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SYNTHETIC KINGDOM: THE SEDUCTION OF IDOLATRY

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SYNTHETIC KINGDOM

THE SEDUCTION OF IDOLATRY

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INTRODUCTION

Self-love and idolatry have been humanity's undoing. In this thesis I argue that it is only through a reordering and redirecting of its love towards the highest good, which is God, and with the help of the Church as a guide to do so, can humanity once again enjoy the purpose for which it was created – love of God and love of neighbor. Saint Augustine's *City of God* offers a discussion of how this state of ordering came to pass through comparing what he categorizes as the earthly city and the heavenly city. The earthly city is characterized by a love of self; the heavenly city by a love of God and neighbor. He asserts that the division has its root in pride, which is demonstrated in both the angelic realm in Lucifer's fall from grace and the human arena in the context of original sin. In this pride, there has been an elevation of the self in self-love, which has led to idolatry. This idolatry involves a turning from the highest good to lower goods, both to that of the self as a lower good and lower goods external to the self. However, the goods external to the self merely serve the mission of self-love to obtain fulfillment in the self. In his depiction of the nature of the two cities, Augustine offers a solution to the displacement of love. He affirms that it is the Church's obligation, as the Church is called to love *both* God and neighbor, to vigorously uphold this two-fold divine decree through uplifting the inhabitants of the earthly city to also pursue love of God and neighbor. The Church is to draw its neighbors towards love of God through the pursuit of common goods – not merely for the sake of peace, but for the sake of the earthly individual – in an effort to align the two cities with the will of God. However, he notes that through this engagement the Church is not to compromise its values, but should remain true to its identity in Christ.

Contemporary Augustinian voices deliver arguments as to how Augustine's vision can be applied today, insisting that his insight still holds significant value in the contemporary context. These voices include theologians: R. R. Reno, Todd Breyfogle and Robert Gascoigne. In this thesis, I show how and why society exhibits a corrupted disposition, seeking fulfillment in lower goods. I also identify the Church's role in society and offer a discussion on methods by which the Church is able to redirect humanity to its proper love of God and neighbor, for the sake of developing spiritual growth and the Kingdom of God. Both endeavors are accomplished through contemporary interpretations of Augustine's analysis.

Beginning with Augustine in Chapter I, I discuss the themes within *City of God* that enable the reader to understand how humanity's corruption came to pass. The manifestation of evil and how the two cities came to be, illuminates how evil is a privation of the good and is developed in self-love, and that this self-love originated among the angels, thus creating the two cities. The topic of original sin and why self-love does not yield self-fulfillment, describes how the two cities expanded to include humanity through original sin and explains that while in self-love the individual anticipates to experience self-fulfillment, the individual instead experiences a lack which can only be fulfilled in a return to love of God and love of neighbor. The examination of the three classes of goods, greater, intermediate, and lower, identifies humanity's relation to these goods and highlights how some goods are to be used, while others are to be enjoyed. A characterization of the nature of the two cities reveals how the love of self and the love of God are exhibited within the earthly city and the heavenly city respectively. Lastly, the Church's role is clarified and an explanation is given on how to maintain

heavenly citizenship. Augustine speaks on the Church's obligation to the earthly city in redirecting humanity's love from self-love to love of God and neighbor. He asserts that this is possible through engaging the earthly city on its terms without compromising the identity of the Church.

Chapters II, III and IV will detail the contemporary arguments of: Reno, Breyfogle, and Gascoigne. In Chapter II, R. R. Reno, Associate Professor of Theology at Creighton University, argues that idolatry is the primal sin rather than pride. He asserts that, beginning with the fall, the primal sin which is identified as pride is more properly identified as idolatry, since in the pursuit of self-love a trade of loves is made. To state more clearly, when Lucifer turned from love of God to love of self, he *traded* his love of God for self-love. There was a re-ordering of goods, misappropriating the self for the highest good, and this is idolatry. However, Reno also affirms Augustine's conclusion that this desire to turn from God stemmed from Lucifer's pride in himself. Yet, as Augustine himself identifies, it is the *action* of the *turning* which is the sin; therefore the primal sin is idolatry, not pride. Contending with pride is one thing, while *acting* on it in idolatry is another, which is when sin is committed.

Reno then introduces his concept of the logic of imitation which explains that the goal of pride is to be like God. In self-love, individuals aim to be their own authority, not having to contend with external limitations or be accountable to anyone. The mission of self-love is unsuccessful and because humans cannot find satisfaction in themselves, they turn to idolatry of other lower goods. He points out that sex is one of the most prevalent forms of idolatry and describes how it affected Augustine and how it affects contemporary society. Reno concludes his argument with a reflection on the pear theft

that occurred in Augustine's youth. Here he recognizes that in the act of theft Augustine's error was two-fold: 1) in the logic of imitation he was trying to be like God and 2) he also carried out a false sense of community. In stealing the pears, Augustine was also trying to establish himself among his peers and earn status among them. As a social creature, he yearned for community. This instance of the pear theft once again proves Reno's point that it is the act of pursuing idolatry, and not the pride it stems from, that is the primal sin.

Moving on to Chapter III, Todd Breyfogle, Director of Seminars for the Aspen Institute, offers three units of analysis for understanding the two competing loves: *societas* - the economy; *civitas* - the political realm; and *ecclesia* - the Church. Breyfogle argues that in all three levels, the commandment to love God and neighbor reveals humanity's social nature and that scripture points to this throughout numerous examples; two of which, that he utilizes in particular 1) the relationship of Adam and Eve in the event of original sin and 2) the construction of the Tower of Babel. In this examination he articulates how community can work both for and against humanity, depending upon whether it has its focus on God or on the self. He also emphasizes the role of the Church to shape humanity in aligning its will with God's and that only by doing so will humanity be able to experience fulfillment in enjoying the perfection of its nature.

Chapter IV makes use of several of Gascoigne's works. Robert Gascoigne, Professor and Head of the School of Theology at Australian Catholic University, details what the earthly city has come to value in its elevation of the self and how this is revealed through its behaviors and practices as individuals and with others. He illustrates the two concepts of tradition present within liberal society: tradition as constraint and tradition as resource. Tradition as constraint, representing the values of traditional society that seek to

guide society's behavior and practices by establishing limits and tradition as resource, which allows individuals to choose which values they will embrace and which they will reject. In using the term *liberal* society, Gascoigne means a society where traditions themselves no longer serve to manage individual freedom. Rather, as explained in tradition as resource, individuals select which traditions they will follow. He then identifies what society mistakes for freedom and how this is, in fact, idolatry. In order for humanity's love to turn from love of self to love of God, he stresses that there must be a comingling of the heavenly and the earthly citizens. The heavenly citizens are responsible for the earthly citizens and are obligated to persuade them in re-aligning their love. He writes that this can be done by the heavenly citizens engaging in peaceful service towards the earthly citizens, demonstrating the values of the Kingdom of God without explicitly addressing the Christian faith, unless the context of the situation calls for it. Therefore, the earthly citizens will not feel coerced in redirecting their love or see the service of the heavenly citizens as a transaction, service in exchange for conversion. He characterizes the nature of noninstrumental and instrumental relationships and explains how by practicing the three virtues within noninstrumental relationships – humility, reverence, and self-giving at the risk of self-loss – humanity can redirect its focus on the self to focus on God and community. In addition, he exemplifies how modern society already makes use of noninstrumental relationships in order to highlight how pursuing a common good does not entail a complete diminishment of the self, but rather a self-less outlook on one's priorities for the benefit of the community. Such a perspective can alleviate the fear of the earthly city of losing its sense of identity within community. He finishes his argument by supporting how the three virtues: humility, reverence, and self-giving at the

risk of self-loss, especially self-loss, are centralized in Christ. Gascoigne insists that by practicing these virtues, humanity will embody Christ's nature, thereby enabling the restoration of God as its highest good. These contemporary arguments contribute to the thesis in explaining how Augustine's work is significantly relevant to contemporary society and addressing how the restoration of humanity's true purpose can be facilitated by redirecting its love to God and neighbor.

I end the thesis with a brief conclusion, looking at the current state of society and the compromise in truth humanity makes with itself when it turns to idolatry in the pursuit of self-love. I also include a final note of encouragement for the Church to uphold its obligation to the earthly city in redirecting love of self to love of God and neighbor and that it is possible for humanity to overcome the seduction of idolatry. In the pursuit of self-love, humanity has abandoned the opportunity to experience fulfillment. Instead of obtaining freedom in self-love, humanity has become a slave to itself in idolatry. Only in love of God and neighbor can humanity break the bondage to lower goods and find enjoyment in the pursuit of the ultimate good.

CHAPTER I

AUGUSTINE'S *CITY OF GOD*

Introduction

In Saint Augustine's magnum opus, *The City of God*, Augustine addresses the perpetually controversial topic of how Christians are to live in this world while preparing themselves for the kingdom of heaven and maintaining their heavenly citizenship. In this robust composition, Augustine makes a distinction between a heavenly city and an earthly city. While the nature of the two cities are completely opposite as they are ruled by divisive loves, the love of God and neighbor versus the love of self, Augustine makes an argument that it is the Church's crucial, God-given duty to work with the citizens of the earthly city in re-aligning their love.¹ The difference between the two is not cause for the Church to isolate itself from the world or to ostracize the earthly city; rather, it is the Church's obligation to honor God through its effort to bring its neighbors to God and restore the purpose for which humanity was created.

¹ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 827. This argument can be seen in numerous places within *City of God*. However, the passages that most poignantly address this theme are succinctly noted on pages 827, 831, and 844 (located within Book XIX). Augustine emboldens the heavenly citizens in their responsibility to the earthly citizens in writing, "But as this divine Master inculcates two precepts – the love of God and the love of our neighbor – and in these precepts a man finds three things he has to love – God, himself, and his neighbor – and that he who loves God loves himself thereby, it follows that he must endeavor to get his neighbor to love God, since he is ordered to love his neighbor as himself. He ought to make this endeavor in behalf of [...] all within his reach." On page 831 he continues to say that the heavenly citizens are to lead the earthly citizens in re-aligning their love by first working with the earthly city on its level, but also through using their discernment as to not lose sight of their mission and instead incorrectly align the heavenly with the earthly city, "This heavenly city, then, while it sojourns on earth, calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace. It therefore is so far from rescinding and abolishing these diversities, that it even preserves and adapts them, so long only as no hindrance to the worship of the one supreme and true God is thus introduced." Finally, on page 844 he stresses how the heavenly citizens are to pray for the spiritual prosperity and well-being of the earthly city and its inhabitants, "it is our interest that it [the earthly city] enjoy this peace meanwhile in this life [...] the apostle also admonished the Church to pray for kings and those in authority, assigning as the reason, 'that we may live a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and love.'"

In order to accomplish this endeavor, Augustine details several key themes throughout *City of God* with the goal of individuals being able to understand how the division and strife between the two cities came to be. Through my interpretation of Augustine's analysis, I demonstrate how self-love has wormed its way into human history and what efforts the Church are obliged to undertake in order to eradicate it. In this interpretation, I begin to show how Augustine's understanding of humanity's defective movement accurately characterizes contemporary society's turning from God and how his vision of restoration can be applied in the context of modernity.

a. The Manifestation of Evil: How the Two Cities Came to Be. While one may think that the origination of the cities began with the original sin of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden or even with the creation of humans, Augustine asserts that the two cities originated among the angels. The cities only later expanded to include humans. To clarify, he is not suggesting that there are separate cities for angels and for humans; rather there is one city "composed of the good, the other of the wicked, angels or men indifferently."² Augustine stresses that the distinction between the angels who turned from God and those that clung to their Creator was not a difference in their nature as God created them both, rather it was a difference in their wills and desires.³ He writes that while some continued in pursuing the highest good – God – others became enamored with themselves and their power and sought to position themselves as their own good; thereby establishing themselves as their own private good. While Augustine maintains that God did not create the angels to have any faults whatsoever, just as with humanity God bestowed them with a will that could freely choose. While God created humans with

² Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 456.

³ Ibid.

the purpose to direct their love and will towards God and furthermore commands humans to do so, God does not coerce individuals to obey this command. Rather, individuals make the choice in how they will focus their love. However, to choose to turn from God injures human nature as it is contrary to its nature.⁴ This illustrates a fault that both the angels and humans have created in themselves, not a pre-existing trait. Augustine identifies this fault as pride and states that pride is the beginning of sin.⁵ By the angels preferring themselves to God, this does not result in a lack of nature, but rather a nature with an insufficient existence.⁶ Instead of their nature fulfilling their purpose of creation – to be aligned with God – their nature, lacking correct purpose, becomes altered in its ability to experience fulfillment, thereby having an existence which is truncated. He proceeds to address whether or not there exists an efficient cause of their evil will. While he recognizes that an evil will is the cause of an evil action, he resolves that nothing is the efficient cause of an evil will. The dilemma here then is to answer the question of how the *first* evil will became evil.

In order to understand what explains the first evil will, it is necessary to address the concept of evil. To illustrate this, I will borrow a simple example from Professor Herminia V. Reyes: the analogy of a doughnut.⁷ More specifically, the relationship of a doughnut to a doughnut hole. Imagine goodness as the substance of the doughnut, the dough, with evil lying in the middle of the doughnut, representing the hole. Without the

⁴ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 458.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 462.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ The doughnut analogy was an example constructed by philosophy professor, Herminia V. Reyes, delivered during an undergraduate lecture explaining the existence of evil and highlighting how it relates to the good. The lecture was given during the year 2008 at San Diego State University located in San Diego, California.

dough encircling the hole, the hole would cease to exist. Likewise, without a good nature to influence and deprave, evil cannot be present. In other words, evil cannot exist without good. Rather than evil being a substance in its own right, it is a privation.

In accordance with this illustration of the relationship between good and evil, Augustine writes that the first evil will did not experience any outside evil influence other than itself.⁸ However, he also asserts that it is impossible for an evil will to exist in an evil nature because the character of evil is to corrupt; therefore, it could not exist in something that has already been corrupted.⁹ Rather, it would be present in a nature that was originally good, though now corrupted.¹⁰ When evil does injury to a nature it does so by diminishing or taking away good.¹¹ So once again, Augustine takes up the task of explaining how is it that the first will became evil if evil did not exist prior to the corruption of the first will.

Augustine argues that since evil has not existed from eternity, that the first will must have been corrupted by something which had *no will*.¹² In other words this something was an inanimate object/thing. Whatever this thing was, Augustine explains that it could not have been superior to the angelic being for then it would be impossible for it not to have a will.¹³ By the same token, it could not be something equal to the

⁸ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 462-463.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 463.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

being.¹⁴ Ergo, that which corrupted the angelic nature must have been an inferior thing lacking a will. This notion of superior and inferior things lends itself to Augustine's idea of an ordering of goods which will be discussed shortly. He clarifies that simply because this inferior thing is inferior it does not mean that it is bad in itself; rather it is most certainly a good as it was created by God with its own proper "nature and being, with a form and rank of its own in its own kind and order."¹⁵ Regardless, the will corrupted itself when it turned to this inferior thing. Augustine insists that when the will forsakes what is superior to itself (this being God, who is superior to all) and *turns* to what is inferior (equal to or lower than the self) it becomes evil.¹⁶ It is the action of the *turning itself* that is wretched, rather than the thing to which it turns. The *turning* to lower goods is what corrupts the will. He warns, "he who inordinately loves the good which any nature possesses, even though he obtain it, himself becomes evil in the good, and wretched because deprived of a greater good."¹⁷ The first evil will, being Lucifer, along with the third of heaven he took with him, became enamored of their own capabilities that God had given them. They turned from love of God to love of self and strove to be their own gods. As Isaiah 14:12-14 states regarding Lucifer, "For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above

¹⁴ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 463.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 466.

the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.”¹⁸ This event of the fall from heaven marks the origination of the two cities, which expanded to include humans when Adam and Eve underwent temptation in the garden of Eden. However, self-love is not sufficient and inevitably turns to idolatry of other lower goods external to the self. The will that loves the self in a selfish manner can never be satisfied and find fulfillment in the self as this goes against its nature and purpose. It therefore migrates to set its love on other lower goods, hoping to find fulfillment in something other than God.

b. On Original Sin and Why Self-Love Does Not Yield Self-Fulfillment.

Augustine writes that Adam and Eve succumbed to disobedience because they were already secretly corrupted.¹⁹ He insists that they already had become subject to pride in self-love and love of lower goods.²⁰ They became more dedicated to each other rather than remain loyal in their commitment to God and saw each other as a source of fulfillment, no longer needing to cleave so closely to God.²¹ The role of the devil merely

¹⁸ While in the biblical context of Isaiah 14, Isaiah is referring to the fall of the King of Babylon, he also parallels the king’s fall with that of Lucifer’s fall from heaven.

¹⁹ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 549.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 548. Augustine writes that Adam “transgressed God’s law [...] by the drawings of kindred yielded to the woman, the husband to the wife, the one human being to the only other human being.” By including this note, I believe one could interpret that in Augustine saying, “the one human being to the only other human being,” that in their kinship of species and more specifically in Eve being created from Adam, that Adam and Eve saw each other as the completion of one another. In only being two of them to represent the human race, and one having been created out of the other, they understood that a certain aspect of fulfillment could be enjoyed in one another as a couple. However, they improperly oriented their love towards one another in focusing it not in their love for each other in God, but loving each other as in the other being their other half. Without the other half, they would be incomplete. So, in fact, their love for each other was based in what the other had to offer them in potential self-fulfillment. Therefore, this reveals that their love for the other was rooted in self-love, giving consideration of the other only so far as it benefited the self in seeking self-fulfillment. Furthermore, this love having its root in self-love is exhibited in the way Adam acknowledges his sin – through blaming Eve. His love for her does not motivate him to respond to God in humility, acknowledging his sinful behavior, instead he puts all the fault on her. This act of blame further exemplifies Adam’s self-love as now it is evident that he was not properly loving Eve.

served to give them that extra push to further their evil will to bring about evil action.²² Augustine maintains that the serpent could not have lured them into doing what God had forbidden had they not already begun to live for themselves.²³ In addition, the temptation they fell prey to was the same desire and sin as Lucifer, to be like God. Augustine recognizes the irony in this as they would have been able to accomplish being more like God by obediently adhering to God rather than seeking to live for themselves as their own gods and satisfy their craving for undue exaltation.²⁴ Augustine also notes that there was another factor in their turning away from God. Unlike with Eve, Adam was not deceived by the serpent's promise; rather Augustine suggests that he yielded to and joined Eve in her sin because "the man could not bear to be severed from his only companion, even though this involved a partnership in sin."²⁵ Here it seems that Adam gave in to Eve in order to maintain a sense of community and unity out of his love for her.

As humans are called to love God, they are also called to love each other. However, to choose to love the self or others over loving God is a misdirection and incorrect ordering of humanity's love and results in dire consequences as demonstrated with humanity's first parents. In *On Christian Teaching*, Augustine discusses how

When Adam partook of the knowledge of good and evil, Augustine believes it was to share in communion with Eve; however, Adam did it to exalt himself. While Augustine does not perpetuate this argument, instead he upholds a more romantic outlook on Adam's sin, I assert it is possible to maintain such an interpretation through the evaluation of Adam's actions. For if he had truly been loving Eve properly, having his love for her rooted in love of God, he would have encouraged her to confess her sin to God rather than join her in her corrupt behavior.

²² Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 551.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 548.

individuals are to properly love themselves and each other. Through this discussion, one is able to understand how Adam and Eve related to each other inappropriately since their love for each other was improperly ordered and not rooted in love of God. Augustine describes how the love of the individual for the self and for others is to be directly related to the individual's love for God. In addition, because humans are lower goods, individuals must also see the human as a good that has a proper use and enjoyment in its relation to God. Augustine writes that though humans have been called to love each other, it is important to know whether the individual should love the other for their own account or for another reason.²⁶ He explains that if the individual should love the other on their own account, then that individual is enjoying the other. If the individual loves the other for a different reason, then the individual is using the other.²⁷

While initially it seems that loving someone for anything other than their own account would be wrong, Augustine states, "In my opinion, he should be loved for another reason."²⁸ He justifies his opinion in explaining how by loving someone for their own account, individuals are incorrectly putting their "hopes" in another as a form of "consolation" in this temporal life.²⁹ By loving that person for their own sake, individuals are improperly ordering their love towards a lower good. He elaborates on this in saying that an individual is also not to enjoy oneself for one's own sake for this is also a misordering of goods that mimics self-love, "if he loves himself on his own account, he

²⁶ Saint Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H.Green. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 16-17.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

does not relate himself to God, but turns to himself [...and] it is with a certain insufficiency that he enjoys himself.”³⁰ Rather, individuals are to love themselves on account of the one who is the “most proper object” of their love, this being God, and others should understand that individuals love them properly when they do so on account of their love for God.³¹ He summarizes his logic of proper use and enjoyment by asserting that a person who loves his neighbor properly should have their love rooted in love of God. In doing so, “he relates his love of himself and his neighbor entirely to the love of God, which allows not the slightest trickle to flow away from it and thereby diminish it.”³²

In seeking to be their own satisfaction, God abandoned Adam and Eve to themselves to live in the notion of freedom they desired. Yet, Adam and Eve would forever be unsatisfied with themselves – in desiring to be more than what they were created for they became less; in their ambition to be self-sufficient they fell away from the only one that could complete them.³³ Being that humans were created to direct their love toward something other than themselves, this something being God, self-love can never fulfill human nature and purpose. In the absence of God, humanity gives way to other lower goods by practicing idolatry, and desperately seeking substitutes for its great loss. As time goes on this search becomes magnified and even more potent in distracting humanity from what it has lost as well as in its attempts to convince individuals that the

³⁰ Saint Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H.Green. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 551.

goods this world offers can bring their souls peace and fulfillment. For in the project to elevate the self in self-love, humanity realizes that it has nothing to offer itself. Individuals cannot simply, selfishly love themselves and expect to receive love in return. They can only experience true love and fulfillment in their relationship with God and each other in community with God. Being that humanity's first parents rejected this relationship and instead embraced a distortion of love, they supplied the ground work for a humanity seeking solace in lower goods and elevating them as the highest good in order to avoid feeling the weight of their loneliness and the regret of their error. However, these temporal goods can only provide temporal, fleeting tranquility. Thus, the search for fulfillment continuously evolves into a journey of never-ending sadness and desperation.

c. Of the Three Classes of Goods: Greater, Intermediate, and Lower. In

his text, *On Free Choice of the Will*, Augustine describes three classes of goods: great, intermediate, and lowest.³⁴ Great goods are considered to be the virtues by which humans live rightly. Not only are they great because they guide individuals how to live rightly, but they also cannot be used for evil. It is impossible to do so because the very action of a virtue is the correct use of those things, other goods, which can be used for evil.³⁵ He classifies lower goods as anything that possesses physical beauty, which includes bodily pleasures, and can be used for either good or evil – these goods are considered mutable.³⁶ He continues to say that when individuals desire and turn to something external to or

³⁴ Saint Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Anna S. Benjamin and L. H. Hackstaff (NY: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), 80-81.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

lower than themselves they are working towards their private good which is a sin.³⁷ External goods are characterized as the private affairs of others or whatever is none of the individual's concern.³⁸ For example, engaging in idle gossip about someone in order to elevate oneself. Augustine proceeds to define intermediate goods as the "powers of the spirit" without which humans cannot live rightly.³⁹ However, like the lower goods they are mutable and can be used for good or evil. Among the intermediate goods is the human will that can choose freely.⁴⁰ Ideally the human will should choose to seek out and cling to immutable goods which are the greatest goods, otherwise known as the virtues, goods that are not private but common such as: truth, wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance.⁴¹ Furthermore, individuals should seek to cling to the Creator of all these immutable goods, God. When humans make this choice, Augustine asserts that they will lead a happy and fulfilling life reflecting the correct disposition of their soul.⁴² He affirms that such a life is their proper and primary good.⁴³ In essence, none of these aforementioned goods are evil in themselves; rather, evil is committed when the will *turns* from immutable goods towards mutable goods. It is in the *turning itself*, Augustine

³⁷ Saint Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Anna S. Benjamin and L. H. Hackstaff (NY: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), 82.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 80-81.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 81.

⁴¹ Ibid., 81-82

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 82.

deems this as the “motions of the soul.”⁴⁴ Augustine assures his reader that since this turning is a matter of choice, individuals have the power to control their desires and actions. He simply states that if one does not desire something it will not exist.⁴⁵ In other words, if one does not choose to desire something the temptation of the desire will not exist. To utilize an example, should a husband desire to have an adulterous relationship, the temptation to engage in one will exist. But as long as he does not desire this, the temptation to commit adultery is not present. He writes with great confidence that there can be no greater security and comfort than to live a life in which what one does not will cannot happen.⁴⁶

Ensuring that individuals live a happy and fulfilling life can be done by ordering these goods properly. Augustine writes that “order is the distribution which allots things equal and unequal, each to its own place.”⁴⁷ Throughout his philosophy, Augustine argues that humanity is to focus its love on the greatest goods; it is not to give importance to, but instead make use of, the intermediate and lower goods. In pursuing these greater goods, it is the individual’s life journey to express their love for the highest good, this being God. Augustine adds that in this expression, it is necessary to make use of lesser goods. Augustine makes a distinction between these greater and lesser goods by saying

⁴⁴ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 535.

⁴⁵ Saint Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Anna S. Benjamin and L. H. Hackstaff (NY: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), 84. In this text, Augustine is confident in asserting the individual’s ability to freely choose greater goods under God’s grace and to avoid contending with temptation. However, he writes in later works, such as *On Grace and Free Will*, that the determination of the individual will to simply not desire something (thereby avoiding temptation) is not enough. The individual inevitably deals with temptation and must engage in prayer in order to be delivered from it.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 824.

that there are some things which are to be enjoyed, some to be used, and some that can be both enjoyed and used.⁴⁸ Those which are to be enjoyed consist of the greater goods which make individuals truly happy and joyful. Those which are to be used help individuals work towards achieving these greater goods. However, while it is possible to both use and enjoy the lesser goods, Augustine cautions that humanity should temper this enjoyment. For if individuals choose to give preference to the lower goods that are to be used, they will not obtain the greatest goods that are to be enjoyed; thus misordering their love. For example, it is fine to enjoy the taste of food as it is used for nourishment, but it is not good to succumb to gluttony as it displaces utility in favor of enjoyment.

Augustine further illustrates this misappropriation through describing how individuals use their eyes. He notes that with the eyes humans see light and can distinguish various forms.⁴⁹ They use them for keeping themselves and others safe and for serving humanity in various ways.⁵⁰ However, with the eyes the individual can also commit shameful acts or use them to savor the things they observe and internalize them to create perverse thoughts.⁵¹ For example, say an individual is very attractive. While there is nothing wrong with appreciating physical beauty, choosing to harbor this observation for the purpose of developing lustful thoughts is a misuse of the faculty of sight. This exploitation of the eyes is consumptive and corruptive as it derails the individual from setting their sights on the eternal; rather, the individual chooses to

⁴⁸ Saint Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H.Green. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 9.

⁴⁹ Saint Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Anna S. Benjamin and L. H. Hackstaff (NY: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), 79.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

languish in the temporal. This example also portrays a distortion in human relationships by the individual objectifying another. By ordering these three classes of goods correctly, knowing what is to be used and what is to be enjoyed, and putting this knowledge into action, humans can expect to live a life that is in accordance with the nature and purpose with which God created them.

d. The Nature of the Two Cities. The main difference between the inhabitants of the earthly city and the heavenly city is that the former live according to the flesh while the latter according to the spirit. In other words, one lives according to humankind, the other according to God. Augustine cites 1 Corinthians 3:3 to substantiate his claim that walking according to humanity and carnality are the same, “For whereas there is among you envying and strife, are ye not carnal, and walk according to man?” Augustine advances this verse by stating that living according to humankind/the flesh is to live by the love of self, even to the hatred of God, while to live by God/the spirit is to live even to the hatred of self, as the former finds glorification in the self, the latter in God.⁵² While he is not suggesting that the individual should hate the self or that this is necessary in order to glorify God, this stark contrast between love of God and love of self is meant to emphasize how the individual is to highly prize the love of God over the self.

He moves on to discuss the character of those individuals who are upheld and considered wise in the earthly city – those who others look to follow. He notes that they seek nothing more than that which benefits their own bodies or souls, or both, and that those who have known God were not thankful for their blessings, but instead turned to

⁵² Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 569.

their vain imaginations and now relish in what they believe is their own wisdom.⁵³ In other words, the wise people of the earthly city have turned to self-love and are now overcome with pride and behaving in an idolatrous manner.⁵⁴ In the heavenly city, its citizens recognize that the only wisdom that exists is God's wisdom.⁵⁵ Furthermore, while Augustine acknowledges that the earthly citizens have made certain achievements that are to be commended, he writes that because the intention and motivation for these achievements was not godly, they did not receive rewards from God. More specifically, he writes that the Romans had two main stimuli that drove them to carry out their actions: "liberty and the desire of human praise."⁵⁶ Augustine highlights that the Romans achieved the following: amended their personal affairs for the greater good of the republic; curbed their greed for the benefit of gaining capital; embraced freedom, yet came together to discuss what was best for the country; and did not fall prey to what they deemed to be criminal or lustful.⁵⁷ Through these achievements they have received various accolades and have been recognized as magnificent among many nations.⁵⁸ While their pursuits were not bad in themselves, the motivation for them was spurred on in order to receive praise from individuals rather than glorify God; as such, their actions

⁵³ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 570.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 200.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 197.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

cannot be considered holy. Because of this, Augustine suggests they have received their just reward by receiving humanity's acknowledgment.⁵⁹

In addition, while the earthly city has accomplished some good it is often in strife within itself in misunderstandings, polemical politics, and even wars for it always seeks to dominate in some form.⁶⁰ It is always in a state of either being riddled with anxieties concerning individuals that may seek to do it harm or puffed up with pride over its latest victory.⁶¹ Augustine asserts that the desire to enjoy earthly goods is what causes this conflict.⁶² Also, he suggests that this conflict is heightened not only because earthly citizens confuse the things that are to be used with things that are to be enjoyed, but because there is a perceived lack of earthly goods to be distributed amongst humanity.⁶³ The perception that there is a lack of resources is not necessarily correct. This notion exists due to the consumptive characteristic of earthly citizens. Because they *want* far more than they *need*, they believe that humanity does not have enough resources. This characteristic stems from their desperation to supplant God, the highest good, with lower goods. Therefore, the insatiable appetite present in the citizens of the earthly city will only allow peace to be temporary, finding themselves mostly experiencing strife on some level. Their consumptive nature blinds them to this truth and as their appetites increase so does the level of conflict. The consumer culture further perverts the relationships among individuals in diminishing the importance of community for the sake of the individual

⁵⁹ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 197.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 575.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 575-576.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

and in doing so perpetuates the objectification of the other for the personal gain of the self. In a society where there is a perceived lack of goods, others become the means by which the individual can acquire the goods they seek.

While Augustine highlights that many woes can befall the earthly city, he states that the heavenly city cannot afford to be antisocial or isolate itself in an attempt to avoid conflict, otherwise it would prove to be impossible for it to serve its purpose and proceed towards its divine destiny.⁶⁴ Furthermore, God has asked individuals not only to love God but the neighbor as well. As such humanity finds itself called to love three things: God, oneself, and the neighbor – “and that he who loves God loves himself thereby, it follows that he must endeavor to get his neighbor to love God, since he is ordered to love his neighbor as himself.”⁶⁵

e. The Church’s Role and How to Maintain Heavenly Citizenship. In order to for the individual to draw the neighbor towards God, citizens of the heavenly city must live their lives adhering to God’s commandments and serve as a model for others.⁶⁶ As witnesses of the Christian life, citizens of the earthly city will inquire as to what it is that makes Christians thrive and contributes to who they are as a people. Such curiosity followed by testimony can allow the Church to create a community of individuals dedicated to living according to God’s word and loving each other *outside* the heavenly city. It is the Christian responsibility to aid the neighbor and as such Christians should encourage an intermixing of the two cities. To be clear, this does not mean that the

⁶⁴ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 813.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 827.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 833.

Church should adopt the mentality of self-love and idolatry of the earthly city; rather, by combining the cities the Church is able to be an example to and guide the earthly citizens and aid them in their journey home to God. In modeling the Christian life, Augustine notes that there are three modes of life the Christian can follow: contemplative, active, and composite.⁶⁷ He insists that so long as the Christian's faith is not compromised and they do not neglect their obligation to truth and duty, they may choose to follow any of the three modes of life.⁶⁸ Regardless of which is chosen, all three modes must dedicate leisure time not to empty headed pursuits, but rather to the "investigation or discovery of truth."⁶⁹ Furthermore, if the type of life the Christian chooses offers them position and influence they are to use this for the benefit of the community and never allow themselves to become susceptible to pride simply because they have attained a higher position than others.⁷⁰

Augustine advances his discussion of how individuals are to act as citizens of the heavenly city while comingled with the earthly city by reminding them that they are not to find rest in the earthly goods and advantages of this life as they are pilgrims in this world.⁷¹ As sojourners striving to make their way back home, individuals are to seek the promised eternal blessings and use the advantages of this earth not as distractions from God, but as resources to aid them in enduring the trials and tribulations they encounter

⁶⁷ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 833.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 830.

that seek to corrupt the body and the soul.⁷² In addition, he says the main cause of discord among the two cities is that while those belonging to the heavenly city make *use* of the things which are to be used, thus rightly ordering their love, those belonging to the earthly city *enjoy* the things that are to be used and find that the behavior of Christians is obnoxious and stirs them to anger due to the differing mentalities and priorities.⁷³ What seems to be the cause of their anger is the conviction they experience for continuing to inappropriately order their love and the challenge this is to their way of life. Such perturbation, while misplaced, is understandable. When one encounters another individual or group of individuals that differ so dramatically from oneself, for example, one is shaken up and prompted to question oneself. This questioning furthers the discomfort as one is confronted with great truths that threaten to shatter what one has built up as truth. To undergo such a mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual strain can be overwhelming and to come to the realization that one has been wrong, misled, or both is quite a shock. Not everyone is willing to go through the process that will ultimately change one's life forever. If one is especially content pursuing one's particular lifestyle, one will continue to deny and indeed find Christianity obnoxious.

While the heavenly inhabitants are in the state of pilgrimage, they should avail themselves of earthly peace in so far as it does not injure their faith and godliness and “maintains a common agreement among men regarding the acquisition of the necessities of life.”⁷⁴ In other words, both the heavenly and the earthly city should strive to agree

⁷² Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 830.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 833.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 832.

upon how lower goods are to be used and the means by which they are to be obtained. This agreement is crucial as the use of temporal things is directly tied to earthly peace.⁷⁵ This indicates that the Church is to be engaged in the ratification and upholding of temporal law. Therefore, Augustine writes, humanity must strive to achieve a well ordered harmonious relationship of knowledge and action.⁷⁶ However, Augustine warns that due to the “liability” of the human mind, the pursuit of knowledge may ensnare the individual unless they remain focused on God.⁷⁷ If the individual were to take the knowledge they gain and use it to exalt themselves, they would be committing the sin of self-love and idolatry. He also discusses that it is the responsibility of the Church to pray on behalf of the earthly citizens.⁷⁸ Here he quotes 1 Timothy 2:1-4, “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”⁷⁹ Augustine concludes his instruction for the Church by reminding it that while the Church should expect to encounter resistance, by being steadfast in its commitment to love both God and neighbor, the actions of the Church are honorable and bring glory to God.⁸⁰ Moreover, nothing can be more rewarding than to know God’s love and spread it among

⁷⁵ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 826.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 826-827.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 827.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 844.

⁷⁹ The italicized emphasis in the verse is within the original context of 1 Timothy 2:1-4.

⁸⁰ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 846.

God's people so that humanity may be unified in the beatific vision of perfect, everlasting community.

Concluding Remarks

Through the themes of the origination of evil, the goods that are to be used and the goods that are to be enjoyed, and the nature of the two cities, the Church is able to gain a better understanding of how to approach its relationship with the earthly city while maintaining its heavenly citizenship. I have shown, through Augustine, how the Church can work with its neighbors who are citizens of the earthly city by making the effort to strive for common goods among the two cities and serve as an example of how individuals ought to live in order to encourage the earthly citizens to do the same; thereby, peacefully combatting their inclination towards self-love. In addition, as Augustine informs, by being aware that human propensity toward self-love can be controlled by the individual, individuals should take comfort and delight in knowing that it is *their* choices and theirs alone that dictate their future. By aligning the choices of their will with the purpose for which they were created, the dual command to love God and neighbor, they are empowered with the ability to overcome the seduction of idolatry and can experience true fulfillment in God.

CHAPTER II

RENO – IDOLATRY AS THE PRIMAL SIN

Introduction

In his article, *Pride and Idolatry*, R. R. Reno gives an analysis of Augustine's account of human behavior and concludes that idolatry, rather than pride, is the primordial expression of sin.⁸¹ He argues that Augustine's philosophy of sin having its beginning in self-love is consistent with and further develops the prevalent concern of idolatry found throughout the bible.⁸² Reno argues that, beginning with Lucifer's fall, the primal sin which is identified as pride is more properly identified as idolatry. He asserts that by Lucifer turning from love of God to love of self, a trade of loves was made. In self-love, Lucifer traded the love of the highest good, love of God, for the love of lower goods. However, Reno also supports Augustine's assessment that this self-love stemmed from pride. Yet, as Augustine identifies, it is the *action* of the *turning* which is the sin; thereby the primal sin being idolatry, not pride.

Reno elaborates on where this pride comes from in his concept of the logic of imitation which explains that pride's goal is to be like God. Self-love aims to be the source of its own authority, not subjected to the authority of another's will. Because this endeavor proves to be impossible, self-love adopts the idolatry of lower goods external to itself. He then addresses how sex is one of the most dominant forms of idolatry and describes its effects on Augustine and contemporary society. Reno concludes his argument with a reflection on Augustine's pear theft. In the theft, Reno stresses that Augustine's error was more than simply carrying-out self-love in the logic of imitation,

⁸¹ Russell R. Reno, "Pride and Idolatry," *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (2006): 166.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 168.

as he also carried out a false sense of community. He writes that this event once again proves his point that it is the *action* of pursuing idolatry, and not the pride it stems from, that is the primal sin.

a. The Fall. Reno begins by discussing Augustine’s reading of Genesis 3 in which Augustine describes the fall of the corrupted angels. Reno insists that from Augustine’s perspective, angels are not only spiritual beings, but also have a “metaphysical transparency” that illuminates questions that would be otherwise conceptually challenging.⁸³ He writes that unlike humans, angels are completely governed by their reason. Angels do not experience bodily impediment or carnal desires, they have everything they will ever need and as such do not need to concern themselves with means of survival or the fear of experiencing physical pain or death.⁸⁴ By not being clouded with such details, angels are able to enjoy total clarity when it comes to their purpose in relation to God – they can all the more perfectly follow God’s twofold command to love God with all their freedom and love each other.⁸⁵ These creatures are wholly capable of devoting themselves to the highest good. However, in spite of their capacity for perfection, angels and humans are on the same level regarding their action and their love.⁸⁶ They were both bestowed with a free will that allows them to choose how they will order their love and what actions they will take to express their love. As such, angels cannot act randomly – so there had to be a motive for their rebellion from

⁸³ Russell R. Reno, “Pride and Idolatry,” *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (2006): 171.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

God.⁸⁷ Once fallen, these angels – creatures created with the dual purpose to love God and each other – cannot simply renounce their love of God for no love at all.⁸⁸ Rather, their love of God is exchanged and it is here where Augustine identifies and details their primal sin.⁸⁹ Augustine describes that while some angels remained in their loyalty and dedication to the highest good which is God, others marveled and delighted in their own power, the power God had given them, and sought to be their own good by turning to a lesser good – themselves.⁹⁰ He states that this turning from God the Creator, who is the greatest good, to what God has created marks the emergence of sin. Reno writes, by Augustine’s analysis of the downfall of the angels, Augustine rightly identifies the primal *form* of sin to be pride, pride as an expression of self-love, but not the actual primal sin.⁹¹

b. The Logic of Imitation. Leaving the discussion of the angels behind, Reno then proceeds to speak on self-love from the human perspective. Carrying over the outlook of individuals seeing themselves as their own good due to self-love, Reno names this mentality the “logic of imitation,” more specifically, “the imitation of God.”⁹² This theory of imitation can be seen in Augustine’s drama of the pear theft. When considering the motivation behind his action of stealing the pears, Augustine insists that his desire was not for evil – following his understanding of creation and human action, it would

⁸⁷ Russell R. Reno, “Pride and Idolatry,” *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (2006): 171.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 456-457.

⁹¹ Russell R. Reno, “Pride and Idolatry,” *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (2006): 171.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 175.

have been impossible for Augustine to desire evil.⁹³ Instead, he was seeking to embody a divine trait.⁹⁴ Reno suggests that Augustine did not want the pears; rather he took pleasure in the ability to capriciously take them.⁹⁵ He continues to say that Augustine rightly diagnosed that he did not desire the shame that came with the theft, what he wanted was to be able to put himself in a position of authority, God's authority, and declare, "To hell with limitations. I make the rules!"⁹⁶ Augustine's pleasure in the act was derived from the psychological freedom one experiences when one has gotten away with doing something that goes against convention or effectively usurps authority. Reno writes that individuals relish in the "aroma of omnipotence and invulnerability."⁹⁷ Like Augustine, individuals embrace "transgression for the sake of freedom" and according to Augustine, this embrace has its root in the individual's desire to be like God. However, in abusing personal liberty, the only thing the individual achieves is a distorted image of God.⁹⁸

c. Turning to Idolatry. Pride falls short as individuals strive to make themselves the highest good and achieve self-fulfillment. Individuals are not successful in this endeavor for they have nothing to offer themselves save the reality that they are creatures not Creators and that they can only be fulfilled and find true enjoyment in God. Unfortunately when pride fails, it does not convert to its opposite of humility, rather it

⁹³ Russell R. Reno, "Pride and Idolatry," *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (2006): 175.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 175-176.

manifests itself into a further degeneration or what Reno dubs, “a perversion of a perversion.”⁹⁹ This corruption is revealed in humanity’s dedication to idolatry of both God’s creation and the things of its own making.¹⁰⁰ Such a transition denotes how lonely humanity is in the solitude of self-love and demonstrates that in this desperate attempt to give its love to something other than God, humanity is bent on convincing itself that the things it enjoys are indeed the greatest goods.¹⁰¹ However, this illusion of the divine can never satisfy humanity. As Augustine writes, human beings are created by God and their love is to be directed towards their Creator.¹⁰² Because of this, humans can never know true happiness and fulfillment unless they worship God – “because you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you¹⁰³ [...] our home is your eternity.”¹⁰⁴

Regarding the instability of self-love, Reno asserts that due to the fact that individuals cannot find rest in themselves, it is crucial they persuade themselves that the perverse manner in which they have constructed their lives is in reality a suitable and proper approach for honoring and glorifying the highest good.¹⁰⁵ He describes how in order to do this, individuals focus their attention on bonding their self-love to the love of worldly things and drape them “in the false tinsel of divinity and propose them to

⁹⁹ Russell R. Reno, “Pride and Idolatry,” *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (2006): 173.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1961), 21.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 90.

¹⁰⁵ Russell R. Reno, “Pride and Idolatry,” *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (2006): 176.

ourselves as idols worthy of worship.”¹⁰⁶ This method of denial and deceit paves the way for individuals to wickedly pursue the lower goods exalted in society as if they were themselves divine.¹⁰⁷ Relating this notion of self-deception to the arguments to come of Breyfogle and Gascoigne, this corrupt strategy which perpetuates the devotion to lesser goods also develops an over-emphasis in the nature of *societas* and *civitas* over that of *ecclesia*, or in terms Gascoigne would use, an emphasis in liberal society over the values of the heavenly city. Humanity becomes concerned with trivial matters instead of working with the Church to advance its mission of appropriately ordering humanity’s love and establishing community.

Reno affirms that the transition from pride to idolatry is not surprising. He states that because humans are made to love, they desire to share their love with others rather than use self-exaltation as the basis for happiness and fulfillment.¹⁰⁸ As Augustine writes, using a sexual metaphor similar to those that can be found in scripture when referring to the nature of spiritual life, the soul fornicates when it turns away from God while seeking pure and good intentions which of course cannot be found except by a return to God.¹⁰⁹ He continues in saying that all who abandon God and choose to enlarge themselves merely imitate God in a corrupt fashion.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, those who partake of this rebellion and imitation only demonstrate that in fact they are not the Creator, but rather

¹⁰⁶ Russell R. Reno, “Pride and Idolatry,” *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (2006): 176.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁰⁹ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1961), 50.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

God's creation.¹¹¹ Reno writes that because the individual cannot find fulfillment in the self by following self-love, the individual subscribes to the *idea* of following self-love through idolatry.¹¹² Individuals are unable to live according to their true nature, but they can develop a philosophy of natural existence.¹¹³ While humanity cannot live for itself in self-love, it embraces the practice of egoism.¹¹⁴ In the quest to find solace in the self, humanity will inevitably find this expression in idolatry.¹¹⁵ Following Augustine, Reno warns that in turning away from God the individual fornicates with idols, self-love becomes "the projection of finite loves onto the screen of a tin foil infinite."¹¹⁶

However, in modern society, people do not always identify the pursuit of idolatry with its root of self-love. What is evident is that this pursuit has evolved from its origin of pride into materialism and consumerism. Reno asserts that modern society, as it is preoccupied with individualism, has done away with the majority of traditional constraints and values that past societies incorporated into their daily behaviors and practices.¹¹⁷ As such, contemporary society has become more susceptible to its desires and exposed to advertising which seeks to stir its passions all the more.¹¹⁸ What individuals would have once considered as their "wants" have now taken the guise of their "needs." To utilize Gascoigne's terminology, without tradition as constraint and

¹¹¹ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1961), 50.

¹¹² Russell R. Reno, "Pride and Idolatry," *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (2006): 180.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

noninstrumental relationships to keep humanity accountable, humanity views material goods as desirable resources to elevate the self or as things that should be elevated. In addition, society has rationalized this perspective into encouraging people to “stimulate the economy” as a national good. Materialism now becomes characterized as patriotism. One recent example of this mentality and the initiative being propagated was during the presidency of George W. Bush. Bush realized that the economic boom of the 1990s was coming to a close and that the United States was going to head into a recession within the next ten years.¹¹⁹ In addition, there had been a surplus in the 2000 fiscal year and Bush asserted that these unspent government funds belonged to the people and not the government.¹²⁰ He suggested that issuing tax cuts would be advantageous as it would encourage the American people to spend *more* of their money in order to stimulate the economy.¹²¹ So when Bush promoted that Americans use their buying power in order to circumvent the impending recession, it was portrayed as patriotic to go headfirst into a shopping spree. With the country supporting humanity’s idolatrous tendencies, individuals further succumb to their desires and occupy their minds with the pursuit and acquisition of lower goods. Materialism and consumerism further become integrated as valid ways of life and the individual is encouraged to partake of a lifestyle that humanity as a whole sees as beneficial.

¹¹⁹ Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “Bush Lost Battle Over the Surplus, But Won Tax Cut War: Public Opinion History,” (Pew Research Center: May 11, 2011) <http://www.people-press.org/2011/05/11/bush-lost-battle-over-the-surplus-but-won-tax-cut-war/> (accessed April 18, 2013).

¹²⁰ Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, “George W. Bush,” (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.: n. d.), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_w._bush (accessed April 18, 2013).

¹²¹ Ibid.

In addition, beginning at least by the 1920s when the Federal Reserve started using credit, Americans have been living beyond their means.¹²² With the advent of credit, individuals are also encouraged to buy more than what they can afford and turn to lesser goods for pleasure. Humanity's campaign dedicated to normalize the temptation of self-love and pursue idolatry alters the individual's sense of fulfillment and deters them from coming to the realization that they can only be fulfilled in God. In the name of profit, consumerism utilizes market research and focus group results in order to produce television commercials, sitcoms, celebrity endorsements, films, etc. that will appeal to individuals and propel the distortion of self-love and idolatry. Instead of individuals focusing on directing their love towards love of God and neighbor their minds are kept busy, distracted by the things of this world.

Augustine, having to endure the same type of distraction, discusses how it affected him. He writes that at thirty years old he found himself still struggling with the entrapments the world had to offer.¹²³ In the greedy effort to simply enjoy what should be used, any true possible enjoyment eluded him and left him progressively more discouraged.¹²⁴ Throughout his struggle Augustine had been deceiving himself with one lie after another, proposing to himself that he would soon discover the source of happiness and be able to perpetuate an un-ending enjoyment from it; but he knew that by following the ways of the earthly city, it would never come to fruition.¹²⁵ Knowing that this was the case, he realized what he must do: namely, abandon his expectation of

¹²² Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, "Roaring Twenties," (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.: n. d.), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roaring_Twenties (accessed April 18, 2013).

¹²³ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1961), 126.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

finding fulfillment in these lower goods and dedicate himself completely to serving God, who is the greatest good.¹²⁶ Despite this understanding, it was difficult for him to ward off temptation, for the earthly life portrays itself as being good and pleasurable.¹²⁷ He states, “Day after day I postponed living in you, but I never put off the death which I died each day in myself [...] *danger loved is death won.*”¹²⁸

d. Sex as a Distraction. The method of distraction that has held the largest audience is using sex or the promise of sex to get the individual’s attention. Sex is able to wield much influence as it appeals to individuals’ desire to share their love with others. In addition, sex was a notoriously difficult problem for Augustine. He describes that the main concern in his life was to love and be loved. Yet, his desire for love strayed beyond the realm of friendship. Augustine writes that bodily passions stirred within him and overwhelmed him to the point where he could not make a distinction between what was true love and what was lust. The confusion of love and lust manipulated and enticed his mind to pursue his carnal nature. He states that in his carnal misery he continually angered and disappointed God, but that he was unaware of this, “For I had been deafened by the clank of my chains, the fetters of the death which was my due to punish the pride in my soul.”¹²⁹ In wrestling with temptation, Augustine recounts that he did not experience God’s effort to restrain him. He explains that it was years before he learned

¹²⁶ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1961), 127.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 128-129; italicized emphasis retained from original text.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 43.

that God was to be his true joy and fulfillment, but until then persistently drifted farther and farther away from God, only experiencing grief in cherishing worldly pleasures.¹³⁰

Sex is used in such a way that it fosters an addiction among its captives which is why its utilization has gotten progressively worse. If it is not explicit, it is implicit, from Carl's Junior commercials featuring Paris Hilton's scantily clad body soaping-up a car and getting sudsy while eating a burger, to AXE deodorant suggesting that its male users will incite a bevy of beauties to parade around them like a baboon in estrus upon catching a whiff of the alluring, rugged aroma of their product. While the audience knows that these scenarios are ridiculously far-fetched, these advertisements still capture their attention and inflame their passions to pursue whatever earthly good these commercials are peddling in the hopes that they can replicate a fraction of what these objects promise to deliver. Sex itself, however, is not a bad thing. It is yet another good given to humanity by God, and by practicing temperance and love versus obsession and lust it can be used properly. In practicing temperance and love, sex has the ability to further unite individuals in their love for one another. But sex that perpetuates obsession and lust acts to destroy love, as it objectifies individuals in an attempt to satisfy the individual's carnality. It becomes cheapened to the point that individuals compromise their virtue and use it as a means of commerce, thereby thoroughly debasing God's creation. Furthermore, when these sexual relationships or marketed products do not result in experiencing true fulfillment, some individuals move on to more corrupt methods in hopes of acquiring what they seek – for example, rape, pedophilia, and bestiality.

Humanity's campaign tends to thrive not only because it appeals to individuals' carnal nature, but according to Augustine, "The devil has a firmer hold on men in high

¹³⁰ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1961), 43-44.

places because of their pride in their rank, and through them he keeps hold on many more because of the influence they wield.”¹³¹ For example, those who are in the position to exert influence – individuals who manage the enticement of humanity – may not only experience this misappropriation of sex to a higher degree, but by seeing the revenue that can be earned from this corruption of sex also fall prey to greed. To obtain wealth and earn recognition within their field, they gather people to support them, tempting them with the same trappings of what wealth and status can bring them, producing a trickle-down effect. Also, since individuals crave community and the pursuit of common goods, this strategy entices individuals to follow these leaders in order to develop a sense of togetherness, although executed in a perverse manner. This distorted version of community is more likened to a pack mentality which can be just as powerful in society.

Augustine explains that he was also drawn to a false sense of community. He elaborates that while he was disgusted with himself, he was at the same time pleased and sought to be pleasing to his community.¹³² He was so clouded by this false sense of togetherness that he felt embarrassed and ashamed to be less of a degenerate and less engaged in debauchery than the rest of his group. Among the individuals, the greater the sin the more they applauded the behavior and their constant boastfulness promoted Augustine to find pleasure in the same sins they were guilty of, not only for the enjoyment of the act, but also for the boosting his reputation among his peers. He was so desperate for their approval that he even pretended that he had committed acts that he in

¹³¹ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1961), 163.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 43.

fact had not committed. He was fearful that his innocence would paint him as a coward and that his lack of sexual prowess would be seen as weakness.¹³³

e. **Return to the Pear Theft.** This tainted execution of community can also be illustrated through Augustine's retelling of the pear theft. Not only did Augustine fall prey to the logic of imitation in trying to possess God-like authority, he also subscribed to a misconception of community through participating in the act of robbery with his friends.¹³⁴ Thus, he turned away from God to the lower goods of self-love and misguided fellowship; thereby demonstrating Reno's assessment that while pride leads to idolatry, it is idolatry that is the primal sin as it involves the actual *turning away*, what Augustine cited as the *motion of the soul* turning away from the highest good to lower goods.¹³⁵ Pride entices humanity to set its sights on lower goods, but the *act* of actually doing so, of committing idolatry, is what consists of the sin.

Concluding Remarks

Through demonstrating how idolatry is the primal sin and illustrating how it is manifested in contemporary society through the expression of self-love, Reno supports the argument of the thesis that it is self-love and idolatry that has corrupted humanity. He acknowledges that humans are unable to find fulfillment in the self or lower goods external to the self and affirms that only by directing their love towards God and obeying the commandment to love God and neighbor can humanity experience fulfillment. Only through love of God and neighbor is humanity able to enjoy the nature God has bestowed upon it.

¹³³ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1961), 46.

¹³⁴ Russell R. Reno, "Pride and Idolatry," *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (2006): 177.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER III

BREYFOGLE – ON HUMANITY’S SOCIAL NATURE

Introduction

In his article, *Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities*, Todd Breyfogle analyzes the divisions of society laid out in Augustine’s *City of God*. He writes that each human being is a member of either one or the other eschatological *civitates* – they either maintain earthly citizenship seeking and possessing temporal goods or live their lives as pilgrims inhabiting the heavenly city, participating in the journey towards their eternal home.¹³⁶ He suggests that the two loves demonstrated within the cities lend themselves to three units of analysis: *societas*, *civitas*, and *ecclesia*.¹³⁷ Breyfogle clarifies these terms by explaining that *societas* represents society at the economic level, *civitas* representing the political, and *ecclesia* being likened to the Church. He writes that Augustine understands *societas* as referring to the complexities of interpersonal relations that are established and take place in individuals’ daily lives, most often in the realm of business.¹³⁸ Augustine would also perceive *civitas* to be the political embodiment of the shared loves present within a people that can be understood in historical or eschatological terms.¹³⁹ Lastly, Augustine would agree that *ecclesia* represents a specific set of relations shaped by participation in common ritual and

¹³⁶ Todd Breyfogle, “Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 502-503.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 503.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 504.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 503.

eschatological hope, such that can be demonstrated by the Church.¹⁴⁰ Breyfogle notes that each unit of analysis becomes more and more particular in the individuals it encompasses. For example, *societas* relates to numerous types of human associations. *Civitas* becomes more narrow as it deals with the relations of citizenship.¹⁴¹ *Ecclesia*, being the most narrow, expresses relationships among Christians.¹⁴²

a. ***Societas: The Economy.*** In further defining *societas*, Breyfogle writes that it is the sum of engagements between people that range from business, neighbor, family, and friendship.¹⁴³ Following Augustine, he agrees that humans were created to love and that this involves nurturing their social nature to develop community. He elaborates that since humans were created from one human (Adam) and since humanity has an entire species in common, it is clear that humans were created for sociability.¹⁴⁴ In addition, he asserts that as a being bestowed with *intellectus* (intellect) and *voluntas* (will), it is inevitable for individuals to be drawn to others for the pursuit of common knowledge and common interest, thereby having the means to establish common objects of love.¹⁴⁵ Breyfogle argues that this social nature is perfected in heaven, since in heaven, all its members share the same common object of love and can enjoy fulfillment and the

¹⁴⁰ Todd Breyfogle, "Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 504.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 506.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 504.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

beauty of reason.¹⁴⁶ In heaven's perfect community, conflicting wills are no longer encountered because they have found rest in their eternal home, in the company of God – where they can enjoy God and the company of one another in God.¹⁴⁷ In addition, individual wills will nothing sinful, yet are able to maintain their freedom of choice.¹⁴⁸ Breyfogle's conception of the heavenly city comes out of Augustine's logic which asserts that in the heavenly city, the individual will is able to enjoy true freedom because it is freed from the delight in sinning and experiences true pleasure in the act of not sinning.¹⁴⁹ Augustine contrasts the two wills by stating that while the *first* free will humanity received as inhabitants of the earth had both the ability to sin and not to sin, the free will humans receive in heaven – what he calls the *last* will – does not have the ability to sin.¹⁵⁰ This will not be due to their own strength, but as a gift from God.¹⁵¹

Breyfogle moves on to address the differences between the character of the heavenly community from that of modern society. He begins by outlining the perversion of society, starting with the first perverse action in human history, the original sin. Breyfogle claims that the process of how Adam and Eve were created, as revealed in Genesis, allows the reader to ascertain that humans were created to love one another and enjoy community. He notes that God created Eve for Adam's company, thereby serving

¹⁴⁶ Todd Breyfogle, "Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 504.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 1030.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

as a form of acknowledgement and reminder from God that the individual cannot be self-sufficient.¹⁵² In addition, he suggests that the manner in which Eve was created, being taken from Adam's side, indicates that the two beings were to be equal with each other under God as they have the same basis for their creation.¹⁵³ To be even more symbolic, Breyfogle points out that God did not create Eve from Adam's foot for her to be viewed as less of a person than he, nor did God create her from Adam's head for her to be understood as superior.¹⁵⁴ Rather, God created Eve from Adam's side to be recognized as being equal with him so that they might enjoy fellowship with each other.¹⁵⁵ This interpretation translates further than the relationship between humanity's first parents by illustrating how all members of society should be treated equally.

Utilizing Augustine's perspective, he continues to say that when Adam sinned it was out of concern for Eve stemming from his kinship for her, what Breyfogle calls Adam's *benevolentia*.¹⁵⁶ He argues that this feeling of attachment and affection demonstrates how community can either uplift humanity, or if focused on incorrectly loving lower goods, can distort it.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, Adam's sin of joining Eve depicts a turning to a lower good from the greatest good.¹⁵⁸ He willingly sacrificed his love and

¹⁵² Todd Breyfogle, "Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 504.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 505.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

devotion to God for the company of Eve. Breyfogle writes that this original sin led to the rejection of the humility of confession and instead embraced what he names “the deformity of confusion” – or in other terms, the misappropriation of goods.¹⁵⁹ However, in recalling Adam’s sin, one is not to forget that Eve also made a choice to pursue lower goods rather than the highest good. Her motivation in doing so was to gain knowledge and then share it with Adam. In her desire to share her knowledge with Adam, it is evident that *both* Adam and Eve fell prey to their love for each other and elevated this love above their love for God.

Breyfogle goes on to say that the punishment of confusion that ensued from pride was also the case in the event of the Tower of Babel which had the further punishment of *societates* experiencing division through language.¹⁶⁰ However, he notes that while in the case of Babel the punishment was twofold, God was also guiding the people as to how they could go about reaching a solution among themselves.¹⁶¹ He points to the fact that the punishment of Babel provided the people with the means of returning to the behaviors and practices of humility which would in turn allow them to enjoy community with one another.¹⁶² Breyfogle stresses that humanity’s social nature longs to communicate and share ideas, therefore the people were able to use this as motivation in re-learning humility in order to be able to engage each other in a communal fashion.¹⁶³ Thus through

¹⁵⁹ Todd Breyfogle, “Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 505.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

humility they were able to come out of their perverted state and return to the beatific vision of sociability. Breyfogle once again exalts his argument that it is humanity's God-given nature and disposition (*affectus*) to be social "according to their common origin, their rational desires, and feelings of affection – the familiarity of the company of good people and good things."¹⁶⁴ He insists that because of this, as exhibited among the people of Babel, individuals resist remaining in solitude and redirect the deformations of confusion to the pursuit of the common good, whatever this may be.¹⁶⁵ In addition, the revelation that is derived from the pursuit of common goods is that individuals come to realize that they are not self-sufficient.¹⁶⁶ In order to achieve the common good individuals seek, they must be united to that end as a community.

Breyfogle emphasizes that in order for individuals to establish a harmonious society, it is critical to introduce and uphold temporal, earthly law as it deals with a multitude of human wills in an effort to reach a compromise in respect to the mortality of the human and the resources humanity needs to support itself.¹⁶⁷ He states that earthly law provides the context for and reflects the relationship between the Christian and the secular, where the Christian acknowledges that some private goals need to exist in order to maintain peace in society.¹⁶⁸ Christians must adhere to this mission of peace, not only

¹⁶⁴ Todd Breyfogle, "Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 505.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 508.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 506.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

for the sake of peace, but in loving their neighbor.¹⁶⁹ With a mutual outlook on peace and common goods, a foundation is set for private goals to be aligned with those that yield a communal value.¹⁷⁰

However, this compromise should not be misinterpreted as a complacency of Christians in their dealings with the secular realm. Breyfogle proclaims that when dealing with sin, Christians must use their discernment and be able to assess to what degree this earthly peace is actually beneficial to and advancing the common good.¹⁷¹ When there fails to be a correlation between the two, it is the duty of the Christian to inform society as to what is the common good and guide them towards it in hope that they will choose to participate.¹⁷² The Christian must also realize that this tension between sin and the common good will always be present, but alongside it will be the hope of grace.¹⁷³ The degree to which Christians resist sin and the injustice that comes with it is up to their discretion, but embodies similar measures when enacting war. In their assessment, Christians must take into consideration the “defense of neighbor, proportionality, and the likelihood of success.”¹⁷⁴ The task that the Christian is called to in loving both God and neighbor is a challenging one; however, it is the Christian’s responsibility to do so and by

¹⁶⁹ Todd Breyfogle, “Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 507; Robert Gascoigne, *The Public Forum and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 135.

¹⁷⁰ Todd Breyfogle, “Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 507.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

adhering to this task the Christian is able to reap the rewards that come with it, not only in the next life, but in this one as well.

The Christian goal then, is not always to combat the earthly will, rather it is to shape and guide humanity towards the common good. While the temporal laws in society limit the interests of the selfish will, temporal laws do not always have longevity. As society evolves, the laws evolve with it, sometimes to the point where particular laws may no longer maintain their earthly value and may be done away with. To echo Breyfogle, Christians must use their judgment when evaluating how they are to respond. At times their resistance will take the form of a legal battle, in other instances Christians may be able to approach the matter from the position of wanting to enlighten others with another perspective in the hopes of nullifying the propensity to support corrupt directives. Whatever their response, it must embody the virtues of humility and reverence in order to appropriately communicate with the earthly citizens and come to an understanding. By advocating and practicing these virtues, Christians pave the way for a common good to be reached. The strife that is encountered among the heavenly and earthly city should not be misinterpreted as an invitation to subjugate the opponent, but rather an opportunity for gradual transformation.¹⁷⁵ The result of mutual healing and forgiveness will follow as the presence of Christ becomes evident within society through the effort of its members.¹⁷⁶

b. *Civitas: The Political Realm.* Regarding *civitas*, Breyfogle explains that the goods that exist within it are good in themselves as they are from God.¹⁷⁷ However,

¹⁷⁵ Todd Breyfogle, "Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 507.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 517.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 511.

the attachment and misuse of these lesser goods has resulted in the diminishment or outright neglect of the love of God and as such undercuts the potential for humanity to establish peaceful community.¹⁷⁸ He accents that humanity is only able to attain the proper perspective and properly make use of God's creation when its love is focused on God.¹⁷⁹

Such insight draws a direct comparison with Augustine's warning in his *Confessions*. Augustine cautions that if individuals find delight in the things of this world so much so that they give preference to these lower goods, that they are to reject them and redirect their love to the Creator.¹⁸⁰ He also alerts and notes that all these good things which individuals love and make use of come from God who is the Creator of all creation, but they will only remain good and sweet as long as they are utilized to bring glory to God.¹⁸¹ Should individuals choose to love them and use them for their selfish and private gain, they will quickly turn bitter.¹⁸²

Once humanity strays from God and turns to the creation, it becomes susceptible and subject to idolatry. Thus, the conflict within *civitas* is the same as *societas*, self-love which manifests itself in idolatry. Once again, this self-love serves as a catalyst for division – creating two cities. Breyfogle expands on this division by referring to the conflict of Cain and Abel, an event Augustine also utilizes to illustrate the difference

¹⁷⁸ Todd Breyfogle, "Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 511.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1961), 82.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

between the heavenly city and the earthly city. Breyfogle highlights how the two model each city respectively: Cain being a member of the earthly city, Abel belonging to the heavenly. Cain's modeling of the earthly city becomes an expression of the individual who is motivated by a self-serving will, which is a perversion of the purpose for which humans were created.¹⁸³ Breyfogle notes that Cain began wanting to serve God, however the intentions of his service were motivated by the desire to please himself. Both Augustine and Breyfogle identify how Cain's desire was misguided. Breyfogle elaborates that when Cain offered sacrifices to God, he did so not with humility and the intent of worship, but for the purpose of soliciting divine aid.¹⁸⁴ What is even more selfish is that in this request for God's aid, it was not for the benefit of his community, but rather for the satisfaction of his private desires.¹⁸⁵ Cain insisted on using God for his own earthly enjoyment when he should have been seeking God regarding how he should use the world as to enjoy it properly and bring glory to God.¹⁸⁶ Able, on the other hand, is a model citizen of the heavenly city. He existed to please God and did this through the things God created. Such a life is how humanity ought to live, bringing glory to God and expressing God's will through the use of creation and the capacities with which God has blessed humanity.

c. ***Ecclesia: The Church.*** Moving on to *ecclesia*, Breyfogle states that the Church should endeavor to live out relationships that reflect its obedience to God's

¹⁸³ Todd Breyfogle, "Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 510.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 518.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

commands.¹⁸⁷ Here he discusses that the Church's role is not to serve as a sloppy bandage trying to put a cover over human sinfulness; rather, it is to serve as a shining example, which *societas* and *civitas* should be inclined to follow.¹⁸⁸ As an expression of the heavenly city, *ecclesia* is to be the embodiment of how individuals are to live socially, in community, and should be used as a measure for *societas* and *civitas*.¹⁸⁹ In this position of authority, it is essential that the Church does not succumb to the same lower goods that the earthly city gives priority to.¹⁹⁰ The Church must be true to its eschatological identity and not be swayed into running parallel to the self-serving and idolatrous tendencies of the earthly city simply because at times it seems the Church is fighting a losing battle; the Church must remain strong and holdfast to its love of God and neighbor.¹⁹¹

Breyfogle continues by somewhat turning the tables, or perhaps better said, offering a new perspective for the Church and presenting it with a challenge. While both the heavenly citizens and the earthly citizens reside on earth, he writes that the Church often sees itself as existing within the secular realm when it should in fact see the secular as being part of the Church's story. The Church should understand that in addition to being actively involved in the comings-and-goings of the earthly city, it should see itself as being responsible for its prosperity. To borrow the language from the story of Cain and Abel, it is the Church's duty to serve as its brother's keeper. The Church is to serve as a

¹⁸⁷ Todd Breyfogle, "Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 513.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 514.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

beacon, guiding the behavior of society and encouraging the citizens of the earthly city to join the Church in its pilgrimage home.

Furthermore, Breyfogle writes that in the role as beacon, the Church must take care not to get wrapped-up in itself to the point where it becomes arrogant and looks down upon the earthly city. It must forever remain conscious of its past in original sin.¹⁹² Augustine warns that if there exists heavenly citizens who delight themselves in their ability to abstain from the lower goods exalted in the earthly city and fancy themselves superior to the earthly citizens, then they have been taken in by the very same pride as the individuals to whom they turn up their noses.¹⁹³ In accordance, Breyfogle highlights that even those heavenly citizens share in being exiled as pilgrims in the world.¹⁹⁴ The heavenly citizens have not reached their final destination and must still walk by faith.¹⁹⁵

In striving for the common good, *ecclesia* must remember that it shares a common nature and purpose with the misguided individuals of the earthly city and that it is to engage in a common fellowship and in that fellowship establish a common object of love – God.¹⁹⁶ While on this earth, it is the mission of the heavenly citizens to develop a community that reflects a nature similar to that of the perfect, harmonious community that resides in heaven. While Christians may entertain other common objects of love in

¹⁹² Todd Breyfogle, “Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 522.

¹⁹³ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 544-545.

¹⁹⁴ Todd Breyfogle, “Citizenship and Signs: Rethinking Augustine on the Two Cities,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009), 522.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

addition to the divine for the sake of allowing the earthly citizens time to discover their purpose and place in community with the Church, the ultimate goal must be to unite humanity in focusing its love on God, who is the greatest good of all.

Concluding Remarks

In considering humanity's social nature, that has its beginning in the relationship between Adam and Eve, Breyfogle demonstrates how this sociability can either foster love of God or love of self. Through highlighting how these divisive loves are carried out in modern *societas*, *civitas*, and *ecclesia*, Breyfogle adds to the thesis in illustrating how self-love and idolatry has led to the perversion of humanity. In addition, he supports the thesis by arguing that through engagement with the earthly city, while maintaining its identity, the Church can assist in reordering humanity's love from self-love to love of God and community in God. In doing so, humanity can begin to experience the perfection of its nature.

CHAPTER IV

GASCOIGNE – THE TWO STORIES OF LIBERAL SOCIETY

Introduction

In his book entitled, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society*, Robert Gascoigne asserts that Augustine's *City of God* maintains contemporary significance. Gascoigne proffers several conceptual arguments in order for the reader to understand how society has gone astray while illustrating how society can begin a journey of mutual healing between the earthly and the heavenly citizens.

Gascoigne details the priorities of liberal society and how they are shown through the behaviors and practices of its members. He follows this with a discussion of what liberal society mistakes for freedom and how idolatry comes into play. He illustrates the two concepts of tradition in liberal society: tradition as constraint and tradition as resource and makes an argument for a return to tradition as constraint. He then characterizes the nature of noninstrumental and instrumental relationships and how by practicing the three virtues within noninstrumental relationships – humility, reverence, and self-giving at the risk of self-loss – liberal society can redirect its love of self to love of God and neighbor. In order to alleviate the fears of participating in noninstrumental relationships and practicing these virtues, he demonstrates how liberal society already makes use of noninstrumental relationships, emphasizing how pursuing a common good does not entail a complete self-sacrifice, but rather obtaining a communal perspective. He concludes his argument by describing how the three virtues, particularly self-loss, are embodied in the life of Jesus Christ. He writes that by practicing these virtues, individuals will be reflecting the nature of Christ, thereby facilitating the restoration of God as the highest good.

a. **The Character of the Two Cities.** Gascoigne asserts that one major factor of the continuing relevance of Augustine's *City of God* is its depiction of the ambivalence of freedom with "freedom as the potential to choose a social ontology of love, or freedom as the *libido dominandi*, the lust for domination."¹⁹⁷ He stresses that one mistake readers make in *City of God* is to correlate the Church with Augustine's heavenly city, and the state with the earthly city. Augustine notes that his use of the term "city" had an allegorical character, referring to moral rather than political entities, "I classify the human race into two branches: the one consists of those who live by human standards, the other of those who live according to God's will. I also call these two classes the two cities, speaking allegorically."¹⁹⁸ While the Church should not be equated with the heavenly city, the behavior of the individuals belonging to the heavenly city (practicing love of God and neighbor) is most often seen within the context of the Church, which is why Augustine found it useful to refer to the Church as the heavenly city (albeit allegorically) throughout *City of God*. The same can be said in equating modern society with the earthly city, as modern society lives by human standards. But for the sake of Gascoigne's argument of highlighting the contrast between the two loves more so than the difference between the two cities, I will refrain from equating the two as such.

Gascoigne continues his assessment of Augustine's work by stressing that the exceptional value of *City of God* for understanding humanity's contemporary situation is not in the comparison between Church and state, but in its reflections on human freedom in relation to two loves: the love of God and neighbor, in contrast to the love of the self.

¹⁹⁷ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 20.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

These two differing loves characterize human beings and differentiate the two cities. Gascoigne illuminates the two stories of liberal society with Augustine’s account of the two cities and the “two loves that energize them – as fundamental possibilities of human freedom.”¹⁹⁹ For Gascoigne, the focus of the two cities is how they represent the basic, fundamental options of human freedom. The heavenly city represents those who have responded to God’s grace by focusing their love appropriately on both God and neighbor, while the earthly city consists of those who have subjected themselves to and cater to the whims and desires of the self and dedicate themselves to expressing their self-love.

For Augustine, a society or people is a group that is bound together by shared values – common objects of love.²⁰⁰ For him, the character of any society can be discovered from these shared values. In the heavenly city, “all good acts are directed towards peace,”²⁰¹ in relation towards both God and neighbor.²⁰² In the earthly city, peace is only the temporary absence of war, “the result of conquest that reverts once again to war once the resentment of the vanquished bursts out in revenge.”²⁰³ Gascoigne notes that Augustine’s reflections on the varying consequences of the two loves demonstrate the stark divergence between humility and glorification of the self.²⁰⁴ Those

¹⁹⁹ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 23.

²⁰⁰ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 832.

²⁰¹ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 25.

²⁰² Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 832.

²⁰³ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 25.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

who are humble maintain the knowledge that all the blessings that they receive and talents which with they are bestowed are gifts from God and that only by worshiping God and participating in the love of neighbor can they be satisfied and enjoy divine fulfillment.²⁰⁵ In other words, those who maintain their humility realize that only God can fulfill them, they can never be satisfied and find fulfillment in themselves.

Gascoigne continues on to say that the love of neighbor is carried out through “peaceful service” which seeks to build a community that does not allow its members to live in domination or servitude of one another despite the fact that there may be a hierarchy within the community.²⁰⁶ While some individuals may have positions of authority it does not entitle them to treat those in supporting positions as pawns. In contrast, self-aggrandizement inevitably fosters a cyclical pattern of “violence, domination, and the counterviolence of the defeated, where peace is merely another way of saying that there is no one left to fight.”²⁰⁷ Therefore the individual choice of which love one chooses to follow determines the character of a community as this community is formed around their members’ common object of love. The peaceful, heavenly city is an expression of the three virtues of noninstrumental relationships: humility, reverence, and self-giving. While the warring, earthly city is an expression of the selfish and self-serving character of instrumental relationships. The distinctions between noninstrumental and instrumental relationships are to be discussed at length shortly.

²⁰⁵ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 26.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

The continuing strength and relevance of Augustine's work to modern, liberal societies can be found in how it relates which love individuals decide to pursue and the radical, social, and political implications that ensue from their choice.²⁰⁸ These loves express their freedom, for Augustine, they either "intensify and multiply freedom or bind and choke it, spiraling downwards into various forms of destruction, addiction, and self-degradation."²⁰⁹ Again, since the loves within a community represents shared values, the character of those loves dictates the nature of society. For example, one facet of worshipping the self entails highly prizing the external, more specifically the physical body. By dedicating time and resources into elevating the quality of the external, a shallow and vapid society is created. Gascoigne stresses that Augustine is zealous regarding the potentiality of small communities such as members of a family or a group of friends being able to live out a life of mutual respect, service and peace, and to possibly influence larger communities.²¹⁰ Ideally this influence would span humanity at large. Gascoigne suggests that Augustine's distinction between the two loves is useful in heightening humanity's awareness in recognizing and being knowledgeable of the dire consequences that result from the abuse of freedom by wrongly choosing to serve itself rather than God.²¹¹ He notes that Augustine's warnings are most especially demonstrated in the contemporary context as individuals seldomly have to contend with any

²⁰⁸ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 26.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid., 27.

impositions brought upon by tradition.²¹² However, he is convinced that by the power of grace individuals can be nurtured and guided towards the route that leads to the heavenly city and succeed in establishing peaceful communities that reflect “mutual respect, consideration, and service.”²¹³ The concepts of tradition as constraint and tradition as resource demonstrate the means by which these individuals can be guided. While Gascoigne will survey how tradition as resource can be useful within liberal society, he will ultimately make an argument for the return to tradition as constraint.

b. Liberal Society: Tradition as Constraint vs. Tradition as Resource.

When Gascoigne speaks of liberal society, he means “a society in which the invocation of tradition is not sufficient to constrain or limit individual freedom.”²¹⁴ In other terms, traditions and traditional values lack to serve as forms of restraint to the actions of the individual. Individuals feel entitled to choose which regulations they will follow, if any. Gascoigne understands the contrast between liberal and traditional societies to be the difference between a society that elevates the importance of individual freedom and a society that heeds the behavior and practices that express the society’s past and enables it to promote social unity.²¹⁵ One could say that the main difference between the two is that liberal society embraces individualism that teeters on the use of egoism while traditional society upholds a collective culture that produces altruistic results. Moreover, in a traditional society, established behaviors do not serve as a myriad of options or

²¹² Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 27.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 7.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

suggestions that individuals can choose from, but “practices that are associated with strong expectations, constraints, and sanctions, such that if an individual were to ignore them they would experience, to varying degrees, social exclusion or anomie.”²¹⁶ Without these practices that are employed to foster a harmonious society based in community edification, the individual will feel at a loss, not being able to experience fulfillment at any level.

One major and fundamental aspect that contributes to social tradition is religion. Therefore, Gascoigne concludes that a liberal society is a secular society as it does not see the need to establish any religion or enforce any religious restrictions on public office; rather its secular nature seeks to advocate “freedom of conscience in religious matters, in the elimination of any link between state power and religious affiliation.”²¹⁷ Furthermore, Gascoigne notes that a “hallmark” of a contemporary, liberal society is the dwindling or altogether dissolution of “tradition as constraint.”²¹⁸ Individuals no longer allow society’s traditions to limit or determine what they should or should not do. In a liberal society, traditions can be freely adopted by individuals or not. Individuals can choose to practice certain traditions while ignoring others, and not necessarily traditions from one specific culture, religion, etc. Liberal society rewards this line of thinking by acknowledging these individuals as multi-faceted and complex. Once viewed as a legitimate way of life, tradition as constraint becomes nullified and undergoes a transformation into “tradition as resource” – what Gascoigne calls “a guide to the task of

²¹⁶ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 7.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

becoming an individual.”²¹⁹ He writes that tradition as social resource facilitates a plethora of conceptions and ideologies of how humans can achieve fulfillment or the “human good” and that this human good can be freely chosen by individuals.²²⁰ Unlike tradition as constraint, tradition as resource does not limit the possibilities of what *good* can be, rather it invites individuals to wander the spectrum of multiple types of good and explore their options instead of subscribing to a common good perpetuated by society.²²¹ While this may seem problematic as it appears to assist individuals in straying from community, Gascoigne argues that tradition as resource discretely leads back to tradition as constraint.

Gascoigne offers a positive spin on tradition as resource by stating that by liberal society legitimizing and ushering the individual to consider a variety of traditions to choose from without having to commit to the social conventions or obligations of any of them, that liberal society is in fact offering resources for an “ontology of the human.”²²² This ontology understands that individuals can begin to find fulfillment in relationships that are based in and advocate freedom of commitment. It allows human freedom to be nurtured in numerous complementary relationships that are rooted in and further positive virtues such as: respect for others, fidelity in relationships, solidarity with those in need,

²¹⁹ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 9.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Robert Gascoigne, *The Public Forum and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 11; Robert Gascoigne, “Christian Faith and the Public Forum in a Pluralist Society,” *Colloquium* 26, no. 2 (1994), 116, <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.phineas.pointloma.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=d88c250b-a434-4952-bffc-258f48a3ef28%40sessionmgr198&vid=12&hid=103> (accessed April 26, 2013).

²²² Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 9.

and care for nonhuman nature. He insists that by participating in these virtues, humans are able to fulfill their personal, moral potential.²²³ The advantages of adhering to this ontology of the human is that individuals who have rejected tradition as constraint and now make use of tradition as resource are unknowingly engaging in practices that assist in building a peaceful community.

While Augustine would recognize this as an attempt to construct and maintain earthly peace, Gascoigne is implying that tradition as resource can serve as a stepping stone to once again be en route towards the heavenly city. He affirms that because tradition as resource borrows from various ways of life that stem from community, the options chosen by individuals through tradition as resource subtly guide them to eventually again pursuing common goods and partaking in community. Gascoigne suggests this subtle guidance demonstrates the active power of grace with the intent to bring individuals home to God. He believes that this ontology of the human is grounded in the dignity of the human being and as such makes a moral claim on all people.²²⁴ This being the case, ontology of the human within tradition as resource leads individuals back into establishing expectations within liberal society, setting the hopeful precedent for a return to tradition as constraint. Granted, in this anticipated return to tradition as constraint, one can imagine that both Gascoigne and Augustine would hope that society would not view traditions as forms of constraints, but rather useful and necessary methods to develop harmonious communities and contribute to the prosperity of the heavenly city.

²²³ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 9.

²²⁴ Ibid.

In utilizing tradition as resource, society has begun to expect all individuals to pursue tradition as resource. This expectation is almost to the point of being a social and moral imperative. It is depicted as an impetus for self-discovery and growth, that without which individuals will fail to respond to Polonius' maxim and challenge of "know thyself."²²⁵ Often, those who do not share this sentiment are viewed as less intelligent and uncultivated for not seeing the benefit of the practice. Without experiences of a vast number of traditions, liberal society tends to view the more traditional individuals as having not much to contribute to society as a whole. Those who continue to hold-fast to the notion of tradition as constraint are perceived as narrow minded or old-fashioned and their thoughts and opinions are regularly discarded.

c. Freedom in Liberal Society. Gascoigne moves on to define the notion of freedom that is prevalent in liberal society. He depicts freedom as absence of constraint, "as freedom of choice, since anything else is an imposition on the possibilities of individual human freedom."²²⁶ However, he writes that this type of freedom does not even consider tradition as resource, but rather does away with tradition altogether. Those who embrace this idea of freedom view tradition as resource as still dealing with pre-established values and as such loaded with impositions on the self. Even though an individual has the freedom of choice in choosing which traditions to follow, the person who subscribes to the freedom Gascoigne is suggesting would argue that regardless of what tradition(s) the individual chooses, they are still choosing to follow a set of constraints and that this is not freedom but rather the illusion of freedom. Freedom in

²²⁵ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. A. R. Braunmuller (New York, NY: Penguin Group, Inc., 2001), 23.

²²⁶ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 10.

liberal society now becomes freedom as “its own object and justification,” the meaning of which is found in the experience of unconstrained choice which in turn is the experience of unconstrained power.²²⁷ As such, “choice becomes its own justification, without any need to appeal to a traditional wisdom of human fulfillment.”²²⁸ To the extreme, freedom becomes a manifestation of the ego itself, which is in its restlessness, seeking consumption and dominance to appease appetites that will never be satisfied.²²⁹ When freedom is the mirror to the ego, the ontology of the human is rejected, “resulting in individualism instead of solidarity in community, and in depersonalization rather than fidelity and commitment in sexual and other interpersonal relationships.”²³⁰

In exercising freedom of choice as such, individuals cast off their concerns for others and determine that their needs are the only needs that must be taken into account and satisfied. If others do not fit into their scheme of self-indulgence or plan of success, they abandon them completely or try to manipulate them to their will, at least until their services or acquaintanceships are no longer necessary. Freedom within the context of individualism in liberal society fuels the individual’s ego in its quest to express self-love and leads to the path of idolatry.

d. Idolatry within Liberal Society. As the individual embarks on the journey of self-gratification and individual expression, the individual comes to the realization that it can never obtain fulfillment in the self. Humans were created to direct their love towards God and community and only through adhering to their God-given

²²⁷ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 10.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid., 11.

²³⁰ Ibid.

nature can they experience fulfillment. Yet, humanity continues to preoccupy itself with searching for ways to express self-love, and since individuals cannot serve as their own source of fulfillment they turn to idolatry in the projection of their self-love. In this turning, individuals become hunters and hoarders of lesser goods in place of the ultimate good. Most often individuals are able to deceive themselves into thinking that their pursuit of lesser goods is really an expression of their freedom rather than their loneliness and needing to be fulfilled. Being that freedom is exalted in liberal society, individuals do not acknowledge their idolatry, but instead see their constant search as a necessary process of self-realization.²³¹ A journey in which they will gain knowledge about themselves and experiences that will make them a more valuable member of society. The irony is that this mentality of assessing the individual within the context of society points to the individual's nature of only being able to have fulfillment in community and in God.

e. **The Comingling of the Heavenly and Earthly Citizens.** While liberal society abolishes tradition as constraint, Gascoigne purports that the citizens of the heavenly city can still maintain and have an active identity in liberal society.²³² He insists that the heavenly citizens can find their own “concerns within the concerns of the liberal secular world” and “support the best ideals of liberal modernity” while also perpetuating the mission of restoring love of God and neighbor.²³³ He elaborates that in Christianity,

²³¹ Robert Gascoigne, *The Public Forum and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 225.

²³² Robert Gascoigne, “Christian Faith and the Public Forum in a Pluralist Society,” *Colloquium* 26, no. 2 (1994), 117, <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.phineas.pointloma.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=d88c250b-a434-4952-bffc-258f48a3ef28%40sessionmgr198&vid=12&hid=103> (accessed April 26, 2013).

²³³ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 37; Robert Gascoigne, *The Public Forum and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 166.

the Kingdom of God extends beyond the Church itself which is another reason as to why the Church should not be equated with the heavenly city. The Kingdom of God “is universal and expresses God’s presence to humanity in terms of a realm of peace, freedom, justice, and reconciliation.”²³⁴ Therefore, Gascoigne asserts that Christians should be committed in bearing witness to the Kingdom of God through assisting in the realization of universalist moral ideals.²³⁵ He stresses that this process involves heavenly citizens demonstrating their moral commitment to the Kingdom of God *outside* the recognized arena of the Church.²³⁶ They must seek to make the presence of God known throughout the world. Gascoigne notes that this outlook is similar to that of Jesus Christ as the Son of God sought to make his Father known not just within the confines of the Church, but to the whole world.²³⁷

In an effort to uphold the best ideals of liberal society, Gascoigne acknowledges that it is possible for the values of the Kingdom to be present in numerous traditions, institutions, and religions that have no explicit relationship to the Church or origins that are dependent on Christianity.²³⁸ Although he also recognizes the possibility that these entities could have undergone influence from Christian ideals present in Western

²³⁴ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 52.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 53; Robert Gascoigne, “Christian Faith and the Public Forum in a Pluralist Society,” *Colloquium* 26, no. 2 (1994), 120, <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.phineas.pointloma.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=d88c250b-a434-4952-bffc-258f48a3ef28%40sessionmgr198&vid=12&hid=103> (accessed April 26, 2013).

²³⁶ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 53.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ Robert Gascoigne, “Christian Faith and the Public Forum in a Pluralist Society,” *Colloquium* 26, no. 2 (1994), 123, <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.phineas.pointloma.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=d88c250b-a434-4952-bffc-258f48a3ef28%40sessionmgr198&vid=12&hid=103> (accessed April 26, 2013).

civilization.²³⁹ These values include: “the dignity and rights of the person, of personal freedom and just societies, of liberation from social and economic disability and discrimination.”²⁴⁰ Since liberal society has such strong and admirable values as these, one can see how heavenly citizens can maintain their identity while recognizing the importance and aiding in the effort of supporting the endeavors of society. Such a relationship between the citizens permits a greater sphere of influence for the heavenly citizens to reach out to humanity in an attempt to re-align it with God’s will.

In connection with this relationship, one must not confuse the service of the heavenly citizens within liberal society with the typical acts of service demonstrated through humanitarianism. Gascoigne asserts that the service of the heavenly citizens must be accompanied by witness if “the ultimate meaning and direction of that service is to be understood.”²⁴¹ Service accompanied by witness and testimony expresses not only the heavenly citizens’ love for God, but God’s love for humanity. Such acts of servitude coupled with the expression of God’s love helps to foster a love for each other. By liberal society observing the acts of the heavenly citizens, the genuine love that motivates those acts will eventually become tangible to the earthly citizens and as such they will be more likely to respond in kind. Faith with service exhibits God’s will being done on earth. Gascoigne believes that by having faith as a basis in service, heavenly citizens are able move past a secular ethical perspective and make evident God’s presence in humanity.

²³⁹ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 53.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

Through faith, the heavenly citizen is able to “confidently proclaim the eternal destination of the human person, despite the obscurity of that destiny in this world.”²⁴²

In addition, he references that the testament of individuals’ salvation in Christ is revealed in their behavior and acts of mercy towards those in need within this life.²⁴³ These acts of service pay witness to individuals’ earnest response to the love of God and God’s grace upon them.²⁴⁴ He writes that the heavenly citizen’s service to liberal society is a service to fellow human beings and that the “anonymity of Christ” in individuals provides the foundation as to how Christians should approach the secular.²⁴⁵ By anonymity of Christ, he means the inward presence of Christ. Heavenly citizens are to be humble in their dealings with society and not adopt the Pharisee mindset of being “holier than thou” or hastily trying to convert others. Gascoigne encourages heavenly citizens to have the mindset that service to an individual would be considered less attentive and respectful if they were to impose their Christian faith on individuals through manipulation or indoctrination.²⁴⁶ Rather, the service heavenly citizens are called to should be done with respect for the individual and should be more considerate of the individual’s particular needs.²⁴⁷ God will let the heavenly citizens know when the time is right to address their Christian faith.

²⁴² Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 58-59.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

f. Noninstrumental vs. Instrumental Relationships. Gascoigne moves on to discuss how the two stories of liberal society can be summed up in terms of the contrast between noninstrumental and instrumental relationships. He explains that the “key virtues exemplified in noninstrumental relationships are humility, reverence for others, and self-giving with the risk of self-loss,” while instrumental relationships “use other persons in order to achieve the self’s goals, refusing any sharing or mediating of those goals with the goals of others.”²⁴⁸ The “self” of the instrumental relationship does not seek the meaning of life or ponder as to how it came into being.²⁴⁹ It does not concern itself with the possible eternal, does not have a relationship with or love of God, and does not seek to grow in relationships with others.²⁵⁰ It fancies itself as completely self-sufficient and only mingles with others in order to manipulate them for its own gain and the pursuit of desires that can never be quenched and instead become self-destructive and addictive.²⁵¹

In contrast, the self of noninstrumental relationships is based in loving God. The self acknowledges that it was created and as such its life is not its own and that the meaning of life is much more than what the self could have ever wished for itself.²⁵² This

²⁴⁸ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 76-77.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² Robert Gascoigne, *The Public Forum and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 213; Robert Gascoigne, “Christian Faith and the Public Forum in a Pluralist Society,” *Colloquium* 26, no. 2 (1994), 124, <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.phineas.pointloma.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=d88c250b-a434-4952-bffc-258f48a3ef28%40sessionmgr198&vid=12&hid=103> (accessed April 26, 2013).

self seeks the company and love of others as it is this love that can begin to fulfill the self and save it from succumbing to the self-destructive and addictive forms of desire.²⁵³ It wants a life that is shared with others in order to form what Augustine deems a community of “perfect concord”: those who live together in everlasting peace, where inappropriate self-love and the selfish will does not exist, but rather a love that celebrates the common joy of the community, a place where many hearts become one.²⁵⁴ Those who participate in noninstrumental relationships are those who exhibit the qualities of people committed to serving others, because there must be a love of neighbor involved in performing service.

Going back to the self of instrumental relationships, it is this individual who easily succumbs to idolatry. Gascoigne adapts Augustine’s phrase of *libido dominandi* to include *libido consumendi*.²⁵⁵ He defines *libido consumendi* as the self as a consumer, undergoing the provocation of relentless, obsessive, and compulsive desire that seeks to obtain a mass amount of objects in the desperation to fill the emptiness it experiences due to the absence of meaning in its life.²⁵⁶ This *libido consumendi* does not accept any limits or restrictions as to what can be bought and sold.²⁵⁷ The result is that more and more goods that consist of the “communal, personal, erotic, and aesthetic life” are transformed

²⁵³ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 77.

²⁵⁴ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 832.

²⁵⁵ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 80.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

into commodities in an attempt to satisfy its voracious appetites.²⁵⁸ Gascoigne details that in relationships with others the needs and desires of the self as consumer do not develop into a common bond or a shared experience within an intimate relationship.²⁵⁹ The *libido consumendi* maintains its individualism without repentance and continuously assesses and tests others in order to discern whether they have the capacity to satisfy the desires that are in line with the criteria and expectations of the selfish, individual will.²⁶⁰

For the selfish individual, people themselves become viewed simply as commodities for one's own benefit and the use-value of others becomes extinguished once their purpose in the interest of the self's gain is served. This individual therefore cannot form or sustain any long-lasting relationships, much less any noninstrumental relationships. Caring for others or merely taking others into account is seen as putting a limit on one's desires and experiences because now one has to take another's needs into consideration.²⁶¹ In addition, the individual cannot establish common objects of love as this would be an unnecessary restraint on individual freedom, similar to that of impositions connected to tradition as constraint.²⁶² It is the case that noninstrumental relationships have a direct correlation with tradition as constraint. Both consider community, not merely the individual, and support the practices and behaviors that go along with this mentality.

²⁵⁸ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 80.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Ibid.*

g. Noninstrumental Relationships at Work in Liberal Society. Gascoigne acknowledges that liberal society does offer various examples of noninstrumental relationships.²⁶³ He highlights that the main commonality is that they do not consist of relations reliant on domination or consumption, and that the motivation behind the relationship is the relationship itself rather than whatever goals or results will come from it.²⁶⁴ He notes that politically, liberal societies have the capacity of establishing relationships that demonstrate mutual respect for humanity, asserting that statements involving human rights are able to foster relationships of mutual recognition – the recognition that every member of humanity makes a moral claim on all humans, which in turn limits the self and its search for domination and rather guides individuals to a larger and wider spectrum of concern.²⁶⁵ He writes that the goal of these statements of human rights is demonstrated in this relationship of recognition, the goal being to make it possible for all human beings to “live in a global human community of freedom, justice, and peace.”²⁶⁶

Gascoigne then proceeds to describe how noninstrumental relationships can work at the political, economic, and social level. Regarding the political level, he writes that procedures and measures can be utilized with not only the goal of curbing the power of the self that would seek to manipulate authoritative power, but also in the furtherance of

²⁶³ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 81.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 82.

the common good.²⁶⁷ For example, the development of democratic procedures can lead to the endorsing of political rights that will ensure that the concerns of the constituency are heard in an efficacious manner.²⁶⁸ Furthermore, those who participate in parliamentary politics will be able to experience these democratic procedures as a resource for forming relationships with each other as the nation's representatives who share the responsibility of pursuing the common good.²⁶⁹

At the economic level, Gascoigne argues that economic activity produces numerous noninstrumental relationships. He states that business relationships can transform into relationships that yield mutual respect and trust since the arena of the workplace is often occupied with the delivery of goods and services, and this enables it to be a forum for relationships that exhibit behaviors and practices such as cooperation, solidarity, and friendship.²⁷⁰ Also, work processes that involve the demand for technological innovation and development can serve as an impetus for noninstrumental relationships as they are driven by their common commitment and dedication to a project. In the lifetime of the project, the relationship can manifest a noninstrumental character through the rigorous experience of team collaboration and shared intellectual engagement.²⁷¹ By learning to rely on each other for the project's success, individuals are able to appreciate the contributions that each member brings to the table and thereby able

²⁶⁷ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 82.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

to appreciate every member even more as a human being and respect the established community within the work environment.

At the social level, individuals in liberal society take part in an array of voluntary projects and communities. This participation is based in the goal of yielding beneficial results for the common good.²⁷² These projects and communities tend to focus on common forms of identity such as ethnic, racial, or friendship.²⁷³ Gascoigne states that these societal relationships are constructed for the betterment of the welfare and dignity of humanity versus whatever benefit there may be for the self or a particular community.²⁷⁴ Being that this serves as the basis for their creation, shared commitment to humanity's enhancement becomes a stimulus for providing an incredible amount of dedicated cooperation among their members.²⁷⁵ Unlike the noninstrumental relationships found at the economic level, these relationships established through such communities are both noninstrumental in nature and in their goal.²⁷⁶ Gascoigne highlights that among these social groups, religious organizations have a particularly large presence due to their size, scope, and contribution to society.²⁷⁷ Religious organizations have the greatest potential to thrive in liberal society for as Gascoigne has suggested, when performing peaceful service religious organizations are to be solely mindful of the individuals they are serving.

²⁷² Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 82.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 82-83.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 83.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

Gascoigne affirms that these three forms of noninstrumental relationships – political, economic, and social – also give rise to the development of the ontology of the human.²⁷⁸ Just as in utilizing tradition as resource, this ontology of the human understands that individuals can begin to be fulfilled in relationships that are based in and promote free commitment.²⁷⁹ Through noninstrumental relationships the individual can experience the emergence and development of one’s character and can begin to find meaning in one’s existence.²⁸⁰ Gascoigne writes that in participating in noninstrumental relationships, the individual becomes a “self” that is willing to allow its individual goals to be changed in the effort to demonstrate its commitment to a relationship.²⁸¹ In other words, commitment to community now outweighs individual goals. However, in order for individuals to compromise or even sacrifice the pursuit of their personal goals in respect of their dedication to a relationship, individuals must be confident that the relationship they are in is fulfilling.²⁸²

For example, say that while I am pursuing my education, a particular cause/organization that I am passionate about and involved in – a breast cancer activist group in California – informs me and the rest of the members that the scientists who have been studying breast cancer are extremely close to learning what causes it and as such will be able to develop a cure. However, in order to make this happen, they need anyone who is able to dedicate their time and money, by interning at a research facility and

²⁷⁸ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 83.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 84.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

making a donation to fund their research, to please do so. While I know that if I participate in this endeavor it may take longer for me to complete my education and possibly deplete my savings, I trust that the scientists and the organization will be successful and will not exploit me or abuse the money I am providing them. As such, I decide to join them in their research.

There must be a level of trust in order for me to put off my individual goals and pursue the greater goals of the community. So when pursuing noninstrumental relationships, individuals need to be able to trust others. Individuals need to believe that although their needs or goals have been pushed aside, that the community will not take advantage of them, that their sacrifice is not in vain. This expectation of receiving kindness and consideration in return is different from that of instrumental relationships because it does not stem from a selfish will that is concerned about what the individual is entitled to. Rather, it illustrates the faith that communities have in each other when they are able to share common objects of love and the hope of perpetuating the common good. While noninstrumental relationships do not require participants to be Christians or to subscribe to Christian values and ideals, having faith in humanity becomes an essential element in order to participate in a noninstrumental relationship. To go back to my example, I must believe that humanity is essentially good, that “we are all in this together.” I must believe that humanity’s main concern is for perpetuating the well-being of its members and as such, is genuine in its effort to develop organizations that embody this principle. If individuals do not have this concept of humanity, there is no way that they will be able to dedicate themselves to noninstrumental relationships. This faith that comes with noninstrumental relationships mirrors both the practices of tradition as

constraint and the values of the Kingdom by putting the concerns of others before one's own, which again legitimizes the claim that the heavenly citizens can maintain their identity within a liberal society.

h. The Fears of Participating in Noninstrumental Relationships and How They Can Be Alleviated. Since a sacrifice of the immediate pursuit of one's own goals is necessary when pursuing noninstrumental relationships, Gascoigne realizes and addresses the fears and concerns of liberal society that must be also be addressed by the heavenly citizens in order to put liberal society at ease and foster their positive, noninstrumental potential. He writes that the concern that numerous noninstrumental relationships will diminish or inhibit individual freedom needs to be carefully assessed.²⁸³ For example, this concern for individual human freedom can be secretly harboring the desire for the maximization of one's self-interest: namely, that one will still be able to enjoy expressing self-love and pursuit of idolatrous tendencies in a dominative and exploitative sense.²⁸⁴ If this is the case, there is no *real* concern here, but rather feigned concern masking the desires of a selfish individual. Others may be concerned that a failure to embrace the various forms of community will be met with oppression or that joining these communities will lead to suppression and a loss of voice within the community.²⁸⁵ However, in these communities that mirror noninstrumental relationships, the community is concerned with humanity's welfare and recognizes that the contribution of the individuals within its community is integral to accomplishing its goal. The

²⁸³ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 84.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

community takes the thoughts and opinions of its members into consideration when developing methods that will advance its mission. In addition, these communities do not seek to guilt people into joining their cause or ostracize those who do not participate. Rather, the community's focus lies in furthering its goals.

Gascoigne asserts that the heavenly citizens can encourage and enhance noninstrumental relationships in liberal society in two ways.²⁸⁶ 1) They must contribute to the growth of positive and compelling philosophies that exalt the common good, doing so will enable members of liberal society to be exposed to and convinced that there are legitimate and prosperous alternatives to philosophies that further individualism. 2) The heavenly citizens must demonstrate and communicate the virtues that allow a commitment to noninstrumental relationships possible.²⁸⁷ These virtues allow individual human freedom to be expressed appropriately through community rather than through the desires of gratification and the action of domination.²⁸⁸ It is crucial that the heavenly citizens communicate and illustrate that dedication to community does not consist of restricting individual freedom or overwhelming the individual, but rather that community cultivates healthy, positive fulfillment through interpersonal relationships.²⁸⁹ Gascoigne notes that this task possesses a Christological character since “the life and passion of

²⁸⁶ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 85.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

Christ [is] not as a story of destructive self-immolation but one of love, joy and peace and community.”²⁹⁰

i. The Three Virtues of Noninstrumental Relationships. Gascoigne argues that there are three virtues present in noninstrumental relationships: humility, reverence, and self-giving at the risk of self-loss.²⁹¹ He writes that these virtues stem from love.²⁹² More specifically, humility demonstrates one’s love of God and the acknowledgment that one’s life is in God’s hands, while reverence and self-giving exhibits one’s love of neighbor.²⁹³ He notes that for Augustine, humility is the key contrast between the heavenly and the earthly city.²⁹⁴ Humility recognizes that one’s life is not one’s own, that a world in which one takes advantage of others in order to succeed with one’s own interests is an empty world, void of fulfillment and of meaning.²⁹⁵ It also recognizes that one cannot draw the meaning of life from oneself and that one must seek to enter in community with others and with God.²⁹⁶ Humility should not be confused with

²⁹⁰ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 84-85.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 87-88.

²⁹² Ibid., 88.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid; Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2006), 570. In reference to humility, Augustine contrasts the earthly and the heavenly city by stating “The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, ‘Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.’ In the one, the princes and the nations it subdues are ruled by the love of ruling; in the other, the princes and the subjects serve one another in love, the latter obeying, while the former take thought for all. The one delights in its own strength, represented in the persons of its rulers; the other says to its God, ‘I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength.’”

²⁹⁵ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 88.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

self-belittlement; rather, it is a heightened self-awareness of one's need for positive life-giving relationships with both God and others.²⁹⁷

The virtue of humility leads to the virtue of reverence. By individuals realizing that they do indeed need others in order to experience fulfillment, individuals now perceive others as beings that must be revered.²⁹⁸ Through reverence individuals become open to recognizing the value of others as they also now know through humility that their own value is bestowed upon them by God – not something that individuals can accomplish on their own.²⁹⁹ In addition, reverence for others is fundamental to statements involving human rights and dignity as it affirms the notion that all humans possess an ontological uniqueness and value.³⁰⁰ By having this in mind, reverence does not allow the individual to attempt to dominate others or treat them as commodities.³⁰¹ In revering others, the individual realizes that one's actions not only affect the self, but others as well. As such, part of respecting others is establishing accountability. Once the individual becomes knowledgeable of the value of others and instituting common objects of love, the individual sees the importance of community. By keeping oneself and others accountable, the community is able to perpetuate these common goods and abstain from treating its members as objects to be used. Furthermore, the combination of reverence and accountability give the individual the strength to rebuke the pursuit of instrumental relationships supported by liberal society.

²⁹⁷ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 88.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 89

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

The third and last virtue is self-giving at the risk of self-loss. Gascoigne explains that this virtue is inexorably tied to noninstrumental relationships.”³⁰² Although, he notes that this effect of self-loss varies to some degree depending on the type of noninstrumental relationship one participates in.³⁰³ For example, participation in the forms of relationship that are present within the work environment usually involves a combination of instrumental and noninstrumental goals to a certain extent; however, this can be dependent on the type of work one does.³⁰⁴ Within this arena, the individual’s willingness to undergo self-loss is dependent upon whether or not and at what level the goals of the company are aligned with its employees shared values.³⁰⁵ An example of self-loss within this area would be for one to take a cut in salary or voluntarily work more hours for the good of the company.³⁰⁶ In friendship, rather than experiencing self-loss, one may only experience self-giving.³⁰⁷ For example, in friendships individuals make the effort to sustain them by at times generously over-extending themselves for a friend in need. However, this does not mean that it is essential for individuals to sacrifice or reject their personal beliefs and/or core values that make up their identity, thereby encountering self-loss.³⁰⁸

³⁰² Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 89; Robert Gascoigne, *The Public Forum and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 230.

³⁰³ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 89.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 90.

Gascoigne proceeds to say that all noninstrumental relationships entail at least the *risk* of self-loss in the act of self-giving.³⁰⁹ Whether this actually happens is determined by the situation. He elaborates that common life shared among individuals that make up a community inevitably runs the risk of loss as it is necessary for individuals to commit themselves to a common good and trust that their fellow members will do so as well.³¹⁰ Those who make the decision to trust others leave themselves open to possible exploitation and betrayal. However, if individuals do not trust each other and take this leap of faith, it is impossible for noninstrumental relationships and communities to flourish.³¹¹

As Gascoigne holds, the strength of the individual's commitment to communal relationships is dependent upon the individual's self-identity. The communal relationship must enable individuals to experience a sense of self-fulfillment within themselves.³¹² This sense of fulfillment is wholly dependent upon shared values. As Augustine says, these communities that the individual chooses to enter into with the possibility of experiencing self-loss should be communities that have common objects of love and ideally two of these common objects of love would consist of love of neighbor and love of God. Liberal society tends to have a strong aversion to the concept of self-loss for the sake of community. While it is essential that people safeguard themselves against the likelihood of manipulation, exploitation, and betrayal, it is fundamental to make a commitment to these types of relationships, otherwise one will continue to live a life that

³⁰⁹ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 90.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

is all about the self and only takes into consideration what others can do for the individual.³¹³

Gascoigne adds that a life that incorporates calculated strategy in the effort to protect oneself from possibly risky circumstances in fact undercuts any possible commitment to noninstrumental relationships and communities that seek to further the common good.³¹⁴ In other words, by individuals keeping their best interests at the forefront in their decision-making process and constantly performing risk assessment, individuals do not allow themselves to fully embrace the potentiality of self-fulfillment that can arise from noninstrumental relationships. Rather, individuals eliminate that potentiality from ever turning into actuality, thereby never allowing themselves to achieve self-fulfillment. What is even more unfortunate is that this negative behavior transcends to the individual's relationship with God. By not completely trusting in God and treating God as someone who needs to be bargained with in order to achieve what the individual deems is the best outcome, the individual's life continues to lack meaning, further postponing the fulfillment the individual can enjoy by being united with God.

This lack of commitment once again reroutes the individual's love from the greatest goods to lower goods as the individual continues in the quest to find something of worth to focus one's love on as one finds that one is not enough to experience fulfillment. As noted above, the fear of being exploited or betrayed makes it difficult for the individual to trust others, not necessarily in all matters but in endeavors that affect the individual's personal progress and success. The individual recognizes that by refusing to

³¹³ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 92.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

partake of community for the sake of maintaining one's self-interests, that it is possible for others within a community to be secretly trying to maintain their self-interests under the guise of pursuing a common good. The individual then fears that not only the community, but these people in particular, may try to take advantage of the individual and attempt to dominate the individual. Therefore, trusting others becomes a major challenge that the individual must contend with. However, it still remains that the best way to do so is through self-giving at the risk of self-loss. For by continuing to pursue empty, instrumental relationships the individual will never experience self-fulfillment. As Augustine explains, humans are created to love, and for human life to have meaning individuals must invest in something outside themselves. Again, ideally this something would consist of love of God and love of neighbor. However, this investment can also take the form of the pursuits of liberal society that center around human welfare and human rights as they embrace the values that can be found in the heavenly city. By engaging in community individuals are emboldened to champion common objects of love as community provides the individual with fortitude, accountability, compassion, and love, which can be experienced both as a community and as an individual. Through all these positive attributes, communities are given the means by which their goals can be achieved.

j. The Christological Nature of Self-Loss. Gascoigne writes that this threat of self-loss presents both a challenge to the heavenly citizens and a critical opportunity in their relationship to liberal society since the tension experienced in liberal society regarding the prospect of self-loss is part of the heavenly citizens Christological

proclamation.³¹⁵ More specifically, the practice of fulfilling the self through commitment to others with the risk of self-loss exhibits a Christological nature.³¹⁶ He asserts that it is crucial for the heavenly citizens to communicate a Christology to liberal society that can rectify its incorrect sense of the potential harm that could come to the self by participating in community and instead encourage liberal society to engage in noninstrumental relationships by which the self will find fulfillment through its personal commitment to community.³¹⁷ Such a depiction is what Gascoigne calls being “Kingdom-oriented” as “it emphasizes that the meaning of Christ’s mission is the proclamation of the Kingdom, which is made up of relationships sustained by mutual respect and love and marked by joy and peace.”³¹⁸ By practicing these types of relationships, individuals are able to experience a taste of the perfectly, harmonious society that exists in the Kingdom of God.³¹⁹

When comparing Jesus’ actions to that of how an individual within society should act, Gascoigne highlights that Jesus’ commitment to proclaiming the Kingdom of God and spreading his Father’s word has its basis in Christ’s humility.³²⁰ Jesus acknowledged that everything he received was from God and that the purpose of his life was found in God.³²¹ He did not succumb to the temptation of self-love and self-interests, rather he

³¹⁵ Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 93.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

aligned his will with God's.³²² By uniting his will, Jesus was able to enjoy fulfillment in his life and able to enjoy community with those who sought to be citizens of the heavenly city. By not giving into self-love, Jesus was able to focus his complete attention to others, demonstrating his reverence for them.³²³ In his humility and reverence Jesus's life was essentially about "de-mastery" – better known as self-loss.³²⁴

When further determining what presence self-giving at the risk of self-loss has in liberal society, Gascoigne states that such a concept which would normally emphasize a resonance with the image of Christ, must now be presented as a means of experiencing true joy in peaceful service within a community that is motivated by humanity's respect for others in which humanity acknowledges individual uniqueness.³²⁵ Just as Christ offered each person he encountered a "calling suited to their own gifts and capacities," liberal society must recognize what it is able to contribute to humanity based upon its members particular talents and abilities.³²⁶ While members of liberal society may not be interested in the values of the Kingdom, it is still their responsibility as members of society to contribute to society. It is essential that an individual find their niche and thrive. By adhering to this responsibility their existence can have meaning in this life.

In order to assess the earnestness of one's self-giving, it is important to evaluate the motivations behind one's actions. In Søren Kierkegaard's text entitled, *Works of Love*, he illustrates more completely how individuals are to give of themselves in love

³²² Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 93.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 94.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

even with the risk of self-loss and how individuals are able to know whether their actions are genuine or initiated by self-interest. With a dramatic flair and in an Augustinian tone, Kierkegaard writes that if individuals would like to know if their love is completely unselfish they should analyze their love in relation to the dead.³²⁷ By this he means that an unselfish love is a love that is able to love freely without expecting any love in return.³²⁸ He contrasts this ideal notion of Christian, agape love with that of pagan, preferential love. He explains that preferential love is love that expects repayment, in other words, it is conditional.³²⁹ A love for the dead, who cannot reciprocate love, is the most free as it is unconditional.³³⁰ The individual does not give preference to the dead because of what they can do for the individual, as such the individual should not practice conditional love, which is a mockery of love, with anyone living.

Kierkegaard continues to say that the more the individual is compelled to love someone, the more it is evident that the individual does not love the person properly.³³¹ The compulsion indicates a need that is being met and prompts the individual to love someone for the sake of fulfilling this need. Kierkegaard acknowledges that while the analogy of love for the dead is not the same as God's eternal love for humanity, that the individual should be encouraged to appropriate their love in this manner in dealing with others. The individual should not have a love that is calculating, seeking its personal profit from the labors of others; but rather a neighborly love that is unhampered from the

³²⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009), 320.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid., 322.

³³¹ Ibid.

temptation to monitor one's potential success in practicing self-giving at the risk of self-loss. By following Kierkegaard's advice, the individual will be able to discern whether their love is conditional or unconditional. If it is conditional, they are charged with the task to re-appropriate their love in order to make it unconditional.

Gascoigne sums up his argument by again advising the heavenly citizens on what their role should be in liberal society. The heavenly citizens are to serve as a guide to members of society, assisting in the advancement of the pursuits of liberal society that reflect the behaviors and practices that can be found within the heavenly city. The heavenly citizens should be able to respect the endeavors of liberal society while communicating how the endeavors relate to the values of the kingdom of God.³³² At what level this communication will take on the form of addressing the Christian faith should dependent upon particular contexts and circumstances and not forced into the dialogue between the heavenly and earthly citizens.³³³

Concluding Remarks

Through discussing the corruption of society and how the heavenly citizens can assist in restoring the love of God and neighbor, Gascoigne contributes the thesis' argument of how the pursuit of self-love and idolatry have led to the incapability of the human to experience fulfillment as their love is incorrectly focused on the self. Through a return to tradition as constraint, implementing noninstrumental relationships, embodying the three virtues of humility, reverence, and self-giving at the risk of self-loss, and through the heavenly citizens engaging the earthly city in peaceful service, a redirecting

³³² Robert Gascoigne, *The Church and Secularity: Two Stories of Liberal Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 102.

³³³ *Ibid.*

of humanity's love on God and neighbor can be facilitated – thereby allowing it to enjoy the purpose for which it was created.

CONCLUSION

TEARING DOWN THE SYNTHETIC KINGDOM

The current state of society is that of living in a synthetic kingdom. A false kingdom filled with illusory realities imitating the divine and promising to satisfy humanity's nature to express its love and receive it in turn. Humanity actively turned from God in self-love in order to enjoy what it believed to be true freedom, not having to answer to anyone save the self. Enamored with the lower goods of creation, individuals willingly rejected the Creator in order to enjoy what instead should be used. God created human beings to seek their fulfillment and be fulfilled in the love of God and the love of community in God. As such, humans cannot find rest in themselves, much less in this world of temporality and temporal pleasure. These lower goods, which are to be used, are to bring glory to God and enjoyment in the pursuit of common goods that align humanity with God and God's purpose for humanity – individually and in relation to others. The enjoyment that is to be experienced is not found in the goods themselves.

By neglecting love of God, or altogether denying God, individuals have compromised their existence. Going against the nature and purpose for which humans were created means that their lives do not have meaning. Furthermore, in an existence separate from God, humanity cannot know the fullness of love. Turning from God to pursue self-love, the individual practices idolatry and is left with aching loneliness that breeds a necessary love of other lower goods external to the self. Because one cannot love oneself and experience love in return in self-love, one turns to other lower goods upon which to project one's self-love. This is no longer a mere enjoyment of these goods, but rather an exaltation and worship of lower goods as the divine, just as the self was

once exalted. These synthetic substitutes only produce temporary gratification as they are temporal not eternal. Nevertheless, they are worshipped and their promises of love are used to adorn the synthetic kingdom in the hope that by nailing more and more promises to the barbed wire that surrounds humanity, the more readily humanity will forget that it resides in a hell that smacks of self-deception.

Humanity gives in to the seduction of idolatry not only as a resource for projecting its self-love, but at times it altogether forgets about the effort it has made in trying to convince itself that lower goods mirror the divine and actually believes *they are* the divine. Individuals begin to believe that the elevation of the self through lower goods makes them self-sufficient in this world and that they can find rest both in themselves and in this temporal world that they have accepted as their home in rejection of their eternal home – God. Underlying this massive farce is humanity’s desire to return to its first, true love. Along with that, Augustine notes that humanity is after the ultimate truth, which is once again, God. This relationship with idolatry produces a catch-22 situation. While individuals allow themselves to be deceived by their seeming independence, individuals do not like to be deceived. However, it is a compromise they make in order to enjoy the psychological freedom of having to answer to no one; thus not allowing them to know the truth. Augustine writes that individuals must indeed love the truth so much that when they realize that what they have been loving is not the truth, they pretend that it is.³³⁴ He says individuals do this because they despise being proved wrong – they will not allow themselves to know that they are promoting and falling victim to self-deception.³³⁵ In turn, they unleash hatred for the real truth for the sake of whatever it is they have turned

³³⁴ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1961), 229.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 229-230.

their love to.³³⁶ Augustine describes, “Men love the truth when it bathes them in its light: they hate it when it proves them wrong [...] those who do not wish to stand condemned by the truth find themselves unmasked against their will and also find that truth is denied to them.”³³⁷

In order to manage humanity’s idolatrous tendencies, individuals must order their love correctly so that, as Augustine exerts, they do not love what should not be loved or neglect to love what they are to love; or love two things equally if one should be loved more or less, or unequally if they should be equal.³³⁸ As has been highlighted throughout this thesis, as far back as the transgression of humanity’s first parents, society has been enjoying the things which are to be used, abandoning eternal enjoyment. Society thrives on elevating the individual and glorifying the self. It wholeheartedly upholds the statutes of individualism that leave a trail of egoism. However, contemporary society merely mirrors the human condition that has persisted throughout human history, as illustrated by Augustine. Modern society’s particular iteration of this condition is driven by consumerism and materialism. However, through contemporary arguments of Augustine’s analysis of the two cities and his solution for overcoming the seduction of idolatry, society can rearrange its priorities and learn to refocus its love on God and neighbor. As it stands, individuals are encouraged by society to put pleasing the self at the top of their priorities.

³³⁶ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1961), 230.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Saint Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H.Green. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 21.

People in society are constantly bombarded by the allurements of what the world has to offer. Whether it is a television commercial, an internet advertisement, or a bus banner, every means by which society does business and engages in this world is tainted by the accessories of pride, self-love and idolatry. In consumerism and materialism, humanity is urged to spend its money on things it does not need and waste its time considering material goods it has yet to obtain. Society surrounds itself with material goods; yet, this hoarding will never cause the ego to subside and experience satisfaction. In the love of lower goods, humanity experiences a vicious cycle of instant gratification and shortly following disappointment. It only experiences temporary happiness and is quickly disenchanted when it can no longer derive pleasure from the acquired objects. Once an object has lost its luster, the individual is once again on the hunt for something shiny and new. Individuals refuse to believe that they cannot find love in these things, even if it is a shallow one. The search to find rest or satisfaction outside of God is relentless, but ultimately restless.

The result of consumerism and materialism grounds humanity to this world. As individuals bond their love to temporal goods, the ties to this world become stronger and humanity disregards the fact that its residence here is only temporary. Augustine equates humanity's earthly habitation to that of visitors in a foreign land. As such, humanity can only find true happiness in its native homeland. He asks individuals to imagine that as travelers in a foreign land, their estrangement from home has filled them with great unhappiness and they now long to return to their native soil. However, in order to get home they would need to take a lengthy mode of transport. Yet, he notes that if they were to become captivated by the delights of the journey and the actual travelling, they would

be wrongly enjoying that which is to be used to help them reach their final destination and become hesitant to finish their journey.³³⁹ So in this life, individuals are never to forget that they are in perpetual pilgrimage, as strangers in the land, making their way home to God where they will have eternal rest from their journey.

This displacement of humanity's love in turning from God to love of self has also resulted in a distortion in how it relates as a community. Created to love its neighbors and enjoy fellowship in God, society has replaced healthy, mutual relationships that embrace the nature God bestowed upon humans, with self-serving relationships that objectify the other by using them as a means to ensure the individual's personal pleasure rather than follow common objects of love. This corruption of love does not allow society to enjoy community with one another, again being subjected to a haunting feeling of loneliness. Instead of facing this situation head on, most individuals would rather mask their true selves and emotions and seek consolation in objects of deception which are themselves masked as tools of promise. Individuals tell themselves that these lower goods bring them joy, that they do not need other people.

This relation to lower goods is complex. As stated earlier, these goods are utilized for the projection of humanity's self-love. In this projection, as Socrates stated in the *Apology*, individuals do not deliberately choose to harm themselves.³⁴⁰ Or as Saint Thomas Aquinas suggested, individuals do not intentionally behave wrongly or pursue evil, rather they pursue these things because they believe they can derive some good from

³³⁹ Saint Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 9.

³⁴⁰ Plato, *Apology*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, The Internet Classics Archive, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html> (accessed April 19, 2013).

them.³⁴¹ While Augustine will affirm that yes, these things are good, he is also clear that it is the action of turning to these lower goods (or to use the phrase “projecting self-love on these goods”) that is wicked as it falsely focuses humanity’s love on that which is not the highest good as if it were the highest good. Therefore, while society may not think it is bringing harm to itself through these lower goods, as it has convinced itself that they are the highest good, the action of self-deception has already harmed society and this action of self-deception is intentional.

Only in times of distress does society reach out to others, rally together for safety, or feel compelled to further some humanitarian cause. In addition, in an effort to avoid living by God’s commandments, modern society advocates for a universalism of ethics. It integrates the belief systems of various societies and cultures as well as their mores and folkways in order to propagate peace among the nations. This attempt to establish a universal community founded on principles that may or may not reflect the values of the Kingdom of God cannot truly replicate the community humanity would enjoy with and in God. Although, there is something to be said for humanity trying to foster a harmonious civilization. The objective to unite in common causes and initiatives and demonstrate humility, reverence, and self-giving at the risk of self-loss are virtues found within a Godly community. In a sense, society seems somewhat inclined to practice the commandment of love of neighbor. However, love of neighbor is to be rooted in love of God, which is not the case here. If society’s love was not misplaced, the impulse for togetherness would be able to reflect the heavenly city. As Augustine stresses, however,

³⁴¹ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Benziger Bros., 1947): First Part, Ques. 48, Article 1, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.FP_Q48_A1.html (accessed April 19, 2013).

the world tends to become drunk with its invisible wine and follows a distorted, earthly will rather than the will of God.³⁴²

In pursuing self-love and idolatry through elevating the creation, humanity denies itself of the purpose for which it was created. It cannot experience true fulfillment, but will be forever unsatisfied. While on earth, individuals are to use creation to bring glory to God, not to themselves. Humanity's will needs to be aligned with God's in order to fully experience God's love for humanity in every facet of life. The Church's journey to restore humanity's relationship with God and neighbor will not be an over-night completion. The Church should expect obstacles during the process of restoration as trying to manage conflicting loves and wills is not an easy task. But with the help of others aiding in the endeavor, the challenges can be managed more effectively. With the correct focus on God, humanity can overcome the seduction of idolatry and begin to break free from the synthetic kingdom.

³⁴² Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1961), 45.

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