human reason, then God exists. Unless he had demonstrated that reason is superior to all other created beings, his argument could not proceed; for evidently he begins with a notion of God as the supreme being. Boyer puts the argument in a neat syllogism[10] which brings out the point well. He says:

> S'il est quelque chose au dessus de notre raison, Dieu existe. Or il est quelque chose au dessus de notre raison. Donc, Dieu existe.[11]

As was noted in the presentation of the argument in the De Libero Arbitrio, the apodosis of the major comes upon us with something of a surprise. To explain it we may say that the point of the preceding proof is not merely to show that there is nothing above the reason in man, but to lead up to the fact that there is something above the reason outside man. However, merely to prove the existence of a reality outside man

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10 It is helpful to reduce St. Augustine's argument to syllogistic form, but it must be noted that the scholastic brevity is not his. L. de Mondadon, "De la Connaissance de Soi-même à la Connaissance de Dieu," in Recherches de Science Réligeuse, Paris, 1913, 148, gives this warning while commenting on Portalié's précis of the argument: "Incontestablement, ce syllogisme a le mérite de dire les choses d'une façon à la fois courte, dégagée et claire, mais je ne surprendrai personne en ajoutant que cette vive et sèche allure ne se retrouve pas dans saint Augustin."

11 Charles Boyer, S.J., L'Idée de Vérité dans la Philosophie de Saint Augustin, Gabriel Beauchesne, Paris, 1920, 50.

and superior to man's reason, is not necessarily to attain to God. Consequently, Augustine proceeds through the reason for a very definite purpose. He wishes to find there something which will lead him to God. This thing is truth.

Gilson describes this procedure of St. Augustine in much the same way as we have given it:

> Toute notre recherche, en effet, tend vers un être nécessaire, immuable, éternel, tel qu'il n'en existe pas de plus grand et qui par conséquent soit Dieu. Il ne suffit donc pas de dépasser l'homme pour atteindre un tel être, mais il faut dépasser en l'homme quelque chose de tel que ce qui se trouve au delà ne puisse être que Dieu. Or une seule voie possible s'ouvre devant une recherche ainsi engagée: celle qui passe par la vérité.[12]

How does the fact that the intellect possesses truth lead us to God? It is due to the character of truth, its eternity and immutability. Augustine evidently pre-supposes a common notion of God as the supreme, eternal, and immutable Being. Hence the existence above our intellects of eternal, immutable truth will prove the existence of God.

Now, the intellect recognizes that it is itself mutable and that there is above it immutable truth. "Quae tamen cum

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12 Étienne Gilson, Introduction à l'Étude de Saint Augustin, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, Paris, 1931, 18.

etiam se propter defectum profectumque in sapientia fatetur esse mutabilem, invenit supra se esse incommutabilem veritatem: atque ita adhaerens post ipsam...beata efficitur."[13]

One class of truth is number, a favorite example of St. Augustine. Number is built up of unity, which cannot be perceived by the senses. No body can produce the notion of unity, since no body is simply one. The senses, whose object is corporeal substances, cannot give us the notion of unity. The reason cannot produce unity as an effect, because this notion is common to all without being changed in any way by the fact that it is known. The laws of number are eternally true, whether apprehended or not.[14] Therefore, number is an eternal, immutable truth.[15]

Another such truth is Wisdom, either in speculative or in moral matters. Wisdom consists in knowing and possessing the supreme good. "Num aliam putas esse sapientiam nisi veritatem, in qua cernitur et tenetur summum bonum?"[16] Wisdom is common

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13 De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII, q. 45; PL 40, 28.

14 De Ordine, II, 19, 50; PL 32, 1018: "Sed unum ad duo, vel duo ad quattuor, verissima ratio est: nec magis heri fuit ista ratio vera quam hodie; nec magis cras aut post annum erit vera; nec si omnis iste mundus concidat, poterit ista ratio non esse."

15 Cf. De Libero Arbitrio, II, 8, 20-24; PL 32, 1251-3; De Vera Religione, c. 30; PL 34, 145-7; De Ordine, II, 12; PL 32, 1011-3.

16 De Libero Arbitrio, II, 9, 26; PL 32, 1254.

to all men in that all seek the Supreme Good, whether or not they are mistaken in pursuing what they think is good. Moreover, the rules of wisdom are eternal and unchangeable. For example, it always has been, is, and always will be true that eternal things are to be preferred to temporal. Wisdom, therefore, constitutes another example of eternal, immutable truth.

> Quam ergo verae atque incommutabiles sunt regulae numerorum, quorum rationem atque veritatem incommutabiliter atque communiter omnibus eam cernentibus praesto esse dixisti; tam sunt verae atque incommutabiles regulae sapientiae, de quibus paucis nunc singillatim interrogatus respondisti esse veras atque manifestas, easque omnibus qui haec intueri valent, communes ad contemplandum adesse concedis.[17]

Having proved the existence of such truth, Augustine then shows that this truth is above our intellects. The intellect recognizes the fact that the truth is superior to it.[18] The truth is not inferior to reason, since the intellect does not judge about the laws of number or wisdom, but judges according to them.[19] It is not equal to reason, since the truth is

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17 De Libero Arbitrio, II, 10, 29; PL 32, 1257.

18 Cf. also Confessiones, VII, 10, 16; PL 32, 742: "Intravi et vidi qualicumque oculo animae meae supra eundem oculum animae meae supra mentem meam, lucem incommutabilem."

19 De Libero Arbitrio, II, 12, 34; PL 32, 1259: "Non examinator corrigit, sed tantum laetatur inventor."

immutable, whereas human reason is mutable.[20] It remains, then, that the truth, eternal and immutable, exists above our intellects.

Sometimes St. Augustine at once brings the argument to a close here, for this truth is God Himself. So in the De Vera Religione he says: "Nec jam illud ambigendum est, incommutabilem naturam, quae supra rationalem animam sit, Deum esse; et ibi esse primam vitam et primam essentiam, ubi est prima sapientia."[21] So too in the Confessiones he exclaims of the unchangeable light above his intellect: "Qui novit veritatem, novit eam; et qui novit eam, novit aeternitatem. Charitas novit eam. O aeterna veritas, et vera charitas, et chara aeternitas ! tu es Deus meus; tibi suspiro die ac nocte."[22]

In the De Libero Arbitrio, however, he goes a bit further. He says that, by showing that there exists some reality above our intellects, he has shown that God exists; for either this reality (truth) is itself God, or, if there is some being above it, this latter is God. "Si enim aliquid est excellentius, ille potius Deus est; si autem non est, jam ipsa veritas Deus est. Sive ergo illud sit, sive non sit, Deum

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20 Ibid.: "Si autem esset aequalis mentibus nostris haec veritas, mutabilis etiam ipsa esset. Mentes enim nostrae aliquando eam plus vident, aliquando minus, et ex hoc fatentur se esse mutabiles."
21 De Vera Religione, 31, 57; PL 34, 147.
22 Confessiones, VII, 10, 16; PL 32, 742.

tamen esse, negare non poteris."[23]

Just how St. Augustine arrives at this conclusion does not immediately appear. The principle behind the proof will, however, be treated in chapter IV. Here we may note that Augustine gives some hint of it in the De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII:

> Quod autem est omni anima melius, id Deum dicimus...Intelligit autem rationalis anima Deum. Nam intelligit quod semper ejusmodi est, neque ullam patitur mutationem. At et corpus per tempus et locos, et anima ipsa rationalis, quod aliquando sapiens, aliquando stulta est, mutationem patitur. Quod autem semper eodem modo est, melius profecto est quam id quod non ita est. Nec quidquam est melius rationali anima nisi Deus.[24]

Here the Bishop of Hippo evidently pre-supposes a vulgar notion of God as an immutable being, superior to every other being.[25] Having, then, proved that the human reason is not the highest in the order of being, but that there exists an unchangeable reality superior to it, he concludes that God exists.

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23 De Libero Arbitrio, II, 15, 39; PL 32, 1262.

24 De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII, q. 54; PL 40, 38. And in the Retractationes, c. 26; PL 32, 627, Augustine amends the statement: "Ubi quod dixi, 'Quod autem est omni anima melius, id Deum dicimus,' magis dici debuit, "Omni creato spiritu melius.'"

25 Gilson, Introduction, 12: "D'abord il est clair qu'aux yeux de saint Augustin l'idée de Dieu est une connaissance universelle et naturellement inséparable de l'esprit humain."

This is the complete "psychological" argument of St. Augustine for the existence of God. With all its nuances, its long and leisurely winding, its flashes of rhetoric, it is typically Augustine's. Put in cold scholastic form, as we noted above, it loses the character given it by its author. However, for the sake of summary, the brief statement of it given by Portalié will suffice to conclude this chapter.

> Elle repose sur la constation d'une vérité éternelle et immuable, supérieure à l'homme, et pourrait être formulée ainsi: La raison de l'homme...occupant le plus haut degré de la hiérarchie des êtres de ce monde, si elle découvre un être plus parfait, cet être sera Dieu. Or, ma raison constate qu'au-dessus d'elle, il y a la vérité éternelle et immuable, qu'elle ne crée pas, mais qu'elle contemple, qui n'est ni mienne, ni en moi, puisque les autres la contemplent aussi bien que moi et hors de moi. Cette vérité est donc Dieu lui-même, ou si l'on suppose en être encore plus élevé, nous conduit de moins à cet être, source de toute vérité.[26]

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26 E. Portalié, article "Saint Augustin" in Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, editors A. Vacant et alii, Letouzey et Ané, Paris, 1903, I, 2345.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH THE PROOF IS BASED

Now that the "psychological" proof has been set down as contained in its two principal sources and assembled completely in a separate section, our discussion of it may get under way. As was indicated in more than one place, the final step in the argumentation is somewhat obscure. St. Augustine proves slowly and carefully that there exists an immutable reality, called Truth, above our intellects. Then he hastens to conclude that God exists. Is he justified in so doing? Is his proof complete in itself? If the proof is complete, on what principle does the final step depend? These are the questions which ought to be answered.

Before discussing these questions, however, it is well to call to mind again that Augustine employed most of the traditional proofs for God's existence (although almost never specifically as proofs, but only as parts of sermons or meditations) and did not confine himself to this one alone. Usually he gave these arguments in a highly literary style, taking little care to develop them fully and with philosophical exactness. Portalié describes his method well:

> Il a touché à toutes les preuves classiques de l'existence de Dieu, mais on trouverait rarement chez lui une démonstration systématique. Il attache une importance particulière au consentement du genre humain...L'antique preuve par la finalité et l'ordre du monde a été dévelopée par lui avec une délicatesse, une grâce, une émotion inimitables: partout dans la beauté de la nature il lit le nom de L'architecte divin...Mais son éloquence est surtout admirable quand il développe la preuve métaphysique du monde fini et changeant, réclamant un créateur infini et immuable.[1]

The reason for bringing in this reminder is that some maintain that the proof we are treating is not complete in itself. Should this claim on examination prove correct, or should it be decided that the proof is invalid, one should realize that St. Augustine did not pin all his rational attempts to prove God's existence on this single proof.

Descoqs attacks the argument precisely on the ground that it is incomplete in itself. He argues that the only possibility of saving it is by reducing it to some other argument. He says:

> Mais du point de vue strictement rationnel, dans l'ordre du discours scientifique et dans le plan de la construction rigoureuse, d'une construction systématique et ordonnée de l'édifice de nos connaissances sur Dieu, les discussions que nous avons poursuivies dans la thèse, montrent assez,

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1 Portalié, "Saint Augustin," DTC, I, 2344.

> nous semble-t-il, que cette preuve ne suffit pas, à elle toute seule, pour conclure de façon efficace. Le seul moyen de lui conserver une valeur probante est de la ramener à la contingence soit par l'intermédiaire des réalités concrètes d'où les idées abstraites, intermédiaire que nous avons nous-même reconnu valable dans la critique de la première partie de la thèse, mais une telle réduction ne semble pas être du tout dans la ligne de pensée de S. Augustin; soit en considérant ces idées comme créées, comme produites en nous par une cause transcendante et d'où nous remonterions à celle-ci par la voie de causalité, ou plus exactement comme un reflet où nous saisirions d'emblée la cause transcendante.[2]

Even then he is dissatisfied with the proof. "Mais n'implique-t-elle pas un innatisme ou du moins toute la théorie de l'illumination difficilement compatible avec les données de la psychologie?"[3] Moreover, it certainly smacks of ontologism, according to the same author. Other men, as Billot, Mercier, and Loinaz, agree with him on this point because they see in the proof an illegitimate conclusion to the existence of God as the sufficient reason of the eternal, immutable truths above our intellects; whereas these truths actually have reality, antecedently to our knowing them, only in so far as they are known by the divine intellect. In other words, once we already know that God exists, we know the eternal reality

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2 Pedro Descoqs, S.J., Praelectiones Theologiae Naturalis, Gabriel Beauchesne et Ses Fils, Paris, 1935, II, 131-2.
3 Ibid., II, 132.

of these truths. But we cannot conclude to the existence of God, not otherwise known, as the sufficient reason of these truths; for, given the essences of finite things and the abstractive power of our intellect, there is no need to seek the sufficient reason for them in the existence of God. In this way does Descoqs, along with Billot,[4] Loinaz,[5] Mercier,[6] and others, argue against the proof. Even some of its defenders feel that ultimately it must be reduced to one of the Quinque Viae in order to be complete. A full discussion of this question, however, is relegated to the following chapter. We record the opinion that the proof is not complete in itself only as an aid to our chief effort in this section: to discover the principle of the argument as St. Augustine understood it, the principle he intended to employ.

Those who defend the argument as being complete maintain

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4 Louis Billot, S.J., De Deo Uno et Trino, Universitas Pontifica Gregoriana, Rome, 1935, 76 (note); "...argumentum profecto non concludit nisi ostendatur ipsam naturam rationalem non esse a se, sed a prima causa a qua pendet rerum universitas, et tunc fit reductio ad unam e quinque viis supra expositis. Si autem procederet argumentum ex ipsa obiectiva necessitate et aeternitate quam in his principiis mens nostra intuetur, quasi per se solam argueret exsistentiam alicuius entis necessarii, sic non videtur valida demonstratio."

5 John R. Loinaz, S.J., Praelectiones e Theologia Naturali, Marietti, Taurini, 1928, 81-82. Cf. Chapter V for opinion.

6 D.J. Mercier, Métaphysique Générale, Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, Louvain, 1923, 40-50. His opinion too is treated in Chapter V of this paper.

that Augustine intended that it prove the existence of God as in some way the sufficient reason for the eternal, universal, immutable truth above our intellects. But not all agree on the principle which he employed.

In an article on the philosophy of St. Augustine, Van Steenberghen briefly reviews the proof, then says in conclusion that the argument proves the existence of God as exemplary cause.

> La disjonction établie entre le réel et l'idéal par la conception platonicienne de la connaissance intellectuelle, semble exclure une interprétation strictement métaphysique de l'argument "idéologique," bien que, aux yeux de S. Augustin, les caractères de la vérité révèlent une valeur absolue, ontologique, métaphysique, et non pas idéale seulement. Dans cet argument, le rapport entre les "Incommutabiliter vera" et la "Veritas incommutabilis" semble bien impliquer les notions de participation et de causalité exemplaire. - D'autre part, à côté et autour de l'argument idéologique proprement dit, les idées de contingence, de causalité, et de création sont fréquemment utilisées par S. Augustin.[7]

Not completely satisfied with this statement of his position, Van Steenberghen explains and qualifies it.

> Mais ces perspectives différentes ne

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7 F. Van Steenberghen, "La Philosophie de S. Augustin d'après les travaux du Centenaire," in Revue Néo-Scolastique de Philosophie, Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, Louvain, 1933, 248.

> paraissent pas parfaitement unifiées et une mise au point s'impose: il suffirait de dire, par exemple, que la nécessité métaphysique du vrai est saisie, par nous autres hommes, dans le réel contingent, pour assurer à la preuve augustinienne une base inébranlable. Car elle s'appuyerait alors sur les caractères de nos jugements considérés, non pas dans leur signification purement logique ou idéale, ni dans leur existence purement psychologique, mais dans leur portée métaphysique. Rattachée solidement à l'ordre réel, la preuve augustinienne devient une preuve métaphysique authentique, ou, plus exactement, l'unique preuve métaphysique considérée sous l'angle du vrai transcendental et aboutissant à l'affirmation de Dieu comme Vérité subsistante et Cause première exemplaire.[8]

This explanation is not convincing, at least if it is intended to prove that the argument is complete and yet not an ontological argument. If recourse be made to "Le reel contingent"--from which the intellect can by its abstractive power arrive at universal truth--then there seems to be no need to appeal to the existence of God. And this latter is exactly the point of the whole proof. Hence Descoqs' rather trenchant criticism of Van Steenberghen's case seems justified.

> La première partie de ces conclusions nous paraît certaine et ne saurait soulever de difficultés sérieuses. La seconde en revanche demanderait des précisions. Nous consentons sans aucune peine et nous soutenons bien en effet que "la nécessité métaphysique du vrai saisie dans le réel

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8 Ibid.

> contingent peut assurer à cette preuve métaphysique considérée sous l'angle du vrai transcendental une base inébranlable," mais à la condition de l'appuyer sur la contingence de ce même réel, c'est-à-dire en dernière analyse, comme l'indiquent les mots mêmes, sur l'insuffisance dans l'être, et donc sur la nécessité de l'Être premier, cause efficiente de ce réel, et par le fait même, cause exemplaire. Si causalité exemplaire est detachée de l'autre, elle reste, quoad nos, sans point d'attache, au-dessus du vide, et ne nous prouve rien.[9]

Of course a rejection of one argument adduced is not sufficient to throw out the whole possibility that the argument is intended to prove the existence of God as exemplary cause. Nor is this procedure attempted here. Instead, let us first review other opinions.

Boyer insists very strongly that the principle underlying the argument is the principle of causality. After a long introduction to the point, he says: "Si importante, si décisive même, en quelque sorte, qu'en soit la raison, il faut la dire sans plus attendre: le philosophe d'Hippone est mû par le principe de causalité..."[10] Whereupon Boyer sets forth numerous examples of the use Augustine made of this principle: in his De Genesi ad Litteram (IV, 32, 49), in his Enarrationes in Psalmos (Ps. 44, n. 13), in his De Trinitate (XII, 5, 5), in

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9 Descoqs, Praelectiones, II, 134.
10 Boyer, Essais, 58.

his De Civitate Dei (XI, 4, 2), etc. He observes rather disgustedly: "Certains semblent vraiment trop croire qu'il faille être péripatéticien jusqu'aux moelles pour avoir l'idée de cause, et pour s'en servir."[11]

It is true that the examples of St. Augustine's use of the principle of causality would point to God as efficient cause. However, Boyer rather seems to hold that this "psychological" argument proves the existence of a God Who is exemplary cause. For in summarizing the argument, speaking of Wisdom and Truth, he says:

> Mais ces perfections, qui sont substantiellement Dieu, nous les percevons à travers le reflet d'elles-mêmes dans notre âme. Leur empreinte, leur participation, et pour dire le mot, leur image, est en notre âme, est notre âme en sa partie supérieure; et la preuve de Dieu consiste précisément à saisir que la règle de notre pensée et de notre vouloir, c'est-à-dire notre raison qui est bien nôtre et qui est une partie de notre âme, n'est intelligible que comme participation et comme image d'une vérité absolue qui est Dieu.[12]

De Mondadon also believes that progress in the argumentation is made by use of the principle of causality, perhaps both efficient and exemplary. After presenting his outline

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11 Ibid., 61.
12 Ibid., 90.

of the argument, he adds:

> Au reste, le passage de l'un à l'autre se fait par l'intermédiaire de la causalité, à laquelle on nous renvoie, quand on parle de lumière intelligible...et de maître intérieur...ou plus clairement, quand on nomme la vérité vie et âme de l'âme raisonable.[13]

And in the passage which follows, he indicates that Augustine intended to prove God either as exemplary or as efficient cause.

From his summary of the argument quoted at the conclusion of the last section, it appears that Portalié understands Augustine to proceed by way of causality, probably efficient causality. For, he says, the argument must conclude to an immutable "source de toute vérité."

Before presenting our own conclusion, we may profitably learn the position of one more authority. Gilson frankly admits that St. Augustine knew the principle of causality and that he made use of it in some places to prove the existence of God.

> Sans doute, Augustin a souvent et expressément insisté sur le fait que la mutabilité même du monde des corps atteste sa contingence et sa dependance à l'égard d'un être nécessaire qui est Dieu. On ne peut donc nier que sa doctrine contienne tous les éléments nécessaires d'une preuve de ce

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13 De Mondadon, "De la Connaissance de Soi-même à la Connaissance de Dieu," 155-6.

> genre et par conséquent que cette preuve ne soît compatible avec l'augustinisme le plus authentique.[14]

However, Gilson very justly notes that St. Augustine used such proofs rather as pious meditations, as parts of sermons or discourses, rather than as proofs properly so called. Where he does develop a proper proof, he always passes by way of the mind. Why so? Gilson answers:

> Et la raison en est claire. Interrogées par nous sur leur nature et leur origine, les choses sensibles répondent en effet par le spectacle de leur mutabilité même: ce n'est pas nous qui nous sommes faites; il faut donc les transcender pour atteindre leur cause; or leur cause ne peut être atteinte en tant que cause de ce qu'elles ont de changeant et contingent, qui est du non être, mais en tant que cause de ce qu'elles ont de stable, qui est de l'être. Ce qu'elles ont de stable, c'est le nombre, l'ordre et la mesure; or, au-dessus de leur nombre se trouve celui de notre pensée qui les connaît; transcendons ce nombre lui-même, nous atteignons celui de la Vérité qui est Dieu.[15]

Therefore, in going by way of the mind, one arrives at the truth. Especially are mathematical and metaphysical truths apt for the proof, since they are eternal and immutable. The only sufficient reason for these truths is God Himself. Thus, Gilson evidently concludes that the principle underlying

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14 Gilson, Introduction, 24.
15 Ibid., 25-6.

the argument is that of sufficient reason.

> Le point critique de la démonstration est évidemment le dernier, où Dieu se trouve posé comme la seule raison suffisante de la vérité présente à la pensée.[16]

The various opinions given above are useful for several reasons. First, they may serve to make precise our own notions. Second, they are the opinions of men well versed in the writings of St. Augustine. Third, by their variety they indicate the difficulty of the question. It was stated above that the last step in St. Augustine's argument is somewhat obscure. The very difference of opinion regarding the principle which underlies this last step should amply prove that statement.

In the face of such disagreement, it may seem presumptuous to try to resolve the question. On the other hand, it would be unsatisfactory to pass over it without giving any personal opinion and tne reasons for holding it.

In the first place, the conclusion of Descoqs that the proof is in itself incomplete does not seem to me to be justified.[17] I do not say that the argument is valid; it could be complete without being valid. And it does appear to be complete. Why does St. Augustine proceed by way of thought?

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16 Ibid., 23.

17 In the next chapter, however, I shall criticize the validity of the proof along much the same lines as Descoqs does.

Is it not to arrive at something above our mind, something which has such characteristics that neither sensible objects nor the mind could produce it? In proceeding in this way, he comes to truth, truth which is eternal and unchangeable. Does he not at once conclude from this that God exists? The argumentation, then, appears clear and complete: there must exist some being itself eternal and immutable, in order to explain metaphysical and mathematical truth. It may be granted that St. Augustine does not explicitly state this step, and does not explicitly enuntiate his principle. Nevertheless, his very manner of proceeding indicates that he adopted this particular way for the purpose of arriving at God as the ultimate explanation for truths of this character. Therefore, it seems logical to conclude that the argument is complete in itself.

Furthermore, the objection that some principle must be dragged in to explain the reasoning, in order to give it a solid basis, seems unfair and untrue. When St. Augustine presented the argument fully, as in the De Libero Arbitrio, he evidently intended it to be a systematic proof for the existence of God. But, unless some principle demanding that God be necessary to explain immutable truth were at least implicitly included, the argument would be no argument at all. There would be no basis for concluding to God's existence.

However, the whole set-up, in which St. Augustine of set purpose works toward that truth which is above the intellect and whose existence demands the existence of God, clearly indicates that the great African Bishop relied on this principle in his proof. Therefore, the principle is in the argument itself; and need not be shoved into it by its defenders, in order to bolster an otherwise incomplete proof.

For much the same reasons as those given above, I conclude that the principle on which the argument rests is the principle of sufficient reason. The argument begins by showing that, in man, nothing is superior to the intellect. Why does St. Augustine so begin? That he may arrive at the truth, which is the object of the intellect. But why does he work toward truth? Because truth possesses certain qualities which can be explained neither by sensible bodies nor by the intellect. For the truths chosen by St. Augustine are mathematical and metaphysical truths, truths which are eternal and immutable. Why does he select these truths, and, once having proved their existence above our intellects, immediately conclude that God exists? The answer is that these truths are not the product of our mutable intellects. Even though the intellect is the highest thing in man, it cannot serve to explain these truths. Therefore, God must exist as the only sufficient reason for these truths--and a God Who is unchangeable and eternal even

as the truths themselves are. Consequently, it seems that the proof rests on the principle of sufficient reason.[18] The statement of the argument in the De Libero Arbitrio, as reproduced in Chapter I, will, it appears, bear out those steps which lead to this conclusion.

In summary, this section was intended to determine the principle underlying St. Augustine's "psychological" proof for the existence of God. It has been seen that some, like Descoqs, maintain that the argument is in itself not complete. We have endeavored to show that it is complete, since it is at least implicitly based on the principle of sufficient reason - and this in the very way in which St. Augustine presented it. Others, who hold that the argument is complete, variously

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18 F.J. Thonnard, A.A., Précis d'Histoire de la Philosophie, Desclée et Cie, Paris, 1946, 214. Fr. Thonnard notes that St. Augustine did not favor the proof from efficient causality of the sensible world. Then he adds this reason for Augustine's procedure: "Pourquoi répugne-t-il à monter directement du sensible à Dieu? La raison, semble-t-il, est que ce chemin ne lui paraissait pas sûr. L'ordre des choses sensibles en effet, pouvait pleinement s'expliquer, à la manière des stoiciens et de Plotin, par l'Âme du monde, et celle-ci, finie et changeante, n'était pas encore Dieu. Augustin la jugeait inutile, sachant par la foi que tout a été créé par le Verbe; mais rationnellement, il ne la jugeait pas absurde; et pour trouver Dieu, il prit, semble-t-il, le parti de l'éviter. Or la voie, à ses yeux, la plus efficace, était le méthode platonicienne du recueillement et de la purification, le retour par les degrés de notre vie intérieure où le sommet des vérités éternelles permet d'atteindre incontestablement Dieu, seul immuable et éternel."

explain the principle from which the conclusion is drawn. Some hold out for exemplary causality; others, for efficient causality; others, for the principle of sufficient reason. For the reasons given immediately above, we agree with the last named conclusion.

CHAPTER V

ONTOLOGISM AND THE PROOF; ITS VALIDITY

The fact (if granted) that the proof is complete does not necessarily prove the validity of the argument. Other difficulties may be--indeed, have been--urged against this proof. The principal of these difficulties is that the argument is ontological, in so far as it concludes from our thoughts of the eternal truths to their real existence from eternity, which fact can only be explained by the real existence of God. In his Theodicea, Palumbo lists those who have especially attacked the argument: Billot, Mercier, Van der Mersch, Loinaz, Mindorff, Cuervo, Balthazar, Ricard, Descoqs. Then he observes: "Iuxta auctores praefatos argumentum ideologicum nullum habet valorem ad Dei exsistentiam ostendendam et demonstrandam et ontologismum aut innatismum sapit."[1]

Although it is not our purpose here to discuss ontologism itself, we may give a definition of what we mean by it. It is a system according to which the first and immediate object of

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1 Franciscus Antonius Palumbo, Theodicea, Pontificium Athenaeum Urbanianum, Rome, 1942, 217.

the intellect is God Himself, ens simpliciter, Whom one immediately apprehends by simple intuition, in which intuition one knows all other things. Although there are several variations of the system, into which we do not propose to enter, this definition is satisfactory for the purposes of this discussion.

With regard to the knowledge of God, the system holds that the human mind continually intuits God. Again, this intuition is variously explained by the Ontologists. We are concerned to give only a general statement of the position, since such a statement is adequate for our purposes.

As a final introductory step, it should be noted that an argument may be ontological without by that very fact being ontologistic. In other words, there may be a transition from the logical order to the real in the argument (ontological), and still no confirmation given to and no reliance placed on the position which holds that the human mind has a direct intuition of God (ontologistic). This distinction is important and, we think, legitimate. In speaking of the ontological argument a simultaneo, Descoqs makes the same distinction:

> Hoc argumentum confundi nequit cum Ontologismo, et potest proponi quin ullo modo accipiatur intuitio Ontologistarum, prouti re vera habetur. Fautores enim praesentis argumenti in ordine reali mere abstractivo stant, tamquam puncto a quo, cum dicant ideam Dei infiniti et

> perfecti quam sponte efformant, habere valorem objectivum absolutum. Sed plerique, saltem hodierni, omnem intuitionem Dei respuunt quae esset ratio fundamentalis illius objectivitatis ideae. Valor enim virtusque a priori rationis ad hoc stabiliendum juxta eos sufficiunt.[2]

There are varied opinions in this matter. Some authors maintain that the argument is ontological; some, that it is ontologistic; some, that it is both ontological and ontologistic together. Certain non-scholastics and the Ontologists themselves,[3] of course, accept the argument as ontologistic and yet valid. The opinions of a few scholastic authors may well be reviewed.

In the forefront of those who oppose the argument is Descoqs. He does not quitewant to call St. Augustine an Ontologist, at least in the Doctor's use of this argument; but he insinuates all along that the argument is surely ontological and probably ontologistic. In regard to the former point, he agrees with the observation of Gilson that the proof prepares, because it formally implies, the ontological argument of St. Anselm.[4] He says:

> C'est aussi bien la pensée qui a inspiré toute notre critique de cette preuve par

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2 Descoqs, Praelectiones, I, 609.
3 As Leibniz in his Nouveaux Essais sur l'Entendement Humain, IV, 11; and Malebranche in Recherche de la Vérité, III, 7, 2.
4 Gilson, Introduction, 28.

> les idées éternelles: qu'on le veuille ou non, l'argument implique le procédé anselmien, il se ramène en définitive et fatalement à l'argument ontologique.[5]

Concerning the question of whether the proof is ontologistic, he is not so certain. He admits that it is a valid proof for one who holds the Platonic ideas and illumination, but doubts that it otherwise has any force at all. Although he does not settle the question, he does express concern that St. Augustine used such expressions as: "Deus lux est in qua omnia cognoscimus," and "...in ipsa, quae supra mentem est, incommutabili veritate omnia cognoscimus." While leaving the question to others for settlement, Descoqs indicates that he believes that the proof is ontologistic as well as ontological.[6]

Loinaz also opposes the argument on the grounds of principium petit, inasmuch as the eternal existence of the truths appealed to can only be granted if it is already known that God exists.

> Sane omnis veritas, omnis possibilitas fundari debet in Deo exsistente; sine quo proin neutrum dari poterit. Extra hanc hypothesim nec verum nec falsum aderit, sed absolutum nihil. Brevi: Maior argumenti aprioristice, si Deus non

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5 Descoqs, Praelectiones, II, 132.
6 Ibid.

> supponatur, falsa est. Hinc Deus demonstretur ex exsistentibus; quod sufficit.[7]

Mercier notes that, given the possibles, the relations which govern them and the truth of these relations are independent of time and space. However, the possibles are not given, unless it is already supposed that God exists and knows them. He summarizes his criticism of the argument:

> En résumé, aucune essence possible n'est nécessaire en elle-même absolument. La seule chose nécessaire, c'est que, posé l'existence soit dans la nature, soit dans la pensée humaine, d'une essence donnée, il se produise entre les éléments qui la constituent, des rapports nécessaires de compatibilité et d'incompatibilité: bref, la nécessité des possibles est une nécessité conditionelle de rapports.[8]

He then concludes that the theory according to which God would be the sufficient reason of the possibles and of their properties "aboutit logiquement à l'ontologisme."[9]

De Mondadon flatly denies that the argument of St. Augustine has anything in common with the arguments of St. Anselm[10] and Descartes, or with the ideological argument of

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7 Loinaz, Praelectiones e Theologia Naturali, 82.
8 Mercier, Métaphysique Générale, 44.
9 Ibid., 49.
10 In this de Mondadon directly sets himself against J. Martin, who maintained that the Augustinian argument was a prelude to the Anselmian. Cf. J. Martin, Saint Augustin, Librairie Felix Alcan, Paris, 1923, 99-109.

Bossuet and Leibniz. He says that those are mistaken (as Malebranche and Leibniz) who would find in St. Augustine texts to prove their own ontologistic doctrine. However, he adds a wise observation:

> Nous pouvons, cependant, reprocher à saint Augustin de n'avoir pas assez distingué au net les divers aspects de la vérité extramentale, accord objectif de la pensée avec son terme, fondements concrets des représentations abstraites, exemplaire éternel des êtres, cause première des actes intellectuels. De là ses apparentes concessions à l'ontologisme. Platonicien, intuitif et orateur, il n'a pas assez surveillé, pas assez controlé son raisonnement; il court d'un élan fougueux, on ne le suit plus et on fait fausse route.[11]

Although Descoqs tries to find an ally in Gilson, it does not appear that the latter would go so far as the former. For Gilson finds that the proof is complete, being based upon the principle of sufficient reason. Moreover, he clearly denies that it is ontologistic.

> Mais il apparaît de même coup qu'en découvrant ainsi la transcendance de la vérité, c'est l'existence de Dieu que la pensée découvre, puisque ce qu'elle apercoit au-dessus de l'homme, c'est de l'éternel, de l'immuable, et du nécessaire, c'est-à-dire une réalité qui possède tous les attributs de Dieu lui-même. Non pas, sans doute, qu'en voyant la vérité dans sa propre pensée, l'âme voie l'essence même de Dieu. Elle n'atteint pas alors le terme dont la

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11 De Mondadon, "De la Connaissance de Soi-même à la Connaissance de Dieu," 156.

> possession lui conférerait la béatitude, mais elle voit du moins quel terme il lui reste à atteindre pour jouir de cette béatitude et entrer dans son repos.[12]

On the other hand, he admits that the proof leads to the metaphysical speculation of St. Anselm, but qualifies this statement.

> C'est pourquoi, de même qu'elle prépare sous son premier aspect le symbolisme médiéval du monde sensible, envisagée sous ce deuxième aspect, elle ouvre la voie aux spéculations métaphysiques d'un saint Anselme, qui cherchent à découvrir l'existence de Dieu dans l'idée même que nous avons de lui. Non qu'il ait developpé cette preuve, mais saint Augustin n'en avait pas moins certainement engagé la recherche dans une direction qui conduisait normalement à la preuve de Proslogion.[13]

It is Boyer who defends the argument most often and most at length. First he points out that the larger number of authors do not find in St. Augustine the teaching of an immediate vision of God in our natural knowledge.[14] He goes on to say that the two questions are always distinct; hence he

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12 Gilson, Introduction, 21-22. Furthermore, he states on page 113: "Ainsi donc, de quelque point de vue qu'on la considère, l'illumination augustinienne ne saurait être interprétée comme une intuition du contenu des idées de Dieu."

13 Ibid., 28.

14 Boyer, Essais, 50: "Le plus grand nombre des auteurs se refusent à trouver dans saint Augustin l'enseignement d'une vision immédiate de Dieu dans la connaissance naturelle."

considers the proof apart from the question of ontologism. Nor can anyone correctly argue, he says, (as some,[15] relying on the famous passage in the Confessiones,[16] have done) that Augustine taught two kinds of knowledge of God: one direct and immediate, the other mediate in the mirror of the human soul.

> Il n'y a donc d'objet immédiat pour notre esprit que des objets créés. Le plus parfait de ces objets, celui qui nous aide le mieux à connaître Dieu, c'est l'âme humaine dans l'acte de la charité.[17]

Again in the schematic presentation of the proof, which he gives in his book L'Idée de Vérité dans la Philosophie de Saint Augustin, Boyer endeavors to show that the proof is not ontological. His whole strenuous defense of it is intended to prove its validity. He also denies that the argument is ontologistic, concluding with these words:

> C'est donc, croyons-nous, s'égarer que de voir dans la preuve de Dieu, chez saint Augustin, l'exposé, soit du système de la vision en Dieu, comme l'a fait Malebranche, soit de l'intuition immédiate de Dieu, telle que l'ont comprise les ontologistes du dernier siècle.[18]

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15 Boyer himself names Ambrosius Victor, Malebranche, and Hessen.

16 Confessiones, VII, 10, 16; PL 32, 742: "Intravi, et vidi qualicumque oculo animae meae, supra eundem oculum animae meae supra mentem meam, lucem incommutabilem..."

17 Boyer, Essais, 90.

18 Boyer, L'Idée, 70-71.

Along with these defenders of St. Augustine's proof may be named Hontheim, who in his Institutiones Theodicaeae gives a long defense,[19] Bossuet,[20] Fenelon,[21] Leibniz,[22] Kleutgen,[23] Sertillanges,[24] Garrigou-Lagrange,[25] and others. They are listed here that we may see how great is the controversy on this matter.

In giving my own opinion on this difficult question, I should like to call attention to the distinction made in the introductory remarks of this chapter. The proof may be ontological (that is, involve an illegitimate jump from the ideal to the real order) without being ontologistic (that is, without implying a direct vision of God). For it seems to me that the proof is ontological objectively, and yet not ontologistic.

To take up the latter problem first, it seems well to remark with de Mondadon that St. Augustine was not always careful to guard his remarks in such a way as to prevent

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19 Joseph Hontheim, S.J., Institutiones Theodicaeae, Herder, Friburg, 1893, 128-139. So on 132: "Neque tamen cum quibusdam exsistimandum est ex mente S. Augustini ipsum Deum esse objectum, quod intelligentia nostra directe contemplatur, quando vera pronuntiat."

20 Connaissance de Dieu et de Soi-même, IV, 5.

21 Traité de l'Existence de Dieu, I, 2, 50; II, 3, 49.

22 Nouveaux Essais sur l'Entendement Humain, IV, 11.

23 Philosophie Scholastique, IV, II, 4.

24 "L'Idée de Dieu et la Vérité," in Revue Thomiste, sept., 1940.

25 Dieu, 296-302.

misunderstanding. We may cite two outstanding examples which taken together surely allow misinterpretation. Augustine says that he sees the unchangeable light above his intellect, and again identifies this light with God. In the Confessiones, he writes: "Intravi, et vidi qualicumque oculo animae meae supra eundem oculum animae meae supra mentem meam, lucem incommutabilem."[26] And in the De Vera Religione: "Nec jam illud ambigendum est, incommutabilem naturam, quae supra rationalem animam sit, Deum esse."[27] That this is dangerous language may be granted; that it is a proof that the argument is ontologistic need not be granted.

The first fact to be considered is this: St. Augustine regularly calls for faith in God's existence, even when he is about to prove the same point by reason. In the De Vera Religione, the sections leading up to the proof discuss what faith has to tell us about the existence and nature of God. In the De Libero Arbitrio, at the outset he asks: "Illud saltem tibi certum est, Deum esse"; and Evodius replies: "Etiam hoc non contemplando, sed credendo inconcussum teneo."[28] But it is at once evident that, where there is faith, there is no room for an immediate vision of God, which would exclude faith.

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26 Confessiones, VII, 10, 16; PL 32, 742.
27 De Vera Religione, 31, 57; PL 34, 147.
28 De Libero Arbitrio, II, 2, 5; PL 32, 1242.

Ontologists such as Malebranche may have faith in revelation and mysteries, but they cannot logically have faith in the existence of God. It is faith in precisely this fact which Augustine demands at the outset of his argument. Moreover, the question of the respective positions of faith and reason is so prominent in St. Augustine that it can hardly be argued that he would be unaware of the inconsistency of demanding faith in the existence of that which we intuit. Therefore, in his very demand for faith the great Doctor shows how far opposed he is to ontologism.

Secondly, the principle on which the philosophical proof is based is, as we have endeavored to prove, the principle of sufficient reason. It is granted that in pious and rhetorical passages St. Augustine does not speak with philosophical precision, and so may seem to hold a direct intuition of God. Nevertheless, in the discussion in the De Libero Arbitrio, he argues by psychological method to those truths of which God is the sole sufficient reason. He does not argue: "We have a direct vision of God; therefore we know that He exists." His laborious process rather excludes this direct vision. The argumentation is not to the psychological "fact" that we directly intuit God. It is rather to the fact that we recognize above our minds eternal and immutable truths; the changeable mind cannot be the explanation of these truths; therefore, God

must exist as the only reason sufficient to explain their existence. Again, then, we must conclude that the argument is not ontologistic.

Finally, St. Augustine in the De Trinitate endeavors to explain St. Paul's words: "We see now through a glass in a dark manner: but then face to face."[29] He realizes that the true explanation can only be that God is seen, not directly, but in something which "reflects" Him. He seeks those things which may provide the best reflection.

> Quale sit et quod sit hoc speculum, si quaeramus, profecto illud occurrit, quod in speculo nisi imago cernitur. Hoc ergo facere conati sumus, ut per imaginem hanc quod nos sumus, videremus utcumque a quo facti sumus, tamquam per speculum.[30]

This is the reason why it may be said that Augustine, while employing elements of the classical proofs for God's existence, really considered them all part of his one proof. He is seeking the mirror in which he may see God. Working from sensible creatures, he arrives at God by means of the argument from causality, by means of the order in the universe, etc. But the mirror in which he best sees God is the human soul itself. As Boyer summarizes it,

> Il n'y a donc d'objet immédiat pour notre

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29 I Corinthians, 13/12.
30 De Trinitate, XV, 8, 14; PL 42, 1067.

> esprit que des objets créés. Le plus parfait de ces objets, celui qui nous aide le mieux à connaître Dieu, c'est l'âme humaine dans l'acte de la charité.[31]

It has been shown that this is the route which St. Augustine follows in the argument as we have presented it from his works. However, such a route--long and slow and tedious--is entirely unnecessary if one has an immediate vision of God. The words of St. Paul, moreover, are not explained if we see "face to face" here below, even though in a less perfect manner than we shall see God in heaven. Again, it appears that we must come to the same conclusion; namely, that the argument is not ontologistic.

There remains, however, the other question of whether or not the proof is ontological. We have noted the divergence of opinion in this matter. I have stated that, in my opinion, the proof <u>is</u> ontological. It is time now to give the reasons for that opinion.

In the course of his argument, St. Augustine proceeds from inanimate creatures, to brutes, to rational beings. He shows that the highest thing in man is his reason. He proves that, above reason, there exist eternal and immutable truths. These truths, he says, are above reason because reason realizes that

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31 Boyer, <u>Essais</u>, 90.

it does not judge them, but judges according to them; and because the mutable intellect cannot produce or explain immutable truth. He concludes that God exists. We have shown that this conclusion must rest on the fact that God alone is the sufficient reason to explain the existence of these truths. It seems to me that this procedure involves a leap from the logical order to the real.[32]

For whence come these truths, with their characteristics of universality, eternity, and immutability? How can it be said that they exist above our intellects? If these truths are taken materially, as abstracted from the real order by the intellect, they do not require the existence of God as their

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32 In Augustine's own system this is not necessarily true. If he did not hold abstraction in the Thomistic sense, the proof would not be ontological for him. This point is taken up later. For the present, cf. Thonnard, Précis d'Histoire de la Philosophie, 214-215: "Mais ce passage obligatoire par notre esprit suscite une objection contre la valeur de la démonstration augustinienne: en s'appuyant sur le caractère de nos idées, n'est-elle pas un passage illégitime du logique au réel?...mais saint Augustin échappe à l'objection, car il ne se base aucunement sur nos idées abstraites, ignorant totalement l'abstraction. Les vérités éternelles expriment pour lui le fait de notre vie intellectuelle saisi par l'intuition de la conscience, avec toutes ses richesses d'être, résumant pour ainsi dire et concentrant en soi la réalité des degrés inférieurs qu'elle juge et regle. Le passage illégitime du logique au réel est donc bien évité et la preuve augustinienne, sans être parfaitement réductible aux cadres thomistes, garde sa pleine valeur de démonstration rationnelle." Although not wholly agreeing with this reasoning, we think it worthy of note here.

sufficient reason. For, given the abstractive power of the intellect, given the essences of finite things which actually are particular, temporal, mutable, and contingent, one can abstract from individuating notes and from real existence. Then these essences are, in their ideal esse, universal, eternal, immutable, and necessary. But they do not require the eternal and immutable God as the sufficient reason for their existence. It is true, as Descoqs points out and as certain defenders of the argument attempt to do, that the proof may be reduced to the argument from contingency (if these truths are taken as contingent essences abstracted from contingent existing beings), or to the argument from the grades of being (if these truths are taken in themselves as determined, finite realities). So reduced it is a valid argument. However, it seems that St. Augustine himself does not argue in this way.

On the other hand, if these truths are taken formally--that is, only in the ideal and intelligible order--and if the argument is taken as complete in itself, there seems to be an illegitimate transfer from the ideal to the real order. For these truths necessarily imply a relation to some mind, either human or divine. But since, by hypothesis, it is not yet certain that God exists, then such truths imply a relation only to the human intellect and have their sufficient reason in our intellect and in things. If they exist from eternity, then

there must be a mind knowing them from eternity. But the eternity of these truths is acquired only by the abstraction made from really existing things by the human mind, under the supposition that we do not yet know whether or not God exists. Hence, if one concludes from this truth, as abstracted by the human intellect and therefore in the ideal order only, to the real existence of God, one falls into the ontological error. This the argument, if taken in itself, seems to do. And it has been demonstrated elsewhere that the argument should be taken as complete in itself.

It might be added that, granted the existence of God proved in some other way, the argument can be used to demonstrate that eternal truths have only in God the sufficient reason for their existence. However, it is precisely this supposition which one arguing to the existence of God cannot make.

For the conclusion of this section, a short summary is in order. It has been shown that there has been controversy on two points concerning this proof. Some have held that the argument is ontologistic, that St. Augustine must have taught that we have a direct vision of God. They have adduced texts to prove this point. In reply, we have endeavored to show that Augustine's thought is not ontologistic, although his words are somewhat careless at times. Specifically, we have

tried to prove that this proof is not ontologistic.

Secondly, some authors defend the validity of the proof, while others say that, if taken as a separate proof, it is an ontological argument. After giving several opinions on both sides, we attempted to demonstrate that the proof is ontological. It follows, of course, that the proof is--again in my opinion--invalid.[33]

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33 Cf. Palumbo, Theodicea, 213-222. The author gives an admirable summary of the proof, the position and reasons of both those who defend the argument and those who oppose it. I have drawn on him heavily for the last part of this section.

CHAPTER VI

DEPENDENCE ON THE DOCTRINE OF ILLUMINATION

Having concluded our discussion of the validity of St. Augustine's argument, we might perhaps logically proceed at once to some remarks on the spirit animating it. However, there is another question so closely connected with this proof that we cannot overlook it. Does the proof depend on the Augustinian doctrine of illumination? Are the two distinct? These are the questions which underlie the discussion in this chapter.

Briefly, the doctrine of illumination which St. Augustine proposed is this: in order to know anything, our human intellect must receive a mysterious influence from God, an illumination of some sort, in the light of which it knows the truth. Time and again Augustine explains the origin of our ideas and our intellectual knowledge in this way. After he had rejected the Neoplatonic theory of reminiscence, he developed this theory of his own, often using metaphors to bring out his meaning. God is the sun of the soul,[1] its interior master,[2] the light in which

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1 Soliloquiorum Libri Duo, I, 8, 15; PL 32, 877: "Ergo et illa quae in disciplinis traduntur, quae quisquis intelligit, verissima esse nulla dubitatione concedit, credendum est ea

we see all things.[3] In the De Civitate Dei, the Word is called the light of the soul, even for the acquisition of natural knowledge, which Augustine is there discussing.[4]

Now it must be admitted that this doctrine is interpreted in several different ways. Complete discussion of the doctrine lies outside the scope of this paper. However, some of the interpretations will be presented. A brief refutation will be made of some; the reasons for adopting the interpretation followed will be stated.

First, there is the pantheistic interpretation, which would make St. Augustine an Averroist. According to this

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non posse intelligi, nisi ab alio quasi sole illustrentur."

2 De Magistro, 12, 40; PL 32, 1217: "Cum vero de iis agitur quae mente conspicimus, id est intellectu atque ratione, ea quidem loquimur quae praesentia contuemur in illa interiore luce veritatis, qua ipse qui dicitur homo interior, illustratur et furitur: sed tunc quoque noster auditor, si et ipse illa secreto ac simplici oculo videt; novit quod dico sua contemplatione, non verbis meis. Ergo ne hunc quidem doceo vera dicens, vera intuentem, docetur enim non verbis meis, sed ipsis rebus, Deo intus pandente, manifestis."

3 De Genesi ad Litteram, XII, 31, 59; PL 34, 479: "Aliud autem est ipsum lumen quo illustratur anima ut omnia vel in se vel in illo veraciter intellecta conspiciat."

4 De Civitate Dei, X, 2; PL 41, 279: "In qua differentia satis ostenditur, animam rationalem vel intellectualem, qualis erat in Joanne, sibi lumen esse non posse, sed alterius veri luminis participatione lucere. Hoc et ipse Joannes fatetur, ubi ei perhibens testimonium dicit: 'Nos omnes de plenitudine ejus accepimus.'" This is given as a comment on the opening verses of the Gospel according to St. John.

interpretation, God, as universal intellect, would see the truth in us and we in Him. Since Augustine rejects eternal creation (as in the De Civitate Dei)[5] and yet holds creation ex nihilo (as in the De Vera Religione),[6] a pantheistic explanation of his system is impossible.

Malebranche, Fenelon, and Bossuet, among others, have put an ontologistic interpretation on the doctrine of illumination.[7] They say that Augustine taught that our soul sees God Himself and in Him the divine ideas. However, as we have already shown in the previous chapter, St. Augustine clearly rejected any direct vision of God. The very metaphors he used in exposing his system indicate, not that it is God Himself Who is seen, but rather that other things are known because of some influence of God on the human soul. Portalié sums up the case against a position which we shall not again refute at length:

> D'après saint Augustin, Dieu soleil de l'âme, n'apparaît jamais comme un objet que nous voyons, mais comme un agent qui produit en notre âme ce par quoi nous pouvons connaître.[8]

A third interpretation is offered by the scholastic

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5 De Civitate Dei, X, 31; PL 41, 311-312; and XI, 6, PL 41, 322: "Cum tempore autem factus est mundus."

6 De Vera Religione, 18, 35, PL 34, 137: "Unde fecit? Ex nihilo."

7 Places cited in previous chapter.

8 Portalié, "Saint Augustin," DTC, I, 2335. In this section we have borrowed much from this excellent article.

school, proposed by such men as Zigliari, Franzelin, and Lepidi.[9] According to them, God is the light of the intellect inasmuch as He is its creative cause and the source and exemplar of all truth. This interpretation of St. Augustine seems insufficient. In the first place, although the Bishop of Hippo would certainly accept the two statements, he said more than they say. He was striving constantly for an explanation of the problem of knowledge. Merely to maintain that God created the human intellect and that He is the source of truth, does not solve this problem. How does the human mind arrive at the truth? That is what he wanted to explain. And he introduced his doctrine of illumination precisely in order to provide the answer to this further question. The texts already cited--and this is the second point--indicate that God, in addition to creating our intellect, must continually illuminate it that it may know the truth. Hence, if we may believe that St. Augustine offered any solution to the problem of knowledge, it seems that

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9 Zigliari in Della Luce Intellectuale, I, 11-13; Franzelin in De Deo Uno, 140-148; Lepidi in De Ontologismo, 192-225. Boyer in his Essais admits that Augustine and Aristotle follow different routes, but maintains that, after all, they are not so very far apart in the end result. So p. 163: "Vraiment quelque diverses qu'aient été les voies parcourues, la différence au point d'arrivée est minime, s'il y en a une..." Cf. the whole chapter on "Saint Thomas et Saint Augustin." Descoqs' criticism of Boyer for attempting to reconcile St. Augustine and St. Thomas in this matter (Praelectiones, I, 557-559), while perhaps harsh, seems to me to be sound.

we must reject this interpretation as inadequate.

A final interpretation is offered here. It is that of Portalié and the one followed in this discussion. It maintains that the action of God in our intellectual knowledge does not consist in His showing Himself to us, but in producing in our minds an image of the truth.

> On peut la formuler ainsi: Notre âme ne peut atteindre à la vérité intellectuelle, sans une influence mystérieuse de Dieu, ne consistant point à se montrer lui-même à nous (objective), mais à produire (effective) Dans notre âme comme une image de ces vérités qui détermine notre connaissance. En langage scolastique, le rôle que les aristotéliciens attribuent à l'intellect agent qui produit les species impressae, ce système l'attribue à Dieu: Lui, le maître, il parlerait à l'âme, en ce sens qu'il imprimerait cette représentation des vérités éternelles qui serait la cause de notre connaissance. Les idées ne seraient pas innées comme dans les anges, mais successivement produites dans l'âme qui les connaîtrait en elle-même.[10]

Does this proof for the existence of God have an essential dependence on St. Augustine's theory of illumination as interpreted above? Descoqs seems to maintain such an essential dependence. For, in his sketch of the proof, he explains that St. Augustine argued directly from the illumination of the soul by God to the existence of God.

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10 Portalié, "Saint Augustin," DTC, I, 2336.

> Cette rapidité avec laquelle S. Augustin expose l'essentiel de sa preuve, montre qu'il la tient pour évidente: et d'ailleurs est-ce bien une preuve, si par ce mot on entend une déduction logique qui nous conduit à la certitude? Si la pensée humaine est sans cesse sous l'action de la lumière divine, comme le suppose S. Augustin, et si, sans elle, elle ne peut rien connaître, tout homme, par le fait même qu'il mène une vie raisonnable, est en contact étroit avec Dieu, il en a déjà une connaissance implicite. Il lui suffira donc de réfléchir sur lui-même, sur son activité intellectuelle, pour prendre aussitôt conscience de sa dependance à l'égard de la Vérité divine et donc de l'existence de cette Vérité sans laquelle il ne pourrait même pas penser. Ainsi l'existence de Dieu nous est plutôt livrée par une analyse pscyhologique que par un véritable raisonnement.[11]

Gilson agrees that the two--this proof and illumination--are essentially connected in St. Augustine. He gives his reason:

> Il est d'abord évident par ce qui précède [an outline of the proof] que l'on ne saurait distinguer chez saint Augustin le problème de l'existence de Dieu du problème de la connaissance; c'est une seule et même question de savoir comment nous concevons la vérité et de connaître l'existence de la Vérité, aussi la preuve s'accomplit-elle toute entière à l'intérieur de la pensée, sans que la considération de l'ordre sensible doive obligatoirement intervenir.[12]

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11 Descoqs, Praelectiones, II, 131.
12 Gilson, Introduction, 23-24.

While not stating his opinion precisely about this proof, Portalié, seems to come to the same conclusion. For he says that the question of illumination is of the first importance in St. Augustine, "especially because of the role which this theory plays in the augustinian system: it is not an isolated problem, it is a part, an aspect, of the great general problem of our dependence upon God."[13] In other words, he would favor the opinion upholding the essential connection of the two questions.

Boyer, on the other hand, maintains that the two are distinct. In his consideration of the proof, he deliberately separates the one question from the other, observing that, although one may cast light on the other, they should be treated separately.

> Afin de décrire avec exactitude la manière dont saint Augustin a prouvé Dieu, il faut dégager constamment cette question de plusieurs autres qui l'accompagnent d'ordinaire dans les textes. Etablir que Dieu est, ce n'est pas expliquer comment nous connaissons Dieu, ni comment il agit sur notre intelligence, ni quel rapport il soutient avec les autres êtres, ni même comment il est. Les théories de la vision de Dieu, de l'illumination, de la participation, de l'essence divine, se rencontrent souvent, soit toutes ensemble

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13 Portalié, "Saint Augustin," DTC, I, 2334: "...surtout à cause du rôle que joue cette théorie dans le système augustinien: ce n'est pas un problème isolé, c'est une partie, un aspect du grand problème général de notre dépendance de Dieu."

> soit l'une ou l'autre d'entre elles, dans la même page que la preuve de l'existence de Dieu. Parce qu'elles sont connexes, on est tenté de les confondre. Sans doute, elles s'éclairent l'une l'autre, mais seulement quand chacune a été rendue lumineuse pour sa part. Sinon, la synthèse est trouble, et le système encombré de difficultés.[14]

This sampling of opinions should indicate that this point too is as much controverted as are the other questions concerned with this proof. But what conclusions may be drawn from the argument itself?

In the first place, it should be noted that St. Augustine himself does not explicitly introduce his theory of illumination into the argument. He begins the proof in the De Libero Arbitrio by demonstrating that the human mind is capable of knowing truth.

> Quare prius abs te quaero, ut de manifestissimis capiamus exordium; utrum tu ipse sis. An tu fortasse metuis, ne in hac interrogatione fallaris, cum utique si non esses, falli omnino non posses?[15]

But note that he makes no appeal to the doctrine of illumination to establish this fact. Again, he arrives at the point where

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14 Boyer, L'Idée, 49. Cf. also Essais, 51-53: "Comme toutefois les deux questions sont de soi distinctes, nous ne considérerons directement dans ces pages que la preuve de Dieu, et nous négligerons les controverses qui portent d'emblée sur l'illumination."

15 De Libero Arbitrio, II, 3, 7; PL 32, 1243.

the mind recognizes eternal truth above itself. How does the mind get at this truth? Augustine does not answer the question here. He states it as a fact of psychological experience: "It is sufficiently clear that above our mind there is a law which is called truth."[16] Nor in any other place in his proof does he explicitly advance his answer to the problem of knowledge.

However, it should be noted that, in the second place, St. Augustine must have used his doctrine implicitly; that is, he presumed its validity throughout his proof. As Portalié says, illumination is not an isolated doctrine; it runs through all the speculations of the great Doctor. A priori, we might say that he would not abandon it in this particular demonstration. Of course, he could not mention it explicitly, because to say that God illumines our intellect is to presume what is to be proved; namely, that God exists. However, when we examine the proof, we see that Augustine chose to proceed by way of the mind, first demonstrating briefly the ability of the mind to know truth. He is not concerned here to explain how the mind gets at the truth; but it seems certain that, if questioned, he would give the answer he so often gave elsewhere--his doctrine of illumination. Since the whole proof proceeds through the mind to get at something above the mind,

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16 De Vera Religione, 30, 56; PL 34, 147.

since this something above the mind is truth, since the mind knows this truth--since all this is so, it seems clear a posteriori that St. Augustine implicitly employed his illumination theory even in the proof for the existence of God.

It must be admitted, nevertheless, that even this implicit use of the theory does not as yet prove any essential dependence of the proof upon it. Whether there is such an essential connection is a further question.

But first let us make one point clear. Descoqs implies that St. Augustine argued from his theory of illumination to the existence of God. According to Descoqs, Augustine says that every man has an implicit knowledge of God; by reflection on his own intellectual activity he learns of his dependence upon the divine truth and then of the existence of this truth without which he would not even be able to think. Why do we know truth and justice? Because the divine truth and justice illumine us.[17] In this way Descoqs seems to argue that Augustine used his very doctrine of illumination to prove the existence of God. Whether or not this is really the sense of Descoqs' words, the fact clearly stands that such a procedure would be invalid. It would be a vicious circle to advance a

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17 Descoqs, Praelectiones, II, 131: "Comment discerner ce qui est juste de ce qui ne l'est pas, si la justice infinie ne nous éclaire?"

theory of knowledge which implies the existence of God, and then to demonstrate the existence of God by means of this theory. However, there is no evidence that St. Augustine proceeds in this way. He first establishes the ability of the mind to grasp truth, independently of any theory as to how the mind grasps it. Then, again independently of any theory, he appeals to the fact that the mind recognizes immutable truth above itself. Finally, he shows that God must exist if this truth exists. In the whole procedure, be it noted, he argues to and from facts, but not from his theory of illumination.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that there is, in Augustine's mind and method, an essential connection of this proof for the existence of God and the solution of the problem of knowledge by illumination. It was pointed out in the previous chapter that this proof is ontological if taken as a separate argument. Whereas Augustine argues from the existence of immutable and eternal truth to the existence of God as--so we think--the sufficient reason for this truth; in a Thomistic explanation the theory of abstraction would account for the immutability, eternity, and universality of truth, given sensible things and the abstractive power of the mind. For it was noted that, if one argued from the existence of truth as abstracted by the mind and so in the ideal order, to the real existence of God, then one would fall into the ontological error. It appeared

that, objectively, Augustine had fallen into this error. However, his method seems to indicate that he did not wish to take this truth as abstracted, and yet regarded his proof as complete in itself. If in his solution to the problem of knowledge there is no abstractive process by which truths in the ideal order would be universal and immutable; if the only explanation is that these truths must have God as the sufficient reason for their universality and immutability; in that hypothesis the argument would be valid. Therefore, if St. Augustine assumed in his proof the validity of his illumination theory, a theory in which there would be no abstraction in the Thomistic sense;[18] then for him the argument would be valid. No other explanation than this latter (barring simple error on Augustine's part) seems adequate. Consequently, both to his mind and in fact the proof has an essential dependence on the doctrine of illumination.[19]

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18 Boyer, Essais, ch. 5 and 6, attempts to show that Augustine actually did hold abstraction in the Thomistic sense, or at least that this is not incompatible with his doctrine. Descoqs remarks: "...la thèse du P. Boyer sur le thomisme de S. Augustin et le possibilité de ramener sa théorie de la connaissance à l'abstraction aristotélico-thomiste, est de plus en plus battue en brèche." (Praelectiones, I, 559.)

19 Descoqs, Praelectiones, II, 132-133: "Pour qui adopte la métaphysique platonicienne du monde des intelligibles et des idées, ou pour qui admet déjà Dieu et l'illumination du Verbe, une telle manière de voir vaut sans doute; mais pour qui n'admet pas cette métaphysique des idées, ou ne tient pas encore Dieu, il est bien évident que la preuve qui s'y appuie n'a plus la même force, si même elle en conserve aucune."

Before concluding this chapter, it might be well to remark with Portalié that St. Augustine's doctrine of illumination is still a free theological opinion, which may be used to solve the problem of knowledge. St. Thomas treated it with respect. Suarez commented that in so obscure a matter liberty remains for the theologian. Illustrious men, particularly of the school of St. Bonaventure, have defended it. Although it does not seem even probable philosophically today, it has had considerable historical importance.

In summary, these points may be set down. The theory of illumination has been variously interpreted. The interpretation here followed is that which explains God's influence in intellectual knowledge as the production of an image of the truth in the human mind. Although the question of the essential connection of this proof with the doctrine of illumination is controverted, this conclusion seems valid from a study of the proof itself: St. Augustine does not argue <u>from</u> his theory to the existence of God, but in his method there is an essential connection between the two.

CHAPTER VII

THE SPIRIT OF THE PROOF

Although the logical steps and principles of St. Augustine's proof have been sufficiently analyzed, there remain to be discussed certain characteristics or features of this proof which indicate the spirit in which it was conceived and set down.

One characteristic stroke of St. Augustine's pen is the discursive nature of the argument. In the first chapter a complete account of the proof and the parts of the De Libero Arbitrio preceding it was set down. There were seen all the nuances, the short halts, the rhetorical flourishes, in which St. Augustine seemed to take delight. There is the step-by-step procedure from inanimate things all the way up to the intellectual soul and above. There is the slow build-up, beginning with a demand for faith in God's existence and a demonstration of the ability of the mind to attain truth.[1] There is the questioning method and a concretizing of the problem, the effective practical method of the apologist. There is the pause

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1 De Libero Arbitrio, II, 2-3, 5-7; PL 32, 1242-1244.

to praise Wisdom and to urge Evodius to embrace it--and this in flowing rhetoric.[2] There is all the sinuousness of a majestic river flowing to its outlet. In fact, the whole proof is inserted into a discussion of free will and the origin of evil. Not for Augustine the short, sharp strokes of the scholastic syllogism, not even in this work where he deliberately sets himself to demonstrate by reason the existence of God. De Mondadon gives a good description of this method:

> Soit qu'il la développe en un dialogue avec son ami Evodius...à travers l'entrecroisement des réflexions, soit qu'il la resserre... en quelques phrases d'une brièveté musculeuse et comme frémissante, jamais il ne manque d'y mettre une richesse de nuances que ne laisserait point soupçonner le lucide raccourci de la forme scolastique.[3]

Moreover, in presentations of the proof in other works, St. Augustine becomes even more rhetorical. In the Confessiones,[4] which we will have occasion to quote below, in sermons and discourses, or in the De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII,[5] he demonstrates that style which is the wonder and despair of those who read him. For example:

> Omne quod est, aut eodem modo semper est, aut non. Et omnis anima omni corpore melior est. Melius est enim omne quod

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2 Ibid., II, 13-14, 35-38; PL 32, 1260-1262.
3 De Mondadon, "De la Connaissance de Soi-même de la Connaissance de Dieu," 148.
4 Confessiones, VII, 10, 16; PL 32, 742.
5 De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII, q. 45; PL 40, 28-29; and q. 54; PL 40, 38.

> vivificat, quam id quod vivificatur: corpus autem ab anima vivificari, non a corpore animam nemo ambigit. Quod autem corpus non est, et tamen aliquid est, aut anima est, aut ea melius aliquid. Deterius enim omni corpore nihil est: quia et si materiam quis dixerit, unde ipsum corpus fit; recte, quoniam caret omni specie, nihil dicitur... Si quid enim esset medium, aut vivificaretur ab anima, aut vivificaret animam, aut neutrum: aut vivificaret corpus aut vivificaretur a corpore aut neutrum.[6]

Perhaps even more characteristic of St. Augustine's method is the psychological approach here employed. The proof begins with a demonstration of the mind's capacity for truth. The progress is ever upwards toward the soul. Then comes an analysis of the psychological fact: the mind recognizes above itself the immutable law of Truth. So studiously does he employ the method in this proof--as should be clear from the account given--that both J. Martin and Descoqs, to name two, maintain that the argument is rather an analysis of our implicit knowledge of God than a proper demonstration. Influenced perhaps by his Neoplatonic background, Augustine always favored

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6 De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII, q.54; PL 40, 38.

7 J. Martin, Saint Augustin, 101: "Tout, pour saint Augustin, se ramène à ce point fondamental: l'intelligence humaine a primitivement une connaissance de Dieu, totale et très confuse...et, pour ne pas sortir du sujet, elle vérifie que, prouver l'existence de Dieu, c'est percevoir avec quelque clarté ce que l'on savait déjà, mais trop confusément." - Descoqs, Praelectiones, II, 131: "Ainsi l'existence de Dieu nous est plutôt livrée par une analyse psychologique que par un véritable raisonnement."

such an approach, an approach as modern as television. And in this sort of study he was a master. Portalié says of him:

> Dans l'étude de l'âme, Augustin est plus heureux que dans son angélologie trop pénétrée de néoplatonisme. Ici il semble vivre dans son domaine: un don exquis d'observation intérieure et d'analyse pénétrante lui permet de décrire avec une saisissante précision les phénomènes les plus délicats de notre vie intime.[8]

Some elements in the proof which rise from this background of Neoplatonism may be indicated. The most noticeable is the very principle which Augustine employed. He asked Evodius: "Are you willing to admit that God exists if I can prove to you that there exists something superior to the human intellect?"[9] Now this line of attack is directly out of Plotinus, as Augustine himself says in the De Civitate Dei.

> Dicit ergo ille magnus Platonicus, animam rationalem (sive potius intellectualis dicenda sit, ex quo genere etiam immortalium beatorumque animas esse intelligit, quos in coelestibus sedibus habitare non dubitat) non habere supra se naturam nisi Dei, qui fabricatus est mundum, a quo et ipsa facta est.[10]

Another indication of his philosophical background is

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8 Portalié, "Saint Augustin," DTC, I, 2356-2357.

9 De Libero Arbitrio, II, 6, 14; PL 32, 1248: "Quid si aliquid invenire potuerimus, quod non solum esse non dubites, sed etiam ipsa nostra ratione praestantius? dubitabisne illud quidquid est, Deum dicere?"

10 De Civitate Dei, X, 2; PL 41, 279-280.

found in his mode of advancing step by step through the various grades of being. He wishes to transcend the sensible order, but in the longest exposé of his proof he feels obliged to do so gradually. As Boyer and Descoqs remark, once he has traveled this route, he need not traverse all the steps again. However, when he follows the itinerary from start to finish in such a way that Evodius may follow him, he takes one step at a time to arrive at the truth above our intellect. This procedure through the "degrees of being" may also be called Platonic.

Again, the effort to pass from things to their ideas, from the sensible to the intelligible, is distinctive of St. Augustine. Gilson observes that his normal route is from the exterior world to the soul, and from the soul to God.[11] One reason for this is undoubtedly the prominence of ideas in Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy. Another reason is the fact that Augustine had at one time conceived of God in a material way, as the Confessiones abundantly testify. Now he wishes to prove the spirituality of God by placing him clearly above the intelligibles.[12] And it may be added that his concern to establish the mind's ability to grasp truth, at the very outset, grows out of his own Manichaean difficulties. For

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11 Gilson, Introduction, 24: "...alors même qu'elle part du monde extérieur, l'itinéraire normal d'une preuve augustinienne va donc du monde à l'âme et de l'âme à Dieu."

12 Cf. Thonnard's observation, given in Chapter IV, p. 57.

the Manichaeans denied that man can know anything with certainty. These more or less autobiographical marks, then, are also characteristic.

Something which he did not learn from his early philosophical training, but which he garnered from his own hard experience, is also evident in the proof. It is the insistence on faith, coming from belief in authority.

> We all remember the chapters of his Confessions, where Augustine relates how, after vainly trying to reach truth, and eventually faith, by means of reason alone, he had at last discovered that all the rational truth about God that had been taught by the philosophers could be grasped at once, pure of all errors, and enriched with many a more than philosophical truth by the simple act of faith of the most illiterate among the faithful. From that time on, Augustine was never to forget that the safest way to reach truth is not the one that starts from reason and then goes on from rational certitude to faith, but, on the contrary, the way whose starting point is faith and then goes on from revelation to reason.[13]

Having once learned this lesson, Augustine indeed never failed to draw profit from it. He demands faith in the existence of God before he seeks to prove that fact rationally

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13 Etienne Gilson, Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages, Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1938, 16.

in the De Libero Arbitrio.[14] The whole section which, in the De Vera Religione, precedes the proof is concerned with establishing the priority of faith on authority and the reasonableness of faith.[15] Only then does he attempt to prove by reason what he already knows by faith. Both the effort to bring in reason to support faith and the clearly defined subordination of reason to faith are typical of the great African Bishop.

To this list, which is not intended to be exhaustive, two other distinctive marks of the hand of Augustine may be added. The one is his affective method which culminates in the other, a great wonder at God Who may be enjoyed in mystical contemplation. The two may be treated together.

As Augustine led Evodius along the path toward God, he came upon Wisdom. Wisdom is a part of the proof. But for Augustine it is more than a logical step in an argument. It is something to be admired and praised and sought.

> At illa veritatis et sapientiae pulchritudo,
> tantum adsit perseverans voluntas fruendi,
> nec multitudine audientium constipata

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14 De Libero Arbitrio, II, 2, 6; PL 32, 1243: "...neque quisquam inveniendo Deo fit idoneus, nisi antea crediderit quod est postea cogniturus." Again, Ibid., II, 2, 5; PL 32, 1242: "A. Illud saltem tibi certum est, Deum esse. E. Etiam hoc non contemplando, sed credendo inconcussum teneo."

15 De Vera Religione, chapters 24-28; PL 34, 141-144.

> secludit venientes, nec peragitur tempore,
> nec migrat locis, nec nocte intercipitur,
> nec umbra intercluditur, nec sensibus
> corporis subjacet.[16]

And again he says: "Ecce tibi est ipsa veritas: amplectere illam si potes, et fruere illa, et delectare in Domino, et dabit tibi petitiones cordis tui."[17] Now, for Augustine, God is, above all, Truth. He has said it in the works of which we have given an account. He said it often, but nowhere more clearly than in the De Trinitate: "Ecce vide, si potes, o anima pergravata corpore quod corrumpitur, et onusta terrenis cogitationibus multis et variis; ecce vide, si potes; Deus Veritas est."[18]

When we realize this fact, we understand the Saint's insistence upon embracing the truth. This grasp of truth may be only that which is ordinarily permitted to men. It may amount to supernatural ecstasy. Boyer believes that the logical culmination of the argument was, for Augustine, a mystical vision of God.[19] Surely there are texts which bear out the opinion.

In the De Ordine, after proving the existence of God,

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16 De Libero Arbitrio, II, 14, 38; PL 32, 1262.
17 Ibid., II, 13, 35; PL 32, 1260.
18 De Trinitate, VIII, 2, 3; PL 42, 949.
19 Boyer, Essais, 77-96.

St. Augustine breaks out into ecstatic praise of Him.

> Cum autem se composuerit et ordinaverit, ac concinnam pulchramque reddiderit, audebit jam Deum videre, atque ipsum fontem unde manat omne verum, ipsumque Patrem Veritatis. Deus magne, qui erunt illi oculi ! Quam sani, quam decori, quam valentes, quam constantes, quam sereni, quam beati ! Quid autem est illud quod vident? quid, quaeso? Quid arbitremur, quid aestimemus, quid loquamur? Quotidiana verba occurrunt, et sordidata sunt omnia vilissimis rebus. Nihil amplius dicam, nisi promitti nobis aspectum pulchritudinis, cujus imitatione pulchra cujus comparatione foeda sunt caetera.[20]

And the famous passage in the Confessiones, already so often referred to and quoted, seems to corroborate the opinion that this last step is ecstasy.[21]

Furthermore, in the Confessiones and the De Trinitate, St. Augustine describes what might be a supernatural vision. It is brief and difficult to retain: "Ecce in ipso primo ictu quo velut corruscatione perstringeris, cum dicitur Veritas, mane, si potes. Sed non potes; relaberis in ista solita atque terrena."[22] It is granted to few, the clean of heart:

> Sed et priusquam videamus conspicere atque percipere Deum, sicut conspici et percipi potest, quod mundicordibus licet: Beati enim mundicordes, quia ipsi Deum videbunt; nisi per fidem diligatur, non poterit cor mundari

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20 De Ordine, II, 19, 61; PL 32, 1019.
21 Confessiones, VII, 10, 16; PL 32, 742.
22 De Trinitate, VIII, 2, 3; PL 42, 949.

quo ad eum videndum sit aptum et idoneum.[23]

Possibly it is supernatural ecstasy which is described in the Confessiones, where St. Augustine describes a special sort of vision.

> ...et venimus in mentes nostras et transcendimus eas, ut attingeremus regionem ubertatis indeficientis, ubi pascis Israel in aeternum veritatis pabulo, et ubi vita sapientia est, per quam fiunt omnia ista, et quae fuerunt, et quae futura sunt, et ipsa non fit, sed sic est ut fuit, et sic erit semper; quin potius fuisse et futurum esse non est in ea, sed esse solum, quoniam aeterna est; nam fuisse et futurum esse, non est aeternum. Et dum loquimur et inhiamus illi, attingimus eam modice toto ictu cordis.[24]

We are not concerned here, however, to prove that the argument for God's existence finds its culmination in ecstasy. It is enough to have shown that Augustine's method here, as in all his works, is affective, that it tends toward union with that which it seeks.

These features of the proof, then, are characteristic of St. Augustine's style, procedure, and way of thinking: the discursive nature of the argument, the rhetorical flourishes in style, the psychological approach to the problem, the

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23 Ibid., VIII, 4, 6; PL 42, 951.
24 Confessiones, IX, 10, 24; PL 32, 774.

indications of a Neoplatonic philosophical background, and finally the affective method leading to an enjoyment of God, probably in mystical contemplation. Thus, as this is "la démonstration augustinienne par excellence," it is also a proof typical in every way of St. Augustine's method and manner.

CONCLUSION

The picture would seem to be complete. But before the "pinxit" is affixed in the corner, it might be well to make a rapid review of the whole process, from the broad sketch to the detailed drawing, from the critical testing to the appreciation.

First was given a faithful account of St. Augustine's proof for the existence of God as he traced it out most fully in the De Libero Arbitrio. Then, in order that the route he took stand out more clearly, that same route was followed in the De Vera Religione. Finally, the whole itinerary was gone over once again, and a master chart, as it were, was compiled from directions given in several of the Saint's works.

Next was the period of testing. Here it was first decided that the proof finally rests upon the principle of sufficient reason, for the argument ultimately proves the existence of God as the sole sufficient reason for the immutable truth which exists above our intellect. In the fifth chapter, in answer to the question, "Is the proof ontological?" the conclusion was reached that it is ontological, inasmuch as it seems to involve an illegitimate transfer from the logical to

the real order. But at the same time it is not ontologistic, since it does not depend on a direct vision of God. With regard to the connection of the proof with St. Augustine's doctrine of illumination, although it seems clear that the Doctor did not argue from this doctrine to the existence of God, and although he did not explicitly use the doctrine in his proof; nevertheless, the argument does have an essential dependence on this theory, it it is to be considered a complete proof. Finally, the proof is entirely characteristic of St. Augustine, for the distinctive marks of his genius may clearly be seen throughout it.

This paper may end with the excellent observation which Gilson makes about the proof:

> Cette tendance profonde à trouver en Dieu seul la raison suffisante de l'idée que nous avons de lui est le lien qui rattache à la métaphysique augustinienne celles de saint Anselme, de saint Bonaventure, de Duns Scot et de Descartes; mais, en un sens, la démonstration qu'il en propose dépasse de beaucoup celles qu'elle a inspirées, car elle n'est ni un argument, ni une suite d'arguments, mais une métaphysique complète, plus une morale, avec la mystique même qui la couronne. Le doute initial, l'appel à la foi, l'évidence de la pensée, la spiritualité de l'âme et la transcendance de la vérité, chacun des moments successifs de la preuve est la traduction d'une experience personelle qu'il importe de méditer pour que l'interpretation métaphysique en devienne intelligible.[1]

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1 Gilson, Introduction, 29

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Patrick J. Kremer, S.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Jan. 10, 1949
Date

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