

A Transforming Vision: Knowing and Loving the Triune God

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Humanity Created for Communion with the Trinity in Aquinas

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Abstract

There are indications in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* that the reason why the Triune God "goes out" in the acts of creation and salvation is the desire of each Divine Person to give himself to human beings and to angels to be known and loved, possessed and enjoyed, in eternal friendship. To make our journey home possible, the Father sends his Son, his Word, both to become incarnate, and to dwell within his friends, who are conformed to him as the Divine Wisdom; and the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to "craft" us by the Charity which is a "participation" in himself as the Divine Love. Aquinas tells us that the *goal* of the creation of the human being is that we should be in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity, an image that comes to its fulfilment in the perfect knowledge and love of the Triune God we hope to enjoy in Heaven. With Augustine, he can say to the Holy Trinity: "You have made us for yourself."

1. Introduction: The Need to Vindicate St Thomas

In the last few decades of the Twentieth Century, St Thomas Aquinas' rather Augustinian Trinitarian theology suffered something of a bad press. Rahner claimed that, as a result of the "Augustinian-Western" doctrine of the Holy Trinity, Western Christians had lost much sense of the Trinity as a *Mystery of Salvation*. He suggested that the way Thomas arranged the treatises in the *Summa Theologiae* caused the Mystery of the Trinity to "to lock itself up in ever more splendid isolation".¹ It is well-known that Rahner wanted to re-connect the "Immanent Trinity" with "the Economy". I suspect a deeper concern was to make the divine self-communication the most fundamental of all realities.² I take issue, not with this laudable concern, but only with Rahner's reading of theological history, since I hope to demonstrate that this concern is one he *shared with Augustine and Thomas*.³

2. "The Answer is 43"

Thomas' treatise on the Holy Trinity in the *Prima Pars* is normally seen as running from Questions 27 to 43. Is this correct? Is this treatise as "self-contained" as Rahner held? Rowan Williams has argued that earlier Questions deliberately prepare for the explicit discussion of the Trinity;⁴ in addition to this, I propose that

¹ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*. Transl. Joseph Donceel. London: Burns & Oates, 1970. Part I, sections A and B.

² *Ib.*, section E; Part III, section C. Also "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace" (*Theological Investigations* I (London: DLT, 1961) 319-346).

³ Recent re-evaluations of Thomas' Trinitarian theology are spearheaded by Gilles Emery, OP, for example in *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: OUP, 2007).

⁴ "What Does Love Know? St. Thomas on the Trinity" (*New Blackfriars* 82 (2001) 260-282).

Question 43 has a distinct status.⁵ It is not a begrudging nod towards the Economic Trinity tacked on to a severely abstract treatise on the Immanent Trinity, but a pivot that engineers the transition from the treatise on the Holy Trinity to the remainder of the *Summa*.

The pattern (better, one of the patterns) of the *Summa* is *exitus-reditus*. The account of the *exitus*, the coming of creatures from God, commences in *Prima Pars* 44. *Secunda Pars* explores what is involved in the *reditus*, the journey home, of a rational animal (a fallen rational animal): we need the Holy Spirit's divinizing presence to craft us in Charity and Wisdom, by which, respectively, we desire to be in God, and can "feel" the way towards him. *Tertia Pars* covers how in historical particularity God made the *reditus* possible: the Father sent the Son to take flesh, so as to be our Way, and so as to impart, by his Passion and Resurrection, and through the Sacraments, "the Grace of the Holy Spirit".⁶ Before detailing the *exitus*, Thomas speaks of the God from whom all things come and to whom they are drawn. This treatise, *Prima Pars* 2-42 (sic), repeatedly points forward to the Economy of Salvation. In 1a 8, 3 we find that God dwells "as in a temple" in those empowered to know and love him. In 1a 12 Thomas explains that we can, indeed, come to rest in knowing God, in the Beatific Vision.⁷ 1a 34, 3 says that the Father knows himself in his Word, and creatively knows things; 1a 37, 2 ad 3 says that Father and Son eternally love *us* in the Spirit.

It is *Prima Pars* 43 that explains the *exitus*. Here is the pivot that tells us *why* the Triune God goes out in Creation and in the great deeds of Salvation: God does so precisely for the sake of the *reditus*, so that the rational creature may come to its fulfilment in God. *Prima Pars* 43 tells us that *each of Father, Son and Spirit wills to give himself to us, to be known, loved, possessed and enjoyed, now and for ever*.

3. Missions and Self-Giving

The introduction to 1a 43 says, "Now we must consider the missions of the Divine Persons." Much of this Question is indeed on the missions of the Son and the Spirit, anticipating how the heart of the *Secunda Pars* is the Spirit's invisible mission, and the *Tertia Pars* is about the Son's visible mission.

Augustine had explored the missions in *De Trinitate* Book IV, partly in order to demonstrate that the Son's and the Spirit's being sent does not imply they are less divine than the Father. Thomas chiefly develops the soteriological aspect of Augustine's concept. 1a 43, 1 says that a Divine Person is sent if (a) He becomes present in the world in a new way, and (b) He is from another Person who can "send" him. It is as if the intra-Trinitarian Procession⁸ is "projected" into the world. Both Son and Spirit are sent visibly: the Son to become incarnate; the Spirit when his presence is symbolised by dove, wind and fire. Both Son and Spirit are sent invisibly, when they dwell in us by grace.⁹

⁵ The title of this section alludes to *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, in which it turns out that the answer to "life, the universe, and everything" is 42. I see *Prima Pars* 43 as providing the answer.

⁶ For this phrase see, for example, 1a2ae 106, 1. [The parts of the *Summa Theologiae* will be referred to as 1a, 1a2ae, etc. and followed by the number of the question, the article, and, if appropriate, the reply to an objection.]

⁷ By the end of 1a 11 it has become so clear that God is "wholly other" that it might seem we can neither know him nor speak of him, and so must call off our theological project and despair of the very possibility of a *reditus*. But Thomas argues that we *will* be made able to know God's very Essence, so we *can* hope to rest in him; and (in 1a 12, 11-13, and in 1a 13) that even in this life we can speak validly of God, and can do so not merely in metaphors.

⁸ The Latin word *processio* is less specific than the Greek *εκπορευσις*: the Greek is reserved for the coming of the Spirit from the Father, whereas *processio* is used for (i) the Son's generation by the Father, (ii) the Spirit's being breathed forth by the Father as Fount of the Divine Being, and (iii) the Spirit's being breathed forth by the Son as one Principle with the Father, and in dependence on the Father.

⁹ Thomas takes for granted that the Son is sent visibly, and the Spirit invisibly; he sees a need to argue that the Son is sent invisibly (1a, 43, 5) and the Spirit visibly (1a 43, 7). Augustine and Thomas agree that God's friends receive the invisible missions *throughout* human history.

Of course, the Divine Persons indwell inseparably, just as they exist inseparably. If Son and Spirit dwell in us, so does the Father. 1a 43, 4 explains that he is not sent, since there is no other to send him or give him. But he does *give himself* in the sense that “He liberally bestows himself on the creature for her to enjoy.” So Son and Spirit are given to us as sent by the Father; but *each* of the Three *gives himself* to us to be known and loved, possessed and enjoyed. This suggests that, besides the Missions, there is a related, and perhaps deeper, theme in 1a 43: the *giving* of the Divine Persons, and their being *possessed* by creatures. Article 2 introduces these concepts: “A [Divine Person] is given so as to be possessed (*ad hoc quod habeatur*).” Article 3 picks up a theme introduced in 1a 8, 3, to which 1a2ae 110, 1 will return, namely the radically new mode of presence by which a Divine Person is in someone who, by grace, knows and loves him. God is in all things as giving them their own being and goodness; God is present in a higher and nobler way when he bestows on us *his own being and goodness!*

To quote 1a 43, 3, God is in the graced rational creature “as the Known in the knower and the Beloved in the lover”. This hints at a *reciprocity* between us and God: “by knowing and loving, the rational creature, by her own operation, *attigit* (comes into contact with) God himself.” It is possible for us, who are creatively known and loved by God, to know and love him! – to “act” on God, to seize, to embrace God! Thomas has already hinted (1a 20, 2 ad 3) that there can be *amicitia*, friendship, between us and God, because of the possibility of “loving in return”; in 2a2ae 23, 1 he will define Charity as friendship between us and God. This is striking, given how aware Thomas is of the *difference* between God and creature, and how he takes from Aristotle that a note of equality must attend true friendship. But so it is: 1a 43, 3 says that by *gratia gratum faciens*¹⁰ we are empowered to *possess* and *freely to enjoy* the Divine Persons! Of course, God’s absolute priority is not compromised: *gratia gratum faciens* is God’s pure gift.

4. Conformity to the Divine Persons

God gives *gratia gratum faciens* so that we may receive the divine self-gift. 1a2ae 110 presents this *gratia* as “deploying itself” into the God-given strengths of Faith, Hope and Charity that empower us to hold to God by knowledge and love. So, by a work of the divine power, which is common to Father, Son and Spirit, we are crafted into God’s children (3a 23, 2). But there are hints in *Prima Pars* 43, 5 ad 2 that the presence of each Divine Person “evokes” these gifts: Thomas says we are necessarily *likened* to a Divine Person who is sent to us, by means of some gift of grace. It is tempting to read him as saying that, precisely in coming to us, each Divine Person *assimilates* us to himself so that we are able personally to welcome him.¹¹

1a 43, 5 ad 2 says our conformity to the Holy Spirit is by Charity, which is a created participation in the Holy Spirit, who is “uncreated Charity”.¹² We are conformed to God the Son, the Divine Wisdom Begotten, by the Gift of Wisdom. The Son is the-Word-who-breathes-forth-the-Divine-Love, and of the various graces seated in the intellect, *Wisdom* is the one that erupts into love.¹³

¹⁰ *Gratia gratum faciens* is often translated as “sanctifying grace”, which does not well capture the way it makes us “pleasing to God”, nor the inter-personal hints in 1a2ae 110, 1. It is the adoptive sonship that makes us “sharers in the Divine Nature” (cf. II Peter 1:4). I would paraphrase it as “the gift that makes us gracious, graceful and grateful” (*morally* graceful, not physically, in *this* life).

¹¹ There is debate about whether sanctifying grace is cause or effect of the divine indwelling. In “Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace” (*Theological Investigations* I (London: DLT, 1961) 319-346) Rahner agreed with Thomas that, insofar as they “craft” us, the Divine Persons work with the single divine power. But in their inseparable yet *distinct* presences the Divine Persons give *themselves* to us to “inform” us, roughly as the thing known “structures” the knowing mind – with the caveat that *God* cannot be contained by a created mind. It would be interesting to investigate whether Rahner missed hints of his own position in Thomas; also whether Thomas’ account of the divine indwelling makes more than Rahner does of the *reciprocity* between God and us.

¹² Thomas returns to this in 2a2ae 23, 2 ad 1, and 24, 2.

¹³ 2a2ae 45 explains that Charity brings about a “connaturality” with God, so that the “Wisdom from above” (James 3:17) is an instinctive fellow-feeling with our Divine Friend, a divine outlook that we share with the Spirit.

This leaves a question: If the Father, too, gives himself to us, are we conformed to *him* by some gift? Thomas does not give an answer, but I suggest the gift is *gratia gratum faciens* itself. This participation in the Divine Nature is “seated in the soul’s essence”, that is, it “moulds” what we are. From the soul’s essence flow its powers;¹⁴ in a parallel way, from the “higher nature” that is *gratia gratum faciens* flow the Theological Virtues that perfect those powers, and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ Wisdom is the chief Gift, Charity the chief Virtue. Now, the Divine Nature belongs in a prior way to the Father, who imparts it to the Son who is Wisdom, and to the Spirit who is Love. If we can appropriate¹⁶ to the Father our participation in the Divine Nature, then the “structure of grace”, in which Wisdom and Charity flow from *gratia gratum faciens*, becomes a reflection of the Holy Trinity, in which the Word and the Spirit proceed from the Father.

5. The Human “Model” of the Holy Trinity

Questions 43 and 93 of *Prima Pars* are correlative, but before we examine 1a 93 it will be helpful to see what Thomas does with the “psychological analogies” found in the second part of Augustine’s *De Trinitate*. In Books I-VII Augustine defended the orthodox Faith in the Trinity by a careful analysis of Scripture in the light of Tradition. Thus the way in which *De Trinitate* develops suggests that only in the light of revelation, authentically interpreted, can we see the human psyche for what it is, so as to recognize in whose image we are made, and for whom we are made. Augustine heralds a new stage in *De Trinitate* by saying we will approach the Trinity by *a more interior route*,¹⁷ and it may well be his conviction that in an unfallen world our clear knowledge of our own nature *would* have pointed us towards the Trinitarian Creator. But as things stand, the image of the Trinity that we are has been fractured by sin; further, our mind is weighed down, making it difficult for us to know (or value) ourselves truly. Only in the light of Christ, and through the Incarnate Word’s healing work, can we see a *Trinitarian* structure to our psyche, and realize our vocation to rise from sin towards communion with our Divine Archetype.

Two analogies are explored in *De Trinitate* Books IX and X: first, **the mind, its knowledge, and its love**; second, **memory, intellect and will**.¹⁸ Though the second may be adapted from Cicero’s “memory, intellect and providence”,¹⁹ Augustine is making an invaluable and original contribution. For Athanasius, for example, we are in the image of the *Logos* (who is *the* Image of the Father) because we are *logikoi*, rational²⁰ – just as for Plato and Aristotle *logos* is the highest part of the soul. For Augustine, we are in the image of the *whole* Trinity, and are so, not only because we can think (have *intellectus*), but also because we can *love* (have *voluntas*). In connection with according this nobility to our power to love, Augustine is able to picture the Holy Spirit as the Divine Love.

Rather than speaking of “memory, intellect and will”, as if Augustine had identified three faculties, it would be more accurate to speak of “remembering, understanding and loving”: three *activities* that necessarily go on in the “core” of the human psyche.²¹ Each has its own distinct dynamic, hence the three are irreducible. Especially when the soul remembers (possesses), understands, and loves (values) *itself*, and above all when,

¹⁴ I.e. what you *are* typically reveals itself in what you can *do*.

¹⁵ 1a2ae 110, 3-4. The Gifts are mentioned explicitly in, for example, 3a 62, 2.

¹⁶ Augustine develops “appropriation” in *De Trinitate* VI, x, 11 – VII, 4, 6. Terms like “almighty” and “wise”, which belong to each Divine Person, can be fittingly applied to *one* of them as reflecting his intra-Trinitarian “personal role”. It became usual to appropriate to one Person both acts common to all Three, and created realities that all Three cause.

¹⁷ *De Trinitate* VIII, I, 1.

¹⁸ For a full exploration, see John Edward Sullivan, OP, *The Image of God: The Doctrine of St. Augustine and Its Influence* (Dubuque: The Priory Press, 1963).

¹⁹ Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: CUP, 2014) 308-313.

²⁰ *De Incarnatione* 3.

²¹ A point made by Edmund Hill, OP (*The Mystery of the Trinity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985) 126).

being healed, it does this aright, the three activities work on the same “object” which they grasp equally well. Here we have a “model” for how the Divine Persons possess, equally, the one, single Divine Nature, but in irreducibly distinct manners. Augustine’s analogy may not be intended to *prove* the Divine Trinity; but it does serve to indicate that irreducible distinction and intense unity are compatible.

In both of Augustine’s analogies, the will, or love (mirroring the Holy Spirit), is a *uniting force* that joins understanding to remembering – basically, if we love something that is in the memory, we “bring it forth” so as to contemplate it. Hence the “birth” of knowledge from the mind or from memory takes place “within” love. Just as the birth of knowledge in our mind is a created analogy for the eternal Birth of the Divine Word, so the unitive character of love reflects the Holy Spirit as the one “by whom the Begotten is loved by the Begetter, and loves his Begetter” (*De Trinitate* VI, 5). This picture of the Holy Spirit as the Bond of Love between Father and Son seems to be in some tension with Augustine’s teaching that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

In his presentation of Trinitarian doctrine that starts in 1a 27, Thomas chiefly draws on Augustine’s first model, the mind, its knowledge, and its love. He does not identify three activities that mirror the Divine Persons. We have two spiritual faculties, intellect and will, and their “movements” of knowing and loving are created analogies for the two Divine Processions, the “comings” of Word and Spirit from the Father. Memory is not a third faculty, for at the spiritual level to remember something simply is to know it.²²

It is tempting to summarise or paraphrase Thomas’ Trinitarian doctrine robustly:

- (1) By knowing himself perfectly, the Father conceives a Perfect Image of himself: his Word and Son;
- (2) “then” by loving himself-as-known he breathes forth a co-equal *Spiritus*, Impulse of Love.
- (3) “In uttering his Word, the Father expresses both himself *and creatures*” (1a, 34, 3); “He spoke, and they were made” (Psalm 32:9) – we can picture God the Father as an artist who conceives beforehand what he will craft; we are creatively foreknown in the Word.
- (4) “The Father loves not only the Son, but also himself and us, by the Holy Spirit” (1a 37, 2 ad 3); we can picture God the Father as an artist who not only conceives beforehand what he will craft, but delights in it and so fashions it. We are fore-loved in the Spirit.

While this summary is true, it is noteworthy that Thomas does not proceed “robustly”; he does call upon the human psyche as a model for the Trinity, but reticently and step-by-step; he seems very wary of seeing the Divine Processions as merely bigger and better versions of what goes on in us. That would risk making the Trinity provable by reason. The closest he gets to picturing the Word as the Father’s self-knowledge, and the Spirit as his self-love, and indeed to Augustine’s remembering-of-self, understanding-of-self, and loving-of-self, is in 1a 37, 1: “If someone understands and loves himself, he is in himself by identity, and as the known in the knower, and as the beloved in the lover.”

Thomas also rejects whatever might compromise the Trinitarian “order” in which the Son proceeds from the Father, the Spirit from the Father and (or through) the Son. In 1a, 37, 2, while appearing to defend Augustine’s saying that the Holy Spirit is the one “by whom the Begotten is loved by the Begetter, and loves his Begetter”, Thomas in fact denies that the Spirit is the principle of the Father’s and the Son’s loving; he is *not* the Bond of Love between them. Thomas is willing to say that *by loving each other*, Father and Son breathe forth the Spirit as Love Proceeding; as a rule he prefers to see love as a delight that *proceeds from* the known truth, this pattern dimly reflecting the Spirit’s procession from the Father through the Son.

²² With my *imagination*, I recall learning about endoplasmic reticulum in a 1974 biology lecture; when I say, “I remember what endoplasmic reticulum is,” I mean that the concept is in my *intellect*. In 1a 93, 7 ad 3 Thomas rejects Lombard’s understanding of *memoria*, *intellegentia* and *voluntas* as three natural powers of the soul.

I have used the word “models” as well as “analogies”, since science uses complementary, limited *models* to gain us some purchase on realities we cannot grasp fully. Augustine seems to use the human psyche in this way, as well as to defuse objections to the Faith; perhaps the apparent tension in *De Trinitate* is due to his offering complementary models. While Thomas is unhappy with the model of the Spirit as Bond of Love, and prioritizes the model of “the mind, its knowing and its loving”, he too employs “psychological models” to help us move towards a deeper understanding of the Triune God.²³

Our movement towards God is always *re-active*; it is evoked by originating movements from God to us: creation, revelation, redemption and grace. Augustine’s and Thomas’ exploration of our being created in the *image* of God needs to be distinguished from the use of models. Models may help our minds move towards God; but to discover, in the light of revelation, that we have been made in the *image* of the Holy Trinity, is to discover that God has moved towards us so as to build into us a project and a goal: the Triune God has made us for himself. A dynamism towards our Archetype is built into us; we are attracted to God the Trinity because we are in the image of God the Trinity. Augustine is clear that we can only reach fulfilment by journeying into communion with the Creator:

This trinity, then, of the mind is not therefore the image of God, because the mind remembers itself, and understands and loves itself; but because it can also remember, understand, and love him by whom it was made. And in so doing it is made wise itself... Let it then remember its God, after whose image it is made, and let it understand and love him. (*De Trinitate* XIV, xii, 15)

This aspect of Augustine’s thought is taken up by Thomas in *Prima Pars* 93, to which we now turn.

6. The Goal of the Creation of the Human Being: *Prima Pars* 93

Prima Pars 43 launches Thomas’ account of how the Trinity creates and governs the cosmos, and how Christ’s saving work and the Spirit’s guidance gently and powerfully lead us home. *Prima Pars* 93 is correlative to 43. Thomas introduces it by saying we are to consider the goal (*finis, terminum*) of God’s production of the human being, insofar as we are made to God’s image and likeness.²⁴

Thomas begins by expounding Gen. 1:26 with Augustine’s help: we are in God’s image because we are both *like* God (in a very imperfect way) and *derived from* him. In creatures below the human being, and in those elements of human nature we share with them, we find *vestigia Trinitatis*, traces of the Trinity. In the human (and angelic) mind we find a real *image* of God. The journey on which Thomas takes us in this Question really commences in Article 4, where we find that the image is capable of varying degrees, since God knows and loves *himself*, and we can imitate him in this:

- (a) by nature all human beings have an aptitude towards knowing and loving God;
- (b) by grace, we habitually or actually love God, but imperfectly;
- (c) when we are likened to God in glory, we shall know and love him perfectly.

Given his Augustinian background, and given the way his treatise on the Trinity developed, we might expect Thomas to say that by knowing and loving *ourselves* we mirror God who knows and loves himself. Instead, he goes straight to how at our natural level we are *capax Dei*, open to *God*, made for *God*. The God who wants to give himself to creatures to be known and loved, possessed and enjoyed, calls into being creatures naturally apt to come to their fulfilment in knowing and loving him; and by grace perfecting nature he brings them to the goal that consists in active communion with the One in whose image they are made.

²³ In 1a 1, 9 Thomas defends metaphors; he does not have a distinct concept of “model”. Edmund Hill sees Augustine as “constructing” models (*The Mystery of the Trinity* 125-6); I see him as *discerning* an image and using it as a model.

²⁴ The Question focuses on “image”, because in Thomas’ Latin “likeness” is ambiguous: it can mean something vaguer than “image”, or it can express a perfection of the image as it becomes more like its Exemplar.

By mentioning God knowing and loving himself, Article 4 reminds us of the Trinity, since in God the Word proceeds by way of knowledge, and the Spirit by way of love. It is therefore not surprising that Article 5 says we are made in the image of the Trinity of Divine Persons. This is stated fairly baldly, but fleshed out in the next three articles.

Article 6 ostensibly argues that we are properly in the *image* of God according to our *mind* (which includes will as well as intellect), not according to our bodily nature. But it recalls how, in the Divine Trinity, the Persons are distinct because of the procession of the Word from the Speaker and the Love from Both; hence the human being images the Trinity by a procession of a word²⁵ according to the intellect and a procession of love according to the will. By contrast with lower creatures, there is in us a *principium verbi*, a “source of word”, which implies that in our mind there is something that reflects the Father. To discover whether this is the mind itself, or something else, we go to the next article.

Article 7 explains that the image is present to a real but limited degree insofar as we have the relevant powers (i.e. intellect and will); it is present to a greater degree insofar as these powers are “shaped” by appropriate habits; it is most present when we *actively* think and love. Thomas says:

... If the image of the Divine Trinity is to be recognized in the soul, we must chiefly look for it where the soul approaches as closely as possible to representing a specific likeness of the Divine Persons. Now the Divine Persons are distinct [from each other] on the basis of the procession of the Word from the Speaker, and [the procession] from the love connecting Both.²⁶ Now in our soul a word “cannot exist without actual thinking,” as Augustine says (*De Trin.* xiv, 7). Hence, first and foremost, the image of the Trinity is to be found in the mind on the ground of its acts, that is, insofar as from the knowledge which we possess, by thinking we form an internal word; and from this we burst forth into love.

We notice a reticence on Thomas’ part. He does not say that if the human mind knew itself perfectly it would form a word that expresses itself perfectly, from which an impulse of love would arise that matches the mind’s true worth, and by doing all this the mind would mirror the Trinity, in which by knowing himself perfectly the Father conceives a Perfect Image of himself, “then” by loving himself-as-known breathes forth a co-equal *Spiritus*. It is tempting to read Augustine’s first analogy of the Trinity in this way. Edward Booth has argued that, even in his *Sentences Commentary*, Thomas gently corrected Augustine’s exploration of the image, for Augustine expected too much: he wanted the created image of the Trinity, at least when brought to its perfection, to mirror the unity and equality of the Divine Persons in a fairly full way.²⁷ At the end of *De Trinitate* he admitted he had not done very well; Thomas takes seriously the impossibility of doing very well, and recognises how far the image falls short of the Archetype. Thus in 1a 93 he is content to note that when we think of *any* good thing we have come to know (e.g. chocolate) we bring forth a concept; recognising the goodness of what we know, we love it.

²⁵ For a detailed analysis of *verbum cordis* see Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967). Also John O’Callaghan, “*Verbum Mentis*: Philosophical or Theological Doctrine in Aquinas?” (*Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 74 (2000) 103-119).

²⁶ The more natural translation of *Amoris connectentis utrumque* is: “[the procession] of the Love connecting Both”, i.e. the procession of the Spirit, who is the Love connecting Father and Son. But 1a 37, 2 has denied that the Spirit is the Bond of Love by which Father and Son love each other; rather, he is Love Proceeding from the love by which they love each other. Of course, in 93, 7 Thomas may have had a lapse of precision, or, more likely, is expressing himself succinctly and assuming the reader will supply necessary qualifications. My translation imposes a strict consistency on Thomas.

²⁷ Edward Booth, OP, “Saint Thomas Aquinas’s Critique of Saint Augustine’s Conceptions of the Image of God in the Human Soul” (Johannes Brachtendorf (ed.), *Gott und sein Bild: Augustins “De Trinitate” im Spiegel gegenwärtiger Forschung* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000) 219-239).

Thomas' reticence also marks the replies to the second and fourth objections. He points out that we are not always *actively* remembering, understanding and loving ourselves; he is cool towards the idea that a Trinity-mirroring activity is inescapably going on in the core of our mind. He reads Augustine as sharing this reticence, and suggests it was an awareness of the human mind's inability to know itself perfectly that led Augustine to propose his second psychological analogy, since there is less inequality between memory and understanding than between mind and (self-)knowledge. Hence at this point Thomas does make use of the memory-intellect-will triad, but adapted to his conviction that we have two powers at the spiritual level; ad 3 presents memory, not as a third *faculty*, but as our "habitual retention of knowledge *and love*" (sic; italics mine). We are not consciously thinking of every concept we have learned. Nor are we consciously aware of all the desires and priorities we have! – we cannot tell by introspection whether we have grace,²⁸ and may surprise ourselves by what we find ourselves willing or unwilling to do!

Article 8 of Question 93 is a climax that clinches what Thomas has been arguing towards. The *sed contra* quotes *De Trinitate* XIV, xii, 15, which was given above, to support the claim that the "trinity... of the mind is ... the image of God ... because it can ... remember, understand, and love him by whom it was made." We are most fully in the image of God insofar as we "act on *God*" by knowing and loving the Most Holy Trinity:

... we look for an image of the Divine Trinity in the soul insofar as it represents the Divine Persons by some kind of specific likeness, as far as this is possible for a creature. Now the Divine Persons... are distinguished on the basis of the procession of the Word from the Speaker, and the Love from both. Now the Word of God is born of God through his knowledge of himself; and the Love proceeds from God according as he loves himself... Hence we recognise the divine image in the human being on the basis of a word conceived from the knowledge of God [*verbum conceptum de Dei notitia*], and of a love derived therefrom. Hence the image of God is found in the soul according as the soul is carried into God, or is naturally apt to be carried into God.

We are to become the image of God in the fullest sense by communion with God. The final article (93, 9) reaffirms this by saying that "likeness" to God can refer to the image's *perfection*. We think of John 17:3 and I John 3:2 – eternal life is knowing God, and when we know him as he is, we shall be like him. The promise of Article 4 leads us to expect 8 and 9 to be about the Beatific Vision, yet Thomas is again reticent. *Verbum conceptum de Dei notitia* makes sense as applied to our present pilgrimage in which, from the graced knowledge of God we have, a *verbum* can be conceived: we can make acts of faith, we can in Wisdom judge what should be done or avoided *sub specie aeternitatis*. This hardly seems to fit the Beatific Vision. What affirmation or judgment can be adequate to the immediate knowledge of God's Essence?

Maybe Thomas is claiming that even in this life we really can resemble the Trinity, and is whetting our appetite to wonder what will happen when we pass from this degree of glory to the glory of heaven. We cannot conceive what this will be like, but are given pointers (cf. I Cor. 2:9f). Thomas intended to discuss our final bliss at the end of *Tertia Pars*, but did not live to write a mature extended treatise on the Beatific Vision or the resurrection.²⁹ Taking cues from what he has said we might tentatively propose the following:

- (1) In the Beatific Vision, the Triune God gives himself to the glorified, strengthened mind; this presence of God as actively known replaces the "habitual knowledge" of Faith.
- (2) Since we can never fully comprehend God, God's self-giving is "met" by some limited "grasp" of God; this non-conceptual, limited possession of the Trinity very approximately corresponds to the "word conceived" (i.e. the concepts and judgments we now bring forth from memory).

²⁸ 1a2ae 112, 5.

²⁹ *Compendium Theologiae* I, 104 (209) - 106 (214) & 165 (327) - 166 (330) cover the issues succinctly.

- (3) But we will be able to draw out from the Beatific Vision “words born therefrom”, truths to be held in concepts, as we contemplate God’s ways, able at last fully to appreciate their wisdom and beauty. We will be able to share these truths with other Saints as we rejoice together in thanksgiving.
- (4) This will especially take place between death and the Final Judgment, while we receive new revelations and are able to respond with intercession as well as with new outbursts of love.³⁰ New revelations will cease at the Judgment, after which we will rest together in a participation in God’s Eternity.

Love especially comes in as a response to the possession of God: we *delight* in the God who gives himself; by our will we *enjoy* the Ultimate Goal possessed (1a2ae 11, 3 & 4).

Thus Thomas is able to say, with Augustine, *to the Holy Trinity*, “Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in you.” The Father has planned us in his Word; the Father and his Word have loved us in the Spirit; Father, Son and Spirit want to give themselves to us. In this overflowing love the Triune God has made us in his image; through the Son’s and the Spirit’s revelatory and salvific Missions, the image that we are is being brought to the perfection which is to have and to hold our Triune Friend.

³⁰ 1a 43, 6 ad 3 associates missions (of the Word?) with these revelations.