



Prayer Before Studying Theology:

Almighty God, you have built your Church on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself as the chief corner-stone: grant us to be so joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may grow into a holy temple, acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

--Book of Common Prayer, Simon and Jude

Week #2: Introduction to Augustine's Theology:

Augustine's Account of the Three Theological Virtues in His *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love*

Enchiridion ("handbook"; portable, can be carried in pocket to allow for reflection) as an example of early Christian catechetical literature.

- Grk. *Catechesis*=elementary instruction in the faith, especially for persons preparing for baptism or recently baptized.

Written 419-422? Addressed to Laurentius (who was the brother of Dulcitus, an imperial agent charged with implementing the imperial proscription of the Donatists) and asked for a summary of Christian doctrine.

This was not an unusual request, since persons who were preparing for baptism or had recently been baptized were given catechetical instruction by a teacher in the Church (catechist, priest, or bishop). Typically this involved a commentary and explanation of the baptismal creed, i.e. the set form of words which the baptismal candidate representing the faith of the Church which the person being baptized was to affirm as his or her own faith.

Excursus on the Use of the Creed in Early Christian Baptism

- The Apostle's Creed as an example of a baptismal creed; this is essentially the baptismal creed used in Italy since the second century, with a few minor additions made in the late fourth and early fifth centuries.
 - To caution against schism, it was affirmed, following the creeds in use in the Greek East, that the church was "catholic," i.e. universal and not confined to only one people, place, or sect.
 - Two phrases not found in the Eastern creeds, "communion of the saints" and "descended into Hell" (see Acts 2:31 [citing Ps. 16:10]; Eph. 4:9; 1 Pet. 3:19, 4:6; and perhaps Heb. 12:23b), were added to emphasize that Christ's saving power is greater than death itself (Rom. 8:39), so that our union with Christ and each other is not confined to this life but includes all who have died in the faith.

- Note also that there were two forms of showing one's reception of the creed as not only the faith of the Church, but also one's own faith.
 - In the case of children and the elderly, the preference was to use an *interrogatory creed* (e.g. the priest asks the person, "Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth?" The person being baptized says "Yes." The priest then says, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son our Lord?" The person being baptized says, "Yes," etc. (Incidentally, this is even today an effective way of securing a public profession of faith for children, the elderly, persons with physical or mental limitations or a crippling fear of public speaking.)
 - For adults capable of giving a public affirmation of their faith, a *declaratory creed* was used. The creed was taught to the persons preparing for baptism were taught the creed several weeks before their baptism (*traditio symboli*="the handing over of the creed"), were to memorize it and recite it at least once a day from memory, and then "give it back" (*redditio symboli*) as their own confession of faith at their baptism.
 - The creed was regarded simply as a brief summary of Scripture, setting forth the most important truths which must be affirmed if one is to be saved in accordance with the rule of faith (*regula fidei*). Cf. already 1 Cor. 15:3; Heb. 6:1-2 for references to possibly similar practices even in the apostolic age.

Augustine therefore draws upon the creed which Laurentius and/or Augustine is familiar with, using it to frame the discussion of faith (cf. XV,56; XVII,64; XXX,114).

- Augustine does, however, flesh out his discussion of this traditional material with some excurses that reflect his own personal commitments as a teacher of the faith (e.g. the discussion of lying, deception, skepticism, and the implications of Christ being the Truth in V,17-VII,22 or the importance of helping the poor by almsgiving and other works of charity in XIX,70-XX,77).

Note also the exposition of the Lord's Prayer in this work, as is typical in early Christian catechetical treatises.

- Eight days after the creed was "handed down" (i.e. initially given to the catechumen to be memorized) the Lord's Prayer was taught to catechumens [s. 213.1] and was to be memorized and repeated at least once daily.
 - The brief treatment of hope in XXX,115-116 comments upon the petitions of the Lord's Prayer and their significance for the life of faith; each of the petitions expresses something hoped for in the future.
 - Note the common division of the Lord's Prayer into two parts—One hopes
 - first for the rule of God, then for our own needs;

- first for things that begin now but will last forever; then, our needs of the moment, which will pass away.

What Laurentius actually gets is not a list of doctrines to which one must assent (probably what he thought he was going to get), but rather a treatise on how God is to be worshipped, which covers not only doctrines but also one's way of life, i.e. a description of

- (a) those attitudes which are constitutive of the Christian life and
- (b) their outworking in practice

- See, for example, XIX,70-XX,77 on almsgiving as the outworking of Christian charity.
- This is why Augustine begins the treatise in I.3 by
 - identifying wisdom with piety and reverence toward God and
 - arguing that God is to be worshipped with faith, hope and love.

The treatise will therefore discuss "what we" as Christians "should believe, what we should hope for and what we should love" (I.3).

- Faith, hope and love turn out to be
 - ways of responding to God
 - yet cannot be had except as a gift of divine grace, through the working of the Holy Spirit
 - ♣ Cf. Augustine (*Predestination of the Saints*): “ ‘But what do you have that you did not receive...?’ It was chiefly by this testimony that I myself too was converted, when I likewise erred, thinking that the faith by which we believe in God is not a gift of God, but is in us for ourselves...To be able to have faith, just as to be able to have love, belongs to men by nature, but actually to have faith, as also actually to have love, belongs to the faithful by grace.”

The Three Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope and Love—The NT Background

Paul praises what he finds in the Thessalonians--“the work of faith, the labor of charity and the perseverance in hope (1 Thess. 1:3)—and urges them to exercise these three virtues (1 Thess. 5:8).

In 1 Cor. 13:13, Paul also exalts these three virtues—faith, hope and love--above every other supernatural gift of God to the Church because the other gifts are given only for this present age but faith, hope and love will remain even when perfection comes and we see God face to face (see vv. 8-12).

Love, Paul says (1 Cor. 13:13b), is the greatest of these three because it is the *means* and *motive* necessary to exercise faith and hope (cf. 1 Cor. 16:14: “Do everything in love”).

- Without love, faith and hope are dead and lifeless, since they are lacking their inner vital principle. This is why in Gal. 5:6b Paul says that “the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself *through love*.”

- The intrinsic connection between faith and love is in fact so strong that in some cases the two words are used interchangeably.
 - Thus it through faith that we are declared righteous and united to God (Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:22), yet since real faith is never lacking in love, it can also be said that it is by love that one is united to God (see 1 Jn. 4:7-12,16).
 - This is also why servile fear can never be the basis for a true faith, because it is a motive opposite to love and is opposed and cast out by love.
 - 1 John 4:18: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love."
 - 2 Tim. 1:7: "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."
 - Daniel 10:19: "...!O man greatly loved, fear not..."

Faith is defined as a *trust* or *confidence* in God (and in what God reveals of his character and plan), *which is itself the gift of God* (see Jn. 6:63-65; cf. 3:27).

- In Heb. 11:1, faith is said to involve "being *sure* of what hope for and *certain* of what we do not see."
- This *assurance regarding things not yet visible* connects it very closely with hope.

Hope is the *confident looking to some good which is not presently apprehended by the senses* but

- is known to us through faith (trust) in God and
- involves an implicit knowledge that the things presently apprehended by the senses lack the perfection and permanence necessary to satisfy us (see, e.g., Rom. 8:31-39).
 - Hope is not only capable of looking at hard things, but looking past the hard things to the person of God, as he is revealed in Jesus Christ.

Hope is the *via media* (middle way) that avoids the excesses caused by *presumption* on the one hand and *discouragement* or *despair* on the other.

Love is a

- joy or happiness in possessing the object of one's love (i.e. God),
- valuing Him
 - for His own sake (not as a means to something else)
 - above other goods.

Since God is love (1 Jn. 4:16b), his prior love and goodness toward us make it possible for us both to experience His love and to love Him in return.

Thinking about Faith

The Concept of Faith in Early Christian Writers Prior to Augustine:

The Intellectualism of the Greek Fathers

Early Christian writers prior to Augustine had generally assumed that *faith is a matter of coming to know that something is true and accepting it as such*, the assumption being that this will result in a change of what one pursues.

- Example:
If I recognize that
 - smoking is bad for my health and
 - having good health is necessary for me to be well and flourishthen it follows that I will try to quit smoking.
 - Model:
 - Certain knowledge that X is true → Action
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- On this model, certain knowledge of what is true (as opposed to mere opinion) determines what object or course of action we will subsequently value and pursue.
 - Because the mind/intellect's knowledge of the truth determines one's subsequent pursuits, we might refer to this as an *intellectualist* model of human action.
 - It may be that you came to seminary with a similar assumption:
 - If I study and gain knowledge, I will be improved and become more rightly oriented, a better Christian, or whatever.

This idea of faith as assent to the truth is common in Greek writers of the first four centuries.

Thus, for example, we find Clement of Alexandria (c. 180 A.D.; Alexandria, Egypt) seems to endorse this idea of faith as coming after knowledge and consisting of assent to the truth in some incidental remarks he makes in various writings:

- “He [sc.] Aristotle says that *faith is the judgment, following knowledge, that a particular thing is true*. Faith is therefore more important (authoritative/decisive) than knowledge and is the discrimination of the latter (or: the judgment passed upon the latter)” (*Strom.* 2.4).
- “Faith is the voluntary taking up [of an opinion] and an anticipation of reasonable things prior to [their] direct apprehension” (*Strom.* 2.6).
- “Faith is a certain good residing in the mind, viz. without seeking (i.e. without a process of enquiry), the understanding confesses that God is this and opines that he is [exists]”
- “The obedience of reason, which indeed we call faith” (*Paed.* 1.13)

Later Greek writers expressed their commitment to the idea that faith consists of assent to the truth even more clearly:

- “*Faith is assent, without examination, of what is heard in full assurance of the truth of what has been proclaimed, by the grace of God*” (Basil, *fid.* 1)
- “Faith is a voluntary assent of the soul...” (Theodoret, *affect.* 1)

Augustine's Conception of Faith:

- *Faith Cannot Be Reduced to Assent to the Truth-- It Is Something Far Greater and Involves Desire and Love*

For Augustine, *intellectualism is insufficient*; rather we must discuss *the orientation of a person's desires*, or rather their will, *through love*.

Desire and love presuppose knowledge but is not limited to knowledge (or knowledge plus assent).

- Example: When you look at a photo of the one you love, you do not simply intellectually assent that they are worthy to be loved; your heart also goes out to them.
- This kind of desire, this orientation toward the other through love, is strong enough to move us to action.
- Model:
 - Love extends toward its object → Action

Cf. Thomas More, "What does it avail you to know that there is a God...what does it avail that you know Him if you think little of Him?" and Charles de Foucauld: "The moment I realized that God existed, I knew that I could not do otherwise than to live for Him alone."

Faith as Foundational and Its Relationship to Hope and Love (III,9-XXIX,113)

The Relation of Faith to Goodness and Order

- The object of faith is the God who created the world but transcends it and, as the source of goodness, gives the world the goodness that it has.
 - Evil is simply the removal of these natural goods.
- There is an order for life in the world (which is part of its goodness and the key to its flourishing) but this ordering toward an ultimate goal cannot be discovered by simple investigation of the physical universe, since the physical universe does not contain the key necessary to properly grasp and understand its ultimate purpose, unity and order.
 - Evil effects the introduction of disorder into this world when things are deprived of their natural goods.

Why Faith is Necessary and How It Transcends All Ordinary Human Knowledge

- Since God and supernatural matters transcend human knowledge, one cannot gain knowledge or understanding without beginning by
 - accepting as authoritative what has been revealed (=the submission of mind and will to God when one is called by God)
 - *Cf. Augustine: "God does not expect us to submit our faith to him without reason, but the very limits of our reason make faith a necessity"
 - * Cf. John 20:29: "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed."
 - having received that divine illumination which alone can lead the mind to true belief.

Excursus: Accepting Divine Things as Authoritative Following Illumination

The end of I.4 and the beginning of I.5 are worth reflecting upon here:

- Certain truths are known to reason either on the basis of innate ideas (e.g. truths of geometry: “The internal angles of a right triangle will always total 180 degrees”)
- Other truths arise from reflection upon sense-experience (“Fire is hot”).
- But divine matters—the things which matter most and should most deeply inform and guide our lives—are not like either of these types of knowledge.
 - The mind cannot reach God, since God is greater than any conception we could ever form of him.
 - God also is not properly an object of sense-experience since he does not have a body and is not subject to the constraints of material existence (e.g. circumscribed in space or location).
- Thus, to know divine matters necessarily requires both
 - prior revelation and
 - an illumination of the mind which can allow us to “see” divine matters (i.e. we possess *spiritual senses* which are in some ways analogous to our spiritual senses and when these are touched by God, we are able to enter into an increasingly deeper communion with God, whom after this life we shall see and know even as we ourselves are seen and known by him).
 - "Seeing" here is thus not a matter of idle knowledge but is linked to and leads on to one's heart being “set on fire with great love” due to God's work of supernaturally revealing and illuminating (I.6).
 - Furthermore, although knowledge of God is strictly necessary and is essential to faith, anything that is truly knowledge of God must also be regarded as a supernatural thing that leads one onward to an increase in hope and in love which is expressed first and foremost in prayer (see the second half of II.7).

The opposite is also true:

- ✚ Pride of intellect, suspension of judgment and self-will are the means by which we oppose God and resist the call to believe the Gospel and have faith and thus shut out the light of the Truth, God being the source of all truth, wisdom and the illumination of the mind.

The Necessary Interaction between Faith, Hope and Love

Faith is basic and all hopes and loves are to be judged and evaluated with reference to this faith.

- Faith is the starting point and alone can exist by itself (to mark out what is to be loved and what our hope is in); faith could therefore be considered the most basic of the three (II.8; cf. James 2:19: "even the demons believe--and shudder")
- **Only the correct faith can serve to engender the right hopes and loves** and that faith is a faith in Christ as the Word of God who emptied himself out love, becoming human to redeem us.
 - Hope and love cannot exist without faith, since these depend upon faith (II.7-8).
 - On faith as the foundation for hope, cf. Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, "We must believe that the Lord loves us, embraces us, never abandons us (especially in our most difficult moments). This is what gives us hope in the midst of life's suffering and chaos."
 - Love presupposes faith and must work itself out through faith (progressing toward that vision of God which we will receive only in the next life):
 - Prologue (7): "faith believes, hope and love pray. But hope and love cannot be without faith, and so faith prays as well."

At the same time, the meaning of faith and hope are found in love, so faith and hope find their completion in love. (In the next life, no obstacles will impede the growth of this love.)

Hope and The Common Features It Shares with Faith (XXX,114-116)

Hope presupposes and depends upon faith:

- What is there that we can hope for without first believing in it? (II.8; faith provides the content for hope)
- At the same time, faith is of no value without hope; think of the demons in James 2:19, who believe...and shudder, because they are without hope. Thus, faith without hope would be little more than knowledge without desire or trust.

Hope

- 1) is only for good things that are *in the future*
- 2) *concerns the one who is said to have hope* in these future good things (it is personally involving, but is also in some way concerns matters that are bigger than us and go beyond us)
- 3) Faith and hope are alike in that they are *not seen at present* (the most obvious common feature of faith [Heb. 11:1] and hope [Rom. 8:24-25]).
 - a. Both faith and hope have in common this not-seeing (II.8) and strain after sight (direct contemplation of God), which is something desired but not yet attained.
 - i. Cf. Augustine: "Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe."
 - ii. Compare Charles de Foucauld: "Pilgrims sleep in tents and sometimes cross deserts, but the thought of their homeland makes them forget all else."
 - b. This is also why faith is counted for righteousness [Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17: "the righteous shall live by faith"]--faith looks to the unseen for the fullness of righteousness which must come from God.
 - i. Cf. Fidelis of Sigmaringen: "It is because of faith that we exchange the present for the future."
 - ii. Compare Augustine's remarks in the *City of God*, "Thus it is written, 'The just lives by faith,' for we do not as yet see our good, and must therefore live by faith; neither have we in ourselves power to live rightly, but can do so only if He who has given us faith to believe in His help does help us when we believe and pray."

Compare Augustine's definition of hope (as a looking away from the present and beyond the present to better things) with that of Gregory of Nyssa: "Hope always draws the soul from the beauty that is seen to what is beyond, always kindles the desire for the hidden through what is perceived."

Where hope is yet weak, fear and despair will enter in and gain power. As hope grows, the power of fear and despair decrease.

Love (XXXI,117-XXXII,121)

Love (*caritas* [charity] as a love of God and neighbor that

- manifests a pure and holy intention and
- a submission to the will of God and
- has a supernatural origin, being
 - a gift of grace (cf. Rom. 5:5) and
 - opposed to all base, carnal and self-serving loves.

Augustine argues that

(a) faith and hope only have value when they find their fulfillment in love. (Faith without love is of no profit; cf. James 2:19; 1 Cor. 13)

(b) the Christian life is defined in terms of faith that works through love (Gal. 5:6) and such a love cannot exist without hope

(1) Faith seeks the grace necessary to truly desire and actually do God's will and in return receives the Spirit of love which Christ sends as the gift that renews the will and leads one into union with God

(2) **Note the understanding here of love in terms of weight, attraction and movement (being drawn toward one's proper place) that leads to participation in another's life through love, so that one becomes united to the other and becomes like the other.**

- Compare Augustine's definition of love in *De doctr. chr.* 3.10.16 (ML 34.72): *Caritatem voco motum animi ad fruendum Deo propter ipsum et se atque proximo propter Deum* "I call 'love' a moving of the soul which aims at the enjoyment of God for his own sake and of oneself and one's neighbor for God's sake. "
 - See also *Conf.* 10.34.53: "Too little does he love God who loves anything along with God, but not for his sake."
- In this way, love transcends mere knowledge; we can never comprehend God with our created minds, but we can always be drawn along by grace to love him more perfectly. (Cf. Aquinas "Love takes up where knowledge leaves off.")
 - This of course does not mean that love is independent of knowledge, reason and faith; instead, love presupposes a knowledge of what is loved, which inflames reason and deepens faith.
 - In the same way, **loving the wrong things puts one in motion downward toward the wrong goals**, darkening the mind and

losing the knowledge and sight of better things, so that one turns away from the faith.

- This is also why flattery is a problem; it confirms the person in false loves, when a challenge to these false loves is what is really needed.
- Love as an inner intention is correlated with the fruit subsequently produced by it, so that charity produces spiritual fruit, while base and carnal loves produce evil fruit.

(3) God is to be loved for himself (and his goodness), not for the benefits that we receive or expect to receive from him.

(c) all the virtues turn out to be forms of love and love is the source of the virtues' unity and interconnectedness.

- Example: Humility is both a form and a consequence of love--in humility, love takes account of the needs of the other[s] [*commune*=the common good], rather than focusing narrowly upon one's own needs [*proprie*], which leads to disordered self-love, arrogance and arbitrariness).
 - "...to live well is nothing else but to love God with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind; and, as arising from this, that this love must be preserved entire and incorrupt, which is the part of temperance; that it give way before no troubles, which is the part of fortitude; that it serve no other, which is the part of justice; that it be watchful in its inspection of things lest craft or fraud steal in, which is the part of prudence. This [i.e. charity] is the one perfection of man, by which alone he can succeed to attaining to the purity of truth" (*On the Morals of the Catholic Church* 25)
 - "So that it seems to me that it is a brief but true definition of virtue to say, it is the order of love" (*City of God* 15.22)
 - "When the miser prefers his gold to justice, it is through no fault of the gold, but of the man, and so with every created thing. *For though it be good, it may be loved with an evil as well as with a good love: it is rightly loved when it is rightly ordered; evil when not rightly ordered*" (*City of God* 15.22)
- The truest love has an ordering toward God and the neighbor.
 - Our loves have become corrupted and disordered by sin.
 - Corrupted self-love turns one's focus in upon oneself in a narrow and unhealthy way [*incurvata in se*].
 - When we try to look beyond ourselves, we simply disperse our loves among many things in the world that we love or want or think we need. After a while, we recognize that these things do not continue to satisfy and that, in giving ourselves to them, we have become less.
 - See *Confessions* X in Hazard, p. 17
 - Cf. Fénelon: "All earthly delights are sweeter in expectation than in enjoyment; but all spiritual pleasures more in fruition than expectation."

- When disordered loves deceive us, we find ourselves loving things and using people (even God), rather than loving people and using things.
 - “It is a perversion for people to want to enjoy money, but merely to make use of God. Such people do not spend money for the sake of God, but worship God for the sake of money” (*City of God* XI.25)
- The Spirit of Christ renews and rightly orders our loves, restoring us to health and to right relation with God and others (sometimes in remarkable ways in which the supernatural character of this love is more clearly manifest, as when a mother loves a sick, deformed child or a person weeps for another person’s sins even more than his own).
 - See *On the Trinity* X in Hazard, p. 86-87 [top half] and *City of God* XIV in Hazard, p. 132

(e) love as the means by which the soul ascends and returns to God by a conversion that affects the deepest levels of the self (see Jackson, "Faith, Hope and Charity and Prayer in St. Augustine"):

- In the early work *De quantitate animae*, Augustine considers the idea of a seven-stage ladder of spiritual ascent rising up through the created order and reaching to God the Creator.
 - ♣ In stage 4, the soul realizes its superiority to all of the physical creation and has a corresponding desire for purification from all that is base in the physical realm.
 - ♣ In stage 5, the soul, being purified, finds tranquility and happiness in itself.
 - ♣ In stage 6, the soul is moved to desire things beyond and above itself (by a rekindling of affection for a higher good/beauty, one turns away from and is purged from its misdirected love which looks to the created order/beauty for its fulfillment).
 - ♣ In stage, 7, the desire to contemplate the source of reality enables the soul to a perfect union of love and understanding.
- In Augustine's later works, Augustine replaces this Neoplatonic scheme (in which one moves progressively out of the material realm) with a scheme based on the Christian virtues of faith, hope and love (this trinity of spiritual virtues which leads up to God has an analogy to God's threefold inner life) and a two-stage desire-love distinction he introduces in the *De trinitate*. This allows a more positive interpretation to be given to the created order. Here the virtues can be regarded as the activities that distinguish the believer's life of prayer within the context of this present created existence and creates a dynamic which purifies the soul and leads it upward toward God.
 - ♣ The soul contains the triad of faith as the ground of hope that prepares one for loving communion with God. This progress makes possible the purification of the mind and a new orientation toward God and contemplation of God.

- ♣ Faith draws upon and makes use of temporal and material things but aims beyond itself at the higher goal of knowing and contemplating God.
 - ♣ Hope is the beginning of progress toward this higher, future goal of possessing the unseen good (eternal life with Christ), moving toward it by *desire* even while one is hindered by weakness, continued sinning and one's own mortality.
 - This desire creates a tension which reflects the restless, incomplete and unfulfilled aspect of our present existence: "If you want to be what you are not as yet, you must always be dissatisfied with what you are...Be ever increasing, every journeying, ever advancing; do not stop on the way, do not turn back, do not stray from the path."
 - ♣ Love is the fulfillment of desire, grasping the object of hope in an increasingly perfect manner, leading to everlasting joy. Here God is the end sought, not the means to obtain some other (created) end or goal (=a pure and disinterested love).
- Conversely, one who lacks true faith places all his or her hope in aspects of the created order and loves these created things as if they were one's true goal, in which one could find one's fulfillment and lasting joy (though in the end, when created things fail and prove inadequate, one is only able to lament their loss).
 - The movements of love are thus the origin not only of the virtues (when love is rightly ordered), but also of the false, passionate, carnal loves for created things (when not rightly ordered).
 - **Rightly ordered love is a sufficient condition for goodness, while a love that is not rightly ordered cannot properly be described as good:**
 - "For when we ask whether someone is a good man, we are not asking what he believes, or hopes, but what he loves."
 - "Whatever good is done by a human being and is not done for the reason that true wisdom commands that it be done, is good in so far as it is a right action (*officio*) but is sin in so far as its end (*fine*=goal) is not right."
 - This also means that if one has love, one will (by mutual implication) possess all the other virtues; if one does not have rightly ordered love, the other virtues will be lacking (apparent virtues apart from love are just that, i.e. apparent and not the genuine article). This is not applicable to individual acts but rather to settled dispositions and, contrary to the Stoics, allows for progress in advancing to greater degrees of the virtues:
 - Langan, p. 94: "**The central role that Augustine gives to charity leads him to turn from the assessment of particular actions in relation to the criteria for virtue to an evaluation of persons in their motivation and their relationship of love and faith to God, in whom they are to find ultimate happiness.**"
 - Charity is the central virtue and an offense against charity as the central (root) virtue is an act against the law and every virtue that issues from charity. Such an act diminishes charity (to a greater or

lesser extent. since not all sins are equal or of the same type): "he who sins more grievously deals a greater blow to charity, while he who sins more lightly wounds it less...Whoever has less charity has more sinfulness, but he who is perfect in charity has no remains of weakness."