

POLITICAL AND THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES IN AUGUSTINE, LETTER 155 TO MACEDONIUS

One of the most persistent set of questions concerning Augustine's political thought involves the manner and extent to which he believes that a Christian ethics ought to influence political structures in the Roman Empire. Scholars examining this and related questions during the last century divide between those who find that Augustine does little or nothing to promote a specifically Christian political ethics, and those who find evidence for such a program in his writings, however limited in scope.¹ Scholars agree that Augustine did

¹ Among those scholars who dismiss the possibility of finding in Augustine a workable Christian political ethics is F. Dahn, *Die Könige der Germanen*, vol. 11, Leipzig, E.A. Fleischmann, 1908, p. 209, who accuses Augustine's doctrine of being "logically false, morally diseased, politically corrupt, and incompatible with one's duties to the state." T. Mommsen, *St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress: The Background of the City of God*, in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12, 1951, pp. 346-374, at p. 370 = D.F. Donnelly (ed.), *The City of God. A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York, Peter Lang, 1995, pp. 353-372, at p. 368, advances the view that "Augustine regarded the purely secular aspects of the drama of mankind as relatively insignificant" in comparison with the theological. J. Straub, *Augustins Sorge um die regeneratio imperii. Das Imperium Romanum als civitas terrena*, in *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 73, 1954, pp. 36-60, at p. 59, holds that, although in his later years Augustine allows for "little improvements which can be brought about by individual Christians within the secular state," he does not expect the Christian religion to alter the essentially fallen condition of social and political life in the earthly city. E. Fortin, *Political Idealism and Christianity in the Thought of St. Augustine*, Villanova, Villanova University Press, 1972 = *ibid.*, in *Classical Christianity and the Political Order. Reflections on the Theologico-Political Problem*, ed. J.B. Benestad, Lanham, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield, 1996, pp. 31-63, at 47, concludes, "... there is, strictly speaking, for Augustine no such thing as a Christian polity. Christianity was never intended as a substitute for the political life. It transcends all regimes and is of necessity limited in its practical applications by the modalities of its existence in this world." These and similar views have been rehearsed by M. Ruokanen, *Theology of Social Life in Augustine's De ciuitate Dei*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993, pp. 102, 108, 117, 158. Among scholars who regard Augustine's political ethics positively, G. Combès, *La doctrine politique de saint Augustin*, Paris, Plon, 1927, p. 112, concludes that, for Augustine, the Christian state exists where Christ rules interiorly in the souls of the head of state, the magistrates, and all the citizens. R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 166-178, finds a balance in Augustine through the concept of "eschatological hope," which does not permit "a politically sterile withdrawal" from society. Markus argues instead that hope results in a "critical" and "subversive" attitude on the part of the Christian toward political society, but also one that is "realistically constructive" toward it (p. 170). Such an attitude, for Markus, "draws the believer into participation in political life and into full membership of his society without tethering him to any ideology or final political vision" (p. 173). G. Lettieri, *Il senso della storia in Agostino d'Ippona. Il saeculum e la gloria*

not think Christians should avoid public office.² But they disagree over the extent to which he urged upon public officials a Christian ethic for governing the Empire.

As a contribution to this discussion, I suggest a fresh examination of Letter 155 to Macedonius, the imperial vicar of Africa (*uicarius Africae*) between AD 413-414.³ I shall argue that this letter demonstrates an affinity in Augustine's political thought between two sets of virtues: the political virtues of prudence, temperance, courage, and justice,⁴ on the one hand, and the virtues of faith, hope, and love, on the other. Augustine maintains that faith, hope, and love transform the manner in which Christian statesmen practice the political virtues, so that they more closely resemble virtues as they will exist in the heavenly city. Furthermore, I shall demonstrate that Augustine's account of this transformation of political virtues parallels Neoplatonist explanations of the purification of the soul through a hierarchy of virtue, beginning with the political virtues. For Augustine, faith,

nel De Civitate Dei, Rome, Borla, 1988, pp. 198-199, maintains that although the idea in Augustine of a Christian empire in which each member of society is inspired by Christian values is intentionally utopian, nevertheless it suggests the possibility for Augustine of at least a partial penetration of Christian ideals in the political society of his time. J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory. Beyond Secular Reason*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990, argues that "Augustine's philosophy of history appears more viable than that of either Hegel or Marx" (p. 389). For Milbank, Augustine's political ethics is to be found in his "deconstruction of antique political society," wherein "the code of a peaceful mode of existence has historically arisen as 'something else', an *altera civitas*, having no logical or causal connection with the city of violence" (ibid.). Lettieri, op. cit., pp. 198-204, and Ruokanen, op. cit., pp. 77-111, discuss other among the most influential studies concerning Augustine's evaluation of Christian political involvement.

² See, for example, C. Lepelley, *Ciuis, ciuitas*, in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol. 1, ed. C. Mayer, Basel, Schwabe, 1986-1994, cc. 942-947, at c. 956, citing *ep.* 138.15, *ciu.* 2.19.

³ CSEL 44.430-447. On Macedonius in general, see J. R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Late Roman Empire*, vol. 2: (A.D. 395-527), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 697 s.v. Macedonius 3; A. Mandouze, ed., *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire*, vol. 1: *Prosopographie de l'Afrique chrétienne* (AD 303-533), Paris, Éditions du CNRS, 1982, pp. 659-661 s.v. Macedonius 2. See also F. Morgenstern, *Die Briefpartner des Augustinus von Hippo. Prosopographische, sozial- und ideologie-geschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Bochum, Universitätsverlag N. Brockmeyer, 1993, pp. 107-8.

⁴ Ambrose dubbed these the "cardinal" virtues (cf. *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam* 5.49.62), but earlier philosophers hearkening back to Plato (cf. *Republic* IV. 430C) termed them "political" or "civic/civil" virtues. See, for example, Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.2: *politikē aretē*. Augustine referred to them as "*uirtutes ciuiles*", as at *ep.* 138.17 (CSEL 44.145). See also *Acad.* 3.37 (CCL 29.57), *c. Iul.* 4.26 (PL 44.751). The two designations are synonymous, but for the sake of clarity I shall refer to them as political virtues throughout this paper.

hope, and love draw the believer beyond the limited, temporal perspectives of the earthly city into a deeper knowledge and love of the true God, and therefore into the eternal reality of the heavenly city. He argues in Letter 155 that Macedonius's faith, hope, and love should alter the way he practices prudence and justice while fulfilling the duties of his office. Although the letter offers the clearest explanation of the relationship between the two sets of virtues to be found in Augustine's writings, it leaves much to be desired in its description of the full role of virtues in political ethics.⁵ Nevertheless, it contains sufficient discussion of the topic to suggest that, in relating the two sets of virtues as he does, Augustine is thinking within a framework analogous to that of Neoplatonist philosophers, such as Porphyry. From Plotinus and Porphyry in the third century, to Proclus, Macrobius, and Marinus in the fifth century, Neoplatonist philosophers consciously set the political virtues in relationship to the purificatory virtues in urging the divinization of the philosopher. Among these Neoplatonist philosophers there is considerable divergence in describing how these levels of virtue relate to each other. However, one finds sufficient similarity between their approaches to outline a foundation for a general virtue theory. In this paper I shall set out a series of parallels linking Augustine's thinking about political virtues with that of Neoplatonists. These parallels enable us to understand better how Augustine believes Christian statesmen can incorporate the ethics that pertain to the heavenly city within their administration of the Roman Empire. Understood against the background of Neoplatonist writings on political virtues, Augustine's Letter 155 further suggests a clearer intention on his part to approach political ethics within a systematic framework than has hitherto been supposed by scholars.

Before proceeding, I should clarify that throughout this paper I use the term "earthly city" (*ciuitas terrena*) as a synonym for the Roman Empire in Augustine's time, in the sense that the empire is an organized political society. It is true that, for Augustine, the primary meaning of the term "earthly city" reaches beyond any particular

⁵ C. Brittain, *Attention Deficit in Plotinus and Augustine: Psychological Problems in Christian and Platonist Theories of the Grades of Virtue*, in *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 18, ed. J.J. Cleary and G.M. Gurtler, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 2003, pp. 223-263, at p. 248, holds that at Augustine, *sol.* 1.14 (AD 386), faith, hope, and charity can be seen to act as "cathartic virtues", in the sense in which the Neoplatonists used this term. I discuss this Neoplatonic category under the designation "purificatory virtues" below. However, I do not believe that the discussion of faith, hope, and charity at *sol.* 1.14 offers a clear example of Augustine's application of the Neoplatonic doctrine of the grades of virtue.

political entity, or even all of them taken together (*ciuitates terrenae*). In its strictest sense for him, the term “earthly city” refers to the city governed by the devil (*ciuitas diaboli*), in which no virtue can be found. According to this interpretation of the term, it is inconceivable in Augustine’s view that a virtuous Christian could play any part in the governance of the “earthly city”. Nevertheless, the term *ciuitas terrena* is also ambiguous for Augustine, because of his position that the city of God and the earthly city are mixed in the present time (*saeculum*), and that they will be separated only in the end-time.⁶ Thus, Johannes van Oort points out that Augustine considered the Rome of his time an “earthly city,” and that even earthly states ruled by Christian emperors with Christians as their citizens “are and remain earthly states” (*ciuitates terrenae*).⁷ Augustine demonstrates this use of the term “earthly city” in a letter to the Roman imperial tribune and notary Flavius Marcellinus, written in AD 411/312.⁸

Augustine’s Correspondence with Macedonius

As the imperial vicar for Africa, Macedonius was responsible for the administration of justice in the African civil diocese. He was a Catholic Christian and refers to Augustine as a spiritual father.⁹ At sometime during Macedonius’s two-year tenure in this post, Augustine wrote to him, presumably in order to request clemency on behalf of an individual facing the death penalty. In his initial reply, the vicar expressed puzzlement that bishops should consider intercessions of this kind a duty that pertains to religion (*ex religione*).¹⁰ In his

⁶ See, for example, *ciu.* 1.35, *en. Ps.* 61.8, 64.2.

⁷ See J. van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon. A Study into Augustine’s City of God and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1991, p. 130. See also pp. 151-163. For further discussion, see F.-J. Thonnard, *Le problème de l’État chrétien*, in *Œuvres de saint Augustin*, vol. 37: *La cité de Dieu. Livres XIX-XXII: Triomphe de la cité céleste*, ed. G. Bardy and G. Combès, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1960, pp. 748-752; and Lettieri, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-204.

⁸ See *ep.* 138.17 (CCL 44.144): “... custodientes tamen quandam sui generis probitatem, quae posset terrenae ciuitati constituendae, augendae conseruandaeque sufficere.”

⁹ See *ep.* 154.1 (*infra*, n. 23).

¹⁰ See *ep.* 153.1 (CSEL 44.396), citing *ep.* 152.2 (Macedonius to Augustine). Augustine’s initial letter is not extant, but see *ep.* 152.1 (Macedonius to Augustine) (CSEL 44.393): “itaque sine mora quod, optabat, obtinuit. uerum quoniam extitit occasio, hoc ipsum, quantumcumque est, quod admonitus indulsi, nolo sine mercede remanere.” In a later letter, Macedonius again refers to the favor. See *ep.* 154.1 (Macedonius to Augustine) (CSEL 44.428): “Miro modo afficior sapientia tua et in illis, quae edidisti, et in his, quae interveniens pro sollicitis mittere non grauaris. [...]

response, Augustine makes a number of observations about the qualities that should characterize the piety (*pietas*) of the Christian statesman. In doing so, he indicates that the statesman's practice of the virtues necessary for good government should anticipate the fulfillment of virtue in the heavenly city.

He begins by asserting that, whereas God's mercy, blessedness, and justice are supreme, public officials are not sinless, and their virtue is not the same as God's. As a consequence, they ought to fear divine judgment, seek divine pardon, and not regard their decision to show mercy in imitation of Christ as a failure to perform a duty.¹¹ In asking Macedonius to accept this last point, Augustine seeks no small concession from the imperial governor, who fears that mercy can easily be mistaken for leniency, with the result that justice is compromised.¹² Augustine readily admits the difficulties involved for human beings in balancing the two virtues.¹³ Furthermore, he recognizes two arguments in the scriptures regarding capital punishment. The first is indicated at Rom 13:3-5: "If you do evil, then fear him; for he does not wield a sword in vain. He is a minister of God and avenger of his anger on the wrongdoer." The passage in Romans containing this verse leads Augustine to acknowledge a theoretical justification in applying the death penalty. An alternative approach is indicated at Jn 8:7: "Let the one without sin cast the first stone."

proinde statim commendatis effectum desiderii tribui; nam sperandi uiam ante patefeceram." See also Possidius, *Vita Augustini* 20. Among the more recent scholarly writings on this correspondence are the studies by K. Raikas, *The State Juridical Dimension of the Office of a Bishop and Letter 153 of St Augustine to Vicarius Africae Macedonius*, in *Vescovi e pastori in epoca teodosiana*, Rome, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1997, pp. 683-94; P. Kaufman, *Augustine, Macedonius, and the Courts*, in *Augustinian Studies*, 34:1, 2003, pp. 67-82; and R. Dodaro, *Augustine of Hippo Between the Secular City and the City of God*, in *Augustinus Afer. Saint Augustin: africanité et universalité. Actes du colloque international Alger-Annaba, 1-7 avril 2001*, Fribourg, Éditions Universitaires Fribourg, 2003, pp. 287-305.

¹¹ See *ep.* 153.8 (CSEL 44.404-5): "igitur super peccatores tanta sit patientia, tanta misericordia dei, ut in hac temporali uita moribus emendatis non damnentur in aeternum, qui nullius, quae sibi praebeatur, expectat misericordiam, quoniam nemo est illo beator, nemo potentior, nemo iustior, quales nos esse oportet homines erga homines, qui hanc uitam nostram quantacumque laude cumulemus, eam sine peccato esse non dicimus, quia, «si dixerimus, nos ipsos», sicut scriptum est, *decipimus et ueritas in nobis non est* (1 Jn 1:8). [...] tamen etiam ipsos criminum ultores atque in hoc officio non ira propria concitatos sed legum ministros nec suarum sed alienarum iniuriarum examinatorum iudices, quales iudices esse debent, terruit censura diuina, ut cogitarent sibi propter sua peccata dei misericordiam necessariam nec putarent ad culpam sui officii pertinere, si quid erga eos misericorditer agerent, quorum uitae necisque haberent legitimam potestatem."

¹² See *ep.* 152.2-3 (Macedonius to Augustine).

¹³ See *ep.* 153.17-18.

The pericope in John's Gospel concerning the woman caught in adultery suggests to Augustine that only Christ can justly apply the death penalty.¹⁴ Augustine frames his discussion of capital punishment with these two scriptural passages. They indicate for him the moral dilemma faced by the magistrate who desires to observe both justice and mercy in capital cases. He then indicates a resolution of the competing arguments without collapsing one into the other. Key to understanding his nuanced approach to the issue is the role that he assigns to John 8:3-11, the pericope of the woman caught in adultery, in resolving the tension within the scriptures between approval of capital punishment and general precepts espousing mercy and forgiveness of enemies.¹⁵ Christian rulers may, indeed, cite scripture in support of their decision to impose the death penalty, Augustine concedes. He warns, however, that in doing so, they should bear in mind that the scribes and Pharisees who brought the adulteress to Christ for condemnation also believed that the scriptures supported imposition of the death penalty by public authorities.¹⁶ Making this point enables Augustine to draw Macedonius's attention to Christ's function in clarifying the dispositions of the soul that are required in order to interpret biblical precepts correctly. He highlights the dialectic between two features of Christ's response as represented at Jn 8:3-11. He points out that, although they are unambiguous, the scriptural passages which the scribes and Pharisees have in mind commanding death by stoning for adulterers (cf. Dt 22:22-24; Lv 20:10) do not prevent Christ from showing mercy to the woman. At the same time, in doing so Christ cannot be said to contradict or abrogate the divine law.¹⁷

In Letter 155, Augustine leaves behind the specific concerns regarding capital punishment which he discussed in Letter 153, such as God's intention to reform and not destroy wrongdoers, the legitimacy of judicial clemency, and the responsibility of officials to deter serious crime and safeguard public order. Instead, in Letter 155 he explores the interior dispositions of the soul which seeks to draw closer to wisdom. He states that Macedonius should fix his attention

¹⁴ Augustine cites Rom 13 at *ep.* 153.19; however, he anticipates the passage already at *ep.* 153.16. He introduces discussion of Jn 8:3-11 at *ep.* 153.9.

¹⁵ See especially *ep.* 153.15-16.

¹⁶ See *ep.* 153.9, where Augustine makes this point in a reference to the obligation of the judges at Jn 8:3-11 to "serve the Law." Both Dt 22:22-24 and Lv 20:10 oblige death by stoning as punishment for adultery.

¹⁷ See *ep.* 153.9 (CSEL 44.405): "ita nec legem inprobavit, quae huius modi reas iussit occidi,..." See also, *s.* 13.4, *Io. eu. tr.* 33.5 (CCL 36.308): "Non dixit: Non lapidetur! ne contra legem dicere uideretur." The argument recurs at *en. Ps.* 50.8.

on the love of God that pertains to the heavenly city.¹⁸ To do so, he should allow his understanding and practice of prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice to be transformed by faith, hope, and love, because these latter virtues are directed toward the knowledge and love of God, in whom all virtues, including justice and mercy, find their true source and end (*finis*).

This last statement represents a synthesis of a number of arguments within the letter. First, Augustine stresses the importance of the virtue of hope in acquiring the eternal benefits (*bona aeterna*) which are possessed in the heavenly city. Hope, he maintains, sustains Christians in their endurance of the trials associated with this temporal life. It does so in conjunction with faith by teaching believers that the blessedness they seek for themselves cannot be found in this life, but must be longed for in the life to come, on the basis of trust in God's promises.¹⁹ In general for Augustine, faith establishes the ground for hope, both of which are preparations for the love of God.²⁰ The relationship of hope to love is important to Augustine's general argument in this letter. He leads up to it by observing that in the past, philosophers have failed to find blessedness in this life, though they have searched for it.²¹ Christ, on the other hand, has revealed that blessedness is attainable only after death, in the life to come. In the present life, trials must be borne joyfully in patient expectation of this blessedness. For Augustine, this is the significance of St Paul's counsel to "rejoice in hope and be patient in trials" (Rom 12:12).²² He

¹⁸ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.1 (CSEL 44.430): "... quod animus tuum caritate aeternitatis et ueritatis atque ipsius caritatis affectum diuinae illi caelestique rei publicae, cuius regnator est Christus et in qua sola semper beataque uiuendum est, si recte hic pieque uiuatur, agnosco inhiantem, uideo propinquantem eiusque potiundae amplector ardentem."

¹⁹ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.4 (CSEL 44.434): "Hoc piorum praemium est, cuius adipiscendi spe uitam istam temporalem atque mortalem, non tam delectabiliter quam tolerabiliter ducimus, et mala eius tunc bono consilio et diuino munere fortiter ferimus, cum bonorum aeternorum fideli dei promissione et fideli nostra exspectatione gaudeamus." Note the expression "*fideli nostra exspectatione*" (= in our faithful hope) by which Augustine connects faith and hope.

²⁰ For further discussion of the relationship of faith to hope, see M. Jackson, *Faith, Hope and Charity and Prayer in St. Augustine*, in *Studia Patristica. Papers presented to the Tenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1987*, vol. 22, ed. E. A. Livingstone, Leuven, Peeters Press, 1989, pp. 265-270. Jackson observes that for Augustine, "faith is the ground of hope which is a preparation for loving communion with God" (p. 267, citing *trin.* 8.6).

²¹ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.2-3.

²² See Augustine, *ep.* 155.4 (CSEL 44.434): "ad hoc nos exhortatus apostolus Paulus ait: *spe gaudentes, in tribulatione patientes* (Rom 12:12). ad hanc spem exhortor per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum. hoc enim deus ipse magister..."

returns to this conclusion later in this letter when he insists that the Christian statesman must govern prudently and justly while recognizing what the virtue of hope teaches: that he not conceive of his primary aim to foster happiness in this earthly life as an end in itself. Were he to do so, the statesman would risk elevating the pursuit of temporal benefits, such as health, wealth, and liberty, above the pursuit of eternal benefits, such as blessedness and life in God, which transcend death. For Augustine, Christian morality requires the statesman to harmonize his desire for benefits in the earthly city with his longing for the benefits of the heavenly city. In situations where the two sets of goods are in conflict with each other, hope requires the statesman to choose the lasting benefits of the heavenly city. Hope, for Augustine, therefore redirects the aim of political virtues away from an exclusive concern with assuring benefits for the earthly city to the pursuit of the blessedness that belongs to the heavenly city. In this way, hope alters the statesman's conception of political virtues.

Augustine continues discussing the differences between virtues as they are conceived in the present life and the way they exist in the heavenly city. He takes as his first example the virtue of wisdom (*sapientia*). In his final letter to Augustine, Macedonius praised the bishop's wisdom as evidenced in the first three books of *City of God* and in the letter Augustine wrote to him concerning capital punishment (Letter 153).²³ In response, Augustine makes three points relative to his own wisdom. First, he says that he fails to recognize in himself the wisdom that Macedonius finds in him.²⁴ He adds that wisdom in this present life "consists in the true worship of the true God," which he identifies as the virtue of piety (*pietas*), whereas wisdom in the life to come is identical to eternal blessedness. In the present life, the practice of wisdom as piety is a task to be performed, whereas in the life to come the soul enjoys wisdom exclusively as a benefit. Finally, Augustine insists that any wisdom he may actually possess is a direct result of divine grace, and not the product of his

²³ See *ep.* 154.1 (Macedonius to Augustine) (CSEL 44.428): "Miro modo afficio sapientia tua, et in illis quae edidisti, et in his quae interueniens pro sollicitis mittere non grauaris. Nam et illa tantum habent acuminis, scientiae, sanctitatis, ut nihil supra sit; et haec tantum uerecundiae, ut nisi faciam quod mandas, culpam penes me remanere, non in negotio esse diiudicem, domine merito uenerabilis, et uere suspicie pater."

²⁴ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.1 (CSEL 44.431): "Quamuis sapientiam quam mihi tribuis, in me non agnoscam..."; *ep.* 155.5 (CSEL 44.435): "hinc enim ausus sum haec ad te loqui, ut tibi sapientiam, non qualis mihi sit, ostentarem, sed qualis esse debeat ostenderem."

own efforts or merit.²⁵ He says that he “hopes in faith” (*fideliter sperare*) that God will bring his wisdom to full maturity.²⁶

This last point recalls the fundamental connection in Augustine’s thought between the virtues of faith, hope, and love, on the one hand, and humility, on the other. Humility is that quintessentially Augustinian virtue, which by countering moral presumption in the soul, enables divine grace to impart true virtue to it. To demonstrate that the path to “true virtue” (*uera uirtus*) encompasses faith, hope, and love, Augustine pairs Ps 17(18):1 (“I will *love* you, Lord, my virtue”) with Ps 39(40):5 (“Blessed is the man whose *hope* is in the name of the Lord...”), and states that believers should “hold these words *faithfully* in [their] hearts.” Christians who seek true virtue have God as the object of their faith, hope, and love, and they pray to God to increase these virtues in them.²⁷ Augustine insists that true virtue inheres in human reason only if God is present to it as a light to the mind. Trust placed in oneself is, therefore, folly.²⁸ Finally, he claims that what holds true for an individual holds true as well for a nation. Quoting from Ps 143(144), he stresses the psalmist’s (and the Holy Spirit’s) judgment that only the “sons of foreigners” (*fili alienorum*) think of Israel as blessed on account of its material prosperity and security, its storehouses full of grain, its fatted cattle, its public order. Israel, in the psalmist’s view, knows instead that “that nation is blessed whose God is the Lord.”²⁹

²⁵ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.5 (CSEL 44.435-6): “haec est autem in praesenti saeculo uerus ueri dei cultus, ut sit eius in futuro saeculo certus atque integer fructus. hic constantissima pietas, ibi sempiterna felicitas. ex ista sapientia, quae una uera est, si quid habeo, a deo sumpsi, non a me praesumpsi;...”

²⁶ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.5 (CSEL 44.436): “ex ista sapientia, quae una uera est, si quid habeo, a deo sumpsi, non a me praesumpsi; atque ab illo in me perfici fideliter spero, a quo inchoatum esse humiliter gaudeo; nec in eo quod adhuc non donauit incredulus, nec in eo quod iam donauit ingratus. non enim meo uel ingenio uel merito, sed eius dono sum, si quid laudabiliter sum. nam quaedam acutissima et excellentissima ingenia tanto in maiores errores ierunt, quanto praefidentius tamquam suis uiribus cucurrerunt, nec suppliciter ac ueraciter deum, ut sibi uiam ostenderet, petierunt.”

²⁷ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.6 (CSEL 44.436): “Si ergo nos uirtus uera delectat, ei dicamus, quod in eius sacris litteris legimus: *diligam te, domine, uirtus mea* (Ps 17[18]:1); et si uere beati esse uolumus – quod nolle non possumus –, id quod in eisdem litteris didicimus, fido corde teneamus: *beatus uir cuius est nomen domini spes eius, et non respexit in uanitates et insanias mendaces* (Ps 39 [40]: 4 LXX). On the importance for Augustine of prayer in fostering faith, hope, and love, see Jackson, *op. cit.*

²⁸ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.6 (CSEL 44.436-7): “quanta est uanitas, quanta insania, quantumque mendacium, hominem mortalem... in seipso fidere ut beatus sit, quando ne illud quidem, quod habet in naturae suae dignitate praecipuum, id est mentem atque rationem, potest uindicare ab erroribus, nisi deus adsit lux mentium.”

²⁹ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.7 (CSEL 44.437-8), quoting Ps 143(144):11-15.

In Augustine's view, without the transformation of the political virtues through faith, hope, and especially love, the statesman would pursue a form of peace and prosperity devoid of the love of God as the supreme good. As hinted at in his earlier discussion of hope, he holds that statesmen corrupt their political virtues when they understand the aims of these virtues within the limited, temporal horizon of this present life, without considering the end to which virtues are directed in the heavenly city.³⁰ He illustrates this point by comparing political virtues as they are understood before and after their transformation by faith, hope, and love.

For Augustine, considered without the changed perspective provided by faith, hope, and love, prudence is the virtue that guides the statesman in reflecting on human affairs, fortitude enables him to overcome fear of his enemies, temperance leads him to avoid corruption, and justice allows him to render to each his or her due. These are the political virtues classically defined, as they are known from Plato onward.³¹ Augustine then reasons that in the heavenly city these same four virtues are not conceived in terms of struggles against any evils, as they are in the present life. Thus, in the heavenly city prudence will no longer be obliged to judge between good and bad, because evil will not exist; fortitude will no longer need to endure troubles bravely, because worldly difficulties will not exist; temperance will not ward off passions, because passions will not exist; and justice will not require that wealth be used to assist the poor, because poverty and material need will not

³⁰ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.10 (CSEL 44.440): "itaque si omnis prudentia tua, qua consulere conaris rebus humanis; si omnis fortitudo, qua nullius iniquitate aduersante terrors, si omnis temperantia, qua in tanta labe nequissimae consuetudinis hominum te a corruptionibus abstines, si omnis iustitia, qua recte iudicando sua cuique distribuis, id laborat, id nititur, ut hi quibus uis ut bene sit, salui sint corpore, et ab omni cuiusquam improbitate tuti atque pacati, habeant filios sicut nouellas constabilitas, filias ornatas sicut similitudinem templi, cellaria plena eructantia ex hoc in hoc, fecundas oues, crassas boues, nec maceriae ruina deformet praedium, nec litigantium clamor personet in plateis eorum (cf. Ps 143[144]:12-15); ita non erunt uerae uirtutes tuae, sicut nec istorum beatitudo."

³¹ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.10 (supra, n. 30). See Plato, *Republic* IV. 427E-434D. These conventional definitions of the political virtues can also be found in Stoic authors. See, for example, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, ed. H. von Arnim (Stuttgart, 1968), 1:49-50 (n. 200-201), 3:63-72 (n. 262-294). Cicero's discussion of the virtues in terms of a practical ethics useful for governing is an important source for Augustine. See Cicero, *De inuentione* 2.159-167, *De officiis*, Book 1. Still useful as a guide to this discussion is H. F. North, *Canons and Hierarchies of the Cardinal Virtues in Greek and Latin Literature*, in *The Classical Tradition: Literary and Historical Studies in Honor of Harry Caplan*, ed. L. Wallach, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1966, pp. 165-183.

exist.³² As a consequence, he reasons that only one virtue exists in the heavenly city, namely adherence to God, as Psalm 72(73) affirms, "For me it is good to cling to God." Augustine says that this virtue is also called wisdom (*sapientia*), and that it is identical with its reward, which is blessedness (*beatitudo*).³³ But he adds that this virtue can also be identified with prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice. At this point he indicates how these virtues exist in the heavenly city. He explains that the soul in heaven acts prudently when it clings to God as the good which it can never lose; it acts with fortitude because it clings tenaciously to this good and will not be torn from it; it acts temperately in that it clings to this good in a pure manner, because it can no longer be corrupted; and it acts justly because it is right for it to cling to this good, to which it is deservedly subordinate.³⁴

After outlining what the political virtues look like in the heavenly city and noting how they differ from the same virtues conventionally conceived, Augustine proposes that, in the present life, believers ought to aim at practicing these virtues as they exist in the heavenly city. Approached in this way, he says, prudence in this life will consist in choosing to love God, whom we ought to love; fortitude will allow no hardship to deter us from that love; temperance will allow no temptation to distract us from it; and justice will prevent pride from keeping us from it.³⁵ He repeats these revised definitions of

³² See Augustine, *ep.* 155.12 (CSEL 44.442): "... ubi iam nec prudenter discernantur a bonis mala, quae non erunt; nec fortiter tolerentur aduersa, quia non ibi erit nis quod amemus, non etiam quod toleremus; nec temperanter libido frenetur, ubi nulla eius incitamenta sentiemus; nec iuste subueniatur ope indigentibus, ubi inopem atque indignum non habebimus."

³³ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.12 (CSEL 44.442): "una ibi uirtus erit, et idipsum erit uirtus praemiumque uirtutis, quod dicit in sanctis eloquiis homo qui hoc amat: *mihi autem adhaerere deo bonum est* (Ps 72[73]:28). haec ibi erit plena et sempiterna sapientia, eademque ueraciter uita iam beata: peruentio quippe est ad aeternum ac summum bonum, cui adhaerere in aeternum est finis nostri boni."

³⁴ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.12 (CSEL 44.442): "dicatur haec et prudentia, quia prospectissime adhaerebit bono quod non amittatur; et fortitudo, quia firmissime adhaerebit bono unde non auellatur; et temperantia, quia castissime adhaerebit bono ubi non corrumpatur; et iustitia, quia rectissime adhaerebit bono cui merito subiciatur."

³⁵ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.13 (CSEL 44.443): "quamquam et in hac uita, uirtus non est nisi diligere, quod diligendum est; id eligere, prudentia est, nullius inde auerti molestiis fortitudo est, nullis inlecebris, temperantia est, nulla superbia iustitia est. quid autem eligamus quod praecipue diligamus, nisi quo nihil melius inuenimus. hoc deus est, cui si diligendo aliquid uel praeponimus, uel aequamus, nos ipsos diligere nescimus. tanto enim nobis melius est, quanto magis in illum imus, quo nihil melius est." Compare this passage with a parallel one at *trin.* 14.12.

the political virtues later in the letter, saying that when anyone upon sober reflection chooses to love God, he is prudent; when he does not allow hardships to deter him, he acts with fortitude; when he does not allow pleasures to deflect him, he is temperate; and when he prevents self-importance from deterring him from loving God, he is just.³⁶ In both cases, Augustine redefines the political virtues as they should be practiced on earth in a manner consistent with their perfections in the heavenly city. Clearly for him, the virtues as practiced in the heavenly city provide models for how they should be observed in the present life. In order to practice these virtues in this way, however, the statesman must become aware of the difference between the virtues as they are traditionally understood, and the way they are redefined based upon their model forms in the heavenly city.

Augustine suggests that faith, hope, and love, considered collectively under the heading "true piety" (*uera pietas*), provide the means for the statesman to do this. In his view, the Christian statesman's primary objective in governing piously should be to assist his subjects to love God as completely as possible. This fundamental aim should guide all of his endeavors to advance even the temporal welfare of his subjects, whether he seeks to assist those in material need or to discipline those who undermine public security.³⁷ By objecting to the conventional definitions of political virtues, Augustine does not imply that statesmen should neglect the pursuit of temporal benefits for his subjects. Instead, he proposes that once they understand the aims of these virtues as they are found in the heavenly city, their

³⁶ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.16 (CSEL 44.446): "hoc qui sobria discretione eligit, prudens est; qui nulla hinc afflictione auertitur, fortis est, qui nulla alia delectatione, temperans est, qui nulla elatione, iustus est."

³⁷ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.12 (CSEL 44.441-2): "si enim uirtutes quas accepisti, a quo acceperis sentiens, eique gratias agens, eas ad ipsius cultum etiam in tuis istis saecularibus honoribus conferas, tuaeque potestati subditos homines ad eum colendum exemplo tuae religiosae uitae, et ipso studio consulendi, seu fouendo seu terrendo erigas et adducas, nihilque aliud in eo quod per te securius uiuunt, uelis, nisi ut hinc illum promereantur, apud quem beate uiuent; et uerae illae uirtutes erunt...". See also C. Mayer, "Pietas" und "vera pietas quae caritas est". *Zwei Kernfragen der Auseinandersetzung Augustins mit der heidnischen Antike*, in *Augustiniana Traiectina. Communications présentées au Colloque International d'Utrecht 13-14 novembre 1986*, ed. J. den Boeft and J. van Oort, Paris, Études augustiniennes, 1987, pp. 119-136, at p. 126, who explains the significance for Augustine of the adjective "uera" in relation to "pietas": "Nun hat das Adjektiv uerus, -a, -um" wie Übrigens auch das dazugehörige Substantiv "ueritas" im augustinischen Sprachgebrauch einen sozusagen über die Tagesereignisse hinausragenden Gehalt. "Veritas" ist letztlich Gott und alles, was zu seinem Wesen gehört. Darum kommt auch die Beifügung "uerus, -a, -um" streng genommen nur Gott und dem zu, was zu Gott gehört bzw. was mit ihm zu tun hat."

expectations about the substance of the benefits which they should promote in the present age undergoes change. Thus, for example, when the statesman conceives of the virtue of peace in temporal terms, he thinks of its end as freedom from suffering. But when he conceives of it in terms of the heavenly city, he thinks of its aim as a life of blessedness in God.³⁸

He also insists that by loving God in this manner, the statesman fulfills the divine commandment to love his neighbor as himself (cf. Mt 22:37-40, Mk 12:30-1, Lk 10:27, Dt 6:5, Lv 19:18). By loving God, the statesman also loves himself, because he can choose no greater good for himself than God. Moreover, the statesman's love of God obliges him to assist his subjects in loving God. Thus, by loving God properly he also loves his neighbor, because he can seek no greater good for his neighbor than God. The statesman's proper love of God therefore extends both to love of self and neighbor: the three loves are united in the love of God. Finally, Augustine emphasizes that the commandment to love one's neighbor obliges the statesman to love all human beings without discrimination.³⁹

Augustine does not draw from these conclusions a more specifically Christian political program or ethics for Macedonius. He does not return to the question of capital punishment which dominates this exchange of letters with the vicar. Yet if Letter 155 is read against the backdrop of Letter 153, the conclusions which Augustine reaches can be seen as relevant to the discussion of capital punishment in the earlier letter, as well as to other ethical questions related to the imperial vicar's office. Augustine's core argument in Letter 155 is that Macedonius's Christian piety, his faith, hope, and love of God, requires him to alter the way he conceives and practices political virtues from the

³⁸ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.10 (CSEL 44.440-441): "si quaelibet, inquam, administratio tua, illis quas commemoraui instructa uirtutibus, hoc intentionis fine determinantur, ut homines secundum carnem nullas iniquas molestias patiantur; nec ad te existimas pertinere, quo istam quietem, quam praestare niteris, referant, id est (ut uerbis non ambiam) quomodo deum uerum, ubi est quietae uitae omnis fructus, colant, nihil tibi prodest ad uitam uere beatam tantus labor."

³⁹ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.14 (CSEL 44.444): "ad illum ergo quanta opera possumus, etiam illi ut perueniant agamus, quos tamquam nosmetipsos diligimus, si nosmetipsos diligere, illum diligendo iam nouimus. Christus namque, id est ueritas, dicit in duobus praeceptis totam legem prophetasque pendere, ut diligamus deum ex toto corde, ex tota anima, ex tota mente, et diligamus proximos tamquam nosmetipsos (cf. Mt 22:37-40, Mk 12:30-1, Lk 10:27, Dt 6:5, Lv 19:18). proximus sane hoc loco, non sanguinis propinquitate, sed rationis societate pensandus est, in qua socii sunt omnes homines." For further treatment of the relationship between love of God and love of neighbor in Augustine's thought, see T. van Bavel, *The Double Face of Love in Augustine*, in *Augustinian Studies*, 17, 1986, pp. 169-181.

manner in which these virtues are conventionally understood. Prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice must now be understood as aspects of love, Augustine argues.⁴⁰ Justice in its classical sense is defined as 'rendering to each his due', an understanding which is close in Roman jurisprudence to establishing and maintaining an equity between parties.⁴¹ If this definition of justice is transformed by Christian piety into an aspect of the love of God, Augustine implies, then the statesman who seeks to punish justly would seek to do so in a manner that conforms, as far as possible, to this love. As we have seen in this letter, however, love of God implies for Augustine a specific form of love of self and neighbor. His comments at the close of Letter 155 urge the statesman to love his neighbor in a way that promotes in the neighbor a deeper love of God. Much of Augustine's discussion in Letter 153 about the preference that magistrates should give to reforming wrongdoers rather than destroying them can be seen as adhering to this principle of neighbor-love in Letter 155. At the same time, Letter 155 draws the earlier discussion in Letter 153 into a broader context, one with deeper implications for the virtuous rule of Christian statesmen than the specific context of capital punishment allows in Letter 153. Augustine's discussion in Letter 155 of the transformation of political virtues through faith, hope, and love opens up for consideration a wider horizon of ethical issues pertaining to government. One example of the possibilities implicit in this discussion can be found in Augustine's brief reference in the letter to the virtue of peace, mentioned above.

⁴⁰ It should be noted that Augustine first makes this point in AD 388 at *mor.* 1.25 (CSEL 90.29-30): "namque illud quod quadripartita dicitur uirtus, ex ipsius amoris uario quodam affectu, quantum intelligo, dicitur. itaque illas quatuor uirtutes, quarum utinam ita in mentibus uis ut nomina in ore sunt omnium, sic etiam definire non dubitem, ut temperantia sit amor integrum se praebens ei quod amatur, fortitudo amor facile tolerans omnia propter quod amatur, iustitia amor soli amato seruiens et propterea recte dominans, prudentia amor ea quibus adiuuatur ab eis quibus impeditur sagaciter seligens. sed hunc amorem non cuiuslibet sed dei esse diximus, id est summi boni, summae sapientiae summaeque concordiae. quare definire etiam sic licet, ut temperantiam dicamus esse amorem deo sese integrum incorruptumque seruantem, fortitudinem amorem omnia propter deum facile perferentem, iustitiam amorem deo tantum seruientem et ob hoc bene imperantem ceteris quae homini subiecta sunt, prudentiam amorem bene discernentem ea quibus adiuuatur in deum ab his quibus impedi potest."

⁴¹ For the concept of justice as the habit of the soul or the virtue whereby one "gives to each his or her due," see Plato, *Republic* IV. 427E-434D; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1129A; 1130A; *Rhetoric* 1366B9; Cicero, *De inuentione* 2.160; *De finibus bonorum et malorum* 5.65, as well as Roman legal codes as at *Digesta* 1.1 [Ulpian] = Justinian, *Institutiones* 1.1. The same concept is found in Augustine at *ord.* 1.19; *ibid.* 2.22; *diu. qu.* 2; *ibid.* 31.1; *lib. arb.* 1.27; *en. Ps.* 83.11; *ciu.* 19.4; *ibid.* 19.21.

There is something striking about the personal context of Augustine's discussion of virtue and government in this last of his letters to Macedonius. As noted, Augustine does not attempt here to draw out specific ethical conclusions for the imperial vicar, but instead to indicate to him a mode of religious life based in the practice of faith, hope, and love through which his practice of the political virtues in the exercise of his public office will be gradually perfected. Augustine's careful avoidance in Letter 153 of an outright moral condemnation of capital punishment allows him to pose to Macedonius the more difficult obligation to examine the morality of the penalty for himself, in the light of the reformed conceptions of prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice which arise from their transformation in his soul through true piety. Augustine argues in Letter 155 that as a result of original sin, the Christian statesman's rule while on his earthly pilgrimage will never be perfectly virtuous. As a consequence, he will never completely overcome the difficulties in harmonizing justice and mercy, as when he is faced with the need to punish criminals. Nevertheless, Augustine is confident that as long as the statesman's attempt to govern with true piety leads him to understand the aims of political virtues in harmony with the love of God, and provided that he receives with humility the grace that Christ bestows on him in this endeavor, his prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice will gradually converge in the love of God.

As much as it is possible in Letter 155 to detect a political ethics at work in Augustine's thought, a more systematic foundation for this ethics appears in the letter when it is read against the background of the transformation of the political virtues as this is discussed by Neoplatonist writers. In the next two sections of this paper, we shall examine this question as it is treated by Neoplatonist philosophers in the third century, and again in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Political and Purificatory Virtues in Early Neoplatonist Philosophers

In discussing the role of the political virtues and their transformation as a result of the soul's purification, Plotinus draws explicitly from Plato. In his treatise "On Virtues" at *Ennead* 1.2, Plotinus takes as the starting point for his discussion a passage from *Theaetetus* (176A-B) in which Plato implies that evil is located in the material world, and that to escape it the soul must flee the body and the sensate

world and become similar to God. Plotinus reports Plato as suggesting that human beings are able to do this by cultivating virtues such as prudence (*phronēsis*), which make them just (*dikaioi*) and pious (*hosioi*). Plotinus thus understands Plato as teaching that the soul is drawn by virtues to the good, and that this movement implies "assimilation to God".⁴² In Plotinus's view, virtues assist in this spiritual process following the soul's purification (*katharsis*) from the body and the material world (in which evil exists as a privation of the good).

Plotinus's approach to virtue involves a hierarchy comprising "lower" and "higher" virtues. He calls the political virtues as found in Plato, *Republic* IV. 427 E – 443B (prudence, fortitude, temperance, justice) "lower" virtues because, as the designation "political" implies, they involve the soul with community life in the earthly city (*polis*), and this involvement implies an association between them and the body.⁴³ However, despite the inferior position to which Plotinus assigns the political virtues relative to higher virtues, he recognizes their utility in diminishing the disorder in temporal life caused by an excess of human passions and desires, when the soul fails to impose appropriate limits and measures on them.⁴⁴ To the degree that political virtues regulate the soul's desires and lead it to prefer the truth to false opinions, they can be said to mark the beginning of the soul's assimilation to God. Yet, Plotinus concludes, moral and spiritual perfection cannot be achieved by the soul unless it transcends the body and the passions which its attachment to the body causes within the soul. To do this the soul requires the higher virtues (*meizones aretai*), also called "purifications" (*katharseis*), which purify the soul of the evil that adheres to it as a consequence of its relationship to the body.⁴⁵

⁴² See Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.1, along with the explanation by G. Catapano, *Epékaina tēs philosophías. L'eticità del filosofare in Plotino*, Padua, CLEOP, 1995, 49-51.

⁴³ See Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.1. Plato's discussion of the four virtues at *Republic* IV. 427E-434D provides the background for Plotinus's treatment of the political virtues.

⁴⁴ See Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.2. At *Ennead* 2.9.15, Plotinus criticizes the Gnostics for rejecting the necessity of justice and temperance in the pursuit of moral perfection. For discussion, see Catapano, op. cit., 53 and n. 31. See also J. Dillon, *Plotinus, Philo and Origen on the Grades of Virtue*, in *Platonismus und Christentum. Festschrift für Heinrich Dörrie*, ed. H.-D. Blume and F. Mann, Münster, Aschendorfsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1983, pp. 92-105.

⁴⁵ See Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.3. Plotinus attributes to Plato the view that there are two kinds of virtues, political and purificatory, and that the former cannot assimilate the soul to God. But this position cannot be found in Plato's writings. See Catapano, op. cit., p. 54, who examines Plotinus's statement in relation to Plato, *Phaedo* 82A-B and *Republic* VII. 518D-E. A. Armstrong (ed.), *Plotinus I. Porphyry on the Life of*

Plotinus does not name the higher virtues in terms different from the lower, political virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice, but instead he indirectly indicates a continuity, in name at least, between these four virtues before and after the soul's purification. He seems to suggest that as a result of this purification, the virtues change their focus from the lower realm of the soul-body composite to the higher realm of intellectual reality.⁴⁶ Thus, he states that following the soul's purification, prudence consists in thinking about intellectual reality without the influence of opinions introduced to the mind through its association with the body. Similarly, temperance after the soul's purification represents its freedom from emotions associated with the body; fortitude its freedom from fear of abandoning the body; and justice the uncontested dominion of reason and intellect.⁴⁷ Plotinus insists, however, that although the soul in this purified state becomes God-like, virtues pertain to the human soul, not to the intellect (*nous*) or the One.⁴⁸ He then offers a second set of explanations for the higher virtues, one that follows from the principle that as the soul becomes more contemplative following its purification, the higher virtues focus on their exemplars (*paradeigmata*) in the second hypostasis, the Intellect. He explains that wisdom or prudence⁴⁹ thus consists in the soul's contemplation of the realities which the Intellect possesses through immediate contact; justice consists in the soul's activity in directing itself toward the Intellect; temperance in the soul's inward turning toward the Intellect; and fortitude in its freedom from affections.⁵⁰ Finally, Plotinus offers a third way to conceive the higher virtues – as analogues to four different attributes of the Intellect. Thus, wisdom is likened to the Intellect's intuitive

Plotinus and the Order of His Books, Enneads 1.1-9, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1978, p. 135 n. 2, notes that at *Republic* IV. 430C, Plato uses the epithet "civic" in relation to virtues, and that at *Phaedo* 69BC he calls virtues "purifications", but without any of the implications drawn by Plotinus in this passage. On the relationship between virtues in Plato and Plotinus, see J. Rist, *Eros and Psyche. Studies in Plato, Plotinus and Origen*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1964, pp. 169-191.

⁴⁶ Catapano, op. cit., pp. 187-189, likens the purificatory virtues in Plotinus's thought to the virtues characteristic of the philosopher. In this sense, the purificatory virtues resemble prudence (*phronēsis*) or wisdom (*sophia*), which, as philosophical virtues, according to Plotinus, draw the philosopher's soul into the perfect understanding of eternal realities.

⁴⁷ See Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.3. See also *Ennead* 5.1.10.

⁴⁸ See Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.3.

⁴⁹ Wisdom (*sophia*) and prudence (*phronēsis*) are interchangeable terms for Plotinus. See *Ennead* 1.2.6.

⁵⁰ See Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.6.

thought; temperance to its self-concentration; justice (here designated *oikeopragia*) to its characteristic activity; and fortitude to its immateriality and the condition by which it abides pure by itself. In this way, Plotinus argues, the higher virtues imply one another reciprocally, so that it is impossible to conceive of one of them as not implying the others.⁵¹ Moreover, he reasons that the higher virtues are in some way derived from their corresponding exemplars in the Intellect.⁵² Scholars have noted that the three descriptions which Plotinus offers for the virtues – the lower (political) virtues as corresponding to the soul-body relationship, the higher virtues considered in relation to the soul alone, and the higher virtues considered in relation to the Intellect – imply a mimetic relationship between each of the three levels, in descending order from the virtues in the Intellect, to virtues in the soul, to virtues in the soul-body composite.⁵³ According to this interpretation of Plotinus, the lower virtues are weaker imitations of virtues as they exist in the contemplative life of the soul following its purification from association with the body. These “purificatory” virtues, in turn, are weaker imitations of the virtues which characterize pure thought itself.⁵⁴ In Plotinus’s view, the person who seeks happiness (*eudaimonia*) must progress gradually from the lower to the higher virtues. He may continue to possess the lower virtues while he cultivates the higher virtues; however, if he practices the political virtues but does not possess higher virtues, none of his lower virtues can be perfected.⁵⁵ Recognizing that, owing to the soul’s continued association with the body, it is impossible even for an individual who cultivates the higher virtues in the contemplative life to rid his soul completely of passions, Plotinus nevertheless asks why the higher virtues in such a person do not simply make the lower virtues redundant. In other words, why would a person who seeks happiness merely limit his reaction to his emotions by exercising his lower virtues, rather than banish these emotions completely from his soul by exercising the higher virtues? Plotinus clearly indicates his preference for the latter approach, because it implies a decision to leave behind the life of the “good man” who practices political virtues, and to choose the life of the gods (*bios tōn theōn*).⁵⁶

⁵¹ See Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.7. I follow the translation of Armstrong, op. cit., p. 145.

⁵² See Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.6, and the explanation by Catapano, op. cit., p. 60.

⁵³ So Catapano, op. cit., p. 60, citing W. Himmerich, *Eudaimonia. Die Lehre des Plotin von der Selbstverwirklichung des Menschen*, Würzburg, Triltsch Verlag, 1959, pp. 150-155.

⁵⁴ See Catapano, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

⁵⁵ See Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.7.

⁵⁶ See Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.7. Cf. *ibid.*, 1.2.5.

In Chapter 32 of his *Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes*, Porphyry attempts to systematize his teacher Plotinus's discussion at *Ennead* 1.2 of the gradations of virtue, along with the discussion of the four virtues identified by Plato at *Republic* IV. 427 E – 443B.⁵⁷ With Plotinus, he first considers them as “political virtues”. Their function, he says, is to moderate the passions and to limit the effects of irrationality on the soul, for the benefit of community life. At this lowest level in the grades of virtue, Porphyry maintains, prudence corresponds to the rational soul, fortitude to the irascible soul, temperance balances the concupiscible with the rational soul, and justice assures that each soul fulfills its proper duty in relation to the others. Porphyry then considers the same four virtues under the heading of “purificatory virtues”,⁵⁸ the second of four levels of virtue which he treats in ascending order. As purificatory virtues, prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice purify the soul of the actions and passions of the body, and thus prepare it for contemplation of the paradigms of virtues in the divine intellect. These virtues distance the soul from the things that pertain to the lower realm, Porphyry maintains, thus elevating it to its proper essence. Prudence as a purificatory virtue frees the soul of opinions formed through its association with the body, and thus enables the soul to purify itself through pure thought alone; temperance frees it from the passions; fortitude frees it from fear of detachment from the body; while justice ensures the uncontested domination in the soul of reason and intellect. Following Plotinus, Porphyry acknowledges a positive role for the political virtues in improving the moral condition of mortal man and preparing the purification of the soul. In this way, he says, their aim is to enable man to live according to his nature (*kata phusin*). However, Porphyry insists, the political virtues are superseded by the purificatory virtues, whose aim is to produce impassibility (*apatheia*) in the soul, after which it can be assimilated to God (*homoiōsis pros theon*). Porphyry notes that these virtues both purify the soul from the consequences of its association with the body and aid it in its spiritual ascent once it is purified. In saying this, he goes beyond Plotinus, who seems not to clarify whether the purificatory virtues purify the soul or act on it only once it has been purified. To these two levels of virtue, which are clearly indicated in Plotinus's treatise, Porphyry adds another two

⁵⁷ See Porphyry, *Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes* 32 (ed. E. Lamberz, Leipzig, Teubner, 1975, pp. 28–31). Unless otherwise indicated, my summary of Porphyry's doctrine on the gradations of virtues is taken entirely from this text.

⁵⁸ I shall translate *aretai kathartikai* as “purificatory virtues”, and not as “cathartic virtues”, as the term is sometimes translated.

levels, the “contemplative virtues” and the “paradigmatic virtues”, which Plotinus does not treat as specific gradations of virtue. The contemplative virtues, Porphyry explains, are those that pertain to the soul when it acts in a purely intellectual manner. As contemplative virtues, wisdom (or prudence) enables the soul to contemplate the principles which belong to the divine intellect; justice enables it to fulfill its proper function by directing its gaze toward the divine intellect; temperance enables its interior conversion toward the divine intellect; and fortitude consists in the impassibility by which the soul is assimilated to that which it contemplates. These contemplative virtues, Porphyry maintains, imply each other reciprocally. Finally, he describes the paradigmatic virtues, the highest of the four levels of virtue, as exemplary principles proper to the divine intellect. Thus, wisdom in the divine intellect consists of pure thought; temperance is expressed in the intellect’s conversion to itself; justice in the intellect’s accomplishment of the activity proper to itself; fortitude in the power by which the intellect remains itself. Although by designating these principles “virtues”, Porphyry does not accurately represent Plotinus, he does follow Plotinus closely in explaining that these four principles of the divine intellect provide paradigms for the corresponding virtues in the human soul.⁵⁹ Other parallel points link Porphyry’s treatment of the grades of virtue at *Sententia* 32 with that of Plotinus at *Ennead* 1.2. With Plotinus, for example, Porphyry holds that although an individual’s possession of a higher grade of virtue necessarily implies his possession of the lower grades, the opposite case is not true. Moreover, Porphyry points out that one can possess both the political and purificatory virtues at the same time. However, he holds that the purificatory virtues ought to be practiced in preference to the political virtues, because they direct the soul to even higher virtues and thus contribute to the soul’s assimilation to God. After describing the four levels of virtues at *Sententia* 32, Porphyry returns to discussing the purificatory virtues in more detail, insisting that they are achievable in this life and that they lead to higher virtues.

His brief treatment here of the process through which an individual, by practicing the purificatory virtues, purifies his soul of attachment to the body parallels a discussion in another of his writings, *Ad Marcellam*. In this letter written late in his life to his wife, Porphyry urges Marcella to continue practicing the philosophical life

⁵⁹ See Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.3, where he clearly indicates that virtue is proper to the soul, not to the divine intellect. See also *Ennead* 1.2.1, 1.2.6, and the remarks by Dillon, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

while he is away on a journey.⁶⁰ His description in this letter of the ascetical practices necessary for the philosophical life matches that of the practices which he associates at *Sententia* 32 with the purificatory virtues. For example, he tells Marcella that she should "ascend into herself", recollect from memory and ponder the clear thoughts concerning the philosophical life which emerge from the confused and obscure perceptions in her mind. At *Sententia* 32, he associates this same process of recollection with the practice of the purificatory virtues.⁶¹ Moreover, just prior to giving this advice to Marcella, he stresses the necessity of purifying her soul of passions, the source of evil in the soul, so it can draw near to God in pursuit of its salvation (*sōteria*).⁶² Porphyry's reference to "purification" in this context further links this discussion with that of the purificatory virtues at *Sententia* 32. However, although he is cautious to stress in *Ad Marcellam* that worship alone, without the practice of virtue, does not advance the soul toward God, he is more explicit here than in his *Sententiae* in linking purification of the soul with religious practices, such as prayer and worship, which he associates with the soul's assimilation to God.⁶³

In conjunction with this assimilation, Porphyry identifies four principles (*stoikeia*) which enable the soul to draw near to God: faith (*pistis*), truth (*alētheia*), love (*erōs*), and hope (*elpis*).⁶⁴ Concerning the first principle, Porphyry claims that "it is necessary to have faith that the conversion (*epistrophē*) to God is the only salvation." Moreover, he says, "the faithful must be as eager as possible to know the truth about God."⁶⁵ Porphyry thus pairs faith (*pistis*) with knowledge (*gnōsis*) of God. Scholarly inquiry concerning the significance for

⁶⁰ For background to the letter, see E. des Places (ed.), *Vie de Pythagore; Lettre à Marcella*, Paris, Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1982; *Porphyry the Philosopher To Marcella*, Text and Translation with Introduction and Notes by K. O'Brien Wicker, Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1987, pp. 1-41; and *Porfirio. Vangelo di un pagano*, ed. A. R. Sodano, Milan, Rusconi, 1993, pp. 3-42.

⁶¹ Compare Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 10 (in conjunction with *Ad Marcellam* 8-9) with *Sententia* 32. Sodano (ed.), *Porfirio. Introduzione*, op. cit., p. 41 n. 5, indicates this parallel, which he also finds in Porphyry, *De abstinencia* 2.48, and in Augustine, *Confessiones* 2.1.1. See also Sodano (ed.), *Porfirio, Vangelo*, op. cit., p. 32 n. 49; p. 33 n. 50. Throughout this essay, I will quote from the English translation of *Ad Marcellam* by K. O'Brien Wicker, op. cit.

⁶² See Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 9. Porphyry here adapts the central assertion from Plato, *Phaedo* 67 B2.

⁶³ See, for example, Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 12, 16 (on the necessity of virtue), 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24.

⁶⁴ See Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 24.

⁶⁵ See Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 24.

Porphyry of this coupling has focused on the relationship between this passage at *Ad Marcellam* 24 and Paul's praise of faith, hope, and especially love at 1 Corinthians 13.⁶⁶ Angelo Sodano, in particular, argues that *Ad Marcellam* represents a continuation of the anti-Christian polemic found in Porphyry's *Aduersus Christianos*. Sodano holds that in this letter, Porphyry offers a series of principles and maxims from Greek philosophy intended to demonstrate that whatever ethical and ascetical wisdom is found in Christianity, as represented in the Old and New Testaments, existed earlier and in a superior form in Greek thought.⁶⁷ In Sodano's view, for example, Porphyry's coupling of faith (*pistis*) with the truth (*alētheia*) about God within his tetrad of virtues is meant to correct Paul's emphasis at 1 Cor 13 on love (*agapē*) as superior to the possession of charismatic gifts and spiritual knowledge (*gnōsis*).⁶⁸ Thus, according to Sodano, against Paul's insistence at 1 Cor 13: 8 that the spiritual knowledge achievable in our bodily condition is only partial ("now we see as in a glass darkly..."), Porphyry claims that faith guides reason to an apprehension of knowledge about God that is certain.⁶⁹ Sodano maintains that

⁶⁶ See A. von Harnack, *Über den Ursprung der Formel 'Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung'*, in idem, *Aus der Friedens- und Kriegsarbeit*, Gießen, Töpelmann, 1916, pp. 3-18, who argues that Porphyry's tetrad depends directly on Paul's triad. R. Reitzenstein, *Die Entstehung der Formel 'Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung' in Historisches Zeitschrift*, 20, 1916, pp. 189-208; idem, *Die Formel 'Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung' bei Paulus*, in *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil. - Hist. Klasse*, 1916, pp. 367-416; idem, *Historia Monachorum und Historia Lausaica. Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Mönchtums und der frühchristlichen Begriffe Gnostiker und Pneumatiker*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1916; idem, *Nachwort*, in *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil. - Hist. Klasse*, 1917, pp. 130-151, argues against Harnack that the tetrad found in Porphyry was already known among Corinthian Christians at the time of Paul, and that the apostle wrote 1 Cor 13:13 in opposition to it. P. Corssen, *Paulus und Porphyrios*, in *Sokrates*, 73, 1919, pp. 18-30, argues against Harnack that the tetrad is not derived in opposition to Paul, but has deep roots in Porphyry's philosophy. Finally, W. Pötscher, *Porphyrios, Πρὸς Μαρκελλαν*. Griechischer Text. Herausgeben, übersetzt, eingeleitet und erklärt von W. Pötscher, Leiden, Brill, 1969, pp. 89-95, thinks that Porphyry's reference to the four *stoikeia* at *Ad Marcellam* 24 depends on Numenius's four *stoikeia* in nature. Pötscher is aware that the same tetrad is also found in the *Chaldean Oracles*, but he does not believe that this work was a source for Porphyry. However, H. Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy. Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the Late Roman Empire*, rev. ed. M. Tardieu, Paris, Études augustiniennes, 1978, pp. 137-157, argues in favor of this possibility. Other contributions to this discussion are provided by O'Brien Wicker (ed.), op. cit., p. 110 ad. loc., and Sodano (ed.), *Porfirio, Vangelo*, op. cit., pp. 117-119 and 125-126.

⁶⁷ See Sodano (ed.), *Porfirio, Vangelo*, op. cit., especially pp. 25-42.

⁶⁸ See Sodano (ed.), *Porfirio, Vangelo*, op. cit., pp. 117-126.

⁶⁹ See Sodano (ed.), *Porfirio, Vangelo*, op. cit., pp. 120-123. In support of this position, Sodano cites Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 21.

in taking this position, Porphyry is asserting against Christians the Neoplatonic belief that the human soul is a divine entity and that its salvation therefore requires a return to the knowledge of eternal principles. Faith, in this view, is subordinate and propaedeutic to true spiritual knowledge, which is attainable in this life through philosophical effort. Sodano interprets Porphyry as opposing what he understood as a Christian anti-intellectualism, demonstrated in Paul's exclusion of knowledge (*gnōsis*) as a virtue – a move which Porphyry viewed as dangerous to the soul's formation.⁷⁰ Sodano explains that love (*erōs*) follows from faith and truth in Porphyry's tetrad of virtues, because it derives from a sure knowledge of God.⁷¹ The soul loves what it knows through its intellectual conversion (*epistrophē*). "For it is necessary ...", Porphyry writes to Marcella, "for the knower to love the one he knows...".⁷² Finally, Sodano concludes, hope (*elpis*) completes Porphyry's tetrad of principles which guide the soul to salvation, by nourishing it with the expectation of happiness that belongs to those who have purified themselves through faith, truth, and love.⁷³

The purificatory function of Porphyry's four principles is attested in the letter to Marcella by their association with the virtues that accomplish the soul's liberation from passions and opinions. "Virtue alone draws the soul upward and toward what is kindred," Porphyry writes to Marcella.⁷⁴ He explains further that wisdom (*sophia*) implies knowledge of God (*epistēmē peri theou*), and that this knowledge rejects opinions (*doxa*) about God common to the masses, along with the "empty talk of rhetoricians."⁷⁵ To illustrate this point, Porphyry insists that the wise man worships God not because he believes God needs to be worshipped, as the impious believe, but in order to be conformed to the divine dignity.⁷⁶ Porphyry's discussion in this letter of the importance of the four principles is linked with his description of true piety (*eusebeia*), the virtue through which the soul becomes God-like through correct worship. Purification of the soul from false opinions about God represents

⁷⁰ See Sodano (ed.), *Porfirio, Vangelo*, op. cit., p. 122.

⁷¹ See Sodano (ed.), *Porfirio, Vangelo*, op. cit., p. 123.

⁷² See Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 24.

⁷³ See Sodano (ed.), *Porfirio, Vangelo*, op. cit., p. 124, who identifies the meaning of hope as expressed by Porphyry at *Ad Marcellam* 24 with that of Plato at *Phaedo* 114C 2-3 and 114C 1-2.

⁷⁴ See Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 16.

⁷⁵ See Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 17.

⁷⁶ See Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 17-18.

rejection of vulgarity in worship, but more importantly, he says, it represents the cultivation of the intellect in its pursuit of true understandings of God.⁷⁷ Porphyry insists that strong faith accompanied by knowledge about God convinces the more philosophically advanced that God exists and that they live under his scrutiny and care.⁷⁸

Some scholars have suggested that Porphyry derived his four principles in conjunction with the so-called *Chaldean Oracles*, a theosophical mystery poem composed of epigrammatic revelations which most scholars date to the late second century, and which exists today only as a compilation of fragments.⁷⁹ According to the *Oracles*, love, truth, and faith as virtues pertain to the three "governors" or "rulers" of the world: the *aion* which governs the cosmic circle or empyrean world; the sun which rules the ethereal world, comprising the fixed stars and planets; and the moon which rules the hylic or sublunar circle, comprising the earth. Proclus quotes the *Oracles* as asserting that these three virtues (which he identifies as *pistis*, *kalêtheia*, and *erôs*) provide the means by which theurgists unite themselves to God.⁸⁰ In another quotation from the *Oracles*, provided by the sixth-century philosopher Olympiodorus, hope (*elpis*) is said to nourish the theurgist.⁸¹ Karin Alt argues against Harnack that Porphyry's conception of love (*erôs*) resembles that of Plato in *Symposium*, a spiritual power through which knowledge of the loved one is obtained. Furthermore, she argues that whereas Porphyry's conception of love is close to that of the *Chaldean Oracles*, it is far removed from Paul's concept of *agapê* at 1 Cor 13.⁸² She supports this point by

⁷⁷ See Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 19-23.

⁷⁸ See Porphyry, *Ad Marcellam* 21.

⁷⁹ See É. des Places (ed.), *Oracles Chaldaïques*, Paris, Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1971; idem, *Les Oracles chaldaïques*, in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, vol. 2.17.4, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1984, pp. 2299-2335; and R. Majercic, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1989. On the dating, see H.-D. Saffrey, *Les néoplatoniciens et les Oracles chaldaïques*, in *Revue des Études augustiniennes*, 27, 1981, pp. 209-225.

⁸⁰ See des Places (ed.), *Oracles*, op. cit., pp. 189, 199. Fragment 46, which refers to this triad of virtues, is found at Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria* (ed. E. Diehl, *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, vol. 1, Leipzig, Teubner, 1903, p. 212). See the explanation by Sodano (ed.), *Porfirio, Vangelo*, op. cit., pp. 125-126, citing Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles*, op. cit., pp. 144-149.

⁸¹ Fragment 47, which refers to hope, is found at Olympiodorus, *In Platonis Phaedonem commentaria* A VII 1 (ed. W. Norvin, Leipzig, Teubner, 1913, p. 39).

⁸² See K. Alt, *Glaube, Wahrheit, Liebe, Hoffnung bei Porphyrios*, in *Die Weltlichkeit des Glaubens in der Alten Kirche. Festschrift für Ulrich Wickert zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. D. Wyrwa with B. Aland and C. Schäublin, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1997, pp. 25-43, at 39-43.

observing that Iamblichus (c. 250 – c. 325), a disciple of Porphyry, mentions the triad of love, hope, and faith in conjunction with the role of prayer in the theurgist's purification and union with the gods.⁸³ Iamblichus's familiarity with the *Chaldean Oracles* supports the assumption that his association of love, faith, and hope with theurgic union derives from that work, and it provides Alt with additional reason for thinking that Porphyry develops his conception of his tetrad of principles in conjunction with his reading of the *Oracles*, and not in opposition to Paul's arguments at 1 Cor 13, as Harnack suggested. Sodano, who develops Harnack's argument, nevertheless recognizes the affinity between Porphyry's explanation of faith, truth, love, and hope in *Ad Marcellam* and the four virtues as found in the *Chaldean Oracles*, and he concedes that Porphyry had the four elements from the *Oracles* in mind as he determined both the number of his *stoikeia* and their purificatory function within the soul. However, Sodano also believes that Porphyry transposed and reinterpreted the Chaldean tetrad within his Platonic and Neoplatonic system, and that he gave it an ethical emphasis which it did not previously have.⁸⁴

Dominic O'Meara recently joined those scholars who credit Iamblichus with increasing the number of levels of virtues to seven from Porphyry's four.⁸⁵ Although no scale of virtues as such can be found in any of Iamblichus's surviving writings, O'Meara suggests that in his lost treatise *On Virtues*, he inserted two levels of virtue beneath the political virtues (at the lowest level the "natural" virtues, followed by the "ethical" virtues), while he also added the "theurgic" virtues above Porphyry's paradigmatic virtues. As support for this view, O'Meara cites the eleventh-century philosopher Michael Psellus, "who attributes to Iamblichus a more elaborate list of the virtues than that to be found in Porphyry's *Sentences*."⁸⁶ O'Meara also cites a letter of Iamblichus to Sopatros, in which he discusses the

⁸³ See Alt, *Glaube*, op. cit., p. 39, citing Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 5.26 (ed. É. des Places, *Jamblique. Les mystères d'Égypte*, Paris, Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1966, p. 182).

⁸⁴ See Sodano (ed.), *Porfirio. Vangelo*, op. cit., p. 126, citing J. Rist, *Plotinus. The Road to Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. 239.

⁸⁵ See D. O'Meara, *Platonopolis. Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 46-49.

⁸⁶ O'Meara, op. cit., p. 46, citing Michael Psellus, *Philosophica minora* (vol. 2, ed. D. O'Meara, Leipzig, Teubner, 1989, p. 111). O'Meara also cites H.-D. Saffrey, *Abamon, pseudonyme de Jamblique*, in *Philomantes. Studies and Essays in the Humanities in Memory of Philip Merlan*, The Hague, M. Nijhoff, 1971, 227-239 = idem, *Recherches sur le néoplatonisme après Plotin*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1990, pp. 210-211.

education of children in ethical virtue.⁸⁷ Assuming that O'Meara is correct, Iamblichus joins Porphyry in proposing both that the political virtues are transformed by the purificatory virtues within a more elaborate grades of virtue, and that faith, hope, and love play a significant role in the soul's assimilation to the divine.

Political and Purificatory Virtues in Later Neoplatonist Philosophers

In holding both of these positions, Porphyry and Iamblichus are followed in the fifth century by Proclus (c. 412–485) and in the sixth century by Olympiodorus of Alexandria, Neoplatonist philosophers who, as we have seen, incorporate into their commentaries on Plato the four elements of faith, knowledge, love, and hope, and who also carry forward earlier Neoplatonic treatments of a grades of virtue aimed at the purification of the soul and its assimilation to the divine.⁸⁸ Other fifth-century Neoplatonists who also depend upon Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus for their views on the purification of the soul in relation to a scale of virtue include Hierocles (d. 431/432) and Marinus.⁸⁹ Synesius, a fifth-century Christian bishop of Ptolemais (Libya) (AD 410), also refers to a scale of virtue, which he learned from Porphyry.⁹⁰

Macrobius's *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* provides an important source for the transmission of this Neoplatonic grades of virtue in the Latin-speaking, western Empire.⁹¹ In this work he reflects upon Cicero's affirmation (*De re publica* 6.13.3) that the

⁸⁷ See O'Meara, op. cit., p. 47.

⁸⁸ For treatment of the four elements by Proclus and Olympiodorus, see supra, nn. 80 and 81. For Proclus's treatment of the grades of virtue, see *Procli Diadochi in Platonis rem publicam commentarii* (vol. 1, ed. W. Kroll, Leipzig, Teubner, 1899, p. 12). See also Proclus, *In Platonis Alcibiadem* 96,7–16. For Olympiodorus's treatment of the grades of virtue, see his *In Platonis Phaedonem commentaria* A I 4–5; A VIII 1–11; and B (ed. W. Norvin, Leipzig, Teubner, 1913, pp. 3, 45–50, and 114–121).

⁸⁹ In addition to O'Meara, op. cit., the best recent discussion of the Neoplatonic grades of virtue in fifth and sixth century Neoplatonists is found in Marinus, *Proclus ou Sur le bonheur*, ed. H.-D. Saffrey and A.-P. Segonds, Paris, Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", 2001, pp. lxix–c. It should be noted that Saffrey and Segonds do not include Iamblichus in their summary of Neoplatonists who treat, or even indicate, a grades of virtue in their writings.

⁹⁰ See Saffrey and Segonds (eds.), op. cit., p. lxxviii, referring to Synesius, *Epistula* 140. See also A. Garzya, *Osservazioni sull'Epistola 140 di Sinesio*, in *Platonism in Late Antiquity*, ed. S. Gersh and C. Kannengiesser, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1992, pp. 231–238.

⁹¹ For background, see *Macrobie, Commentaire au songe de Scipion*, ed. M. Armisen-Marchetti, 2 vols., Paris, Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", 2000–2003.

statesman who "preserves, aids, or enlarges" his *patria* will enjoy eternal happiness.⁹² Macrobius accepts that happiness can be found only in the practice of that kind of virtue which is normally reserved to philosophers, because it requires complete detachment from worldly affairs and wisdom born of the contemplation of divine realities. But then he asks how the statesman, who does not aspire to these noble philosophical aims, can hope to acquire the virtue which produces happiness.⁹³ He resolves this dilemma by turning to Porphyry's four-tiered grades of virtue, which he mistakenly attributes to Plotinus's treatise *On Virtues*.⁹⁴ He notes that this hierarchy includes the political virtues (prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice), which he says are concerned with establishing the primacy of reason over those passions which interfere with the good government of the soul, the family, and the *res publica*. Macrobius argues that because Plotinus includes the political virtues within the grades of virtue that lead to happiness, the statesman who practices the political virtues enjoys the promise of eternal happiness which Cicero had indicated.⁹⁵ It is clear, however, both in Plotinus and in Porphyry that happiness is attained only by those who transcend the political virtues, and whose souls are assimilated to the divine through purification of attachment to the body and its passions. Macrobius omits mention of this crucial point in the Neoplatonic doctrine of the grades of virtue.⁹⁶

⁹² See Macrobius, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* 1.8.1 (ed. L. Scarpa, *Macrobius Ambrosii Theodosii, Commentariorum in somnium Scipionis libri duo. Introduzione, testo, traduzione e note*, Padua, Liviana Editrice, 1981, pp. 132-134). Macrobius quotes directly from Cicero, *Somnium Scipionis* 3.13, which is found in the sixth book of Cicero's *De re publica*. Macrobius apparently knew the *Somnium Scipionis* as a separate work. See also P. Boyancé, *Études sur le Songe de Scipion, Essai d'histoire et de psychologie religieuse*, Bordeaux, Feret, 1936, pp. 138-147, who lists sources for the position that Cicero takes in this passage among Stoic, Neopythagorean, and other ancient Greek philosophers.

⁹³ See Macrobius, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* 1.8.3.

⁹⁴ See Macrobius, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* 1.8.5-6. He neglects even to mention Porphyry's *Sententia* 32, from which he derives this grades of virtue. See P. Henry, *Plotin et l'Occident. Firmicus Maternus, Marius Victorinus, Saint Augustin et Macrobe*, Louvain, Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1934, pp. 154-162, who establishes Macrobius's dependence upon Porphyry, *Sententia* 32. On this point see also Saffrey and Segonds (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. lxxix-lxxx, and J. Flamant, *Macrobe et le néoplatonisme latin, à la fin du IVe siècle*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1977, pp. 596-608, especially p. 607.

⁹⁵ See Macrobius, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* 1.8.12. On this "specious argument" by Macrobius, see especially, Flamant, *Macrobe*, *op. cit.*, p. 598-599.

⁹⁶ See Macrobius, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* 1.8.5-11. Flamant, *op. cit.*, pp. 600-608, examines Macrobius's treatment of the four levels of virtue in detail and compares it with those of Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2, and Porphyry, *Sententia* 32, making it unnecessary for me to repeat the comparison here.

Moreover, he omits the affirmation, common to Plotinus and Porphyry, that although possession of the higher virtues signifies possession of the lower virtues, the opposite is not the case.⁹⁷ By summarizing his Neoplatonist sources in this way, Macrobius seeks to harmonize Cicero's position with that of Plotinus and Porphyry at the point where they are least reconcilable.

Nevertheless, Macrobius's summary of Porphyry's four levels of virtue is otherwise largely accurate,⁹⁸ and it may be possible to find in his commentary a strong affirmation of the role of the higher virtues in the Neoplatonic system. Jacques Flamant has drawn attention to Macrobius's citation of Cicero's final exhortation in the *Dream of Scipio*, that the statesman should engage in the finest pursuits, those "undertaken in defense of the *patria*," because these activities guarantee a "swifter flight [of the soul] to its proper home and permanent abode." But Cicero adds to this counsel that the soul should be permitted to "contemplate what lies outside itself," and thus "detach itself as much as may be from the body."⁹⁹ Immediately following this citation of Cicero, Macrobius outlines three types of virtue which he sees implied in Cicero's text: 1) higher, contemplative virtues (*uirtutes otiosae*), which, he says, pertain to philosophers and are exemplified in Pythagoras; 2) active virtues (*uirtutes negotiosae*), which are practiced by statesmen (*rectores rei publicae*) and are exemplified in Romulus; and 3) a mixed category which belongs to those rare statesmen who also pursue philosophy and who exhibit both the contemplative and active virtues. Among such men Macrobius names Lycurgus and Solon for the Greeks, and Numa and the two Catos for the Romans.¹⁰⁰ Flamant cites this final argument of Macrobius against the views of scholars who, in his opinion, limit Macrobius's appreciation of the Neoplatonic doctrine on the virtues to the self-serving aim of justifying Cicero's position that eternal happiness is guaranteed to those statesmen who selflessly advance the well-being of the *res publica*.¹⁰¹ In Flamant's

⁹⁷ See Flamant, op. cit., p. 602, citing Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.7, and Porphyry, *Sententia* 32.

⁹⁸ So argues Flamant, op. cit., pp. 607-608. Furthermore, he asserts that Macrobius's only sources for his account of the four levels of virtue were Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2, and Porphyry, *Sententia* 32.

⁹⁹ See Macrobius, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* 2.17.2-4 (ed. Scarpa, *Macrobius*, op. cit., p. 360), quoting Cicero, *De re publica* 6.26.29.

¹⁰⁰ See Macrobius, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* 2.17.5-9 (ed. Scarpa, *Macrobius*, op. cit., pp. 360-362).

¹⁰¹ See Flamant, op. cit., p. 610, where he criticises the views of K. Mras, *Macrobius' Kommentar zu Ciceros Somnium. Ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte des 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.*, S.P.A.W. Phil. Hist. Klasse, 1933, pp. 232-288.

view, Macrobius's discussion of the three kinds of virtue follows from Cicero's decision at the end of the *Dream of Scipio* to place political action and philosophical contemplation in close proximity to each other. Flamant sees Macrobius as also led by Cicero's text to harmonize it with the Neoplatonist teaching regarding the necessity for philosophers to long for the separation of their souls from their bodies and to acquire virtues in pursuit of the reward that is reserved by God for the most virtuous.¹⁰² Flamant thus understands Macrobius as affirming the superiority of the contemplative virtues over the political virtues.¹⁰³

Writing also in the fifth century, Marinus of Neapolis, author of the *Vita Procli*, treats the Neoplatonic grades of virtues in relation to the life of his teacher.¹⁰⁴ He is followed in this endeavor in the sixth-century *Vita Isidori*, a work of the Neoplatonist philosopher Damascius, which evaluates Isidore's contemporaries and predecessors in terms of their place in the same grades of virtue.¹⁰⁵ Marinus classifies virtues into six distinct groups, in ascending order: physical, moral, political, purificatory, contemplative, and theurgic.¹⁰⁶ His biography consists largely in demonstrating evidence for these virtues in the life of Proclus. Significantly, he states at the beginning of the work his conviction that Proclus was the happiest man of renown to have lived for a long time, and that his happiness, which was perfect, consisted in his possession of both internal goods, such as wisdom, and external goods, such as prosperity.¹⁰⁷ It becomes clear in the course of the biography that Marinus traces Proclus's progress from the lower to the higher classes of virtue chronologically, from his boyhood and youth

¹⁰² See Macrobius, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* 2.17.12 (ed. Scarpa, *Macrobius*, op. cit., p. 362).

¹⁰³ See Flamant, op. cit., p. 610.

¹⁰⁴ For a critical edition, see Marinus, *Proclus*, op. cit. See also R. Masullo (ed.), *Vita di Proclo, Marino di Neapoli. Testo critico, introduzione, traduzione e commentario*, Naples, M. D'Auria editore, 1985. A noteworthy study on the work is provided by H. Blumenthal, *Marinus' Life of Proclus: Neoplatonist Biography*, in *Byzantion*, 54, 1984, 469-494 = idem, *Soul and Intellect. Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1993, Essay XIII. An excellent English translation together with notes and introduction has been published by M. Edwards, *Neoplatonic Saints. The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by their Students*, Liverpool, University of Liverpool Press, 2000, pp. xlv-lv, 58-115.

¹⁰⁵ See *Damascii Vitae Isidori reliquiae*, ed. C. Zinten, Hildesheim, G. Olms, 1967. O'Meara, op. cit., p. 49, observes that "[s]ome of them, for example Theosebius, are pegged at the level of 'political' virtue, not having gone much higher," citing Damascius, *Vita Isidori*, fragment 109, in the edition by Zinten, op. cit.

¹⁰⁶ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 3.

¹⁰⁷ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 2. See the helpful note on internal and external goods at Edwards, op. cit., p. 60 n. 29.

to his later years. According to Marinus, Proclus exhibits the traditional political virtues by the time he concludes his study of philosophy at Athens.¹⁰⁸ Marinus recounts that as a philosopher, Proclus offered counsel to the Athenian magistrates on matters of justice. Moreover, he advised scholars in the city to be discrete (or temperate).¹⁰⁹ Marinus indicates that Proclus demonstrated fortitude in and outside Athens on various occasions, notably during a controversy in the city, which Henri-Dominique Saffrey suggests concerned the forced conversion of the temple of Asclepius into a Christian church.¹¹⁰ In addition to these virtues, other political virtues which Marinus attributes to Proclus include piety, philanthropy, and friendship.¹¹¹ Following Plotinus, Marinus says of political virtues that they impose limits and measures on the temper and appetites of the soul, and that they annihilate passions and false opinions.¹¹² Thus, he says, political virtues can be called purifications of a sort, and can be thought of as bringing about the moral improvement of those who possess them in this present life. Yet, like Porphyry at *Sententia* 32, Marinus emphasizes the role of the higher, purificatory virtues in liberating the soul completely from the consequences of its attachment to the body.¹¹³ He reports that Proclus limited his consumption of food and drink and abstained from eating meat. Moreover, he carefully observed religious rituals and fasts aimed at purifying the soul. Marinus records him as praying, keeping vigils, and even authoring hymns in praise of the gods. All these observances were aimed at self-denial.¹¹⁴ The effect of these practices on Proclus according to Marinus was to give him greater freedom from passions with respect to physical pain brought on by illness or to anger and other emotions brought on by external circumstances.¹¹⁵ Marinus claims that Proclus's soul, purified in this way, "all but departed from the body."¹¹⁶ At this point in Proclus's spiritual development, according to Marinus, his

¹⁰⁸ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 14-17.

¹⁰⁹ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 15, and Edwards, op. cit., p. 78 n. 146, on *sophrosunē* in the passage in question.

¹¹⁰ See H.-D. Saffrey, *Allusions anti-chrétiennes chez Proclus*, in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et philologiques*, 59, 1975, pp. 553-563, at pp. 555-557, cited at Edwards, op. cit., p. 79 nn. 149, 151.

¹¹¹ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 15-17.

¹¹² See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 18. Cf. Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.2.

¹¹³ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 18.

¹¹⁴ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 19.

¹¹⁵ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 20.

¹¹⁶ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 20. I follow the English translation at Edwards, op. cit., p. 90.

soul's temperance manifested itself in the total absence of feeling (*apatheia*), a consequence of its detachment from the body; its fortitude consisted in the absence of fear of death, understood as separation from the body; its justice consisted in the right ordering of the soul's inferior faculties to the mind and reason.¹¹⁷

Marinus goes on to explain how Proclus proceeds from these purificatory virtues to the contemplative virtues, in which the soul knows the paradigms of the divine intellect without the need for discursive reasoning or dialectic.¹¹⁸ Virtue at this stage in Proclus's spiritual ascent is no longer called practical reason (*phronēsis*), but rather wisdom (*sophia*). Proclus is portrayed as speaking as if under divine inspiration and sharing in divine illumination. Marinus, carefully adhering to the model advanced earlier in Plotinus and Porphyry, discusses justice, temperance, and fortitude as they exist in the soul of Proclus as contemplative virtues. Thus, he says, justice is exhibited in the way that Proclus's soul does what is proper to it, by attending to intellect and God. His temperance consists in his soul's inward reversion to the mind, a state in which it does not succumb to distraction. His fortitude is expressed in his soul's desire to possess the impassibility which it beholds in God.¹¹⁹ In this state of virtue, according to Marinus, Proclus has accomplished what Plotinus had stated was the purpose of the soul's purification, to exchange the life of the "good man" for that of the gods.¹²⁰ Marinus clearly holds that Proclus attained this spiritual condition and practiced the virtues at this high level while still alive and active as a philosopher.¹²¹ He further attributes to him a progression to the highest level of virtue, the theurgic virtues.¹²²

Augustine and Neoplatonist Accounts of the Grades of Virtue

This review of the teachings concerning the grades of virtue offered by Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Macrobius, and Marinus reveals strong parallels with Augustine's discussion in Letter 155 of the transformation of the political virtues through faith, hope, and

¹¹⁷ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 21.

¹¹⁸ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 22.

¹¹⁹ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 24-25. See Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.1; Porphyry, *Sententia* 32.

¹²⁰ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 25; cf. Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.2.1.

¹²¹ See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 26.

¹²² See Marinus, *Vita Procli* 28.

love. Perhaps the strongest of these parallels can be seen in the similarity between Augustine's description of prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice as they are lived in the heavenly city, and the Neoplatonists' description of them following the soul's purification. With regard to this parallel, both Augustine and the Neoplatonist authors we have examined differentiate between prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice as they exist when the soul is struggling against evils, and these virtues as they exist in the soul that has been freed from the struggle with evil. For example, at the lower levels, both Augustine and the Neoplatonists consider fortitude as the virtue which wards off fear of death, while they associate temperance with the struggle to keep the soul from yielding to passions. For both Augustine and the Neoplatonists, prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice undergo a gradual change in their respective aims as the soul becomes more detached from the influence of the body and from the material world to which the body belongs, and as it draws closer to the divine. Clearly, for Augustine, the transformation of the political virtues involves their becoming forms of love of God, whereas for the Neoplatonists, the higher virtues exhibit a greater purification of knowledge of the eternal principles contained in the divine intellect. But this difference in emphasis is less striking when the relationship between love and knowledge is examined more closely in both Augustine and Neoplatonist philosophers. Furthermore, for both Augustine and the Neoplatonists, as the soul approaches or attains assimilation to God, prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice are described as forms of an effortless adherence to God (or to intellect for some Neoplatonists), which is completely free from distraction or other concerns. Augustine in Letter 155 describes this state as repose, whereas the Neoplatonists describe it as an unencumbered contemplation.

Augustine and the Neoplatonists both view the relationship between the different conceptions or levels of the political virtues hierarchically, in the sense that the lower levels exist as imitations of the higher levels. In Letter 155 Augustine identifies three distinct levels of prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice. At the lowest level, he considers the political virtues under their conventional definitions. At the highest level, in the heavenly city, he says that they exist as aspects or qualities of the soul's adherence to God. At this level, he explains, the soul clings to God prudently, courageously, temperately, and justly.¹²³ Between these two levels Augustine

¹²³ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.12 (*supra*, n. 34).

locates a significant intermediate level, which he says describes these virtues as they exist in the soul that embraces true piety in this life. He insists that at this level, prudence chooses to love God as the highest good, fortitude allows no hardship, temperance no temptation, and justice no pride from keeping the soul from loving God.¹²⁴ Thus, Augustine tells Macedonius that the prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice which he should practice through true piety find their true paradigms in these virtues as they are practiced in the heavenly city. Augustine shares with the Neoplatonists the view that an individual who practices the political virtues as conventionally understood already acts in a morally responsible way. This individual's actions are certainly more virtuous than are those of an individual who does not practice these virtues at all.¹²⁵ At the same time, Augustine believes that the statesman becomes more truly virtuous as he leaves behind the lower level of the political virtues conventionally understood and, through faith, hope, and love, ascends to the intermediate level, where his practice of the political virtues is attuned to the love of God that he will perfectly embrace only after death, in the heavenly city. In this way Augustine's conception of the statesman's personal progress in virtue corresponds to his place in a scale of virtue. Once again Augustine's explanation of the transformation of the political virtues parallels that of Neoplatonist philosophers. Finally, in Plotinus, as in the other Neoplatonists we have examined, prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice, considered as "higher" virtues, imply one another reciprocally, so that the soul which possesses any one of them can also be said to possess each of the others. In Augustine,

¹²⁴ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.13 (supra, n. 35).

¹²⁵ Augustine makes this point with striking clarity at Letter 138 to Marcellinus, when he distinguishes between the "powerful political virtues" that the Romans practiced in establishing and enlarging the *res publica*, and, on the other hand, that true religion, which, had the Romans adopted, would have resulted in their becoming citizens of the heavenly city. See Augustine, *ep.* 138.17 (CSEL 44.145): "deus enim sic ostendit in opulentissimo et praeclaro imperio Romanorum, quantum ualerent ciuiles etiam sine uera religione uirtutes, ut intellegeretur hac addita fieri homines ciues alterius ciuitatis, cuius rex ueritas, cuius lex caritas, cuius modus aeternitas." One is here reminded of Augustine's observation at *ciu.* 5.13 (CCL 47.147) about the virtues practiced by pagan Roman political leaders, that they were "less base" (*minus turpes*) than those Roman leaders who practiced no virtues at all. Thus, I believe that Brittain, *op. cit.*, p. 252, is wrong to conclude that Augustine's grades of virtue differ from the Neoplatonists' insofar as he denies that pagan ethical virtues or virtuous people exist, and that "the lowest grade of virtue Augustine can recognize is that of a faithful Christian ...". Augustine's position on the virtues of non-Christians is more nuanced than Brittain's stark statement of it allows.

this principle is expressed in the identification in the heavenly city of the each of the political virtues with the one virtue, which Augustine calls adherence to God, but which he also identifies as wisdom and blessedness.¹²⁶

The developments in the fifth century by Macrobius and Marinus of the accounts of the grades of virtue by Plotinus and Porphyry offer two additional, important parallels to Augustine's Letter 155. First, Macrobius makes a case for applying the Neoplatonic scale of virtues to the statesman, where previously only the sage or the philosophical soul was thought capable of ascending from the lower to the higher virtues. Macrobius claims that within his mixed category of virtues, which incorporates both the contemplative and active virtues, one can find those rare statesmen, such as Lycurgus, Solon, Numa, and the two Catos, who combine the pursuit of philosophy with good government.¹²⁷ Marinus, on the other hand, employs the grades of virtue as a way of describing the moral progress of a specific individual known to him, his teacher Proclus, whereas in Plotinus and Porphyry, the scale of virtues was discussed only theoretically, without application to any particular person.¹²⁸ Marinus charts Proclus's progress from practicing lower grades of virtue to higher ones.

In Augustine, we see parallels of both these developments in his application of the grades of virtue to Macedonius. At the beginning of Letter 155, Augustine tells the imperial vicar that he already "approaches near to God's heavenly commonwealth" and that he "burns with a desire for it," insofar as he is also "inspired with a love for eternity, for truth and for love."¹²⁹ Augustine's attribution to Macedonius of a love for truth and for love echoes the qualities which he later points to in Book 19 of *De ciuitate dei* as the conse-

¹²⁶ J. P. Langan, *Augustine on the Unity and the Interconnection of the Virtues*, in *Theological Studies*, 72, 1979, pp. 81-95, associates Augustine's position on the interconnectedness of all virtues mostly with Stoic philosophical premises, and omits explanations drawn from Neoplatonism.

¹²⁷ See supra n. 100.

¹²⁸ Although Porphyry speaks abundantly in his *Vita Plotini* about Plotinus's virtues and his ascent to the divine (notably at *Vita Plotini* 23), he does not refer in any systematic way to a moral or spiritual ascent by Plotinus through the several grades of virtue, as Marinus does in the case of Proclus.

¹²⁹ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.1 (CSEL 44.430): "... quod animum tuum caritate aeternitatis et ueritatis atque ipsius caritatis affectum diuinae illi caelestique rei publicae, cuius regnator est Christus et in qua sola semper beataque uiuendum est, si recte hic pieque uiuatur, agnosco inhiantem, uideo propinquantem eiusque potiundae amplector ardentem."

quences of a mixed contemplative-active life.¹³⁰ His reasons for acknowledging these qualities in Macedonius can be surmised from the content of their correspondence, in particular from Letter 154, which the vicar wrote to Augustine just shortly before. In his letter, Macedonius indicates that he has granted the pardon sought by Augustine. Moreover, he thanks Augustine for sending copies of the first three books of *De ciuitate dei*, which had just been completed, and which he had to request twice from the bishop before receiving.¹³¹ Macedonius expresses deep admiration for the content of these books. He says that they demanded time from him, snatching him up from the anxieties associated with his office.¹³² He tells Augustine that he does not know what to admire more about the books, the maturity of the priesthood which they exhibit, the teachings of philosophy, the wide knowledge of history, or the pleasing eloquence which they offer.¹³³ Macedonius endorses the perspective on Roman history that Augustine presents in these books. He specifically praises the contrast the bishop draws between the errors of the Romans' forefathers, who immersed themselves in pleasures, and thus forfeited the happiness they sought in this life, and, on the other hand, the commandments and the mysteries of the incarnation and of eternal life, which is offered as a reward to the truly virtuous. He adds that these commandments and mysteries "even lighten the burden of this present age and of the unavoidable circumstances into

¹³⁰ At *ciu.* 19.19 (cf. *ciu.* 19.1), Augustine considers the social and cultural practices of Christians (*mores populi christiani*) in conjunction with the three kinds of life (*genera uitae*), contemplative, active and mixed, which the Roman intellectual Marcus Terentius Varro had presented in *De philosophia*. He emends the content of Varro's categories so that the contemplative life is associated with the study of philosophical truth (*ueritas*), while the active life is portrayed as charitable service (*cari-tas*) on behalf of one's neighbor. He suggests that the mixed life represents the attempts of contemplatives to pass on to others the fruits of their philosophical investigations in an effort to improve the welfare of their neighbors. At *ciu.* 19.19 he specifically mentions bishops in this connection. See F.-J. Thonnard, *Les trois états de vie*, in *Œuvres de saint Augustin. La Cité de Dieu. Livres XIX-XXII: Triomphe de la cité céleste*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1960, pp. 752-753.

¹³¹ See Augustine, *ep.* 154.2 (Macedonius to Augustine). We learn at Augustine, *ep.* 152.3 (Macedonius to Augustine) of the imperial vicar's annoyance at having to ask a second time to have the books.

¹³² See Augustine, *ep.* 154.2 (Macedonius to Augustine) (CSEL 44.429): "explicui tuos libros; neque enim tam languidi aut inertes erant, ut me aliud quam se curare paterentur: iniecerunt manum, ereptumque aliis sollicitudinum causis, suis vinculis illigarunt (ita enim mihi Deus propitius sit) ...".

¹³³ See Augustine, *ep.* 154.2 (Macedonius to Augustine) (CSEL 44.429): "... ut ego anceps sim, quid in illis magis mirer, sacerdotii perfectionem, philosophiae dogmata, historiae plenam notitiam an facundiae iucunditatem ...".

which we have been born.”¹³⁴ In the light of the vicar’s letter, Augustine’s statement at the beginning of Letter 155 that Macedonius exhibits love for love (*caritas*) could be explained by reference to the pardon which he extended to the individual facing the death penalty, whereas his love for truth could be said to follow from his professed commitment to the Christian religion (*uera pietas*) and its teachings, as exhibited in his reaction to Augustine’s writings. Augustine could also find a basis in Macedonius’s letter for the virtues of faith, hope, and love, which figure prominently in his response to the vicar. Macedonius’s profession of Christian faith and hope is clear from his endorsement of Augustine’s view in *De ciuitate dei* that the mysteries of the incarnation and eternal life as a reward for virtue lighten the burdens associated with this present life. Thus, in his response to Macedonius, Augustine claims that although the vicar exercises political responsibilities in this life, he lives already “near to the heavenly city,” and adds that although he wears the belt of an earthly judge, he has his mind largely fixed on the heavenly commonwealth.¹³⁵ In these terms, Augustine brings together in Macedonius the qualities of the philosopher-statesman, which Macrobius presents just a few years later in Neoplatonic terms. He also seems to argue that Macedonius has either attained already, or is close to attaining, that intermediate level of prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice in which these virtues are practiced in conjunction with faith, hope, and love.

The parallels which I have drawn between Augustine’s Letter 155 to Macedonius and the writings of Neoplatonic philosophers concerning the grades of virtue do not inevitably lead to the conclusion that Augustine had first-hand knowledge of the relevant Neoplatonic texts. He could not have known Macrobius or Marinus, and we have no evidence that he ever read Iamblichus. Otmar Schissel

¹³⁴ See Augustine, *ep.* 154.2 (Macedonius to Augustine) (CSEL 44.429): “conuicti namque sunt impudenter pertinaces, iam inde a bonis quae memorant saeculis, pro naturae rerum obscuritate contigisse peiora, falsosque omnes illitis quadam dulcedine felicitatibus suis, per quas non ad beatitudinem, sed ad praerupta sunt ducti: haec uero nostra praecepta, et simplicis uerique dei mysteria, praeter uitam perpetuam quam purissimis uirtutibus pollicentur, etiam haec saecularia et necessario qui nati sumus euentura mitigare.”

¹³⁵ See Augustine, *ep.* 155.17 (CSEL 44.447): “pietas igitur, id est uerus ueri dei cultus ad omnia prodest, et quae molestias huius uitae auertat aut leniat et quae ad illam uitam salutemque perducatur, ubi nec aliquid iam mali patiamur et bono summo sempiternoque perfruamur. ad hanc te perfectius assequendam et perseuerantissime retinendam exhortor ut me ipsum. cuius nisi iam particeps esses tuosque istos honores temporales ei seruire opotere iudicares, [...] ut te appareat in terreni iudices cingulo non parua ex parte caelestem rem publicam cogitare.”

von Fleschenberg has attempted to demonstrate that Augustine's discussion at *De quantitate animae* 70-81 of the last four of the seven gradations of the soul depends upon Plotinus's treatise *On Virtues* (= *Ennead* 1.2), and most directly upon Porphyry's four grades of virtue at *Sententia* 32.¹³⁶ Yet the paraphrases of Porphyry's *Sententia* 32 that Schissel von Fleschenberg finds in *De quantitate animae* can at best be described as parallels of thought, and do not establish with certainty a direct use or even knowledge of this text by Augustine.¹³⁷ Henri-Dominique Saffrey and Alain-Philippe Segonds make the important observation that Augustine's discussion in *De quantitate animae* is about grades of the soul, not of virtue. Nowhere in this text does Augustine speak of grades of virtue.¹³⁸ For this reason, they do not include Augustine among those writers, pagan and Christian, who advanced versions of Plotinus's and Porphyry's doctrines. The passages in question from *De quantitate animae*, therefore, should not be pressed to establish direct contact by Augustine with Porphyry's *Sententia* 32. To hold this view, however, one need not conclude that Augustine was unaware of Porphyry's doctrine. Yet he may have learned of it from another work of Porphyry than the *Sententiae*, one which may no longer be extant. On the other hand, he may have learned of the doctrine from a source closer to Iamblichus's writings, some of which have similarly been lost, although we have evidence that they were

¹³⁶ O. Schissel von Fleschenberg, *Marinos von Neapolis und die neuplatonischen Tugendgrade*, Athens, Kunstdruckerei & Verlag, 1928, pp. 81-94, especially pp. 88-89. For further discussion of the question of Augustine's dependence upon Porphyry for the doctrine of grades of virtue, see O. Du Roy, *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin*, Paris, Études augustiniennes, 1966, pp. 256-67; B. Neil, *Neo-Platonic Influence on Augustine's Conception of the Ascent of the Soul in «De quantitate animae»*, in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, vol. 2, ed. P. Allen et al., Everton Park, Centre for Early Christian Studies, Australian Catholic University, 1999, pp. 197-215; and Brittain, op. cit. W. Theiler, *Porphyrios und Augustin*, Halle, Niemeyer, 1933 [= idem, *Forschungen zum Neuplatonismus*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1966], provides a list of parallels between Augustine's writings and Porphyry's *Sententiae* (see the *Stellenverzeichnis zur Lehre des Porphyrios* at the conclusion of the book for references). However, Theiler's arguments in this work are generally regarded with skepticism by many scholars.

¹³⁷ A. Solignac, *Réminiscences plotiniennes et porphyriennes dans le début du «De ordine» de saint Augustin*, in *Archives de philosophie*, n. s. 20, 1957, pp. 457-462, finds echoes of Porphyry, *Sententiae* 35, 37, and 40 in Augustine's *De ordine*. On this point, see also Du Roy, op. cit., pp. 183-196.

¹³⁸ See Saffrey and Segonds, op. cit., p. lxxix, n. 1. Nevertheless, Brittain, op. cit., pp. 248-260, follows closely Schissel von Fleschenberg and Du Roy, op. cit., p. 258-260, in treating *quant. an.* 70-81 as though it were a commentary on the grades of virtue, inspired by Plotinus and Porphyry.

known to Proclus and Olympiodorus. It is also possible that from the latter half of the fourth through the sixth centuries, various forms of this doctrine as found in the early Neoplatonists had circulated widely throughout the Empire, and that Augustine learned of it through intermediary sources. Perhaps the most that can be said with certainty about the doctrine of the grades of virtue which Augustine explores in Letter 155 is that there are strong parallels between it and various elaborations of this doctrine by Neoplatonic writers. To say this, however, is to say much.

The same cautious approach to parallels between Augustine's Letter 155 and Neoplatonist writings ought to prevail in regard to the role of faith, hope, and love, as virtues which draw the soul closer to God. We saw the importance that Porphyry in *Ad Marcellam* attaches to the four principles of faith, knowledge, hope, and love in conjunction with the purification of the soul as it approaches God, and the possible role of the *Chaldean Oracles* as a source for this doctrine in Porphyry. We also saw a parallel role for faith, hope, and love at Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 5.26. Certainly, the significance of faith, hope, and love in Augustine's account of the ascent of the soul to God is derived from other sources, both biblical and patristic, not the least in conjunction with 1 Corinthians 13. We cannot say that he knew Porphyry's *Ad Marcellam* or the so-called *Liber de mysteriis*, attributed to Iamblichus.¹³⁹ However, the juxtaposition of these three virtues in relation to the political virtues and the subsequent purification of the soul which Augustine discusses in Letter 155 offers another striking parallel to the treatment they receive in these Neoplatonist writings. This fact should be noted, even if we cannot yet account for it. The enduring significance of these principles or virtues for the Neoplatonists is indicated by the fact that in the fifth and sixth centuries, they reoccur in commentaries on Platonic dialogues by Proclus and Olympiodorus.¹⁴⁰ Dominic O'Meara's recent book, *Platonopolis*, has demonstrated that our understanding of the revival of Neoplatonist political thought in the fifth and sixth centuries is still in an initial phase.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Theiler, op. cit., claims to have identified a number of parallels between Porphyry's *Ad Marcellam* and various works of Augustine. But see my remarks supra, n. 136.

¹⁴⁰ See supra nn. 80, 81.

¹⁴¹ In the light of Augustine's correspondence with Christian public officials such as Macedonius and Flavius Marcellinus (see my argument at infra, nn. 142, 143), O'Meara may want to rethink his conclusion that Augustine eventually rejects completely Neoplatonic political ideas. See O'Meara, op. cit., pp. 154-158; 202.

I believe that the examination in this paper of Augustine's use of the Neoplatonic doctrine of the grades of virtue strengthens O'Meara's central argument, concerning the revival of Neoplatonic political philosophy in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Conclusion

Nevertheless, what emerges from this analysis and comparison of Augustine's Letter 155 with Neoplatonist accounts of the grades of virtue is a clearer picture of Augustine's intentions in this letter, one with wider consequences for our conception of his political ethics than we have previously perceived. Letter 155 confirms that Augustine is aware of some form of the Neoplatonic doctrine of the grades of virtue, and that he frames his discussion of Macedonius's political responsibilities against the backdrop of this Neoplatonic doctrine, which he nonetheless modifies to suit his own theological assumptions. Two important consequences follow from this effort, in addition to those indicated at the conclusion of the initial section of this article. First, by incorporating a version of the Neoplatonic doctrine into the counsel he gives to Macedonius, Augustine bridges a gap between the virtuous life of the heavenly city and the virtuous life of Christians who govern the earthly city. Letter 155, with its emphasis on the transformation of the political virtues through faith, hope, and love, shows in more detail than we have previously understood how in Augustine's view it is possible for Christian statesmen to deepen their love of God as "citizens of the heavenly city," without abandoning the obligations of their political offices. One might even say that Augustine sets this as a general expectation for Christian statesmen. About two years before writing Letter 155, Augustine wrote Letter 138 to the Roman imperial tribune and notary Marcellinus, and in the course of the letter, asserted that faith, hope, and love make Christians "adopted citizens" of the heavenly city, so that they either reform the morals of those who would allow vices to rage in the earthly commonwealth or, failing to reform these individuals, they are at least able to tolerate them.¹⁴² As in Letter 155, Augustine makes this claim about faith, hope, and love in the context of a discussion of the status of political virtues before and after their transformation

¹⁴² See Augustine, *ep.* 138.17 (CCL 44.144): "...cui nos ciues adsciscit fides, spes, caritas, ut, quam diu inde peregrinamur, feramus eos, si corrigere non ualemus, qui uitiiis inpunitis uolunt stare rem publicam, ...".

through true piety.¹⁴³ Other occasions in which Augustine discusses faith, hope, and love in the context of the transformation of political virtues can also be found in his writings.¹⁴⁴

Representative of those commentators who perceive in Augustine's thought a gap between the good citizen and the good Christian is the late Ernest Fortin, who insisted that,

"Christian wisdom and political power may occasionally coexist in a single subject, the person of the Christian ruler, but even in that case, they remain distinct, cooperating with each other whenever possible but never merging into the other. [...] The Christian who, by his active presence in the city, is willy-nilly caught up in its more or less just distribution of goods and honors or its more or less just wars is not being asked to love the evils consequent on the establishment and maintenance of that society, but only the substantive justice which it embodies and which would not exist without it.

[...]

"By judiciously blending the teaching of classical philosophy with that of the Bible, Augustine was able to counter the massive objections to which on political grounds Christianity was exposed, as well as the massive objections to which on Christian grounds the political life was exposed. Yet the solution at which he arrived cannot be said to have been completely harmonious or symmetrical. He reduced but did not suppress the tension between man's perfection as a citizen and his perfection as a Christian and a human being. It disposed of the problem of the political life, not by integrating the Christian fully into it, but by moving beyond it in the direction of a goal which was not only transpolitical but other-worldly."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ As is clear from what immediately follows the preceding passage (supra, n. 142) at Augustine, *ep.* 138.17 (CCL 44.144): "... quam primi Romani constituerunt auxeruntque uirtutibus etsi non habentes ueram pietatem erga deum uerum, quae illos etiam in aeternam ciuitatem posset salubri religione perducere, custodientes tamen quandam sui generis probitatem, quae posset terrenae ciuitati constituendae, augendae conseruandaeque sufficere." These statements should be read in the context of this entire section of the letter.

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, Augustine, *ciu.* 5.20 (CCL 47.157): "unde non ei digne seruit soliditas quaedam firmitasque uirtutum, ut nihil prouideat prouidentia, nihil distribuatur iustitia, nihil toleret fortitudo, nihil temperantia moderetur, nisi unde placeatur hominibus et uentosae gloriae seruiatur. nec illi se ab ista foeditate defenderint, qui, cum aliena spernant iudicia uelut gloriae contemptores, sibi sapientes uidentur et sibi placent. nam eorum uirtus, si tamen ulla est, alio modo quodam humanae subditur laudi; neque enim ipse, qui sibi placet, homo non est. qui autem uera pietate in deum, quem diligit, credit et sperat, plus intendit in ea, in quibus sibi displicet, quam in ea, si qua in illo sunt, quae non tam ipsi quam ueritati placent; neque id tribuit, unde iam potest placere, nisi eius misericordiae, cui metuit displicere; de his sanatis gratias agens, de illis sanandis preces fundens."

¹⁴⁵ See Fortin, *op. cit.*, p. 47-49.

Fortin's description of Augustine's Christian ruler or citizen assumes the inevitability of a moral compromise between the two poles of civic responsibility and Christianity. By this reading, either the Christian ruler/citizen gives more weight to the tenets of the Christian religion and less to the sometimes harsh obligations of public office, or he fulfills his public duties while paying less heed to the "other-worldly" claims on his soul made by his Christian faith. However, Fortin's summation of Augustine's thinking does not allow the possibility of a gradation of political virtues, such as justice. Fortin assumes, for example, that the concept of justice behind the Christian statesman's distribution of goods and honors, or his conduct of just wars, remains constant, and does not undergo any modification as a result of his faith, hope, and love. We might even say that, according to Fortin, Augustine equates the demands of justice as conceived by the Christian statesman with the demands of justice as conceived by Roman statesmen who give no place to Christian faith, hope, and love. However, Letter 155 clarifies that for Augustine the concept of justice, as of the other political virtues, undergoes significant change in the statesman once he considers his public responsibilities in the light of the claims of Christian faith, hope, and love.

Augustine gives some indication of this changed perspective in Letter 138 to Marcellinus. As already noted, this letter contains a brief but telling reference to the fact that the political virtues undergo transformation in the Christian statesman as a result of his faith, hope, and love.¹⁴⁶ Elsewhere in the letter, Augustine responds to the accusation by the proconsul of Africa, Rufius Volusianus, that the morals of the Christian religion are not suitable for governing the Roman Empire.¹⁴⁷ In response, Augustine claims not only that Christian morals would not harm the Empire, but that they would likely

¹⁴⁶ See Augustine, *ep.* 138.17 (*supra* nn. 142, 143).

¹⁴⁷ See Augustine, *ep.* 138.9 (cf. Augustine, *ep.* 136.2 [Flavius Marcellinus to Augustine]). On Rufius Volusianus, see A. Chastagnol, *Le sénateur Volusien et la conversion d'une famille de l'aristocratie romaine au Bas-Empire*, in *Revue des études anciennes*, 58, 1956, pp. 241-253. See also É. Rebillard, *Augustin et le rituel épistolaire de l'élite sociale et culturelle de son temps. Eléments pour une analyse processuelle des relations de l'évêque et de la cité dans l'antiquité tardive*, in *L'évêque dans la Cité du IV^e au V^e siècle. Image et autorité*, ed. É. Rebillard and C. Sotinel, Rome, École française de Rome, 1998, pp. 127-152, and N. McLynn, *Augustine's Roman Empire*, in *History, Apocalypse and Imagination: New Essay on Augustine's the Secular City of God*, ed. M. Vessey, et al., Bowling Green, Bowling Green State University, Philosophy Documentation Center, 1999 (= *Augustinian Studies*, 30:2, 1999), pp. 29-44, at pp. 40-44.

enhance its strength in the face of its enemies.¹⁴⁸ He says, for example, that the Gospel admonition at Mt 5:39-41 to turn the other cheek when struck by an assailant can result in an evil person being defeated through the goodness, rather than the brute force, of his Christian adversary. He adds that while Christians who pursue less violent means in the defence of society must be prepared to tolerate some loss of temporal benefits, they witness to their conviction that there are higher goods to be sought in life, among them faith and justice. Furthermore, by taking this stand, Christians may succeed in drawing their enemies into reforming themselves by choosing these eternal goods.¹⁴⁹ Against the criticism that attempts to practice Christian nonviolence in this way would leave the Empire defenceless against its enemies, Augustine responds that this moral principle is not meant to rule out the use of force altogether, but to curb it, thereby rendering the force applied less harsh.¹⁵⁰ He concludes this argument by stating,

"If the earthly commonwealth observes Christian precepts in this way, then even wars will be waged in a spirit of benevolence; their aim will be to serve the defeated more easily by securing a peaceful society that is pious and just."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ See, for example, Augustine, *ep.* 138.10 (CSEL 44.135): "cum uero legitur praecipiente auctoritate diuina non reddendum malum pro malo, cum haec tam salubris admonitio congregationibus populorum tamquam publicis utriusque sexus atque omnium aetatum et dignitatum scholis de superiore loco personat, accusatur religio tamquam inimica rei publicae. quae si, ut dignum est, audiretur, longe melius Romulo, Numa, Bruto ceterisque illis Romanae gentis praeclaris uiris constitueret, consecraret, firmaret augeturque rem publicam."

¹⁴⁹ See Augustine, *ep.* 138.11 (CSEL 44.136-137): "qui ergo uincit bono malum, patienter amittit temporalia commoda, ut doceat, quam pro fide atque iustitia contemnenda sint, quae ille nimis amando fit malus, ac sic iniuriosus ab eo ipso, cui fecit iniuriam, discat, qualia sint, propter quae fecit iniuriam, atque in concordiam, qua nihil est utilius ciuitati, paenitens adquiratur uictus non saeuientis uiribus sed beniuolentia patientis."

¹⁵⁰ See Augustine, *ep.* 138.14 (CSEL 44. 139-140): "sunt ergo ista praecepta patientiae semper in cordis praeparatione retinenda ipsaque beniuolentia, ne reddatur malum pro malo, semper in uoluntate complenda est. agenda sunt autem multa etiam cum inuitis benigna quadam asperitate plectendis, quorum potius utilitati consulendum est quam uoluntati, quod in principe ciuitatis luculentissime illorum litterae laudauerunt. nam in corripiendo filio quamlibet aspere numquam profecto amor paternus amittitur; fit tamen, quod nolit et doleat, qui etiam inuitus uidetur dolore sanandus."

¹⁵¹ See Augustine, *ep.* 138.14 (CSEL 44. 140): "ac per hoc si terrena ista res publica praecepta christiana custodiat, et ipsa bella sine beniuolentia non gerentur, ut ad pietatis iustitiaeque pacatam societatem uictis facilius consulatur." English translation by E. M. Atkins at *Augustine. Political Writings*, ed. E.M. Atkins and R.J. Dodaro, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 38.

Augustine's conclusion implies that the kind of benevolence, peace, piety, and justice produced in an earthly commonwealth which is governed according to Christian precepts should be morally superior to the benevolence, peace, piety, and justice found in a commonwealth not governed according to these principles. As if to provide evidence for this point, Augustine later indicates that the political virtues of the earliest Romans established and enlarged their commonwealth, and that although these Romans did not practice true piety, they nonetheless practiced virtues such as integrity (*probitas*) in order to defend their earthly city.

"For God," Augustine declares, "revealed in the wealth and fame of the Roman Empire how powerful are civic virtues even without true piety; to make it clear that with the addition of this, human beings become citizens of the other city, whose king is truth, whose law is order, and whose limit is love."¹⁵²

It will perhaps only become completely clear through a careful reading of Letter 155 that, for Augustine, the addition of true piety and the resulting acquisition of citizenship in the "other city" of which he speaks in Letter 138 ought to lead to the transformation of political virtues in the Christian statesman above the elementary level of these virtues that the Romans observed without true piety.¹⁵³ The

¹⁵² See Augustine, *ep.* 138.17 (CSEL 44. 144-145): "uitiis impunitis uolunt stare rem publicam, quam primi Romani constituerunt auxeruntque uirtutibus etsi non habentes ueram pietatem erga deum uerum, quae illos etiam in aeternam ciuitatem posset salubri religione perducere, custodientes tamen quandam sui generis probitatem, quae posset terranae ciuitati constituendae, augendae conseruandaeque sufficere. deus enim sic ostendit in opulentissimo et praeclaro imperio Romanorum, quantum ualerent ciuiles etiam sine uera religione uirtutes, ut intellexeretur hac addita fieri homines ciues alterius ciuitatis, cuius rex ueritas, cuius lex caritas, cuius modus aeternitas." English translation as at Atkins, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹⁵³ H. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1963, seems to miss this point when he writes at p. 142: "Provided that the Christian keeps patience and benevolence in his heart as he punishes and disciplines the criminal for his own good and for that of society, he commits no sin 'in correcting with a certain benevolent severity, even against their own wishes, men whose welfare rather than their wishes it is our duty to consult' ...", citing Augustine, *ep.* 138.14. In making this statement, Deane seems as unaware as Fortin that when Augustine refers in this and similar passages to political virtues such as patience and benevolence, he thinks of them as having been transformed in the Christian statesman as a consequence of his true piety (faith, hope, and love), and therefore as virtues which are practiced in a way not characteristic of pagan public officials. To understand what is precisely "Christian" about Augustine political ethics, one has to try to understand how he imagines the difference between governing through political virtues as they conform to true piety, and governing through political virtues which do not.

presence of this hierarchy of virtue in Augustine's political thought progressively diminishes the conflict which Fortin and others detect in it between the justice which statesmen are obliged to pursue in the earthly city and the love of God which their Christian commitment requires of them.¹⁵⁴

A second, related consequence follows from this first general conclusion. Letter 155 gives us further reason to approach Augustine's political ethics through a more systematic examination of his virtue theory. Studies of Augustine's political thought to date have for the most part ignored the role of virtues, which may yet be shown to be central to his political ethics.¹⁵⁵ The study of a comprehensive virtue theory in Augustine would fill a lacuna in Augustinian studies, while, in my view, it also offers the most promising way to advance our understanding of his political ethics.

Robert DODARO OSA

¹⁵⁴ At another point in Letter 138, Augustine observes that the failures which Volusianus attributes to Christian emperors, if true, are the result of their moral faults, and not of the Gospel teaching which ought to have inspired them. See Augustine, *ep.* 138.16.

¹⁵⁵ In any future study of Augustine's virtue theory, the role of humility in relation to other virtues must be examined with particular care. Though I have not commented greatly on the precise role Augustine assigns to humility in Letter 155, the relationship between it and the other virtues which he urges Macedonius to practice is clear, and consists largely in recognizing that whatever true virtue he practices is a consequence of divine grace and not of his own efforts. See, for example, Augustine, *ep.* 155.5, 155.9, 155.12.