

## AUGUSTINE, MAXIMINUS AND IMAGINATION

In a paper presented at the 11th Oxford Patristics Conference, I pointed out that Augustine accuses all heretics of being carnal persons, that is, the sort of persons who can think of God only in bodily terms<sup>1</sup>. I showed that Augustine specifically accuses the Arians of thinking of God in a carnal or bodily fashion and even claims that their heresy arises from an image-controlled interpretation of *Jn* 5:19, "The Son cannot do anything of himself, except what he sees the Father doing"<sup>2</sup>. To illustrate his point, Augustine reconstructs the logic of the Arians in thinking about *Jn* 5:19 as follows:

"As far as I can see, you understand that the Father makes some things, but the Son watches how the Father makes them so that he too can make what he has seen the Father making. You have set up two carpenters, as it were, thinking of the Father and the Son like a master and his apprentice, in the way that fathers who are carpenters teach their sons their craft. See, I come down to your carnal mind; I think the same way you do ..."<sup>3</sup>.

In this paper I shall first show that Augustine explicitly accuses the Arians in general and Maximinus in particular of thinking of God in a carnal or bodily fashion. Then I will try to determine from what Maximinus

<sup>1</sup> *Heresy and Imagination in St. Augustine*, forthcoming in *Studia Patristica* 11. For Augustine's understanding of the Pauline terms "carnal," "animal," and "spiritual," see my *Spirituals and Spiritual Sense in St. Augustine*, in *Augustinian Studies* 15 (1984), 65-81; 'Homo spiritualis' in St. Augustine's 'De Genesi contra Manichaeos', in *Studia Patristica* 10, vol. 22, 351-355; A Decisive Admonition for St. Augustine?, in *Augustinian Studies* 19 (1988), 85-92, and 'Homo spiritualis' in St. Augustine's 'Confessions', in *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*, ed. Joanne MCWILLIAM, Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992, 67-76.

<sup>2</sup> See *Tractatus in Iohannis Euangelium* 18,3; CCL 36,181: "Ariani quidem haeretici. ... capiunt ex his uerbis ansam calumniae ...". See also *Sermo* 126,8 in *Revue Bénédictine* [RB] 69 (1959), 186-187: "Non potest filius a se facere quidquam, nisi quod uiderit patrem facientem (*Io* 5,19). Hic arrianorum error exsurgit ...".

<sup>3</sup> *Tractatus in Iohannis Euangelium* 18,5; CCL 36,182: "sic, quantum opinor, intelligis, quoniam quaedam facit Pater, Filius autem attendit quemadmodum faciat Pater, ut possit et ipse ea facere quae uiderit Patrem facientem. Duos quasi fabros constituisti: ita Patrem et Filium, ut etiam magistrum et discipulum, quomodo solent patres fabri docere filios suos artem suam. Ecce descendo ad carnalem sensum tuum, ita interim cogito ut tu ...". Cf. also *Sermo* 126,9; RB 69 (1959), 187.

himself said in the debate with Augustine whether or not Augustine's accusations are justified<sup>4</sup>. In conclusion, I shall suggest some reflections on the charges that Augustine is guilty of Hellenizing the biblical doctrine of God.

# I. THE ACCUSATION AGAINST THE ARIANS

Augustine's anti-Arian writings are relatively late and few in number. In 418 Augustine received a copy of an anonymous Arian tract, *Sermo Arianorum*, in response to which he wrote his *Contra sermonem Arianorum*<sup>5</sup>. There are also a number of anti-Arian passages in the *Tractatus in Iohannis Euangelium*, dating from the years 413-418, and in a number of Augustine's *Sermones*<sup>6</sup>. Finally, there is the *Collatio cum Maximino*, a verbatim record of the debate between Augustine and Maximinus held in Hippo in 427 or 428, and the two books of the *Contra Maximinum Arianum*, which Augustine wrote after the debate, because Maximinus's filibuster had deprived him of a chance to answer on the day of the debate.

Maximinus, the Arian bishop, came to Africa in 427 or 428 with Count Sigisvult, a Goth, who was sent to suppress the rebellion of Bonifacius. The fact that he accompanied Sigisvult suggests that he was a Goth, though Meslin has argued that he was a Roman by birth<sup>7</sup>. In any case, Maximinus took as his rule of faith the Council of Ariminum (386) which espoused the Homoian Arianism of Ulfila, the apostle of the Goths<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Augustine denounces the Arian use of image-thinking, but he himself frequently uses images to illustrate Trinitarian doctrine. Cf. especially *Sermo* 117,6,10-9,12; PL 38, 666-668, where he uses images of the brightness of light and of a reflection of a reed in water to illustrate how the Father is not temporally subsequent to the Son. The difference is that, while Augustine uses images to aid in understanding the rule of faith, the Arians allow images to determine what the rule of faith is.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Epistula* 33\*A; CSEL 88,122, where Augustine says: "dictavi contra Arrianos ad illud quod Dionysius noster de Vico Iuliano miserat ...". For this point and for the content of the next note, cf. B. DALEY, *The Giant's Twin Substances: Ambrose and the Christology of Augustine's 'Contra sermonem Arianorum'*, in *Collectanea Augustiniana* II, New York: Peter Lang, 477-495.

<sup>6</sup> Of the *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, the most important in terms of their anti-Arian doctrine are 18, 20, and 26, which date from 413, and 71, which is dated after 418. The principal anti-Arian *Sermones* are *Sermo* 117 [418], *Sermo* 135 [417], *Sermo* 139 [416-418], *Sermo* 140 [427 or 428], *Sermo* XLXXXIII [after 416], *Sermo* 226 [416-417], *Sermo* 341 [418], *Sermo* 330 [417], and *Sermo* Guelferbytanus 17 [421-423].

<sup>7</sup> Cf. M. MESLIN, *Les ariens d'Occident*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. R. GRYSON, *Scolies ariennes sur le concile d'Aquilée*. (*Sources chrétiennes*, 167). Paris: du Cerf, 1980, 250-263, for the Creed of Ulfila and Maximinus' commentary on it. Cf. R. P. C. HANSEN, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian*

Maximinus began the debate with Heraclius, the priest whom Augustine had appointed to take over the administration of his diocese, but when Heraclius found himself in trouble, Augustine was summoned to his aid<sup>9</sup>.

This paper will focus upon the accusations of carnal thinking that Augustine raised against the Arians first in his earlier *Contra sermonem Arianorum* and then in his writings against Maximinus<sup>10</sup>. In the third chapter of his *Contra sermonem Arianorum*, Augustine takes issue with the Arian claim that the Son created all things at the command of the Father. He asks, "What do they mean when they say that the Son created everything at the bidding of the Father, as if the Father did not create, but commanded that everything be created by the Son?"<sup>11</sup>. Augustine suggests that such people "who are wise in a carnal manner should ask themselves by what other words the Father commanded the only Word"<sup>12</sup>. Then, he explicitly accuses them of forming a phantasm, that is, a false image, in their heart of two people, the one commanding and the other obeying.

"They form for themselves in a phantasm of their heart two people, as it were, though next to each other, still set in their own places, the one commanding, the other obeying. Nor do they understand that the command of the Father that all things be made is none other than the Word of the Father by whom all things were made"<sup>13</sup>.

In the *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XII, Augustine cites a text from the Arian sermon, "He heard from the Father, 'Sit at my right hand,'

*Controversy 318-381*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, 557-597, for an account of the Homoian Arianism and its principal representatives. For an excellent account of the Homoian Arian theology, cf. see R. GRYSON, *Les scolies ariennes*, 171-200.

<sup>9</sup> From POSSIDIUS's *Vita Augustini* VIII,vi,3; PL XXXII,543-544, we learn that it was the same Heraclius who was administering the affairs of the diocese who initially debated Maximinus.

<sup>10</sup> M. Simonetti has argued that the author of the anonymous *Sermo Arianorum* represents the same sort of Arianism as is found in the writings of Maximinus. Cf. his *S. Agostino e gli Ariani*, in *Revue des études augustiniennes* 13 (1967), 55-84, here 72. Hence, what is said in *Sermo Arianorum* may be counted as evidence, if not explicitly against Maximinus, at least against the Homoian Arianism that he represented.

<sup>11</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* III,4; PL 43,685: "quid est quod dicunt, jubente Patre creasse omnia Filium, tamquam Pater non creaverit, sed a Filio creari jusserit?"

<sup>12</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* III,4; PL 42,685: "Cogitent qui carnaliter sapiunt, quibus aliis verbis jusserit Pater unico Verbo".

<sup>13</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* III,4; PL 42,685: "Formant enim sibi in phantasmate cordis sui quasi duos aliquos, etsi juxta invicem, in suis tamen locis constitutos, unum jubentem, alteram obtemperantem. Nec intelligunt ipsam jussionem Patris ut fierent omnia, non esse nisi Verbum Patris per quod facta sunt omnia". Here Augustine explicitly points out that the Arians think in phantasms and do not understand (*intelligunt*) the Father's command.

and thus he sat at the Father's right hand". He comments, "as if he did this at the Father's bidding, not by his own power as well"<sup>14</sup>. Augustine says, "Unless this is interpreted spiritually, the Father will be on the Son's left"<sup>15</sup>. He warns that one should not think of the hand of God "in terms of the dimensions of the body, which do not exist in God, but in terms of the power to act"<sup>16</sup>. Augustine at least implies that the Arians interpret Christ's being seated at the right hand of the Father in a bodily manner.

Later, Augustine deals with the text from John, "As I hear, so I judge" (*Jn* 5:30), which the Arians understood as indicating the subjection of the Son. He cites the text, "The Son cannot of himself do anything except what he has seen the Father doing" (*Jn* 5:19). After warning that *Jn* 5:30 is more difficult to understand than the Arians suppose, he cites John's words, "The Father does not judge anyone, but has given all judgment to the Son" (*Jn* 6:22). Then he asks, "How is it that 'the Son cannot of himself do anything except what he has seen the Father doing' (*Jn* 5:19), though he judges and does not see the Father judging?"<sup>17</sup>. While the Arians, Augustine would contend, have tried to imagine the Son observing the Father in action so that he could do what he sees the Father doing, Augustine insists that, if one takes all the texts together, one is forced to transcend the imagination. He says,

"Let them attend to these things; let them think of them; let them ponder them, and in some way let their intention as far as possible become removed from the flesh (*excarnetur*). For by their carnal thought they strive to separate the one and identical nature of the Trinity in a distinction of substances and to arrange it in degrees of power"<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XII; PL 42,692: "Audivit, inquit, a Patre, 'Sede ad dexteram meam', et ideo sedit ad dexteram Patris, tanquam paterna jussione, non etiam sua id fecerit potestate". See *Sermo Arianorum* 9; PL 42,680: "Is qui voluntate Patris descendit et ascendit, voluntate et praecepto Patris sedet ad dexteram ejus, audiens Patrem sibi dicentem: 'Sede ad dexteram meam, donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum pedum tuorum'" (*Ps* 109:1).

<sup>15</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XII; PL 42,692: "Hoc quidem nisi spiritualiter acceptum fuerit, Filio Pater ad sinistram erit".

<sup>16</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XII; PL 42,692: "non secundum lineamenta corporis quae in Deo non sunt, sed secundum effectivam virtutem ...".

<sup>17</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XIV; PL 42,693: "Quomodo igitur 'non potest Filius a se facere quidquam, nisi quod viderit Patrem facientem,' cum judicet, nec Patrem videat judicantem?"

<sup>18</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XIV; PL 42,693: "In ista intendant, ista cogitent, ista considerent; et eorum quodam modo, quantum fieri potest, *excarnetur* intentio, qui carnalibus cogitationibus moliuntur unam Trinitatis eandemque naturam et substantiarum separare distantia, et potestatum gradibus ordinare". The verb *excarnare* is used by Augustine only one other time; in *Sermo* 140,6; PL 38,775, he says, "Exercet mentis Evangelium Ioannis, limat et excarnat, ut de Deo non carnaliter, sed spiritualiter

Still later, in dealing once again with *Jn* 5:30, which the Arians took as evidence of the subordination of the Son, Augustine says, "If they would think [of what Augustine has just said], they would not in their carnal thoughts arrange the powers or functions of the Trinity in unequal degrees, making the Father the emperor, the Son the judge, and the Holy Spirit the advocate like three men of unequal and unlike dignity"<sup>19</sup>. On the other hand, Augustine turns back upon them their own argument and explains that

"even by such carnal thinking they cannot demonstrate a diversity of natures — which is the main point at issue between them and us. They compare these things to human practices and do not withdraw from things familiar to the human race which they can grasp in thinking. For the animal person does not perceive what belongs to the Spirit of God (*I Cor* 2:14)"<sup>20</sup>.

After all, Augustine insists that, in the Arian comparison of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with the emperor, judge, and advocate, the latter three are all humans with the same nature, despite their different powers and functions<sup>21</sup>.

Later Augustine again accuses the Arians of carnal thinking. He first cites the Arian text, "The Father begot the Son, willing this without change or passion; the Son made the Holy Spirit without labor or exhaustion by his own power alone"<sup>22</sup>. Among other things, Augustine states that the Arians should attend to their claim that the Son made the Holy Spirit by his own power, for "in that way they are forced to say that the

sapiamus".

<sup>19</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XVIII; PL 42,696: "Haec isti si cogitarent, non carnalibus cogitationibus sic Trinitatis potestates vel officia gradibus imparibus ordinarent, ut tamquam tres homines inaequalis ac dissimilis dignitatis facerent, tanquam imperatorem Patrem, iudicem Filium, advocatum Spiritum sanctum". In *Sermo Arianorum* 9; PL 42,680, the relationship is stated less bluntly. After citing *Jn* 5:30, it says of Christ, "Unde et in iudicando Patris praesentiam praeponit, dicens: 'Venite, benedicti Patris mei' (*Mt* 25:34). Ergo justus iudex est Filius; iudicantis vero honor et auctoritas, Patris imperiales leges; sicuti et Spiritus sancti officiosa advocatio et consolatio".

<sup>20</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XVIII; PL 42,696-697: "Qua sua cogitatione carnali, tamen naturae diversitatem, de qua inter nos et ipsos maxima quaestio est, in his tribus personis demonstrare non possunt. Cum enim ad humanos mores ista referunt, et ab humani generis consuetudine quam cogitando possunt capere non recedunt (animalis enim homo non percipit quae sunt Spiritus Dei (*I Cor* 2:14) ...)".

<sup>21</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XVIII; PL 42,697: "quid aliud nos admonent, nisi quia et imperator, et iudex et advocatus, homines sunt?" Proinde iudex imperatore etiam si potestate minor est, non minus homo est".

<sup>22</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XXVIII,26; PL 42,702: "Pater, inquit, immobiliter et impassibiliter volens Filium genuit: Filius sine labore et fatigatione sola virtute sua spiritum fecit". Cf. *Sermo Arianorum* 26; PL 42,681.

Son did something that he did not see the Father doing"<sup>23</sup>. Augustine continues to press them, asking whether the Father also made the Holy Spirit, for, if he did, then the Son did not make him by his own power alone<sup>24</sup>. Worse yet, did the Father perhaps first make another Holy Spirit so that the Son could make the one he made? After all, the Son cannot do anything that he has not seen the Father doing<sup>25</sup>. However, the second hypothesis runs directly counter to Jesus' words, "Whatever the Father does, those same things the Son does in a like manner" (*Jn* 5:19). Hence, Augustine adds, "If they would try to think of these things, all those things which they make up for themselves in their carnal thought would assuredly be thrown into confusion"<sup>26</sup>. Augustine elsewhere explains that such confusion is not meant to be the goal, but should rather be the path that leads to healing. In *Sermo* 126, he points to the confusion that results from imagining that the Son watches what the Father does and then does the same thing, if one adds to such imagining of *John* 5:19 the content of *John* 1:3, namely, that all things were done through the Word. Here Augustine points out that the remedy for this carnal thinking lies in the confusion.

"Certainly you are confused, you heretic; certainly you are confused. But like one who has taken hellebore, you are confused in order to be healed. Now you are no longer yourself; you too condemn, as far as I can see, your carnal opinion and your carnal view"<sup>27</sup>.

That is, the image of the Father and the Son, the one unable to do anything by himself and watching the other's activity, like the apprentice observing the master carpenter, is shattered by the image of the Father doing all things by his Word so that one is forced to transcend thinking in

<sup>23</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XXVIII,26; PL 42,703: "Isto enim modo coguntur fateri, aliquid fecisse Filium quod non viderit Patrem facientem".

<sup>24</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XXVIII,26; PL 42,703: "An placet eis dicere, quod etiam Pater fecerit Spiritum sanctum? Non ergo eum sola virtute sua fecerit Filius".

<sup>25</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XXVIII,26; PL 42,703: "An alterum fecit prior Pater, ut posset Filius facere quem fecit, qui non potest facere nisi quod viderit Patrem facientem?"

<sup>26</sup> *Contra sermonem Arianorum* XXVIII,26; PL XLII,703: "Si haec cogitare conentur, procul dubio turbabuntur eis omnia quae sibi carnali cogitatione componunt".

<sup>27</sup> *Sermo* 126,10; RB 69 (1959), 188: "Certe turbaris, haeretice, certe turbaris; sed tamquam helleboro accepto turbaris, ut saneris. Iam te non inuenis, sententiam tuam et carnalem intuitum tuum, quantum arbitror, etiam ipse condemnas". Though hellebore (*helleborum*) was a drug used to cure mental diseases, its cognate verb (*helleboro*) means "to purge." Either sense (or both) could be applicable here.

images and arrive at understanding<sup>28</sup>. Hence, Augustine tells the Arians to place the eyes of the flesh behind them, raise up their heart, and gaze upon things divine<sup>29</sup>. If they do this, then their carnal intention is confused, hidden, destroyed<sup>30</sup>.

In his *Contra Maximinum Arianum*, Augustine frequently accuses the Arian bishop of thinking of God in carnal or imaginative terms. In the first book, Augustine twice accuses Maximinus of such carnal thinking. First, when Maximinus appealed to the ineffable groans of the Holy Spirit to prove that the Holy Spirit adores the Father<sup>31</sup>, Augustine interprets these groans as the prayers of the saints and says of the Arian interpretation, "No one thinks of the Holy Spirit in that way unless he thinks of him in terms of the flesh and not in terms of spirit"<sup>32</sup>. Later Augustine accuses Maximinus of believing that the Son is mutable.

"Of course, you would not believe this, if as a Catholic you believed that the form of the servant was assumed by the form of God and not that the form of God was changed into the form of the servant. Then you would think — not in a carnal, but in a spiritual manner — that he remained the invisible God after having assumed the visible man ..."<sup>33</sup>.

In the second book Augustine deals with a number of texts from the debate in which he points to carnal thinking as the source of the Arian position. At one point Maximinus stated that the Son "sees the Father, but he sees the incomprehensible. The Father, on the other hand, sees the Son as one who holds and has the Son in his embrace ..."<sup>34</sup>. Augustine replies

<sup>28</sup> In the Oxford paper I suggested that Augustine was using against the Arians the Plotinian technique of correcting one image by another or of shattering one image against another in order to move beyond imagery to understanding. Cf. Robert J. O'CONNELL, *St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man, A.D. 386-391*, Harvard: Belknap, 1986, p. 58, for a description of Plotinus's use of images to transcend the corporeal realm.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Sermo* 126,10; RB 69 (1959), 188: "Repone oculos carnis post te, erige si aliquid habes in corde, diuina intueri".

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Sermo* 126,12; RB 69 (1959), 189: "Ubi est ergo intentio ista carnalis? Confundatur, abscondatur, perimatur".

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Rom* 8:26.

<sup>32</sup> *Contra Maximinum* I,ix; PL 42,750-751: "Nemo enim sic de Spiritu sancto sapit, nisi qui secundum carnem, non secundum spiritum sapit."

<sup>33</sup> *Contra Maximinum* I,xix; PL 42,758: "Quod utique non crederes, si formam servi a forma Dei esse susceptam, non formam Dei in formam servi esse mutatam, tanquam catholicus crederes; et visibili homine assumpto, permansisse invisibilem Deum, non carnaliter, sed spiritualiter cogitares ...".

<sup>34</sup> *Collatio cum Maximino* II,9; PL 42,728: "Vidit ergo Patrem sed vidit incapabilem. Pater autem sic vidit Filium, ut tenens in sinu suo et habens ...". Maximinus had conflated *Jn* 6:46: "Not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father" and *Jn* 1:18: "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten God who is in the Father's embrace, he has revealed him".

that only the carnal-minded think that way and accuses him of imagining to himself "an embrace, that is, some capacity of the greater Father by which he grasps and contains the smaller Son, as a home holds a human being in a bodily fashion or as a nurse's bosom holds an infant"<sup>35</sup>. Augustine continues to jab away at his opponent, adding with irony that this way of thinking leads one to include among the marvelous things about Christ that "he grew in the form of the servant and became larger than he had been in the form of God so that, though he was first carried in his Father's embrace, he now sits at the Father's right hand"<sup>36</sup>. Hence, he cries out, "Cast such childish or old womanish phantasms from your heart ..."<sup>37</sup>. Later Augustine accuses Maximinus of thinking of the Son's being born from the Father in a carnal manner and of rejecting, for this reason, the Son's generation from the Father. "Filled with carnal thoughts, you think that the substance of the Father could not beget the Son out of itself without undergoing what the substance of the flesh undergoes when it begets"<sup>38</sup>. Shortly thereafter, he urges the Arian, "Remove the corruption; cast aside from the light of the mind any carnal passions and see the invisible reality of God that is known through what has been made"<sup>39</sup>. That is, as God gave to human parents the ability to generate offspring of the same substance as themselves, so the Father has from his substance begotten a Son of the same substance. One must "purify" the concept of generation of any corruption and carnal passion; once one has done so, one "will not fail to believe out of contentiousness, but see as a result of understanding"<sup>40</sup>.

Once Augustine uses a human analogy precisely "on account of the

<sup>35</sup> *Contra Maximinum* II, ix, 2; PL 42, 764: "Sic non sapiunt, nisi qui carnaliter sapiunt. Sinum quippe tibi fingis, ut video, aliquam capacitatem majoris Patris, qua Filium minorem capiat atque contineat: sicut hominem corporaliter capit domus, aut sicut sinus nutricis capit infantem".

<sup>36</sup> *Contra Maximinum* II, ix, 2; PL 42, 764: "Ergo inter mirabilia Christi et hoc deputabitur, quia in forma servi crevit, et major est factus quam in forma Dei fuerat, ut cum prius portaretur in sinu Patris, nunc sedeat ad dextram Patris".

<sup>37</sup> *Contra Maximinum* II, ix, 2; PL 42, 764: "Abjice ista puerilia vel anicularia phantasmata de corde tuo ...".

<sup>38</sup> *Contra Maximinum* II, xiv, 2; PL 42, 771: "Carnalibus quippe cogitationibus pleni substantiam Dei de se ipsa gignere posse Filium non putatis, nisi hoc patiat quod substantia quando gignit patitur carnis".

<sup>39</sup> *Contra Maximinum* II, xiv, 3; PL 42, 772: "Corruptionem de medio tollite, passiones carnales a lumine mentis adjicite, et invisibilia Dei, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspice" (*Rom* 1:20).

<sup>40</sup> *Contra Maximinum* II, xiv, 3; PL 42, 772: "non contendendo diffideres, sed intellegendum conspiceres".

weakness of the carnal ones"<sup>41</sup>. He asks us to think of a human child who obeys his parent, asks his parent for something, thanks the parent, is sent somewhere by the parent where the child states that he has come to do the parent's will. Then he asks, "Does this show that the child is not of the same substance as the parent?"<sup>42</sup>. So too, Augustine accuses Maximinus of thinking in carnal terms of the Son's veneration and worship of the Father<sup>43</sup>. Later Augustine, arguing that the Holy Spirit is seated with the Father and the Son, warns that we should not think of their being seated in a carnal fashion. Otherwise, we would think that the Father is seated in the less honorable position at the Son's left or that the Holy Spirit is denied what Scripture promises to the saints<sup>44</sup>. Finally, Augustine accuses the Arians of not hearing with faith *Dt* 6:4: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is your God, the Lord is one," and, thus, of being Israel carnally, like the Jews, and not spiritually, like Christians<sup>45</sup>.

Hence, there is ample evidence that Augustine accused the Arians not merely of thinking of the Father and the Son in terms of images, but also of falling into their error because of such image-thinking. However, he also points out that, if they accepted as true not merely that the Son cannot do anything by himself that he does not see the Father doing, but also that the Father does everything through his Son, the Word, they would be forced to transcend their image-thinking and would come to understand what one must first accept as true in faith. There remains the more difficult question of whether the Arians did indeed allow such image-thinking to control their theology.

## II. MAXIMINUS AS AN IMAGE-THINKER

In the first part of this paper, I have shown that Augustine accused the Arians in general and Maximinus in particular of being "carnal" in

<sup>41</sup> *Contra Maximinum* II,xiv,8; PL 42,776: "Ut enim humanum aliquid dicam propter infirmitatem carnalium ...".

<sup>42</sup> *Contra Maximinum* II,xiv,8; PL 42,776: "numquid hinc ostenditur non ejusdem cujus pater est esse substantiae?".

<sup>43</sup> *Contra Maximinum* II,xviii,3; PL 42,786: "Quodlibet de veneratione et obsequio Filii erga Patrem carnaliter sentias ...".

<sup>44</sup> *Contra Maximinum* II,xxi,3; PL 42,792: "Cum ipsa sessio non sit utique cogitanda carnaliter: alioquin opinaturi sumus honorabilius Filium sedere quam Patrem; honorabilius quippe sedetur ad dexteram: et videbitur esse consequens ut Pater sedeat ad sinistram. Postremo qualis vobis persuaserit spiritus, ut sancto Spiritui denegetis quod sanctis hominibus sancta Scriptura concedit, vos videritis".

<sup>45</sup> *Contra Maximinum* II,xxiii,1; PL 42,796: "Quod et vos utique audiretis, si Israel esse velletis, non carnaliter ut Judaei, sed spiritualiter ut Christiani".

their thinking about God. Augustine did not, of course, think that one became a heretic simply because one thought of God as bodily or by imagining him. The little ones in the Church also think of God in terms of bodily images, but they humbly believe what they do not understand. The Arians, Augustine claims, were too proud merely to remain at the level of faith and thought they understood when they did not understand<sup>46</sup>.

It is more difficult to show that Maximinus did in fact think of God in a carnal fashion as Augustine claims. Yet, there are, I believe, indications in the *Collatio cum Maximino* that Augustine's accusation was well grounded. There is, first of all, some indirect evidence that Maximinus thought of God as bodily and as able to be pictured in the imagination. The Homoian Arianism which Maximinus espoused shunned any philosophical learning and insisted upon a fidelity to the Scriptures and to the Scriptures alone<sup>47</sup>. When Maximinus stated for Augustine what he believed, he immediately added, "I state this on the basis of the Scriptures"<sup>48</sup>. He not merely accepted the authority of the Scriptures, but refused to accept "those words which are not found in the Scriptures"<sup>49</sup>. Maximinus surely intended to exclude the non-biblical language of the Council of Nicea, but his claim clearly goes beyond that. In fact, he claims that to use words not contained in the Scriptures is to fall into the wordiness condemned by the Scriptures<sup>50</sup>. He insists that the use of testimonies from the Scriptures is the only admissible form of proof. "The truth is not attained by argumentation, but is proved by certain testimonies"<sup>51</sup>.

Though Maximinus appeals to the Council of Ariminum, the authority of that Council stems from the fact that the fathers gathered there declared "in accord with the divine Scriptures the faith that they learned

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Enarratio in Psalmum* 130,9: CCL 40,1905: "uolunt se extendere ad id quod capere non possunt; et si aliquid utcumque ceperint, aut uisi sibi fuerunt capere quod non ceperunt, extolluntur inde. et superbiunt inde; uidentur sibi quasi sapientes".

<sup>47</sup> Cf. R. P. C. HANSON, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God. The Arian Controversy 318-311*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, 557-558.

<sup>48</sup> *Collatio cum Maximino* 4; PL 42,711: "Et hoc de divinis Scripturis assero".

<sup>49</sup> *Collatio cum Maximino* 1; PL 42,709: "eae vero voces quae extra Scripturam sunt, nullo casu a nobis suscipiuntur ...".

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Prv* 10:19 and *Mt* 12:36, as well as *Collatio cum Maximino* 13; PL 42,718: "Quamvis etiam etsi per totum diem quisque de divinis Scripturis proferat testimonia, non in verbositate illi imputabitur reuera: quod si aut litteraria arte usus, aut expressione spiritus sui quisque concinnet verba quae non continent sanctae Scripturae; et otiosa sunt et superflua".

<sup>51</sup> *Collatio cum Maximino* 15,21; PL 42,736: "Veritas non ex argumento colligitur, sed certis testimoniis comprobatur".

from the divine Scriptures"<sup>52</sup>. So too, Maximinus points out that Augustine's charges arise from the art of philosophy and warns Augustine against the dangers of using the rhetorical figure of metonymy as a means of exegesis<sup>53</sup>. Thus, in opposition to the Nicæan interpretation of texts concerning Christ's obedience to the Father, Maximinus insists that "the divine Scripture has not come as a source of our instruction so that we might correct it"<sup>54</sup>. Hence, Maximinus not merely rests his theological position on the Scriptures, but also refuses to make any use of any non-biblical language or philosophical thought to interpret the Scriptures<sup>55</sup>.

The concept of a non-bodily or spiritual reality, however, is a philosophical concept. The ability to understand that God is incorporeal involves more than being able to speak of God as invisible or simple or spiritual — all terms which Maximinus admits<sup>56</sup>. To understand that God is incorporeal is to grasp that he is whole everywhere, that there is not more of him in a larger place and less of him in a smaller place, but that wherever he is — and he is everywhere — he is whole and undivided<sup>57</sup>. The *Confessiones* reveal to us the long struggle that Augustine underwent in coming to a concept of a spiritual substance — a concept that he came to from reading the *libri Platoniorum* within the Christian Neoplatonist circle of the church of Milan. What is all too often forgotten is that the concept of a spiritual or incorporeal substance is not found in the Scriptures or in any of the Western Fathers prior to Augustine in a fully articu-

<sup>52</sup> *Collatio cum Maximino* 4; PL 42,711: "Non ad excusandum me Ariminensis concilii decretum interesse volui, sed ut ostendam auctoritatem Patrum, qui secundum divinas Scripturas fidem nobis tradiderunt illam quam a divinis Scripturis didicerunt".

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Collatio cum Maximino* 15,5 and 13; PL 42,725 and 718.

<sup>54</sup> *Collatio cum Maximino* 15,20; PL 42,736: "Nec enim in nostrum magisterium devenit divina Scriptura, ut a nobis emendationem accipiat".

<sup>55</sup> It is, of course, very difficult to remain with the language contained in the Scriptures and to avoid all non-biblical language. Indeed, Maximinus does not succeed in doing so. Cf. *Contra Maximinum* II,ix,2; PL 42,763, where Augustine points out that Paul did not say that the Father was incomprehensible (*incapabilis*). Similarly, Augustine reminds Maximinus that the terms *ingenitus*, *innatus* and *incomparabilis* are not biblical; cf. below note 66.

<sup>56</sup> Though Maximinus holds that the Father is alone invisible, he admits that the Son is also invisible; cf. *Collatio cum Maximino* 9; PL 42,727-728. He speaks of both the Father and the Son as spirits; cf. *Collatio cum Maximino* 15,15; PL 42,733. In *Collatio cum Maximino* 10; PL 42,728-729, he says that the Father is simple power; cf. below note 63.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Confessiones* VII,i,2: CCL XXVII,92-93 and *Epistula* CLXVI II,4: CSEL XLIV,550-553, for Augustine's realization of the non-corporeal nature of God and his description of the soul's incorporeality.

lated form<sup>58</sup>. For, apart from the Neoplatonist circle in the church of Milan, the corporealism of Stoic philosophy remained the common philosophical patrimony of the West<sup>59</sup>. Indeed, even after the time of Augustine, there were learned bishops, such as Faustus of Riez, who, like Tertullian in an earlier century, insisted that the soul was bodily<sup>60</sup>. Hence, given Maximinus's rejection of all philosophy and his insistence upon the *sola Scriptura* principle, it is not surprising that he lacked a concept of incorporeal reality and could only think of God as bodily and in terms of what can be imagined.

All the passages in which Augustine accuses Maximinus of thinking of God in a carnal manner, of course, count as evidence that Maximinus conceived of God in bodily terms. But there is at least one other passage which, I believe, confirms the evidence presented so far. In Maximinus's long final discourse, he insists "that the Father alone is the one God, not one along with a second and a third, but that he alone is the one God"<sup>61</sup>. Maximinus goes on to argue the point. "If he alone is not the one [God], he is a part"<sup>62</sup>. That is, Maximinus sees no way that the Son can also be the one God without the Father being merely a part of the one God, for, if the Son is also the one God, then the Father cannot be the whole of the one God. Moreover, Maximinus gives a reason why the Father cannot be a part: "I deny. . . that the one God is composed of parts; rather, what he is is unbegotten simple power"<sup>63</sup>. Maximinus's argument, namely, that either the Father alone is the one God or the Father is a part of the one God, presupposes that a plurality in God can only be a plurality

<sup>58</sup> Cf. G. VERBEKE, *L'évolution de la doctrine du pneuma du Stoïcisme à s. Augustin*, Paris and Louvain, 1945, and F. MASAI, *Les conversions de saint Augustin et les débuts de spiritualisme en Occident*, in *Moyen Age* 67 (1961), 1-40.

<sup>59</sup> For the distinction between corporealism and materialism, cf. E. WEIL, *Remarques sur le 'matérialisme' des Stoïciens*, in *Mélanges Alexandre Koyré*. II. *L'aventure de l'esprit*, Paris: Herman, 1964, 556-572.

<sup>60</sup> For Tertullian's position, cf. *De carne Christi* XI,4; CCL II,895: "Omne, quod est, corpus est sui generis. Nihil est incorporeale nisi quod non est", and *De anima* VII,3; CCL II,790: "Nihil enim, nisi corpus". Though Tertullian admitted that God was a spirit, he nonetheless held that he was a body; cf. *Adversus Praxean* VII,8; CCL II,1166: "Quis negabit Deum corpus esse, etsi Deus spiritus est". For the continued debate about the nature of the soul in 5th century Gaul, cf. Thomas SMITH, *Augustine in Two Gallic Controversies: Use or Abuse?*, in *Collectanea Augustiniana* II, New York: Peter Lang, 1993, 43-55.

<sup>61</sup> *Collatio cum Maximino* 15,10; PL 42,728: "Ego Patrem solum secundum antelata testimonia, non cum altero et tertio dico quod unus est, sed quod solus unus est Deus".

<sup>62</sup> *Collatio cum Maximino* 15,10; PL 42,728: "Si vero solus unus non est, pars est".

<sup>63</sup> *Collatio cum Maximino* 10; PL 42,728-729: "Nec enim ex partibus compositum unum dico Deum: sed ille quod est, virtus est ingenua simplex".

of parts — and of the sort of parts that compose a whole greater than any of the parts. And that, of course, is precisely what it is to be a body. What Maximinus lacks is the grasp of the spiritual or non-bodily reality of God that Augustine has and that allows him to say that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God.

"One is not a third of this Trinity, nor are two of them a greater part than one, and all of them are not something greater than each of them, because their greatness is spiritual, not corporeal"<sup>64</sup>.

### III. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

I have shown that Augustine accuses the Homoian Arians and Maximinus of thinking of God in a carnal fashion, that is, of thinking of God in bodily terms or in terms of what can be imagined. Indeed, he claims that their heresy arises from interpreting *Jn* 5:19 in terms of imagining the Father and the Son like a master craftsman and his apprentice. There is ample evidence that Augustine made this claim against the Arians. I have also tried to argue that, given Maximinus's insistence upon a biblical theology and upon the avoidance of all non-biblical language, he could hardly be expected to have the sort of concept of incorporeal reality that Augustine acquired only after years of struggle and then only from the works of the Neoplatonists. There is, moreover, some direct evidence from Maximinus's long final discourse that indicates that he could not think of God except as bodily, though the evidence for the absence of a concept can at best be tenuous.

Contemporary theologians at times bemoan the Hellenization or the Platonization of the Christian doctrine of God and the loss of the biblical doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit<sup>65</sup>. Maximinus's attempt to

<sup>64</sup> *Contra Maximinum* II,x,2; PL 42,765: "nec hujus Trinitatis tertia pars est unus, nec major pars duo quam unus est ibi; nec majus aliquid sunt omnes quam singuli, quia spiritualis, non corporalis est magnitudo".

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Hans KÜNG, *On Being a Christian*, trans. by E. QUINN, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976, 472-477. Küng refers to the trinitarian thought of the Cappadocian fathers as "almost ... a kind of higher trinitarian mathematics" that "scarcely reached any lasting solutions" and compares "this Greek speculation, remote from its biblical roots", to the flight of Icarus (473). Augustine, of course, took over and worked out the trinitarian thought of the Cappadocians. But "[t]he real difficulties of the specifically Western doctrine of the Trinity arise from the fact that Augustine, its founder, . . . started out, not like the Greeks, from the triplicity of persons, but from the unity of the divine nature. In this respect Augustine had against him not only the Greeks and — for instance — Hilary of Poitiers in the West, but also the New Testament" (475). Cf. also M. SCHMAUS, *Die Spannung von Metaphysik und Heilsgeschichte in der Trinitätslehre Augustins*, in *Studia Patristica* VI. (Texte und Untersuchungen, 81). Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1962, 503-518,

rely on the Scripture alone and to avoid all philosophical terms might be thought to aim at such a purely biblical formulation of the faith. However, as Augustine points out, Maximinus does introduce non-biblical terminology at times<sup>66</sup>. Furthermore, in supposing that he has avoided all philosophy in his theology, Maximinus has simply and unreflectively adopted the philosophy that was the common patrimony of his age, namely, Stoic corporealism, which was just as much a Hellenization of the biblical faith as the spiritualist metaphysics that Augustine learned from the Neoplatonists. Hence, in confronting Arianism, Augustine certainly thought out the Christian doctrine of God with the aid of a spiritualist metaphysics he learned from the Platonists. The alternatives he faced were not a Hellenized versus a non-Hellenized understanding of God, but a Stoic corporealist versus a Neoplatonic spiritualist understanding of God.

Moreover, it is arguable that Maximinus had operative in the articulation of his Trinitarian faith an unreflective philosophical principle, ultimately derived from Platonism, that subordinates whatever is derived from another to that other from which it is derived<sup>67</sup>. Such a philosophical principle held unreflectively, while he supposes himself innocent of all philosophy, leads Maximinus to the conclusion that the Son, though a great God, is inferior to the Father<sup>68</sup>. In this case, a philosophical principle, though held unwittingly, is the norm by which the content of the biblical revelation is judged. For Augustine, on the other hand, philosophy was not the norm or standard by which the word of God was judged, but a means by which it was understood. However important philosophical re-

especially 508-510. For further discussion of this question, cf. the introduction to Augustine's anti-Arian works in *Obras completas de San Agustín XXXVIII*, Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1990, 240-251.

<sup>66</sup> Augustine points out that both Arians and Catholics use the non-biblical terms *ingenitus* and *innatus* of the Father and that the Arians make the non-biblical claim that the Father is incomparable to the Son. "Tu ubi legisti Patrem Deum ingenitum vel innatum. Et tamen verum est. Quod vero aliquoties dixisti, etiam Filio esse incomparabilem Patrem, nec legis, nec verum est"; *Contra Maximinum Arianum* II,iii; PL 42,760. To Maximinus's claim that the Scriptures do not say that the Holy Spirit is adored, Augustine replies, "quasi non ex iis quae legimus, aliqua etiam quae non legimus, intelligamus"; ib.

<sup>67</sup> Maximinus, for example, says, "Saepius aequalem Filium asseris Patri: cum ipse unigenitus Deus semper et in omnibus auctorem suum praedicet Patrem, a quo, ut paulo ante dixi, et vitam se consecutum hoc modo professus est"; *Collatio cum Maximino* 14; PL 42,731.

<sup>68</sup> Thus, from the statement that Christ "a genitore suo omnia haec consecutus est, et vivit propter Patrem", Maximinus draws the conclusion that "Filius Patri subjectus est, ut charissimus, ut obediens, ut bonus a bono genitus"; *Collatio cum Maximino* 10; PL 42,714.

fection was for coming to an understanding of the faith, for Augustine believing came first and faith remained the norm. Indeed, Augustine is quite insistent that one who desires to understand desires to understand precisely what he believes, not something else<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. *Epistula* 120,1,2; CSEL XLIV,706, where Augustine explains to Consentius that one who desires to understand his faith desires to understand that which he believes or to see with the light of reason that which he holds with the firmness of faith: "ut quod credis intellegas ... ut ea quae fidei firmitate iam tenes, etiam rationis luce conspicias".